

Signs of entente between AL and far-Right?



PLEASURE IS ALL MINE
SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

If one were to suggest a signature tune to the Awami League's second term, one would set it to the tiffs the ministers have had from the very word go. It began a little churlishly and then became rueful down-stream bringing a new food for thought on the table.

AL General Secretary and LGRD Minister Syed Ashraful Islam took a snipe at Communication Minister Obaidul Quader 'pulling up' officials before the media advising lesser visibility for him. He thought the officials had better be left alone with their given responsibility to discharge. Obaidul's repartee was that it was his style of working and that he couldn't care less about what a colleague thought so long as his method was working and appreciated by public.

Then we have had the planning minister's apparently snide remark on the finance minister that he was failing to get his act together due to age, the difference of opinion centering on the size of development budget. To this, the finance minister merely reacted saying he expected 'courtesy' from a minister and the latter for his part promptly retracted to save further embarrassment.

The third instance is pretty serious involve as it did a matter of principle. And, there has been a seesaw-like pendulous movement from one position of the clock to the other as though by a magic wand!



Planning Minister A.H.M. Mustafa Kamal said he saw no problem in accepting funds worth Tk. 10 billion from Islami Bank towards construction of Padma Bridge and that he expected a total of Tk. 20 billion investment from the Islamic banking sector for the project. His argument is if the IDB could fund for the project what's wrong with an investment from IB, a partner of the IDB.

This stout defense of the bank stands in contrast to the controversies raised over two issues: Acceptance of a cheque for the national anthem celebrations (eventually returned by the culture ministry!) and the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) having tasked Islami Bank with decorating the capital before the ICC World Cup in 2011.

Reportedly sometime ago, PMO wanted Islami Bank's "questionable activities" investigated. The Gonojagaron Mancha, since divided and, therefore, weakened, at one time alleged that

"Jamaat-e-Islami, the party that opposed the Liberation War, has control over Islami Bank's ownership."

So why is this change of heart overall? Is the softening of approach to the bank, or for that matter, Jamaat-e-Islami as a party follows en masse joining of Jamaat members in some parts of the country with the Awami League? Jamaat is gradually morphing into a new mould, so it appears. A realisation may have dawned on them that even after their much-hated terror campaign they have garnered substantial electoral gains in the upazila polls. They carved a big win, some of which through informal liaison with AL followers as against BNP candidates.

The AL, on the other hand, has two concerns to be met: It wants to neutralise Jamaat in a way that the latter keeps from being a party to BNP's threatened launch of a movement against the government to force a mid-term election. Secondly, the

AL may like to wean away Jamaat from its alignment with BNP which appears to be happening anyway. AL has also put the heat on Jamaat by insisting that BNP delink from JI for any AL-BNP dialogue to take place at all.

Whether the AL is serious on this point only time can tell.

The prospect, at any rate, for any realignment between AL and Jamaat is easier toyed with than actually accomplished because Awami League will have to make huge concessions to JI for that to happen. It would risk stripping AL of its core values spearheaded by ICT trials.

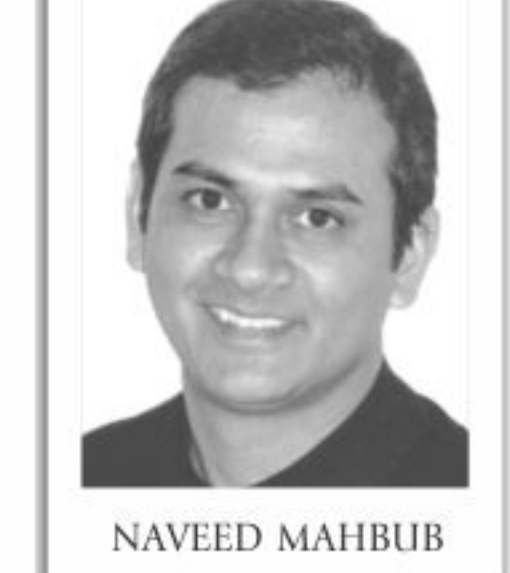
As if to chime in with AL's flexibility, Hefajat-e-Islam chief Shah Ahmed Shafi was all praise for Awami League on Monday saying that AL had always been with them and donating for their madrassas. Actually, a huge chunk of railway land has been allotted to Hefajat-e-Islam for establishing madrassas. The olive branch is displayed even though contentions namely on reforming Qawmi madrasa curricula and implementing the 13-point demands of Hefajat-e-Islam which would push Bangladesh into medieval age remain squarely unresolved.

