

# The 11th day of Boishakh

RUBANA HUIQ

DATES maybe inconsequential, but events are not. One looks forward to happy, unexpected bends on the roads to change one's life. Some of these bends end up being gratifying, some lead to disaster that ends up being too costly for comfort.

If you want to sip a cup of great coffee at North End in Bissho Road, you would have to wait patiently for a long time to take a right turn and eventually by the time you arrive at that place, you may be dead and drained from the slow commute and your great cup of coffee may just end up being a "was-it-worth-it" moment. For many in this country, we have been sipping great drinks after having traveled long distances. These distances cover our struggle for freedom, justice, and survival. Many within us have traveled distances to achieve these and many within us have also just uprooted fences to create short cuts. Not all turns are favourable and not all are disappointing. In 1420 (BS), unfortunately, we have had unexpected events that call for serious reflection and remedy.

In our very own country, some have earned democracy and some have just faked it; some have earned a living and some hijacked it; some earned identity and some assumed one. But at the end of it all, through all the long rides and short cuts, we have in reality, earned a free country, aspiring for an unquestionable democracy, credible economy and a gratifying culture. Have we achieved this so far? How is Bangladesh being perceived now?

One needs to resort to memory, logic and endorsements while analysing perceptions. How does one know that one knows? How does one form perception? If memory is a tool, then one must admit that it has prompted knowledge, and if human beings perceive and infer based on memory, then memory-cognition must be recognised as relevant in providing basis to the perceptions. If memory does form perception then, indeed, we do need to examine a particular perception that came into existence in the Bangla year 1420 that will be plaguing this country for a long time and which will not be forgiven by memory for the longest time possible.

One such perception of the nation is based on our latest memory of a big chunk of it being filled

up with the collapse of Rana Plaza. Will the *Bangla Noboborsho* 1421 be able to change that reality? How can this nation come together and change that negative perception? With April 14, Pohela Boishakh, we may be dreaming of turning a new leaf, but in order to do so, how can the blood stains on the page be remembered with a positive pain? Only ten days after we celebrate the first day of Bangla New Year, the nation will come together to mourn the loss of the 1,129 lives lost under the rubble of Rana Plaza.

While we send corporate gifts to one another, while we wear our reds and bangles, let us also come together as a nation and pause for a bit to think that all this could have been collectively spent on paying the compensation for the Rana Plaza victims.

If the entire nation can come together and sing our National Anthem and make it to the Guinness Book of Records, then why shouldn't we be able to build a collective national fund and pay tribute to the fallen? With less than 10 days from the first year anniversary of Rana Plaza collapse, perhaps the government can urge the citizens to raise a record level of donations for contribution to the fund for those who succumbed to the tragic collapse on April 24.

The World Bank's Bangladesh Development Update begins with the most positive and promising paragraph. (And let us not question the concept of 'endorsement' please as we do need reports to validate our reality.) It says that the target of reducing extreme poverty to 22.5% by 2015 is closer now as Bangladesh has sustained "healthy" GDP growth; it also commends the country for having a "sound macroeconomic management;" praises the country for having maintained "an adequate level" of official foreign exchange reserves; states that the monetary policy has "remained prudent;" and then finally moves on to analyse how political "turmoil" of 85 days of hartals has cost us a value added loss of \$1.4 billion. And yet, in spite of all that, RMG has grown by 17.7% in the first seven months. It also says: "Managing the transition in garments will be critical."

Indeed, it will be. Managing the safety standards is only one side of the game. Managing the perception of the world audience is a much larger part. While in the last one year the industry has seen a lot of revisions and has experienced worthy local and international initiatives to strengthen the sector, a

lot still remains to be one in terms of managing our image. Whether or not anyone believes it, trust me, Aminul Islam is not going to be a lame memory. Trust me, the replay of Rana Plaza footage after ten days will not be easy for the nation to handle.

No matter how many criterion we may fulfill in terms of compliance, the nagging and unsettled issue of Aminul Islam will be on the US's GSP list that will ultimately impact their GSP decision. The time to come clean is now. Instead of committee reports to represent a formal response, the sincerity of the government must surface through a cleaner investigation, which may implicate much bigger players and agencies in the process. But so be it. This is the time to tell the world that Bangladesh is truly trying to be the becoming the world's biggest apparel hub through meaningful engagements in best practices of justice, law and conscience.

The time to set things right is now. The time to see things as they are is now. If we fail to tell the difference between a snake and a rope, then the fault lies with our defective sense organ. Whatever we do on the 10th day of the Noboborsho, we can't change the 'truth' even if we think it is hybrid. Ironically, the world perception on the first year anniversary of Rana Plaza will be negatively heightened. And we can't afford to play the 1641 Cartesian "evil demon" anymore, where the "evil demon" is none other than a personification of someone who is "as clever and deceitful as he is powerful, who has directed his entire effort to misleading" people. While the "evil demons" play a very tricky part by stimulating several people's brains with multiple electrodes and engage in the process so perfectly so that the victims experience a grand dinner while no food is actually laid on the dining table, there may be greater post performance dangers involved in the process.

