

# Clarity, the crucially missed link

## PLEASURE IS ALL MINE



SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

My esteemed colleague in this paper, Executive Editor Syed Badrul Ahsan, wrote on what he terms 'Sheikh Hasina's legacy' in his last Wednesday column.

One would have much rather he had phrased it as Hasina governments' 'performance' or 'scorecard' spanning two tenures and blended his narrative with an element of critiquing by way of being a 'critic is your best friend' with a directional way forward note appended to it. However, I cannot be oblivious of the fact that he had done so in some measure before and would do it again when he deems fit.

That said, let me turn to the milestones with bunting that my colleague flagged astride the path Sheikh Hasina has trodden. I am entirely in agreement with his recital of her high water marks—annulment of Indemnity Ordinance paving the way for trial and punishment of assassins of Bangabandhu with all but two members of his family; 'reordering of investigations into the November 1975 killings of four Mujibnagar government leaders;' the trial of collaborators of Pakistan army; transparent legal proceedings launched in 10-truck arms haul case and the August 2004 grenade explosions case. Quite deservedly, credit has also been given to Sheikh Hasina for her stern action against attempted obscurantist siege at the centre of Dhaka as well as a resounding denial of space to terrorists aiming to 'undermine other countries.' Her handling of extremists or their ethos has been astutely surgical, one has to add.

Her government's performance in agriculture, food security, social safety networking and edu-

cation is notable, too. Premised on such strong points of her incumbency, one feels Sheikh Hasina should be only confident, politically generous and constitutionally accommodative on the issue of nonpartisan interim caretaker arrangement to oversee the next general election. The fulcrum of the dispute is finding a reputed neutral person mutually acceptable to both Awami League and BNP to head a council of advisers made up of MPs from both parties.

This is one of an array of options circulating in the speculative domain, such as Speaker or

*If the AL is serious in pooling the floating voters who decide the fate of elections it will have to send conducive signals to them about a well-participated broad-based election.*

President heading an interim arrangement with powers of certain crucial ministries delegated to the Election Commission. One recalls Sheikh Hasina having said she was 'making an investment' when electing Shirin Sharmin Chowdhury as Speaker.

The point is if Sheikh Hasina listens to Rousseau's sovereignty of general will she cannot misread the pulse of the people, the barometer of public opinion favouring a negotiated settlement of the controversy over pre-poll time government. Khaleda Zia by conceding caretaker system under popular pressure might have lost her high wattage star quality and consequently the election. By the same token, some political observers believe were Hasina to yield ground on a nonpartisan interim modality for the next general election she too might lose the election. Not necessarily, because the circumstances stacked against Khaleda Zia at that time were different from what they are at present vis-à-vis Hasina.

An undercurrent of view is that if Sheikh

Hasina sounds conciliatory on the caretaker issue drawing upon the reservoir of political wisdom of the old Awami League, she can cut a deal with the opposition and yet retain the potential for a reelection. It won't be read as a sign of weakness; instead, the nation will heave a sigh of relief over the prospect of peaceful transfer of power. Time for Hasina is running out to seize the initiative positively rather than negatively from the opposition's hands. It is in her, more than in Khaleda Zia, to be a game changer with a single act of generosity that can buttress her chances at the polls as well. If she bends over backwards, she will be in a better position to play her continuation of development card during her campaign for reelection. That way, the positives of her achievements might swamp the negatives.

Remember, BNP-led 18 party alliance has nearly as much of a hardcore vote bank as the AL-led Mohajote—inside of 40% of the electorate or thereabouts. In the event that 40% do not go to polls along with a considerable percentage of undecided voters, a respectable voter turnout is ruled out. What happens then to the legitimacy of the government born of a one-sided election, let alone a plethora of questions over the credibility of the polls?

To my mind, if the AL is serious in pooling the floating voters who decide the fate of elections it will have to send conducive signals to them about a well-participated broad-based election. And who make up a sizeable swathe of floating voters; evidently, the new generation of voters who have acquired eligibility during the last five years to be on the electoral roll. The party which succeeds in reaching out to them will come out as the winner, something both parties need to bear in mind with great amount of sensibility.

