

Howling wind and glaring light

PLEASURE IS ALL MINE



SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

Sheikh Hasina has got an opportunity to serve the people by carefully avoiding controversies and pitfalls that marked much of her previous tenure. Both in content and style governance has to change, underpinned by an agenda to win the hearts of minds of the people.



on her but she is being seen through a critical lens. On January 14, the EU parliament in six separate resolutions signed up to by six groups comprising 62 members representing 10 important countries voiced no-confidence in the January 5 election in Bangladesh. They urged both major parties to move towards transparent, participative and credible election through dialogue envisaging mutually agreeable formulation of poll time government.

Almost simultaneously, we have seen three US Senate foreign relations committee hearings on "Prospects for Democratic Reconciliation and Workers' Rights in Bangladesh."

Nisha Desai Biswal, US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, berated the government for holding a deeply

flawed election and voiced concern over continuing extrajudicial killings and disappearances. She also hinted at curtailment of aid that benefits Bangladeshi politicians, redirecting the resource to address workers' rights and other concerns.

There were four common denominators between two sets of deliberations at the apex of the western hemisphere: Call for a space to dissenting views, use of the space responsibly, denunciation of violence as a political tool and its use against minority communities, and the focus on workers rights and safety in the sequel to Tazreen and Rana Plaza factory disasters.

As for workers' rights, the bottom line is spelt out in a Times report saying that



Bangladesh is morphing into an era of labour reform.

Yet there is a significant difference in one vital respect between EU and US Senate committee positions. The EU parliament laid emphasis on prohibition of fundamentalist Jamaat-e-Islam as a political party and BNP's cutting of links with JI. The US has not spelt out its position on Jamaat but in matters of war crimes trial the EU takes a softer line than the USA, but both have been identically opposed to capital punishment and insistent on trials according to 'international standards.' The 'standardisation' is more notional than based on objective analysis of various war crimes trial.

The world's spotlight is on Sheikh Hasina in a more intense sense than ever before. She has

hit the road running as though in the eye of a storm stalking her. The new-found status quo is blissfully free of threats and ultimatums translating into forced blockades and hartals that the people have had enough of to be hating from the core of their heart. The people picking up their lives thrown into disarray have no intention of stomaching 'sacrifice' to put one or the other party in power. They have slapped a message home to incorrigible politicians that power should be obtained only through ballot, not through any form of coercion.

Sheikh Hasina has got an opportunity to serve the people by carefully avoiding controversies and pitfalls that marked much of her previous tenure. Both in content and style governance has to change, underpinned by an agenda to win the hearts of minds of the people. As long as people are fed, earn their living, have security of life and property, minimum healthcare, power supply, educational institutions running, do not have to grease palms to get any service, they will be the sentinels against violent politics. The days of spontaneous popular movement against a constitutional government, be it only technically contrived, are practically over. Only if the AL government commits blunder that the erstwhile opposition can cash in on.

A cause that gels people into a groundswell of energy cannot be simply drummed up by a bad intent or means employed by any vested quarters. Just as people don't shed blood driven by an imposed motive to topple a government and seat somebody in power, they are (particularly the young generation) wary also of dividing the nation into pro and anti-liberation camps, a polarisation that does not fit in with a digital era of all round fast-track development.

No pun intended, just stating a possibility for Sheikh Hasina to bounce back -- she may imagine herself as a potential candidate for Forbes magazine's placing as one of the 10 or 100 most powerful or influential women in the world should she pull off success culminating in a fresh participative, literally midterm, election through a healthy sustainable bipartisan consensus.

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Eat, Love, Pray

HUMOROUSLY YOURS



NAVEED MAHBUB

HAPPY Valentines! Today, happy are the flower shops, the restaurants and Hallmark (the card company, not the group which has already made a lifelong killing). Gentlemen of all ages, (re)kindle the love and take her (or him) out for a good meal. That won't be difficult as there are

practically just three types of establishments in town -- restaurants, clothing stores and pharmacies. Makes sense. We eat, which makes us sick and expand our guts, which in turn makes us buy new clothes and medicine.

