

# Grasping our strategic potential and tapping it

PLEASURE IS ALL MINE



SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

UN peace mission, combating terrorism and natural disaster management.

The first two rounds since Bangladesh-US partnership dialogue framework had been launched by former US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton in mid 2012 produced a forum and dilated on ways to fight terrorism respectively. With the third round rhetoric really translated into a substantive phase under the framework agreement.

**W**E have just emerged from the third round of security dialogue with the US. It brought much on the table: Expansion of cooperation in four areas was mooted and headway made in some domains. These included strategic prioritisation in regional security, military security cooperation, global security and disarmament,

The nub of the third round has been underlined by US Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Tom Kelly in following terms: In a broader perspective US values Bangladesh's geographical location. It sees an important role for Bangladesh in the overall security context of the Middle East, and Indian-Pacific-Oceans region. This is why US wants Bangladesh by its side in its strategic pursuits.

Three factors have combined for such a US reckoning. One, Bangladesh being a part of the Asia-Pacific pivot of the American policy direction; and two, the Indian Ocean sea lanes have to be secured; and three, US is winding down from Afghanistan and Iraq.

The importance of the Indian Ocean sea lanes is summed up by the following statement: "Through these, 50% of the world's container traffic and 70% of the world's crude and oil products transit, it is in US interests to promote maritime security cooperation among South Asian countries and deepen defense ties with these navies as a form of burden-sharing in the Indian Ocean" (Nilanthi Samaranyake, Strategic Studies Analyst in *Asian Pacific Bulletin*; September 22, 2011 issue).

Kelly said that Bangladesh Navy and Coastguards are being provided with financial and technical assistance aimed at ensuring security and defense of its marine resources.

Interestingly, when Kelly was asked about his views on Sino-Bangladesh Naval cooperation, he simply said that US respected the sovereignty of Bangladesh and had no problem with its bilateral relationship with any country.

Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Pankaj Saran recently maintained that big power rivalries in the region would not contribute to regional peace and stability. But he added in reply to a pointed question from a newspaper reporter: "It is up to you to choose a strategic partner. India has nothing to say in the matter."

Some excerpts from Yale Global Online article titled, *India: Still at the Centre of the Indian Ocean* -- Nilanthi Samaranyake again -- make an interesting

read: "India cannot fund all infrastructure projects throughout the region, much of which is underdeveloped, and fully expects small nations with limited resources to accept Chinese investment funds." The concluding remark is, however, emphatic: "But this is not a zero-sum game and does not translate to India losing its strategic advantage in a region whose very geography is a metaphor for the country's centrality and growing influence."

Indian High Commissioner's emphasis though is on a regional structure "where all countries in the region contribute to an environment of peace, stability and prosperity."

Thus we waltz in the vision of Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) economic corridor and Kunming-Chittagong-Yangoon rail and road links and all the rest by way of having grander dreams in spite of vestigial remnants of prejudices.

China too is open-minded about Sonadia deep seaport; wouldn't mind India being part of an investment consortium. This is indicative of the growing importance of trade, connectivity and economic development being balanced out with considerations of geopolitical interests.

With the USA we have Bangladesh-US Partnership Dialogue Framework, with India we have had an elaborate friendship accord signed between Indian PM Manmohan Singh and his Bangladesh counterpart Sheikh Hasina, and with China we have kept the relationship "unarticulated, flexible..." reaping the benefits of a close cooperation, anyway.

Sheikh Hasina, into her second term, has given power corridor to India, Karnaphuli underpass to China and gas and oil drilling contract to America.

Bangladesh's relations with the USA, China and India need not necessarily be mutually exclusive; in fact, they can be inclusive being duly respectful of each other's sensibilities, concerns and interests.

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

## Feeling Hot Hot Hot

HUMOROUSLY YOURS



NAVEED MAHBUB

**I** scream in agony as I hit the shower. I thought I had turned the cold water on. It's so hot that water from the COLD tap is hotter than that from the HOT one! To avoid third

degree burns, I now adjust the faucets like the burglar in a movie trying to unlock the combination lock of a safe.

Well, the good thing is that there is now constant running hot water. Oh, and finally, it's also safe to drink tap water.

