

From an embryo to a giant

PLEASURE IS ALL MINE



SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

We come by reports that the US has urged practicing of democratic norms in Bangladesh, giving space to NGOs and meeting the deficit on workers' rights. The April meeting in the US on GSP restoration is looked upon as a potential game changer of sorts.

CRICKET crazy Bangladesh is feasting on Asia Cup tournament. Dhaka is basking in the sunshine of hosting the best of Asian cricketers accompanied by an array of commentators from almost all participating countries. The T-20 World Cup being in prospect on our soil, the cricketing fervour in Dhaka is extremely high pitched at the moment, not excluding the Bangladeshi Diaspora.

The level of consciousness of the goings-on among cricket lovers is so high that even the minutest detail of the proceedings is quickly unzipped under the lens. For instance, Pakistani commentator Ramiz Raja, at a relatively early stage of the Bangladesh-India match, clearly tossed up an off-putting bouncer zooming in on the TV watchers, if you like. Whilst Bangladesh was building its innings at 4.58 run rate per over he spotted the projected score on the TV screen which read 229 and prematurely pronounced it was 'below par.' This went down as a pinprick to discerning listeners: How could he have been so judgmental about the score before seeing to the end of the inning?

Bangladesh put up a fighting score and were Shakibul Hasan not laid off under a three-match ban for an odd gesticulation before cameraman after his hurtful dismissal in the last ODI against Sri Lanka, the record third wicket partnership in the Indian chase might well have been broken in good time before it snatched the game away from Bangladesh. Shakib's match-winning versatility should have weighed in with the BCB to have played him in the important opening encounter with India. The monetary penalty could be raised instead of the outright three-match ban slapped

on him. National interest should have overridden exaggerated notion of disciplining any momentarily errant cricketer of Shakib's stature. Tamim has been slightly out of touch but his inclusion too might have been a value addition.

The beamers from the Indian side, one of which hurt Mushfique was an avoidable intimidation. But thanks to Bangladeshi captain's grit, he eventually scripted a well-made century.

Move on to the Hindi film Gunde which stirred up a controversy playing by the narrative of a third Indo-Pak war in 1971 which ended 'on a surrender of 90,000 Pakistani soldiers, the biggest capitulation since the World War II.' And on the footnote you have the consequential and coincidental birth of Bangladesh as a new country, so it appears. That Bangladeshi waged a Liberation War against the Pakistanis after they committed genocide upon them on March 25, 1971 was underplayed vis-à-vis the highlight on one crore Bangladeshis finding refuge in India. Of course, the Indian help to our refugees is profoundly remembered, so is their soldiers' blood mixing with our soil and India's debt war preparedness under Indo-Soviet umbrella with the Mukti Bahini robustly joining in. Bangladeshis are rightly proud of and highly sensitive about the sanctity of the Liberation War in which countless sacrifices were made by our compatriots to accomplish their goal of freedom.

Yash Raj, the filmmaker in a post-reaction press conference said in so many words that he had taken a fictional liberty and that no umbrage was intended to Bangladesh. If, however, its sensibilities have been hurt, he apologised for it. We wonder how the movie passed the Indian censorship criteria as it contained a slant and distortion of history, not by just Bangladeshi or Indian standards but also universally accepted norms of historical presentations.

One can take artistic licence in the creative sense but not be artfully licentious with values held dear to the hearts and minds of a people next door to India.

Last Wednesday, Indian newspaper

Anandabazar published a report titled 'Delhi's success, US softens a little towards Bangladesh.' Commenting that New Delhi is carefully observing the whole issue, the report points out that on publication of Garry Bass-authored book titled *The Blood Telegram*, the US' anti-Bangladesh Liberation War role in 1971 has come to the fore. In the context of South Asia whether US has really marked a departure from the 'Nixon policy' is what South Block is trying to gauge in the first place.

Nixon, in an interview with David Frost, admitted to his many mistakes, one of which was, in his words, ignoring the despatches from the then US envoy in Dhaka which faithfully portrayed the ground reality in Bangladesh.

At any rate, mixed signals about Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Shahidul Huq's mission to Washington have been received in Dhaka. We hear of Assistant Secretary of US South and Mid Asia Dept Nisha Desai Biswal's statement in the Senate stressing expansion in Bangla-US economic relations and the need for withdrawing 'negative attitude' towards Awami League. We also come by reports that the US has urged practicing of democratic norms in Bangladesh, giving space to NGOs and meeting the deficit on workers' rights. The April meeting in the US on GSP restoration is looked upon as a potential game changer of sorts.