On the first day of the Noboborsho, we certainly don't want evil demons and we don't need magic or illusion based on which the world audience is expected to become naive realists. 1,129 have died and many are missing. We certainly don't need short cuts at this point of time. We need to take one long hard look at the road, which challenges our transparency, integrity and intent. Celebration of Noboborsho will not place us in the global map, but unfortunately April 24, the 11th day of Boishakh will.

# A lesson for Bangladeshi students

QUAMRUL HAIDER

STUDENT politics in Bangladesh has a glorious past. From the 1950s through 1970s, students had a dominant voice in the political life of the Bangalees. They fought for social justice and labour rights; they built communities and participated in the political process of the country. They fought for Bangla Bhasha in 1952, played the pivotal role in bringing down a military regime in 1969 and were at the forefront in the struggle for the independence of Bangladesh in 1971.

But that was ages ago, when student politics was mostly non-violent, inclusive and deliberative. Nowadays, though, things have changed; everything fell apart. Today's politicised students are totally ignorant and cynical about their heritage. They are disconnected from their family and social structures. Genuine political and social issues have no value to them.

Emboldened by the protection provided by members of the ruling party, the so-called students gave birth to a cancerous, self-destructive political culture. They descended into the netherworld where killing, rape, extortion and toll collection, tender and admission business, assaulting and humiliating teachers are the marching orders. In a quirky twist, they make members of the erstwhile despicable National Student Federation look like saints.

Because of their atrocious activities, there has been a precipitous decline in the quality of education in the last 20 years. Education got pushed to the back burner. Machetes and hand guns have replaced pens and pencils. The proverbial sword is now mightier than the pen. If this trend continues unabated, the country will be in real danger of producing a criminal class of politicians.

In stark contrast, students 7,900 miles away to the west are fighting not among themselves. Instead, they are fighting for the rights and safety of Bangladesh's industrial labourers.

Earlier this month, United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS), a non-profit grassroots national labour organisation of American students fighting for workers' rights worldwide, brought two female Bangladeshi RMG workers to a speak-out event at Fordham University (New York) to narrate their struggle to improve factory safety and what American students can do to help them.

With local chapters at over 150 campuses, USAS is dedicated to highlighting the plight of the RMG workers in Bangladesh and raising awareness amongst the students as to how much "blood, toil, tears and sweat" went into making the dresses they wear. It is waging a relentless campaign to expose the incongruity between the US companies in apparel business, the factory owners and the workers.

USAS believes that since students are the target consumer of the companies, their voices will have greater impact because of the stake they have with the universities. Using this "unique leverage," they are exerting pressure on their institutions to end relationship with companies like North Face, Jan Sports, Under Arms and Champion that sell collegiate apparel made in third-world sweatshops. As part of the campaign, Fordham students will hold candle-light vigil in front of the President's Office on the first anniversary of the Rana Plaza disaster.

The students are committed to continue with their effort to force the US companies to do business with RMG factories that make their apparel in the most ethical way. They are demanding that the companies sign the Bangladesh Safety Accord, a legally-binding contract between local unions and brand retailers that will transform the RMG industry from deathtraps to safe workplaces. They have already forced Fruit of the Loom, Adidas, Knights Apparel and Top of the World to sign the Accord. Yielding to their pressure, Temple Duke, U. Penn and NYU now require their licensees to sign the Accord.

For the Bangladeshi students, there's a lesson to learn from the humanitarian campaign waged by the American students for the rights of their compatriots. The Americans have redefined three "C" words -- care, compassion and conscience, which are missing in the dictionary of their Bangladeshi counterparts.

Bangladeshi students should realise that the strength of democracy lies in an active engagement of the citizenry of which they are a vital part. Hence, they should shun the destructive path of violence and move in the direction of a constructive life. Otherwise, they will become a virus seriously threatening the civic and political health of Bangladesh.

We need to take one long hard look at the road, which challenges our transparency, integrity and intent. Celebration of Noboborsho will not place us in the global map, but unfortunately April 24, the 11th day of Boishakh will.