But let's forget that for now. *Eat, Love & Pray* that you have money to pay the bill.

Eating out is not cheap. And so when I get a call from the popular restaurant *The Village* to do a comedy show in return for a dinner for two on the house, I jump for it. After all, I am a starving artist who is more than willing to work for food. Besides, it's a great bargain, as the restaurant may be called *The Village*, but they sure charge like *The City* (could be a tag line for Visa cards from The City Bank). After all, those who go there, the *Village People*, don't live at the YMCA.

But the wife stares me down, "You cheap..."

There goes my thought for food. I can choose to be right, but I choose to be happy. So, I make reservations at a restaurant, and a fancy one too. But the fancier the restaurant, the more expensive the food, the slower the



NUREN SHARARA SAIF

SAINT Valentine's Day, also known as Valentine's Day or the Feast of Saint Valentine, is observed on February 14 each year in many countries around the world.

In Bangladesh, Valentine's Day celebrations started in the 1990s, but it has not encountered any resistance so far from any front. Meanwhile, it has gained huge popularity among the young generation. What are the dynamics of Valentine's Day celebrations in Bangladesh?

Thousands of couples attend different kinds of programmes to celebrate Valentine's Day, especially in the Dhaka University (DU) campus where they are able to express their feelings of love to their partners in an atmosphere of fun, frolic and festivities. Famous outlets like Archie's and Hallmark sell cards and gifts items on discount on the day. To mark the day, many hotels, cafes and restaurants offer different types of attractive gifts for couples to make it as memorable as possible for them.

However, there are many conservatives and people with a different perspective who do not like the celebration of Valentine's Day in Bangladesh. But the day does have a positive significance in the lives of the general population, and there is nothing indecent about it.

Love encompasses joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, and pride. When a couple is involved in a relationship it does not mean that they will get sidetracked or misguided from the good way of leading life. It is possible for two people to learn bad things and spoil their lives even if they are involved in a relationship but, at the same time, it is also true that these couples might have good influence on each other and might

start excelling in their lives because of that.

Valentine's Day is a day for couples who have or already had come under the good influence of their partner and are wholeheartedly willing to carry on with their relationship with utmost purity forever. Love often changes the life of many, in good or bad ways. But if the love is true and pure, and if it is strong enough to overcome any sort of obstacle and hurdle, then Valentine's Day welcomes them to celebrate the day to show respect towards their love.

The date, February 14, holds a much more significant meaning for Bangladesh. Student and cultural organisations of Dhaka observe it as the day marking the first instance of protest against Ershad's autocratic regime.

On February 14, 1983, the deposed military dictator Ershad's government brutally cracked down on students protesting against its new education policy. The movement, led by Chatra Sangram Parishad, demanded withdrawal of the education policy, release of political prisoners and resumption of fundamental democratic rights. A few students lost their lives on that day. Students' organizations hold rallies on Dhaka University campus to mark the day.

The student movement of the 1990s is a crucial part of our post-independence history. The present democratic environment is a fruit of those sacrifices. And thus this day is especially significant since it salutes and shows respect to those without whom the present democratic environment may not have been achieved.

The writer appeared in the A-level examination.

MOHAMMAD SHAHIDULLAH

WHAT does love do to your brain chemicals? When do you know if you fancy someone? With an irresistible cocktail of chemicals, our brain entices us to fall in love. We believe we are choosing a partner, but we may merely be happy victims of nature's lovely plan.

Looking into a lover's eyes is like looking into a fire Thanks to shot of adrenaline by your brain, your palms sweat, your breathing gets shallow, your skin feels hot, and your pupils dilate. Your amygdala, the centre of the brain that processes emotion, blazes with activity. At the same time you produce dopamine, a 'feel good' neurotransmitter that is associated with passion and addiction, and oxytocin is another neurotransmitter related to strong bonding. All of these processes occur within 90 seconds to 4 minutes.