One final point, Obama seems laid back in foreign policy pursuits, with Kerry leading the show. Mozena is, however, on a dynamic mode in Bangladesh visiting different parts of the country and getting red carpet reception in madrasas. Hilary Clinton, the next presidential probable, by some reckoning is all too known for her views on Bangladesh.

Indian Lok Sabha election is round the corner so that things are likely to be pretty much in a state of suspended animation between Dhaka and New Delhi in the foreseeable future.

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Bath Island

HUMOROUSLY YOURS



NAVEED MAHBUB

IF it is a 'wash', then why are we surprised to see a guy in a towel? But you know you are no ordinary mortal if the camera not only trains on you at this instant, but you also have to pay to

scratch parts of your own body. Wonder what the BCB would have done to Michael Jackson...

Shakib Al Hasan. Crotch behind. Good thing there were no gestures on the field, else he would have been a suspect for spot fixing.

Maybe it was another version of the marketing campaign 'scratch & win' through which Shakib was simply hoping to win the match. The next marketing campaign -- 'scratch and win a chance to scratch'...

Makers of intimate apparels, please don't try to grab (no pun intended) Shakib to be your brand ambassador, because Dhaka City Corporation North (DCCN) may have already beaten you to the punch. His towel clad gesture may simply have been an invitation to join the public baths -- the beautification objects on road dividers made of bathroom tiles.

The flak for using bathroom tiles in the name of beautification is unfair. Since we relieve ourselves everywhere in public (including road dividers), it is absolutely justified to use bathroom tiles as decoration for 'P-20.'

Or maybe these public baths are there to remind us of more Bangla Washes to come.

Ah! Public baths. The Ancient Romans would surely have migrated in droves...

Here's another (morbid) theory. The beautification objects (for lack of a better term) reminds us of high end graves. Perhaps, this is DCCN's attempt to remind us of fatal consequences while rash driving or jay walking.

No matter what the artistic motives, the construction work is surely fueled by a brickfield bonanza. Because the Parliament premises is also getting a facelift as a wall around the landmark is scheduled to go up. The classic case of 'keeping out' and 'keeping in.' It is necessary for the protection and security of the inhabitants -- outside.

But many have echoed Ronald Reagan's words, "Tear down this wall!" as it has become the Great Wall of Chae Naa (don't want).

A middle ground has been reached to give the look (and protection) of a zoo (I would like to say pun intended, but I do value my freedom). So, a fence is going up. Now won't that attract the BSF?

We sure have a method in our madness. It is 'crystal' clear that the word 'method,' has 'meth' in it, followed by 'od' (over dose). And if this is ammo to once again select Dhaka as the worst city to live in, I say, excellent! Please visit Dhaka especially during the games. Your bragging rights: "I survived the worst city on the planet" (T-shirts sold separately).

Where was I? Oh yes, Shakib and his moves. Momentary lapse? Absolutely. For him, every action has an instant reaction. As the nation reacted, so did he, as a gentleman, by apologising. Yes, he has been the butt of jokes, but, contrary to conventional wisdom, we joke only about those who we care about.

Meanwhile Shakib, next time, just rub your eyes.

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Free up the Parliament building and history

ADNAN MORSHED

FIFTY years ago, on October 6, 1964, the construction of architect Louis Kahn's Parliament building began in the then East Pakistan. It is unfortunate that instead of celebrating the 50th anniversary of this universally acclaimed building, the government of Bangladesh has decided to barricade it in the name of security.

Though security is important, it cannot suffocate democracy. Lest we forget, *demos* means people, *kratos* power. Democracy is people's power. Around the world, democratic values in public buildings are suggested or ensured by providing public accessibility, at least visually if not physically. An 8-foot tall metal fence all around the Parliament building could only represent a misunderstanding of democracy, paranoia of perceived security threat, and arguably a legal breach.

The legal community has recently pointed out in Article 24 of the Constitution that the state must protect buildings of historic significance from unlawful encroachment, disfigurement, and aesthetic compromise. Furthermore, "the open spaces around the Parliament building are designated for protection under the Protection of Open Spaces and Wetland Act, 2000." A metal barrier that cordons off the Parliament building from the city, changing its visual and experiential character, offers a compelling legal case in which the state itself violates the Constitution.

It is unfortunate, though, that the public has to invoke legal parameters to protect a building that embodies the democratic ideals of the nation. As much as it houses the assembly of the country's lawmakers, it is a virtual museum of the history of Bangladesh's emergence as a nation state. Why does the government not understand this?