If you put the same ingredients into the mixture it would turn out similar results all the time. So, we have to put new elements into the grinder so as to produce a new result—a solution.

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# Darn it Damascus!

## HUMOROUSLY YOURS



NAVEED MAHBUB

AND now, the winners of the World's Most Livable Cities sweepstakes—Aussies and Canucks!!

Damascus also steals the spotlight—again! It's on top of the inverted list. Dhaka is a distant second, and not in the least envious.

All cities are equal. Some are more equal than others, apparently, on the basis of stability, healthcare, culture and environment, education and infrastructure.

Dhaka now sees an additional influx of foreign consultants to guide it with their infinite wisdom. Don't forget the increased hardship allowances as a result of Dhaka's ranking.

Karachi is more stable than Dhaka, as rated by drones. Dhaka's healthcare report gets hospitals in Singapore and Thailand to do high fives. Now, even Dhaka-ites with moles on their behinds will hop on to air ambulances.

Don't forget you can get every conceivable prescription medication over the counter. The 12 year old apprentice behind the counter can even prescribe the right medication for you. Before going home, guess who load up their suitcases with prescription antibiotics and antidepressants?

As for culture, not really Dhaka's fault that Shilpakala, the Fine Arts Institute or Ramna Botomool gets lost in translation.

Men scratching their groins with poetic oblivion? That is very much a part of the culture here, not a gesture of sexual innuendo. And it's because of the heat (another factor for Dhaka's ranking), for which countries not signing the global warming prevention treaty for 'lack of data,' but had 'sufficient data' on WMDs in Iraq, need to take some credit.

What if you send the Buckingham Palace butler to rate a culture where belching is a complement to the chef?

Education. That's why a flood of newspaper ads with smiling graduates beckoning our kids to strange sounding universities abroad. Wonder how I got my 2 US patents with a predominantly Bangladeshi education.

Finally, infrastructure. Hey, who do you think is keeping the World Bank in business?

Now, when did the surveyors come to Dhaka (if at all)? Was it during hartal, flood, load shedding, conjunctivitis outbreak and the airport ground handlers' strike all on the same day? If they came during Eid, Dhaka might have beaten Melbourne. Now, that's Eid-ul-Fitr. Come during Eid-ul-Adha, Dhaka would be splitting hairs with Damascus.

The data in the report are in absolute terms. For apples and apples comparison, Statistics 101 states that data needs to be normalised. So, Dhaka, age 41, needs to be compared with Melbourne when it was 41. Otherwise, it's like Aishwarya Rai and Shuchitra Sen competing for the Miss Universe title. Say what? Dhaka is older than today's Melbourne at 400? No, no—that's Dacca, not Dhaka, ok?

Dhaka-ites are in unison when complaining about the city. Let someone from the Land of Hezbollah migrate to the bankrupt Detroit (where if you get a flat tire, you just drive on for dear life) and then come to Dhaka to complain about the crowded bazaars, spit, stench and indifferent waiters, you see the same Dhaka-ites are again in unison, this time, to furiously defend this very city.

Perhaps Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto's words, after executing the Pearl Harbor raid, also applies to Dhaka: "We may have just woken up a giant."

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# Negotiation on Gibraltar: Cannot brook delay

LUIS TEJADA



Ambassador Luis Tejada

THIS summer, Bangladeshi readers have been able to follow in the international press and in some local newspapers different news about an acute disagreement between two EU countries, United Kingdom and Spain. The British government has even announced legal actions against Spain on the accounts of the strict controls that our government has been exercising at the border of a territory, Gibraltar.

Gibraltar is a peninsula in the most southern tip of Spain, very small, but with historical, commercial and military importance. Its position is strategic from the military point of view, as it allows the control of the access by sea to the Mediterranean from the Atlantic Ocean. It is formed by a natural fortress—the Rock—with a surface area of just 4.8 sq.km linked to the rest of the Iberian Peninsula by an isthmus approximately 1.6 km long.

The dispute over Gibraltar is a vestige of dynastic conflicts of the Ancien Regime. The fortified town was occupied on August 4, 1704, during the War of Spanish Succession. Queen Anne of Great Britain obtained the cession of Gibraltar from the Spanish Crown under the Treaty of Utrecht of July 13, 1713. Under this treaty, only the town and castle of Gibraltar were ceded, together with the port, fortifications and forts thereunto belonging. Spain did not yield the isthmus, the territorial waters or the air space above. Although the isthmus was not ceded by Spain, more than half of it was illegally seized by the British during the 19th Century.

