

Sushma visit: 36 hrs of quality time



SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

PLEASURE IS ALL MINE

INDIAN External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj's visit to Dhaka was impeccably organised, be it her homework on bilateral issues with great attention to detail, exchange of views across the table or carrying gifts for her Bangladeshi hosts on the sidelines. Sushma recalled buying sarees and presenting them to Hasina when as opposition leader the latter had visited New Delhi decades ago.

Let alone the government side, now it is BNP leader Khaleda Zia who has a gift of Jamdani saree at the ready to offer to Sushma when both meet. Khaleda's enthusiasm for the meeting is understandable as a leader of a major party and so is BJP's gesture in keeping touch with all major political parties in Bangladesh appreciated.

Sushma very thoughtfully made a phone call to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee before leaving for Dhaka. The UPA government's apparent miscommunication with Mamata had put a spanner in the works of Teesta pact. Mamata wished Sushma a useful visit requesting her to convey the chief minister's good wishes to the people and government of Bangladesh. A now apparently happy Mamata complained of the UPA government keeping her in the dark about developments on Teesta water treaty.

Anandabazar Patrika alluding to Mamata hilariously suggested that while Sushma discussed weighty issues with Bangladesh, she should not forget tasting *Hilsha* from Barisal and Bhola!

So much for the light-hearted and lively temper to any important Indian dignitary's trip-eve mood in an attempt to lessen the stress of serious business on the table with Bangladesh! Recall Congress leader Mani Shankar Ayrer's booming announcement that 'Bangladesh was more important to India than India to Bangladesh (so India of its own will cultivate Bangladesh).'

A major Indian newspaper, *The Hindu*, in an op-ed titled 'What India needs to do' by Suhasini Haidar made a very pertinent observation on Indo-Bangla equations:



High Commission of India, Dhaka.

"In 2013 in a survey commissioned by *The Hindu* and conducted by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), more Indians had a favourable opinion of Bangladesh than of any of the other countries named. According to CSDS, when asked which countries India should trust a 'great deal' or 'somewhat,' 48% chose Bangladesh, even ahead of India's old friend Russia (46%)."

The turnaround in Indian public opinion was attributed to Awami League leader Sheikh Hasina's coming to power in 2009 and allaying the Indian concerns over cross border insurgency in its North-East.

Thus, it is now India's turn to reverse the adverse public opinion in Bangladesh about India. This it can do by ratifying the LBA, transferring the adverse enclave possessions, signing Teesta water-sharing accord, resolving other common river water problems, stopping border killings, among others.

The Modi government has prioritised peace and stability in the neighbourhood. Pure pragmatism dictates it to root for regional stability and peace. Without such an assured environment the fast-lane Gujrat-type growth that he has promised to replicate for the whole of India cannot be guaranteed.

Although Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj's visit to Dhaka has been termed as a goodwill

one with no specific agenda, there was more to it than meets the eye. On a few counts, the visit may have conveyed an extra bit of significance: First, Bangladesh may have been keen to understand as to where Delhi's perception of a threshold lies in respect of Dhaka-Beijing partnership for development. Then, there is a new spurt in Japan-Bangla cooperation. Japan has a Bay of Bengal belt concept including a vision for a string of industries along it. Add to this the BCIM trajectory that Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar would like embark on in pursuit of sub-regional growth through all kinds of connectivity. Indian strategist Dr. C. Rajmohan floated the idea of developing Bay of Bengal resources in conjunction with Myanmar and Bangladesh. Importantly, India-Bangladesh case in terms of maritime boundary delimitation is up for arbitration in early July.

Whilst geo-political constellation has a configuration that will have its bearing on realpolitik, stability in Bangladesh, the 8th largest populous country in the world is a key element in the matrix. It is, therefore, that political order in Bangladesh be strong and inclusive, based on the fullest extent of intra- and inter-party democratisation at play.

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The Gods Themselves



NAVEED MAHBUB

HUMOROUSLY YOURS

800 members of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) get 30,000 Iraqi security personnel, all trained under US standard specifications, to put down their weapons and run. Even the French goes, "What?" ISIS starts a crisis that may split Iraq into slices. Then again, how do you slice something that is already crushed?