Once he had received the commission to plan the Parliament complex, Kahn first visited East Pakistan in the early March of 1963. Five years earlier, the commander-in-chief of the Pakistani army, Ayub Khan, took control of the government after a military coup and imposed martial law. In 1960, the military man was "elected" to a five-year presidency, while the country was still under martial law. Pakistan's new constitution of 1962 warranted that a "democratic" election be held in 1965.

Aware of the political and economic disparity between the two wings of Pakistan and concerned about his own re-election bid, Ayub Khan came up with the political ploy to address the grievance of the Bangalis, already agitated with the language movement and demands for political balance between the two wings of the country.

Thus, the idea of the "Second Capital" was

born (Islamabad was the "First Capital"). The military man believed that a grand public building in the capital of East Pakistan would provide the Bangalis with a sense of power and they would repay him with their votes in the forthcoming election. That this building was Ayub Khan's mere political stunt is evidenced by the fact that he doesn't even mention it in his self-congratulatory autobiography, *Friends Not Masters* (1967).

The political drama that ensued from then on explains how the Parliament building, first conceived as a "bribe" for the Bangalis, gradually took on a whole new identity as a symbol of the people's struggle for self-rule. With rudimentary construction tools and bamboo scaffolding tied with crude jute ropes, *lungi-saree*-clad construction workers erected a monumental government building, slowly but steadily portraying the broader resilience of a nation revolting against economic and social injustice.

Meanwhile, Kahn was also invited to design a new Parliament complex for Islamabad (Pakistan's new capital after Karachi, 1947-1958, and Rawalpindi, 1958-1962). The government bureaucracy there demanded that Kahn articulate a clear "Islamic" visual language for the Parliament. Dismayed by such unjustified interference, Kahn gave up on the project (eventually another American architect, Edward Durrell Stone, designed a rather uninspiring building). There was also a lingering rumour that Kahn's Jewish background was not exactly a nice fit for a military junta, mired in the politics of Islamic identity as an ideological bulwark against a perceived Indian threat.

In East Pakistan, however, political Islam did not drive the nationalist movement. Kahn could develop his design for the Parliament building without demands for domes and pointed arches, conventionally thought of as Islamic building motifs. Guided by the Yale-trained local Bangali architect Mazharul Islam (who was instrumental in bringing the American architect to East Pakistan), Kahn searched for inspirations from the Bengal delta, its rivers, its sweeping green, its expansive landscape, its raised homesteads, and its land-water geography. Soon after he had first arrived in Dhaka, he went on a boat ride on the Buriganga River and sketched river scenes to understand life in this tropical land. He didn't have any problems in blending Bengali vernacular impressions with those of classical Greco-Roman and Egyptian architecture that he had studied thoroughly during the 1950s.

Kahn was not the kind of architect who would belabour a national or ethnic identity in his design for public buildings. In East Pakistan, though, as his design slowly took physical shape

and concrete walls rose (according to some sources, typically five feet a day, hence the improvised design element of the marble bands that adorn the Parliament's concrete walls), the agitated Bangalis began to envision in Kahn's edifice the kind of nationalist myths that seem necessary to galvanise a nation. If the Shaheed Minar symbolised the language movement during the 1950s, the Parliament building portrayed the rise of the independence-minded Bangalis during the 1960s.

As the war broke out on March 25, 1971, Kahn's field office in East Pakistan quickly closed and construction work discontinued. Only a half-done mysterious building remained, yet it was a powerful reminder of the Bangalis' fight for independence. During the Liberation War, an ironic story persisted that Pakistani pilots didn't bomb the building assuming that it was a ruin!

Upon completion in the early 1980s, that "ruin" eventually became an emblem of the country, adorning Tk. 1000 notes, stamps, rickshaw decorations, advertisements, official brochures, and so on. The Parliament complex is studied in not only design schools around the world, but also departments as diverse as government, cultural studies, history, and many others. There are, of course, many other heritage buildings in Bangladesh. But this is the most iconic building that the country presents to the world stage. It draws tourists from all continents of the world. A few years ago, I led a group of forty American architects, planners, authors, journalists, and investors who came to Bangladesh to see this building. One of them, an octogenarian gentleman who was part of the design team that worked for Kahn in Philadelphia in the 1960s, broke down in tears after entering the building. That was the first time he experienced the magic of the building that he had worked on from across the world. For him, it was no less a pilgrimage.