In 1946, the United Kingdom, pursuant to the United Nations Charter, registered Gibraltar as a "non-self-governing territory." As from 1963, Gibraltar has been included in the list of territories subject to decolonisation under the Committee of 24.

The UN's call to solve the dispute by bilateral negotiations gave way to the Declarations of Lisbon (1980) and Brussels (1984), in which

Spain and the United Kingdom set the foundations of a new negotiating process directed at solving all the differences, including the issues of sovereignty. From the end of the negotiations on co-sovereignty in 2001-2002, the United Kingdom has refused to continue participating in the Brussels Process.

In 2004, a Forum of Dialogue on Gibraltar was launched as an initiative aimed at favouring technical cooperation to the benefit of the inhabitants of both sides of the border. It was blocked due to the insistence by Gibraltar on its pretended sovereignty, something that absolutely



lacks any legal basis whatsoever.

From the beginning of its tenure, the present Spanish government has requested the United Kingdom to re-commence the bilateral negotiations on sovereignty, which has been interrupted for far too many years.

But the issues with United Kingdom do not refer only to sovereignty. The inhabitants of Gibraltar have traditionally profited from their particular status to indulge in several forms of illegal activities. Only this summer, the authorities

of the Rock have decided to drop 70 concrete blocks into the Bay of Gibraltar. This is just an attempt to underline their pretended sovereignty. But the dumping of concrete blocks also constitutes a violation of the most basic rules of environmental conservation. Furthermore, these waters account for 25% of the activity of local fishermen, who have been fishing there for many years.

Another example of the lack of respect for the basic environmental rules by the inhabitants of Gibraltar is the bunkering or refuelling of ships at sea, a practice that risks releasing toxic discharges into the sea.

On the other hand, smuggling has been a traditional activity of many Gibraltar inhabitants, profiting from the fact that it is not part of the EU customs territory, and that its taxes, as VAT and excise duties, are not applied there. For example, seizures of illegal cigarettes from the colony increased by 213% between 2010 and 2012. This is why it is absolutely mandatory for our government, under the EU legislation, and specially the Schengen Borders Code, to control the traffic passing through the gate between Gibraltar and Spain.

Gibraltar operates as a tax-haven, especially regarding corporate tax. For a population of 30,000 people, Gibraltar has 21,770 registered companies, of which only 10% pay taxes. "Shell" companies located in Gibraltar conceal the true ownership of over 3,000 properties in Spain. There are 6,700 Gibraltarians whose actual, but not fiscal, homes are in Spain, and who benefit from our social services and infrastructure without contributing to them by paying taxes. Spain has complained on numerous occasions to the EU, the G-20 and G-8 about the tax-haven condition of Gibraltar. We are also implementing measures at national level to address tax fraud.

These are not the only examples of violations of international laws and obligations by Gibraltar, but give a good idea of the type of difficulties that arise from the present status and the attitude of its authorities. Obviously, they do not show much interest in altering a position so advantageous for their income, even if a good deal of it is obtained by illicit means. This is why the negotiation between Spain and the United Kingdom should not be further delayed.

The writer is Ambassador of Spain to Bangladesh.

## LEST WE FORGET

# Dr. Muhammad Ibrahim: A great reformer

MUHAMMAD ABDUL MAZID

NATIONAL Professor Mohammad Ibrahim, a successful physician, gifted teacher, talented socio-health organiser and a great reformer, was born on December 31, 1911 in Murshidabad, India. The nation is commemorating his 24th death anniversary today with profound respect and regard. He spent the major part of his life in the Government Health Services in different key positions after getting the MB degree in 1938 and becoming MRCP in 1949. He was made an FCCP in 1950. He was Chairman of the Medical Research Council and of the Council of Scientific Research in Pakistan.