But is there no respite from the extreme heat? At least Musa Ibrahim can plan another climb to the Everest just to get away from it all. As for me, I can swear I saw the two magpies of the *Doyal Chottor* sweating!

If Asia is one giant steak, then Japan is medium rare and Bangladesh is well done.

The heat wave is due to a wind flow during a high temperature patch. In urban areas, the situation is worse since heat is trapped in concrete. Great! So, build more buildings. In fact, the developers can now build just single floor buildings and then let the heat automatically stretch them to three storeys.

Air conditioners are a must. Luck has it, mine pukes. I call customer service only to get the automated response: "Please call back in Monsoon!"

High energy consumption is another reason for the heat wave. So, it is a vicious circle -- running ACs to counter the heat, which in turn means more AC sales. Business 101: Never let go of an opportunity...

Speaking of which, this indeed is the right moment to test true party loyalty -- The Teesta Long March. I bet there are muted grumbles as the Teesta Long March, thanks to the heat, becomes the Toasted Long March. In fact, it is so hot, that even Mamata Banerjee is likely to join the Long March. However, she assures us that we have seen nothing yet and that the real heat wave will start when she converts from Celsius to Fahrenheit. In other words, it's practically freezing here in Fahrenheit.

Foreign relations may take a further upturn. The high temperature is accompanied by low humidity. This allows us to express solidarity with Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Perhaps some brownie points there to ease up on the visas...

What? How dare I speak against the petro dollar! Fear not, Bangladesh has never been safer from external aggressions. The heat is a great air defense shield. A heat seeking missile approaching Dhaka would go totally haywire.

On the domestic front, we see a boon in many areas:

The average Joe does not need to schmooze to get access to exclusive clubs. Just sit inside the bathroom with the door and the window(s) shut and you have the cheapest sauna.

Companies are experiencing high work throughput through cost efficiency. Employees are working overtime without pay -- just to enjoy the free air conditioning.

The food chain is also a tad shorter. Chickens are laying boiled eggs and cows are providing powdered milk.

And finally, Dhaka is a hot tourist destination, literally.

Oh well, at least I'm glad it's finally hot enough to complain how hot it is. We ARE getting tired of the hot weather. But we'd better remember, it's coming in eight weeks.

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

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## Bangladesh's water diplomacy: Crucial need for national unity and consensus

S.M. RASHED AHMED

**M**UCH has been written and said on the subject of Teesta water sharing agreement due to virtual drying of the Teesta river and its devastating impact on Bangladesh. Movements by the political parties on the Teesta issue, particularly the recent one by the BNP, should have positive fallout for Bangladesh; these clearly reflect articulation of the wishes of our people and should strengthen the hands of the government in negotiating with the new government of India. This will also positively impact in mobilising public opinion at home and abroad and galvanising support of the International community in getting our legitimate share of water.

We have been consistently stressing on the crucial need for a national consensus on the vital issues of our domestic and foreign policies; the critical issue of Teesta and water sharing with India has opened a rare window of opportunity to achieve the objective given its vital national importance.

It is hoped that the government and the combined parties in power will seize the opportunity opened to achieve a broad-based national consensus in negotiating with India not only on the sharing of the Teesta water but of all common transboundary rivers including, among others, Ganges, and the issue of Tipai dam. Already, environmentalist lobbies and the people in India are voicing their serious concern about the grave ecological and other disastrous consequences of building of dams; there is now a worldwide awareness of its manifold negative consequences. Our environmentalists and experts should participate in these movements, cutting across the divide.

It is time for a durable and lasting solution to the water crisis not only for Bangladesh but for the region and beyond. The issue of water scarcity has assumed a regional and



global dimension. The magnitude of the water crisis impinging on our non-military security including agriculture, food, energy, environment, climate change and overall development involving the potential for serious conflicts is beyond comprehension. Bilateral agreements can at best be short-term palliatives. The solution lies in wider regional and multi-lateral collaboration involving, among others, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Bhutan and China. The support of the UN and our development partners including USA, EC and Japan, and of the multilateral financial institutions including World Bank, Asian Development Bank and Islamic Development Bank is also needed.