# Impact of El Niño: How dry can 2014 be?

MD. RASHED CHOWDHURY

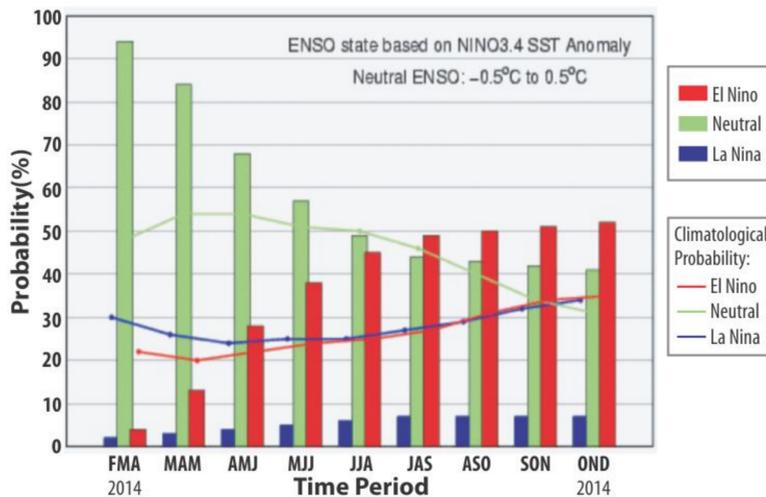
WHAT is El Niño? El Niño is a band of anomalously warm ocean water temperatures that periodically develop off the Pacific coast of South America. El Niño is Spanish for "the boy," and the capitalised term El Niño refers to the Christ Child, Jesus, because periodic warming in the Pacific near South America is usually detected around Christmas. The 'El Niño-Southern Oscillation' (ENSO) refers to variations in the temperature of the surface of the tropical eastern Pacific Ocean (El Niño and La Niña) and in air surface pressure in the tropical western Pacific. The two variations are coupled: the warm oceanic phase, El Niño, accompanies high air surface pressure in the western Pacific, while the cold phase, La Niña, accompanies low air surface pressure in the western Pacific. The mechanisms that cause the oscillation are still being studied. Developing countries dependent upon agriculture and fishing, particularly those bordering the Pacific and Indian Ocean, are the most affected.

From a historical perspective, weak, moderate, and strong El Niño and La Niña years are listed as follows.

**El Niño Years:**  
Weak: 52-53, 53-54, 58-59, 69-70, 76-77, 77-78, 04-05, 06-07  
Moderate: 51-52, 63-64, 68-69, 86-87, 87-88, 91-92, 94-95, 02-03, 09-10  
Strong: 57-58, 65-66, 72-73, 82-83, 97-98

**La Niña Years:**  
Weak: 50-51, 54-55, 56-57, 64-65, 67-68, 71-72, 74-75, 83-84, 84-85, 95-96, 00-01, 05-06, 08-09, 11-12  
Moderate: 55-56, 70-71, 98-99, 07-08  
Strong: 73-74, 75-76, 88-89, 99-00, 10-11

**How do El Niño and La Niña impact Bangladesh climate?** Bangladesh normally faces a deficit of rainfall (and drought conditions) during any major (strong) El Niño event. Many previous major El Niño years, such as 1951, 1958, 1972, 1983, 1993, 1997, and, most recently, 2009, recorded significant deficits in the monsoon seasonal-average (Jul-Aug-Sep) rainfall. For example (based on a previous study conducted by the writer in 2003), 1951, 1958, and 1972 recorded about 38-, 48-, and 10-percentage less rainfall. The



Forecasters at NOAA's Climate Prediction Centre and the International Research Institute for Climate and Society released this ENSO forecast on March 6. (Courtesy CPC/IRL.)

major (strong) La Niña years --1964, 1973, 1988 and 1998 -- recorded excessive rainfall. The increases were as follows: 4% in 1964; 8% in 1973; 30% in 1988; and 10% in 1998. In particular, Bangladesh is always found to be wetter than normal during any La Niña year (weak, moderate, or strong); however, Bangladesh is not always drier than normal during any El Niño year. For example, the year 1987 was a moderate El Niño year and the country experienced flooding rather than drought.

**What is the causal connection between El Niño/La Niña and Bangladesh climate?** During an El Niño year, the trade wind weakens and as a result the whole Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna (GBM) basin experiences less rainfall. The weakening of trade winds depends on how strong, moderate, or weak the event is. The deficiency of rainfall causes Bangladesh rivers to dry out because of low-flow and results in severe drought. On the other hand, during any La Niña year, the trade wind strengthens and as a result there is a significant increase in rainfall along the greater GBM basins, which cause flooding along the whole catchments. Again, the strengthening of trade winds depends on how strong (e.g., weak, moderate, or strong) the

event is. This, in turn, severely floods Bangladesh, as it is the lowest riparian country in these basins.

**How is El Niño developing now (2014)?** Right now, it looks like an El Niño is developing. According to the Climate Prediction Center (CPC) and the International Research Institute for Climate and Society (IRI), the likelihood of El Niño developing is 50% or more during the summer or fall of 2014 (see Figure).