Although people experience love differently, the biological sequences are unique. Neuroscientists dissected all of these processes in love and divided them into three stages: lust, attraction and attachment. Lust is the first stage of love, which is driven by sex hormones testosterone and estrogen in men and women, respectively.

In the attraction stage, neurotransmitter adrenaline, dopamine and serotonin are released. Adrenaline has a charming effect when we unexpectedly bump into a new love. We start to sweat, the heart races and mouth goes dry. The dopamine neurotransmitter in the brain affects various organs. Have you ever noticed that you sweat more in the early stages of love? Or the sky seems bluer? Dopamine, in the context of arousal, is partly responsible for that. As a consequence of dopamine being released, mood and emotions are also influenced, leading to feelings of excitement and happiness. It has the same effect on the brain as cocaine. Serotonin is one of love's most important chemicals, and one that may actually make us temporarily

insane, and let your new lover keep popping up in your thoughts.

The last stage is attachment. People couldn't possibly stay in the attraction stage forever; otherwise they would never get any work done! Attachment is a longer lasting commitment and is the bond that keeps couples together when they go on to have children. In this stage, two important neurochemicals, oxytocin and vasopressin, are released by the nervous system. Oxytocin is the powerful neurotransmitter released by men and women during orgasm. It probably deepens the feelings of attachment and makes couples feel much closer to one another after they have had sex. Oxytocin also seems to help cement the strong bond between mum and baby, and is also released during birth. It has been shown by a Japanese professor Dr. Higashida that if you block the natural release of oxytocin in the brain of rats or mice, they reject their own young. Oxytocin can be released through physical touch, like stroking, cuddling, hugging and kissing. Vasopressin is another important neurochemical in the long-term commitment stage and is released after sex. Vasopressin works with your kidneys to control thirst, but its potential role has been discovered in the long-term relationship.

In addition to these neurotransmitters, endorphin is another neurochemical that is released during sex. It provides the 'feel-good, calming' effect that one feels immediately after orgasm. Find out how the three stages can feel even stronger for teenagers experiencing their first love.

Love is the ultimate positive reinforcement. Love is powerful motivator for being good. The affective part of the goodwill is no poor sister to the rational. It can be an effective guide to good action.

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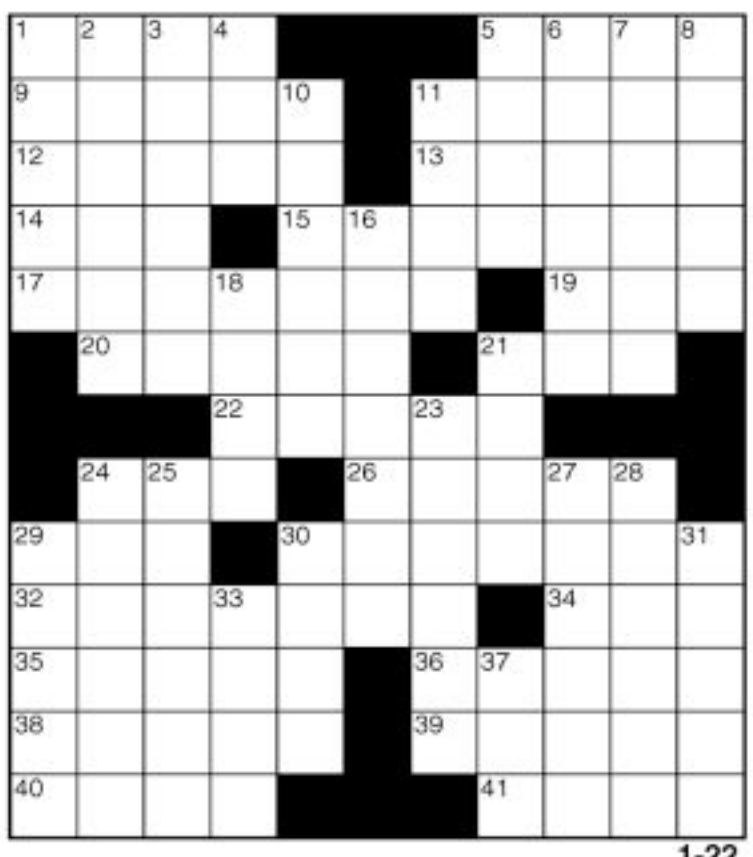
CROSSWORD by Thomas Joseph

