

Election *dhamaka* in India ... our sense of proportion!

PLEASURE IS ALL MINE



SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

If in India all this is relevant during election, in Bangladesh post-election vituperative exchanges between the BNP and the AL that both parties are unnecessarily enmeshed in are holding us back from concentrating on crucial issues.

LOK Sabha election in India is turning out to be pricey, spicy and high-stake contestation. It is literally becoming a head-turner. The repertoire of political banter, vote-catching maneuvers and last-minute attempted reworking of electoral

equations between parties, groupings and alliances is coming into full play. From self-serving books publication pillorying Manmohan Singh by people who claimed 'they knew' because of their proximity to him through dynastic war of words in the Gandhi family to playing the communal card cutting both ways, the arsenals of political parties are gearing up on all four cylinders against each other. Sanjay Baru, once media advisor to the PM, launched his book -- *The Accidental Prime Minister -- the making and unmaking of Manmohan Singh*. As if that was not enough, former coal secretary P. C. Parakh released his *Crusader or Conspirator? -- Coalgate and Other Truths*. The essence of their treatises is summed up by the titles of their books themselves. Commercial interests have driven the book writing surge -- the timing is expedient, pollsters predicting a BJP win over Congress with its record of ten-year incumbency. Manmohan's last term has seen a downslide in economic growth from what was galloping in the previous tenure. Manmohan Singh's daughter Upendra Singh

came in defence of her father. She called Baru's book as stabbing in the back, a betrayal of trust and mischievous ploy devoid any iota of morality. Priyanka Gandhi, who with a fiesta, is campaigning for Rahul Gandhi called Manmohan Singh a Super Prime Minister. Chidambaram, finance minister in Manmohan's cabinet, said of Manmohan that "by nature he is serious, somewhat absent-minded and shy." He debunked the perception about Manmohan not being his own man and that absolute power was wielded by Sonia Gandhi. Separating the chaff from the grain, argued he that political decisions used to be taken by Sonia and the party while governance was left to Manmohan, adding he said the PM hardly ever went to 10, Janpath.

Conflicts between the two branches of Gandhi family have come out in the open as perhaps never before. Varun Gandhi, son of Maneka and late Sanjay Gandhi, is contesting the election from Sultanpur constituency in Uttar Pradesh on BJP ticket. Varun's cousin Priyanka counseled the people to bring her cousin to the right path. When Varun reacted to this saying that his big sister had crossed the Laxman Rekha, the line of decency, Priyanka quipped: "It was not a family tea party but a matter of ideological conviction." Senior BJP leader Uma Bharati said: "If BJP came to power, Sonia's son-in-law Robert Vadra would be arrested," alleging that he was linked to many misdeeds. To this, Avishek Singvi, a Congress spokesman, said something profound: "There is freedom of expression in the country." A word about the stern manner in which the election was being conducted, keeping it free from anyone influencing voters through any leading comments. Recently at a party election meeting in Muzaffarnagar, Narendra Modi's close

friend a BJP leader had talked of *badla* (reprisal), he was simply blacklisted by the commission. Similarly, when Samajbadi leader Azam Khan commented that India won the Kargil war through the contribution of Muslim soldiers, the Election Commission debarred him from campaigning.

A snapshot view of Aam Aadmi Party comes through the revelation that such a populist party having 200 contestants in Lok Sabha polls has 86 *crorepatis* among them!

Anna Hazare blasted the AAP chief Kejriwal for abandoning the post of Delhi CM and nurturing the ambition of becoming the prime minister of the country as he has fielded party candidates in various constituencies. If in India all this is relevant during election, in Bangladesh post-election vituperative exchanges between the BNP and the AL that both parties are unnecessarily enmeshed in are holding us back from concentrating on crucial issues. Tareque Rahman's claims that Ziaur Rahman was the first president of the country and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was illegal prime minister in 1972 do not even deserve any mention, let alone any debate. Ridiculously, the BNP acting secretary Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir equated Tareque's sense of history with that of Cuba's Fidel Castro, as a deliberate ploy to create a controversy to ruffle AL's feathers. No constitutional expert is digging into the avalanche of books losing sleep on Tareque's pranks. Why should some AL leaders -- at all?

Are we to believe that grace and sense of proportion have taken leave out of the country?

The writer is Associate Editor, *The Daily Star*. E-mail: husain.imam@thedailystar.net

The Life of Pi(t)

HUMOROUSLY YOURS



NAVEED MAHBUB

SATELLITE images reveal a vast reserve of oil. Thank heavens Dick Cheney is in retirement, otherwise Gulf War III would have been right here on the Buriganga River.

Buriganga. Our vicarious way of owning black gold. The tundras may pride themselves of their fall colours, but we have our water colours. Not only are the rivers multi coloured, thanks to their industrious industrial neighbours, but their water is so thick that if you drop a stone, you see a mushroom cloud.