So, who is this new kid on the block? Let's first look at Ancient Egypt. The goddess Nut has a daughter Isis, the goddess who is the protector of the dead. Isis has a son Horus, the hawk-headed god of war. This may explain the modern day ISIS becoming a hawk-headed nut in being the creator of the dead.

Now let's look at modern day Egypt. ISIS, if spelled from right to left, is Sisi. Hence the blitz?

Oh I don't know. All I DO know is that even Chris Rock envies the reach of one single 'humorous' Tweet of ISIS, thanks to the hash tag with 'WorldCup': "This is our ball -- made of skin..."

ISIS, please don't quit your daytime job. On second thoughts, please DO quit your daytime job and leave the comedy to Dick Cheney. For Cheney and his daughter Liz writes in the *Op-Ed of the Wall Street Journal* (even first-world broods blindly follow the parents): "Rarely has a US president been so wrong about so much at the expense of so many." If you want a good throw-up session, you can read the full text.

Not to be outdone, White House Press Secretary Jay Carney says, "Which President was he talking about?"

The Washington Comedy Festival continues. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid adds, "If there is one thing that this country does not need, it's that we should be taking advice from Dick Cheney on wars... Being on the wrong side of Dick Cheney is to be on the right side of history."

Senator John McCain is the last comic standing. He wants a bombing campaign based on Iraq's call for help. By the way Mr. Bush, now THIS is called the 'call for help', not quite sure what you heard 12 years ago...

So the US bombs the Sunnis on behalf of the Shias while the latter are supported by Iran, the sworn enemy of the US. Uhm, doesn't that mean that the US is bombing the US? We also then see a new addition to the Axis of Evil -- USA.

Seems the voice of BBC (Bush, Blair and Cheney) is alive and kicking: "We have already liberated ourselves of the notion that we had caused the current quagmire. Iraq was a success." I think that's what we all heard them say -- it was rather hard to hear them over the explosions in Mosul and Baghdad. Yes, yes, they did get the applause, but remember, we also clap to say, "PLEASE, stop!"

But if it's *Iraqi Idol*, then Bush, Blair and Cheney have long been voted out (electorally too). Not fair that Felani is shot while these washbucklers walk free and live on fat pensions. Can Dick Cheney at least serve time for shooting a hunting buddy in the face?

What about the silent but deadly disease in Iraq -- TB (Tony Blair)? TB lied and hundreds of thousands died. Perhaps he and Bush can be sent to Baghdad now for community service. Oh, outside the Green Zone!

And Iraq herself? Well, the Protestants and the Catholics fought it out in the 16th century. There were no third party invasions. Perhaps the world was too Christian then. The Sunnis and the Shias have fought for over a thousand years and may continue to do so for another millennium. While the conflict in Iraq is far more complex than a mere Shia-Sunni matter, if the US thinks they can solve this in twelve years, then by all means now go and also invade the Jehovah's Witness...

Iraq. We are sorry. The only person left to send to you now is Dennis Rodman...

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*.
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The winning model

ANU MUHAMMAD

THE day of budget declaration is a day of fear for the people in general. There is tension about another wave of price rise, along with the rise of tax burden. This year was no exception. Although there have always been complaints about government's general inefficiency, data shows that they have developed enough skill to increase revenue income, specially by expanding vat net and other taxes. The question remains, who pays and who gains? People are paying increased taxes in many forms but what are they getting in return? Better security? Better access to public education, healthcare, public transport? Clean water, playing field, open spaces? NO.

The model that made the roadmap

In the 1980s neo-liberal model of capitalism started rolling in many countries, including Bangladesh, in the form of implementing structural adjustment programmes prescribed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). This model got momentum after its 'successful implementation' in Chile, over thousands killed and many more disappeared, under the killer Pinochet regime.

Milton Friedman, the guru of neo-liberal (conservative) economics of Chicago University, served as special adviser to this military dictator. Naomi Klein, in her *Shock Doctrine*, vividly showed the nature of implementation of this model in different parts of the world that created 'disaster capitalism.' Based on research in different regions for four years, she revealed how war, genocide, occupation, militarisation and privatisation go together to give corporate world a big success.