Where twists and turns of politics have been interesting, a major distraction has come about through the diabolic seven murders which make public not only demand guarantee for life but also that for return of the dead bodies. The most shocking jolt comes from the fact that this was entirely preventable and yet money, internal feuding and compromised law enforcement unstoppably sabotaged the state authority. The lessons should have been learnt.

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Narayanganj and the Temple of Goom

HUMOROUSLY YOURS



NAVEED MAHBUB

NARAYANGANJ, the perfect location to film the sequel *Taken* 4. Wait! Am I crazy? The entire film crew in Narayanganj? What am I going to tell their families?

Let's give Dhallywood another shot at international fame. After all, Hollywood's blockbuster is *Zoom*,

Bolly wood boasts its *Dhoom*, Collywood (Crimea) has *Doom*, Kollywood (Karachi) has *Boom*! And now, Dhallywood presents -- *Goom*...

Say what? Too dangerous to film that too? Then how about a local version of *The Sopranos* -- NJ to NG (New Jersey to NarayanGanj). Interesting -- the anagram of *Sopranos* is *Sponsor*, which, while turning a blind eye (literally, NO pun intended -- I don't want to vanish) looks like *Sponsor*...

Nah. Even that won't work. The Mafia dumps the body in the trunk ('boot' for the Anglophile, *back dalla* for the fiercely anti-western) of the car. The local version won't have that luxury, thanks to the enormous CNG tank in the back.

How about David Copperfield performs his classic disappearing act in Narayanganj? Nope, it might be his last. Then again, he can survive by opening up C@ifurs, the Copperfield coaching center for proper magic. After all, the local magicians are failing to return the live props used in their disappearing acts.

Oh, well, I guess it's no luck with turning the city into a media attraction. Correction! It IS a media attraction now, but for being Paradise Goom. Narayanganj, an almost daily case of MH 370, while the country remains a biennial case of the *MV Sewol* (minus any high profile resignations). Cruel joke, but perhaps MH 370 is at the bottom of the Shitalakhya -- which continues to get even more polluted from heart wrenching discoveries floating on the river. Given a choice, we would happily settle for the river being a dyeing river from textiles rather than being a dying river from gentiles.

Well, money talks. Part of the dynamics behind the Narayanganj incidents is the drug trade. Perhaps Narayanganj can be renamed NarayanganjA.

But the conscientious have spoken. The media and the mass have erupted boldly. Perhaps the Mob fearing the potency of a mob, aka, the classic *gonopituni*, the Goom Goons promptly let go of the abducted Saiful Islam and the husband of Rizwana Hasan unscathed.

Selina Hayat Ivy has also been strongly vocal. To the perpetrators, she's Poison Ivy. For the rest, she's a league of her own -- the Ivy League.

Even the PM has ordered the State Minister for Home to arrest the abductors. Wonder what would have happened otherwise. I guess Bangladesh is the only country when an additional order is needed to finally get the job done -- you need an escalation of a crisis that leads to the escalation in decision making that leads to the escalation in corrective actions.

The State Minister goes on record with statistics. No, thank Heavens he DIDN'T say, "Rubbish! Seven is a negligible number." But what he did say is, "Abduction rates are down." He is correct. When a victim dies, it's technically no longer (just) a case of abduction, but that of homicide.