ACROSS

- Valiant one
- Bottle topper
- Outdo
- Oscar winner Sophia
- Anger
- Make blank
- Young fellow
- Sandal feature
- Reception future
- Building wing
- Prepare for a game
- Peculiar
- Swift
- Gift from Santa
- Figure of speech
- Silent
- Mine, of a sort
- Pirate's place
- I, in Berlin
- Majestic
- Vicuna's cousin
- San Antonio landmark
- Lucifer
- Misplace

DOWN

- Instructional
- Spell-bound
- Library patron
- Unconscious
- Succotash half
- Make speeches
- Found a new owner for
- Prepare to propose
- Fear
- Wolfish look
- Syrinx
- a one (none)
- Norse god
- Worthy aims
- Elvis' birthplace
- Last letters
- Morphine, for one
- New Brunswick tribe
- Fable finish
- Capital on a fjord
- Express gratitude to
- Handle
- Young fellow



CRYPTOQUOTE

HO HL SDDLHGCM OD LODTOM OUM QHXIYHOU B QHCCHDX VBFOL BXI LOHCC GM MXOHTMCN KXMIKFBOML - BCMF GDKTXM

Yesterday's CRYPTOQUOTE:

If people turn to look at you in the street, you are not well dressed.

- Beau Brummel

Yesterday's answer



A XYDLBAAXR is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

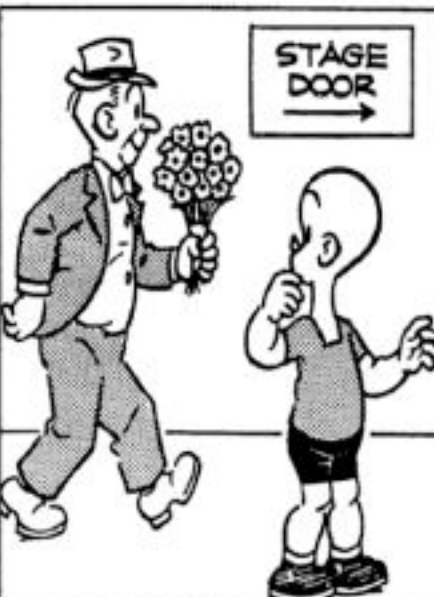
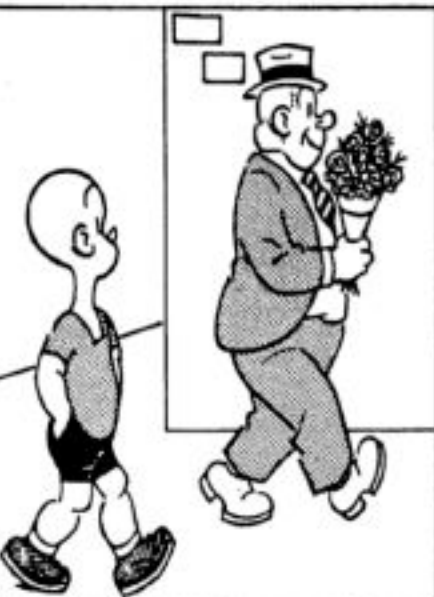
BEETLE BAILEY

by Mort Walker



HENRY

by Don Trachte



QUOTABLE Quote

Love is our true destiny. We do not find the meaning of life by ourselves alone - we find it with another.

Thomas Merton