At this point of time, I believe water diplomacy should be the principal thrust of

our foreign policy and diplomacy. We have to get out of the box of blame game. There seem to be little possibility that either Mamata Banerjee or the next Indian prime minister would be able to fully ensure Bangladesh's legitimate share of water in the long run given India's domestic constraints and its growing need for water. Had it been possible to get our legitimate share of water from India perhaps the best opportune time was during the tenure of PM Hasina's government given the personal equation between her and the influential Indian Congress leadership, including Sonia Gandhi, Pranab Mukerjee, Manmohan Singh, and the historic ties between AL and the Congress. This is the grim reality on the ground.

We now need an agonising reappraisal, particularly of our water diplomacy given its obvious national priority.

It is time for serious regional initiative and collaboration amongst not only the South Asian countries involved but also China to resolve the water crisis. Some experts estimate that both India and China may go for building 200 big and small dams on the Himalayan rivers -- Yangtze, Brahmaputra and Ganges -- to meet their growing water needs.

We need to keep in mind the models of joint and collaborative use, development and preservation of water by Europe, North America, Mekong Basin countries among others.

For the proposed new diplomatic thrust on water diplomacy to succeed it is hoped that the AL coalition government and parties in power will initiate the process of consensus building on this critical issue by inviting all political parties, particularly the BNP and other opposition parties, to a series of dialogues to achieve national consensus on the issue. It can begin with a round table conference or any other format.

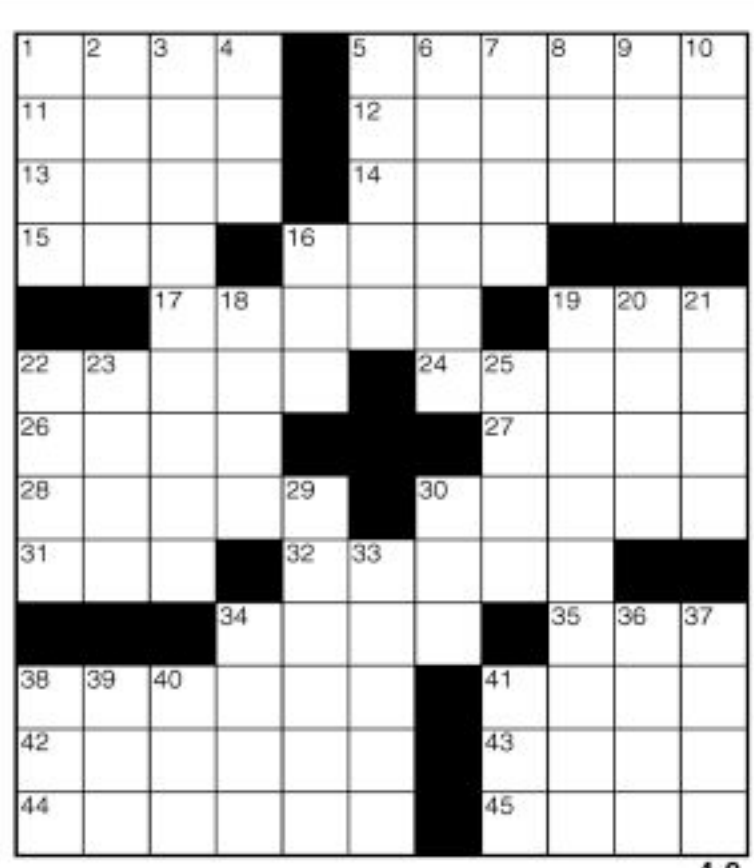
What is important is sincere and serious political will to achieve national consensus and unity on an issue which involves the survival of Bangladesh. Crucially, for the sake of larger national interest, all narrow partisan gains have to be set aside; no blame game or hidden agenda. This is the age of public diplomacy and transparency. Thanks to the media, there is an unprecedented awareness amongst the people.

It is our hope that the government will initiate this historic process of national consensus building which has so far eluded us, and that the opposition will respond accordingly. The issue is one of our survival; "who lives if the country dies and who dies if the country lives."