Pi survived in the vast ocean, but would not have for a single day in the pit that is today's Buriganga. So, what is in the water? The answer lies in 'analytical' chemistry. The source is hazardous waste. And the source of hazardous waste? Us...

There really aren't any good jokes on water pollution -- the few I've seen, all stink. Oh wait, there really is one good joke -- the joke is on us. That's because of our theory of the 'bone plate' -- in the absence of a 'bone plate' we make the table a 'bone plate'. Oh, don't forget the floor too. Why do I care? Someone else will clean up (if at all).

And we think formalin ridden fish is dangerous? Oh, please! How about those fishing in the rivers, who'd be dead of mercury poisoning in three years. This is man's amphibious assault -- formalin on land and mercury in water.

"Mmmm. Pollution. Smells like profit." Homer Simpson's voice. Exactly. Let's be optimistic, the glass is half full (with slimy water):

First of all, fishing has never been easier. As we fish, we can hear them coughing. Under water grumbling? Plenty of that too. Mommy frog tells the sick tadpole, "I told you not to drink the water!" The fishes are annoyed, "What? Mercury for breakfast again?"

Then there are the soft drink companies which can put up signs on the rivers: "This water is not safe for drinking, but you can always drink our orange juice!"

Or put the water in the classic blue and silver can and sell as energy, er, lethargy drink, *Red Droll*, imported from Bangladesh.

When it comes to our rivers, is there no solution to the pollution? If so much is spent in blooming the desert, how come man lets the rivers die?

Take heed. The awareness level, along with the pollution level, is high. When it's voting for clean rivers, it's 90 to 10. When it's devoting 10 minutes to stop the pollution of rivers, the voting is 10 to 90.

Warning letters are also being served, probably printed on paper from the same paper mills that dump waste into the rivers. At least, that's recycling. Meantime, the tanneries continue skinny dipping...

If you really must continue to dump, then why not dump some masks for the fish? Then at least we will not end up with one species of fish -- dead.

Sigh. Why expect miracles? Even if there were a genie coming out of the lamp, he would say, "I will grant you three fishes." Perhaps we need the Midas golden touch. One thing is for sure, he was definitely not a man. For, whatever man touches, becomes polluted.

Meanwhile, where do we put all the pollution? Well, as of now, we have an obliging 160 million stomachs.

The writer is an engineer & CEO turned comedian (by choice), the host of NTV's *The Naveed Mahbub Show* and the founder of *Naveed's Comedy Club*. E-mail: naveed@naveedmahbub.com

The Cup and the Cross of Christ

MARTIN ADHIKARY

CHRISTIANS all over the world observe the Holy Octave -- the last eight days in Jesus' life on earth -- with due solemnity. This Octave includes Palm Sunday on which day Jesus came from Galilee and made his triumphal entry into the city of Jerusalem and cleansed the Temple, to the next Sunday on which he was resurrected from the dead with Friday being the day on which he died on the cross. These days have utmost spiritual significance in the plan of God for the salvation of mankind from the bondage of sin through the sacrificial death of Christ.

Christ's death receives paramount importance in all the Gospel narratives. On average, one-third of the Gospels is devoted to the events concerning his death. No biography of any person has given such importance in describing the death of that person. This points to the fact that it is Jesus' death that is the main focus around which all the acts of salvation revolve. Jesus predicted his suffering and death as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies throughout his discourses in parables, and allegorical and symbolical teachings. Coupled with all these were his works that inexorably moved towards his cross. Also, in other New Testament literature Jesus' death is poised as the main focal point alongside his resurrection.

St. Paul declared that the Gospel was "the message of the Cross," though it was a "stumbling block to the Jews and folly to the Gentiles." The Jews wanted to see miraculous signs of God's might and power to testify to Jesus being God's son; and the Greeks (being a people loving philosophy) sought wisdom and enlightenment as a way of getting salvation. To the Gnostic Greeks matter was evil and as such God could not be incarnated in human form. But God did not create anything evil. God of the Bible is so loving a God that he chose to reveal himself in flesh-and-blood reality in the person and in the life and death of the human Jesus.

Man's way is not God's way just because he is God. Paul wrote to the Corinthian church: "I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and he crucified." It was through his sufferings and



death on the cross that Jesus was to fulfill his messianic vocation. He exchanged his place with us. It is our sin that sent him to the cross. He drank the cup of God's holy wrath on our behalf and we are acquitted of our sin and punishment for it. It was God's purpose in his life. Jesus alerted his disciples earlier on that "the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed" (Mark 8:31).

Jesus used the metaphor of 'the cup' to refer to all his bodily sufferings, the shame of the utterly abhorrent death on a cross and the mental and spiritual agonies. The 8th century B.C. prophet Isaiah depicted this: "He was pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities." He was so bruised and humiliated and his figure was

so marred by all the whipping and torture that we are reminded of Isaiah's prophecies again and again: "There is no comeliness that we look at him." In fact one needs to study prophecies of Isaiah as recorded in Isaiah 53 to be able to grasp the meaning of the cross of Jesus for our salvation.