'Rate'. Sounds like the interest rate. Well, it's not tied to LIBOR, but measured on the Mexico City scale.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that the absolute number of abductions is not down to zero. The lesser of an evil is if the remaining ones are limited to being mere alien abductions.

But we refuse to give up hope. It is encouraging to see that there is a genuine drive to get things in order. We hold our collective breaths for a bright ending to a dark tale. Otherwise, Narayanganj will become the classic Wild West -- perfect for a sequel to the classic *High Noon* -- *High Goom*.

Meantime, don't start getting too happy. Want to get the euphoria level down? Just read the newspapers.

The writer is an engineer & CEO turned comedian (by choice), the host of NTV's *The Naveed Mahbub Show* and the

HAMID MIR

THERE are two types of traitors. The first type joins hands with foreign enemies and helps enslave his own people. Among the most prominent names in this category is Syed Jaffar Ali Khan, the chief of Sirajuddaulah's army. Today, Mir Jaffar's name is synonymous with treachery. Because of his treachery, Sirajuddaulah's army was defeated by the British forces in the battle of Plassey in 1757, paving the way to the occupation of a united India by the British.

The other kind of 'traitor' does not collaborate against foreign powers. Instead, he raises a voice against those powerful local interests who are bent on collaborating with foreign powers in the name of 'patriotism.' Most of this second category of traitor do not carry arms, deploy tanks or possess fighter aircraft. All they have as weapons are their tongues, with which they speak the truth; or they write the truth with their pens. When they speak or write the truth, those with guns get rattled and label them traitors.

Our history is brimming with this second category of traitors. At present, a campaign has been launched to label people like myself and some other journalists in this second category. Those who live under the shadow of the gun not only want to label me or my organisation Geo TV as a traitor but they also want to revoke my citizenship.

What is my crime? An assassination attempt was made on my life few days ago in Karachi. I got six bullet injuries and Geo TV aired the suspicion of my family that elements within the country's premier intelligence ISI could be the mastermind of that attack because I informed my management many times recently that some ISI officials were trying to use extremists to silence my voice. I was unconscious when my family made that statement about ISI using extremists against me. When I opened my eyes on the day after the attack I endorsed the stand taken by my family. ISI immediately sent a reference to the govern-

ment for declaring Geo TV as traitor. Some banned militant outfits, including Hafiz Saeed of LeT, came on the roads in support of ISI. They want the government to declare me and my organisation as traitors.

It seems such forces have been working for decades to dub me a traitor. At times, they have labelled someone making a political speech attacking dictatorship as a traitor, and at other times poems in praise of democracy were dubbed treasonous. The men with guns had used this label to describe Fatima Jinnah, the sister of our founding father Mohammad Ali Jinnah, despite the fact that she played a prominent role in the Pakistan Movement. When military dictator Ayub Khan moved to subvert democracy, Miss Jinnah mocked the power of the men with guns. When she fought the presidential election against the dictator, powerful people labelled her an Indian agent and traitor.

I became a traitor by the name of Habib Jalib simply because I wrote poems condemning the army action in Dhaka in 1971. The regime of the dictator General Yahya Khan who ordered the surrender of troops in Dhaka not only labelled me a traitor but also threw me in prison.

I was then called a traitor in the name of Pashtun nationalist Wali Khan, Baluch Nationalists Ghaus Bux Bizenjo and Ataulah Mengal, even though these leaders had played a key role in framing the Constitution of 1973 and pledged loyalty to Pakistan under that Constitution. Next, I was labelled a traitor by the name of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto who gave us constitution of 1973. My elected government was toppled and I was dubbed an Indian agent. I was then falsely implicated in a murder case and sent to the gallows. It was during the regime of General Ziaul Haq, the military dictator who hanged Bhutto, that India occupied the heights of Siachen. During this period politicians like Benazir Bhutto, Maulana Fazlur Rahman, poets like Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Ahmed Faraz, and my father Waris Mir as well as countless political workers, journalists, poets, and writers were labelled traitors.