Forecasters at NOAA's Climate Prediction Center and the International Research Institute for Climate and Society released this ENSO forecast on March 6. (Courtesy CPC/IRI.)

Most of the world's major seasonal prediction models now push the Pacific into an El Niño temperature regime by July. Some scientists even argue that there is 67% chance of developing an El Niño by July-September of 2014, while others argue that it may develop by October-December of 2014. Researchers are closely watching the Pacific, including the interplay among the various factors, and making their own assessments of how likely El Niño might be.

**What can happen in 2014?** If a weak El Niño event develops then this will cause basin-wide lower than the average rainfall

during the months of June to September, which may result in slightly drier than normal weather in Bangladesh. Similar to the weak event, a moderate event also can cause drier than normal weather for the same time period. However, as mentioned before, there are some exceptions in the case of moderate event (e.g., 1987). Note that the 1987 event is a rare event, and there were probably other open factors that caused flooding in that moderate El Niño year. Further research is needed here. However, if a strong El Niño event develops then a drought, similar to that of 1982-83 and 1997-98, is most likely to occur. In that case the GBM basin-wide rainfall will be exceptionally low, rivers will dry out, and the drought will continue for a long time. Based on some recent news report, it seems likely that the country is already drier than normal. Further, the river water sharing conflicts between Bangladesh and the neighbouring countries may also aggravate the problem.

**What is the verdict now?** While most of the El Niño events over the last 15 years have been on the weaker side, currently some conditions in the western tropical Pacific are now strikingly similar to those that preceded the two strongest El Niño events of the last century: 1982-83 and 1997-98. There is uncertainty in any forecast but these trends are still of concern for all of us. If the strong El Niño doesn't take shape in the next several months, however, we may not see it this year at all. If it does happen, then it could have a huge global impact, which will also seriously affect Bangladesh. Therefore, like many other International Research and Applications Climate Centers, we at the 'Pacific ENSO Applications Climate Center' are constantly monitoring this event and regularly updating early warnings for vulnerable communities in the Pacific Islands. I believe local climate experts and concerned applications agencies in Bangladesh are also equally vigilant in monitoring this on-going El Niño event.

Finally, it is important to keep in mind that in probabilistic seasonal climate predictions "we never have perfect predictability"; however, the goal is to find ways to take advantage of the information we do have.

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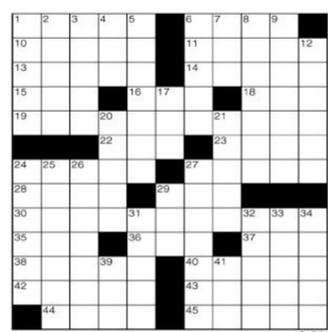
## CROSSWORD by Thomas Joseph

ACROSS

- 1 Cheering word
- 6 Wild guess
- 10 Air traffic aid
- 11 Buttes' cousins
- 13 Musical set in Argentina
- 14 Caper
- 15 Tiny
- 16 Bronco's org
- 18 Pub beverage
- 19 Meat stew
- 22 Longing
- 23 In- (stuck)
- 24 Sings like Ella
- 27 Aids in crime
- 28 Swanky
- 29 Bullring cheer
- 30 Mischievous person
- 35 -de Franc
- 36 Many a time
- 37 Ab- (from the beginning)
- 38 Marilyn's real name
- 40 Despises
- 42 Main ideas
- 43 Knowing
- 44 Easter lead-in
- 45 Exams

DOWN

- 1 Makes coffee
- 2 "Bolero" Composer
- 3 Parting word
- 4 Big tub
- 5 Grove harvest
- 6 Miniature
- 7 Wallet bill
- 8 "Top Hat" star
- 9 Government rescue
- 12 Fragrances
- 17 Amusement
- 20 Tales of the gods
- 21 Record company
- 24 Winter follower
- 25 Kerosene
- 26 Malign
- 27 Great, in slang
- 29 Clumsy fellow
- 31 Port setting
- 32 Smidgens
- 33 Not hidden
- 34 Snouts
- 39 High pt.
- 41 Reverent wonder



**CRYPTOQUOTE**  
BVORV BLMBVDCDMF LI VYQBOSCLM OR XVZV KZVKOZOSCLM ILZ NIVOSVZ NGV, OMYXOUV CS SGV IQNN XVOMCMF LI SGV KZVRVMS NCIV. -TLGMVYVPA

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: IT IS THE MARK OF AN EDUCATED MIND TO BE ABLE TO ENTERTAIN A THOUGHT WITHOUT ACCEPTING IT. -ARISTOTLE.

## Yesterday's answer



**A XYDLBAAX 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



EXPERIENCE is not what happens to a man. It is what a man does with what happens to him. Aldous Leonard Huxley