It is hard to comprehend why the government would not understand what this building signifies for the past and future of Bangladesh. Would you not preserve a heritage building that means so much to you?

A wall around the Parliament building would be like putting history in a box, tucked away in the storage room, hidden from everyday use. In the darkness of the box, without any introspection, history can only rot. And, this certainly will not be the sign of a country that aspires to be democratic, confident, enlightened, and a middle-income country by 2021, the 50th anniversary of the country's birth.

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QUOTABLE Quote

Where we have strong emotions, we're liable to fool ourselves.

Carl Sagan

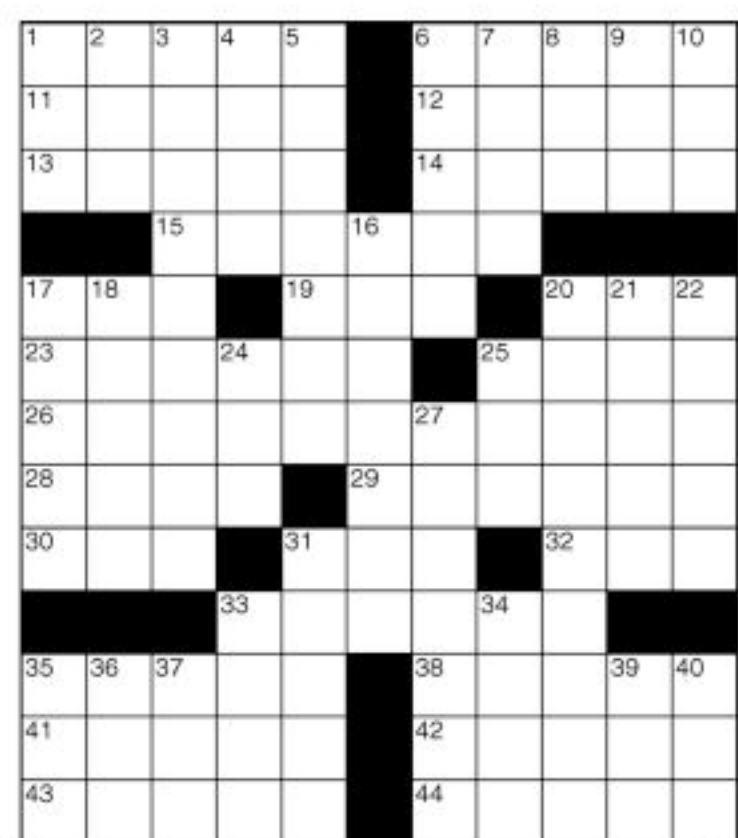
CROSSWORD by Thomas Joseph

ACROSS

- 1 Doughy ring
- 6 Milk buy
- 11 Yucca's kin
- 12 City-based
- 13 Like the Capitol
- 14 Bumbling
- 15 Blows one's top
- 17 Tech's place
- 19 Cobbler's cousin
- 20 Acquire
- 23 Take to the sky
- 25 Store come-on
- 26 Charades and the like
- 28 Team
- 29 Sidewalk stuff
- 30 Golfer Ernie
- 31 "You betchal"
- 32 Fork over
- 33 Mail-related
- 35 White's colleague
- 38 Russian range
- 41 Wise words
- 42 "Walk Away"
- 43 Locker room need
- 44 Studio stand

DOWN

- 1 Misbehaving
- 2 Before today
- 3 Grouse and pheasants
- 4 At any time
- 5 Preceded
- 6 Rather
- 7 Fancy planters
- 8 Homer's dad
- 9 Grammar category
- 10 Blasting stuff
- 16 Runs through
- 17 Oversight
- 18 Profit
- 20 Strategies
- 21 Supreme court justice
- Kagan
- 22 Irritable
- 24 Saloon supply
- 25 Rick's pianist
- 27 Hand signal
- 31 Sticks figure
- 33 Newspaper part
- 34 District
- 35 Plopped down
- 36 Bustle
- 37 Mouth part
- 39 Sheltered side
- 40 Poivre partner



CRYPTOQUOTE

CMSYKUTP GTNKB JC TBR JDT ROA ZT GTWCIT PKYTBJ OGCMJ JDBNPN JDOJ IOJTS.

- IOSJKB YMJDT'S XKBN ES.

Yesterday's CRYPTOQUOTE:

The most wasted day of all is that on which we have not laughed. - Sebastien Roch Nicolas Chamfort

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