The cross of Christ is the public revelation and manifestation of God's love. The Greek word for God's love is 'agape,' which means unselfish and outpouring love, love even for the unlovable with the motive of change. This love is supremely manifested on the cross of Christ. To quote John R. W. Stott one of the few great Christian scholars of our time: "The coming of Christ is, therefore, a concrete, historical revelation of God's love, for love (agape) is self-sacrifice, the seeking of another's positive good at

one's own cost and a greater self-giving than God's gift of His Son there has never been, nor could be."

"There is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as ransom for all", said Paul. We receive salvation in and through the vicarious death of Christ, the sinless son of God, "the Lamb of God" as John puts it. That's how we are forgiven of our sins, are reconciled to holy God, justified before his throne of grace and worthy of sanctification by the Holy Spirit to a new kind of life. So redemption from the bondage of sin, regeneration by the power of the Holy Spirit and restoration to the pristine relationship with God all are result of the death and the resurrection of Christ for those who believe.

The most sublime truth about God's grace for human salvation is that he gave his only begotten son to make the full and final payment for sin in his vicarious death on the cross. Our salvation is due to God's unmerited grace for us. Man cannot earn salvation by anything of his own. It is entirely God's gift to man that God gives in his grace to people who come to him in repentance for sin. This repentance is more than feeling sorry for wrong done, more than emotional gesture or regret; rather it is an act of our will a deliberate turning away from our past life for a new kind of life of transformation. Paul has used the Greek word 'Metamorphosis' for the English word 'Transformation' which is the word used to describe the process through which a caterpillar is made into a butterfly. Archbishop William Temple said, "All is of God; the only thing of my very own which I can contribute to my own redemption is the sin from which I need to be redeemed." Paul said: "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." What a great stand that God has given us as a result of Christ's work! But what a challenge before us to live lives worthy of the transformation!

The writer is Principal, College of Christian Theology Bangladesh.

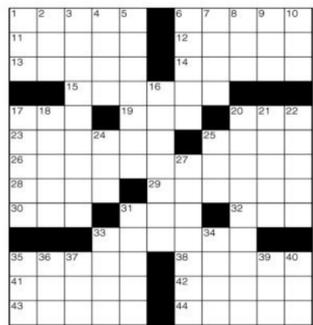
QUOTABLE Quote

Be not angry that you cannot make others as you wish them to be, since you cannot make yourself as you wish to be.

Thomas à Kempis

CROSSWORD by Thomas Joseph

- | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| ACROSS | DOWN |
| 1 Needed a massage | 1 Nile serpent |
| 6 Tenor's pride | 2 Busy one in Apr. |
| 11 Left over | 3 Selects carefully |
| 12 One with a record | 4 Great Lakes port |
| 13 Stampede cause | 5 Ten-sides figure |
| 14 Calls for | 6 Viper's poison |
| 15 Priest's subordinate | 7 Plow pullers |
| 17 Card spot | 8 Motel freebie |
| 19 Stick in a pack | 9 Haddock's cousin |
| 20 Joaquin Phoenix film | 10 Print measures |
| 23 Magazine worker | 16 Becomes clotted |
| 25 Grow paler | 17 Green sauce |
| 26 Watch parts | 18 Think tank output |
| 28 Appropriate | 20 Manuals |
| 29 Highland boy | 21 "Frasier" pooch |
| 30 CIA's forerunner | 22 Stopwatch button |
| 31 Hankering | 24 Sandal sight |
| 32 Wager | 25 Craze |
| 33 Iago stabs him | 27 Chewbacca's pal |
| 35 Eggs buy | 31 Rebs' foes |
| 38 Maine college town | 33 Small coin |
| 41 Bold way to solve crossword | 34 Persia, today |
| 42 Kobe, for one | 35 Pulled off |
| 43 Co divisions | 36 Binary digit |
| 44 Beginning | 37 Energy |
| | 39 Maiden name label |
| | 40 Food scrap |



Yesterday's answer

S HEDS M A I M
P A N E L W A L D O
I M P L Y I D E A S
D I L L C Z E C H S
E T A T O A S O Y
R U N S H O R T
P E T E D O D O
S H O R T R U N
S I L A N Y E T E
O R A N G E M A S S
B A Y O U L I M I T
E T U D E E L U D E
R E P S T O P E D

CRYPTOQUOTE
J I Q V J Q K Z L Q U O S Q E E J E U S
Q K A V B O J A S U L H C L A M Q E E O N U O
M N U S Z Q E U S W Q K A V K Q E Q L U O A
Q L U.
- TJMNQUV RALWUS

Previous day's Cryptoquote: IF LOVE IS SWEET AS A FLOWER, THEN MY MOTHER IS THAT SWEET FLOWER OF LOVE.
-- STEVIE WONDER

BEETLE BAILEY



by Mort Walker



HENRY



by Don Tranchte