Dubbing a war fought for the sake of foreign interests as 'patriotism,' Ziaul Haq introduced the culture of the Kalashnikov, sectarianism, linguistic and ethnic divisions and narrow provincialism in the country. To weaken the political forces arrayed against him, Zia doled out guns to certain religious groups, and along with the accusations of treachery, *fatwas* declaring people 'kaafir' too became part of the political discourse.

When another prime minister, Nawaz Sharif, refused to bow before the power of the gun in 1999, his government too was toppled and a case was lodged against him for hijacking; and he too was declared a traitor.

Then I was labelled a traitor under the name of Akbar Bugti, even though I had voted in favour of Pakistan when it was born in 1947. For this, I was driven in my old age to a cave deep in the hills of Balochistan which became my final refuge and where I was killed. My killing was blamed on General Musharraf, a man who subverted the Constitution of Pakistan not once but twice. Musharraf was termed a usurper by the Supreme Court of Pakistan, yet his supporters continue to call me and my family traitors.

Although ostensibly there is democracy in the country today, yet the men with guns have held democracy hostage. Elected governments and superior courts looks helpless in front of the people with guns. Through certain sell-out politicians, maulvis and intellectuals, those who champion the freedom of the press are being termed traitors once again. The wisdom of those sell-out individuals seems to be tied to the laces of the heavy boots.

Today, I do not seek to address those who have sold their conscience to the enemies of democracy but to address you directly. I want to tell you that only a person like me who has suffered bullet wounds on his own body can feel the importance of the sacrifices of our brave soldiers. I too salute the sacrifices of our brave soldiers for the defence of the country.

But remember, these men offer sacrifices for my country and not to protect the unconstitutional privileges of a handful of people. You will not be able to hide your crimes behind the sacrifices of our brave soldiers. You represent the past that has fanned repression and injustice and the trampling of the rights of the smaller provinces. I am the representative of that hope that wants to see every institution in Pakistan bound by the Constitution. You believe the Constitution is a joke and every day you betray your contempt for the Constitution. To save a dictator from a treason trial, you kick up a hue and cry and label others traitors. I believe those who subvert the Constitution are the enemies of the country.

You divide terrorists into 'good' and 'bad' categories to confuse the people. I believe in unveiling your deceit. You aim to further your personal interests by handing over the country's bases to foreign powers. You allow drone strikes on your own country and term your opportunism as patriotism. I believe such patriotism is a slight on the name of Pakistan. I believe in peace. You want to fan a civil war. I believe in holding my head high and speaking the truth to everyone. You believe in stabbing people in the back.

Agreed you are very powerful because you have guns and tanks. But I do not want to beg you for a certificate of patriotism. If Fatima Jinnah could be called a traitor, if Jalib, Bhutto, Faiz, Wali Khan, Mengal, and Akbar Bugti were traitors, I accept being called a traitor. I promise if you have me declared a traitor by any court or have a maulvi issue a *fatwa* for my death, I will not deny your accusation. Your charge will be a favour to me. Whether you hang me like Bhutto or have me murdered like Bugti, I will not be stopped from speaking the truth.

I want to be murdered by your hands, so I can live on in history. The verdict of who is or is not a traitor cannot be pronounced by a secret agency but by history.

The writer is Executive Editor, Geo Television (Pakistan).