Dr. Muhammad Ibrahim

Dr. Ibrahim was the first to think of diabetic care in the country. He realised that diabetes was a disease where not only the doctors but patients should be involved in the process of diabetic care. He organised a group of social workers, philanthropists and professionals who helped him establish the Diabetic Association of Pakistan (now Diabetic Association of Bangladesh) on February 28, 1956. He also founded Diabetic Association in Karachi and Lahore, West Pakistan, in 1964.

Dr. Ibrahim's motto was 'no diabetic patient should die untreated, unfed or unemployed even if she/he is poor.' So, he gave primary care to the diabetic patients free of cost, irrespective of their socio-economic, racial or religious status.

He established the diabetes health-care and research institute complex, Bangladesh Institute of Research and Rehabilitation in Diabetes, Endocrine and Metabolic Disorders (BIRDEM), at Dhaka in 1980. It was the first such centre in Asia.

His humility was legendary and most genuine. Deep empathy and compassion were characteristics of his dealing with his patients, especially those who were poor and in pain. He also motivated other doctors to serve the patients with empathy. He included social welfare, health education, nutritional education and rehabilitation in the diabetes healthcare delivery system. He believed that an institution achieves its goal and excellence not by bricks and mortars; nor by machine or metals but by its human resources.

For over three decades, Dr. Ibrahim succeeded in generating awareness about diabetes through free-of-cost quality services, health education, and motivation. He also established the Bangladesh Institute of Research and Training for Applied Nutrition (BIRTAN) and Rehabilitation and Vocational Training Centre (RVTC) in Dhaka to develop low-cost nutrition, and to give vocational training to poor and unemployed diabetics.

He took keen interest in family planning. His involvement began as a founder member of the Family Planning Association of Bangladesh in the mid-fifties. He made his real impact as adviser to the president, with the rank of minister in-charge of the Ministry of Health and Population Control, in the mid-1970's. He was instrumental in formulating the population control policy of the government for the first time and introduced the National Population Council.

Following the guidance and philosophy of its founder, the Diabetic Association of Bangladesh has upheld its vision that no diabetic should die untreated, unemployed or unfed even if poor and all people shall be provided with affordable health care service.

Dr. Mohammad Ibrahim died on September 6, 1989. His death anniversary is observed as Diabetic Service Day (Sheba Dibash) to endorse and honour his great contribution to socio-medicare services.

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**ACROSS**

- Aries
- Incite
- Satanic
- Carte lead-in
- Perjurer
- Unruly hair
- Acquire, as an inheritance
- Sicilian spouter
- Hankers
- Coffee shop container
- Gorged on
- Set, as the sun
- Adolescence
- Bashful
- Carnival city
- Therefore
- Allow
- Sentry's command
- Solidify
- Snapshots
- Ball VIP
- Enter
- Whammy

**40** Author Fleming

**41** Applications

**45** Blunder

**48** Get sick (with)

**50** Touch

**51** One

**52** Actor Stephen

**53** Compassion

**54** Hospital furniture

**55** Kreskin's claim

**DOWN**

- Risque
- vera
- One of the Three Bears
- Block serving as a base
- Sham-pooper's Step 2
- Feedbag morsel
- Deluge's opposite
- Make corrections
- Cistern
- Hostel
- Meadow
- Poets' Muse
- Orbison or
- Exam format
- Determination
- Memo-randum
- Safe-cracker
- Black-and-white snack
- Trade-marked tangelo
- Dr. Ruth's topic
- Pride member
- Group of six
- Bake sale grp.
- Assails
- Swell
- Hot and sticky
- Clinton's veep
- Farm females
- Break suddenly
- Space
- Kimono sash
- No longer stylish
- Individual

**Solution time: 25 mins.**

Yesterdays answer 7-19

**CRYPTOQUIP**

40VP CFNM CPOC YOZLM LZHQ  
 IW WZFMAYB QPHCHLZOQPMZT  
 IMMC, CPMB TPOZM O LMAJFAM  
 O N M Z O - K M Z F M

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: OUTFITS BEING DESIGNED SPECIFICALLY FOR MEN AND BOYS REHEARSING THINGS: MALE PRACTICE SUITS.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: C equals T

**QUOTABLE Quotes**

"Great minds discuss ideas. Average minds discuss events. Small minds discuss people."

**Eleanor Roosevelt**

**HENRY** by Don Trachte

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