The writer is a former UN Regional Administrator in Kosovo and Bangladesh Ambassador to Japan. Email: rashed\_ahmed2001@yahoo.com

### CROSSWORD by Thomas Joseph

- |                        |                            |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>ACROSS</b>          | <b>DOWN</b>                |
| 1 Dossier              | 1 Golf cry                 |
| 5 Bakery pan           | 2 Infamous czar            |
| 11 Track shape         | 3 Hidden dangers           |
| 12 Pay no attention to | 4 Antlered animal          |
| 13 Military level      | 5 Irritation               |
| 14 Repeated verbatim   | 6 "If you say so"          |
| 15 Put a stop to       | 7 Son of Seth              |
| 16 Takes to court      | 8 Youngster                |
| 17 Produces            | 9 Fuming feeling           |
| 19 Court concern       | 10 Composer Rorem          |
| 22 Like some gossip    | 16 Blue hue                |
| 24 Alarm               | 18 High cards              |
| 26 Writer Rice         | 19 Noncellular phones      |
| 27 Bills from tills    | 20 Region                  |
| 28 That is: Latin      | 21 Sunset setting          |
| 30 Nasser's successor  | 22 Lockup                  |
| 31 - Alamos            | 23 Taka apart              |
| 32 Even a little       | 25 Snowman's eyes          |
| 34 Puritanical fellow  | 29 Lord of jungle          |
| 35 " - Pig's eye!"     | 30 Slump                   |
| 38 Guatemala neighbor  | 33 Layers                  |
| 41 Winter blanket      | 34 Bread with a pocket     |
| 42 Film set on Pandora | 36 2014 Russell Crowe role |
| 43 Still life fruit    | 37 Wrong                   |
| 44 Houston team        | 38 Baseball need           |
| 45 Pale                | 39 Holiday lead-in         |
|                        | 40 Indulgent               |
|                        | 41 Restful resort.         |



**CRYPTOQUOTE**  
BQ ABG BCL JZCXICPIJGI AJBPBGT  
YQCNIIJX BCL AJXL WTP IG DQQP.  
-HGLQKB HGTWQNP

**Yesterday's CRYPTOQUOTE:**  
**SLOTH, LIKE RUST, CONSUMES FASTER THAN LABOR WEARS, WHILE THE USED KEY IS ALWAYS BRIGHT.**  
- BEN FRANKLIN

### Yesterday's answer

SAID CHAPS  
EDGES HIT IT  
COURT JESTER  
TRAROW ICE  
SENDAK CREW  
SAUTE LESS  
PASSE  
TOTE TOAST  
ONES ENTERS  
MET FRI DOE  
CIRCUS CLOWN  
ADIOS SINES  
TASTE PALE

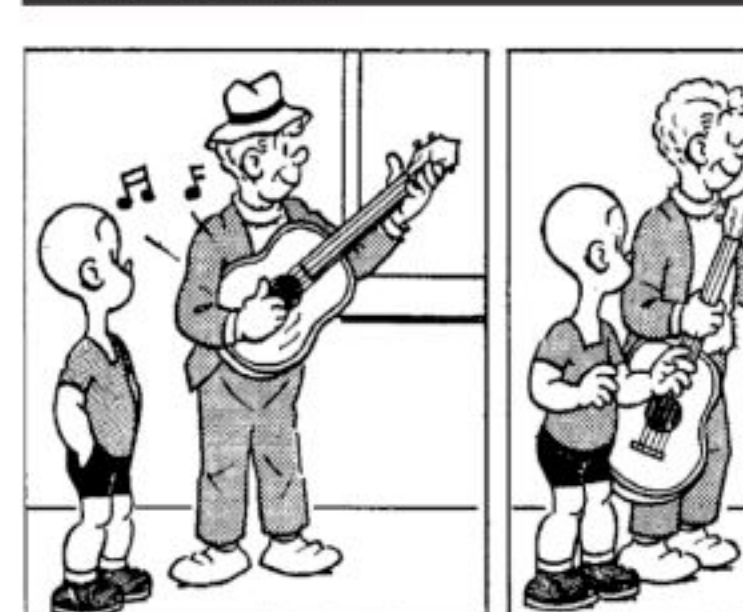
### BEETLE BAILEY



### by Mort Walker



### HENRY



### by Don Trachte



### QUOTABLE Quote

*When I study philosophical works I feel I am swallowing something which I don't have in my mouth.*

Albert Einstein