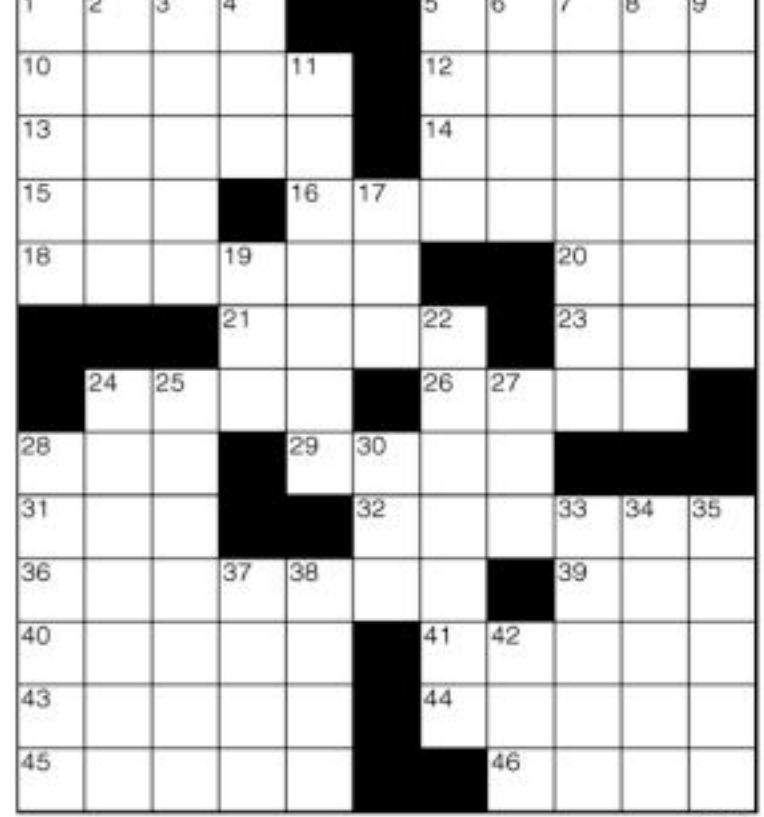
QUOTABLE Quote

Silence never won rights. They are not handed down from above; they are forced by pressures from below.

Roger Baldwin

CROSSWORD by Thomas Joseph

- ACROSS
- DOWN
- 1 Play makeup
- 1 Ready to swing
- 5 Big party
- 2 Pursue
- 10 Massenet opera
- 3 Lighting home
- 12 Aerie builder
- 4 Bro or sis
- 13 Thumper's pal
- 5 Wagers
- 14 Grove sight
- 6 Escapade
- 15 Pharaoh's symbol
- 7 Long in the past
- 16 Tracy/Hepburn film
- 8 Think about overnight
- 18 Service for a social
- 9 Checked out
- 20 Clumsy fellow
- 11 Brandy cocktail
- 21 Great serves
- 17 Summer, in Paris
- 23 Zeus or apollo
- 19 Texas' Houston
- 24 Capital of Italia
- 22 Greet, in a way
- 26 Heaps
- 24 European resort area
- 28 Gloss target
- 25 Kind of mining
- 29 Hold power
- 27 Kayo count
- 31 "-- had it!"
- 28 Completely clear
- 32 Romantic time of day
- 30 Apply
- 36 Way of thinking
- 33 Church feature
- 39 Hole number
- 34 Consumed
- 40 Invigorate
- 35 Lock of hair
- 41 Select group
- 37 Desert sight
- 43 "Three Sisters" sister
- 38 Prepare for a fight
- 44 Begets
- 42 Top
- 45 Librarian's stamp
- 46 Bears' lairs



CRYPTOQUOTE
WRK'M WM KWON MT MLWKB MLYM
MTSTZZTD WR Y KND UYC DWML KT
SWRMYBNR WK WM CNM?
-- Q.S. STKMHTSNZC

Yesterday's CRYPTOQUOTE:
HAPPINESS IS WHEN WHAT YOU THINK,
WHAT YOU SAY AND WHAT YOU DO ARE IN
HARMONY.
-- MAHATMA GANDHI

Yesterday's answer

SAUCER STAB
ABRADE THRU
DANCES REED
ANTEUP
ISTO STRAP
NTH MASSIVE
CUE ARANAT
AMPLIFY CIA
SPAIN SELL
USEDUP
RAPT ATONCE
EPEE MAKEUP
BERN SHEETS

AXYDLBAAX 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