The neo-liberal model, i.e., orthodox version of 'free market' capitalism, has actually been used as a theoretical tool to rationalise aggressive mode of capital accumulation in the phase of 'late capitalism,' as coined by Ernest Mandel. This model asks for privatising and corporatising everything under (and including) the sun: education, healthcare, water, river, forest ... making everything for market, bringing everything under corporate greed. Public services, state responsibility for providing health care, education, child and mother care, pure drinking water, public transport, security are not recognised as people's rights in this model. People must have money to buy everything they need, as citizens they cannot expect any right!

Therefore, though we had many changes in governments in Bangladesh in the last few decades, this model kept running with increasing strength. Beneficiaries of this model include multinationals, big business, bureaucrats, consultants, contractors, ministers, MPs, local grabbers.

Money and muscle

It is no wonder that grabbing of public resources and common properties has become a dominant economic activity in the country. Therefore, huge wealth in the form of 'black' money has been generated in the economy. These huge resources are accumulated in a few hands, those who are obviously powerful, well connected to or part of the government, and have blessings from global agencies as well. Illicit money flows from countries like Bangladesh is actually a good thing for global financial industry. A partial figure has recently been exposed by the 'Banks in Switzerland 2013' that said Bangladeshis have US\$414 million there -- a 60% increase from the earlier year (*Prothom Alo*, June 20, 2014). A Washington based think-tank reported that illicit financial flows from Bangladesh reached on average US\$ 1.2 billion a year (Dev Kar and Brian Le Blanc, 2013)!

Sources of this big underground or 'black' economy include: bribing, commissions from different bad deals, over and under invoicing, grabbing of public resources, fraud transfer, sex trade, women and child trafficking, drug business, smuggling, tax evasion, illegal transfer from MLM-Destiny-share market money, usurpation of public money. Well connected persons start with grabbing wealth beyond legal means and end up with multiplying that asset. They dictate politics, law, and government agencies.

The mere size of this accumulated underground money is self explanatory, the logical consequence is its further expansion through similar activities and investment. These produce and reproduce violence, crime, hooliganism and extreme insecurity in the society and environmental destruction.

Government legalising grabbing

The government has decided to identify, "unutilised land of the state-owned entities" for privatization. We have bitter experience of privatisation of the state-owned entities, where in many cases private owners closed down the running state-owned mills, and turned the land into shopping malls or real estate. This latest plan of the government was nothing but to create opportunities for the same encroachers to grab public lands.

Within three days of the declaration of budget for 2014-15, the inter-ministerial committee reviewed the detailed area plan of the Dhaka city and took decision to allow construction of buildings on water bodies and open spaces by changing the area plan. As it is reported, the committee is ready to approve 19 housing plots and projects that include projects of Bashundhara Housing at Badda, Cantonment and Gulshan, Hamid Real Estate and others. Approval for the 19 projects will call for a change in the land use plan, mostly from 'flood flow zone,' 'water body' and 'water retention area' to 'urban residential zone' or 'institutional zone.' (*New Age*, June 9, 2014)

Privatisation of power and energy sector turned gas and electricity into costly commodities, and increased subsidy for the corporate interest. Consequences include consistent price rise and its devastating effects on the productive sectors of the economy.

After making power sector a lucrative field for a few and a constant pain for the majority people, we are hearing about the government's efforts and commitments at 'prioritising' the sector. It is true that huge amount of public money has already been spent in this sector, government has borrowed money at unprecedented level, allocation in the sector in terms of money has been increased, subsidy has been skyrocketing. But where has this money gone?

Simple answer is: to the black holes. What are these black holes? They are rental and quick-rental power plants, the multinationals, vested interest groups, lobbyists and commission agents. Wrong policy and corruption are draining out a major portion of the public money.

Strengthening mineral resources division, building national capacity for increasing power generation, using efficient mix of renewable and non-renewable energy resources, expanding exploration and extraction activities by the national organisations are the minimum requirements to ensure energy security. But the policy has been the opposite. Therefore, no money was available for doing the most important things. The model asks for borrowing and spending more money to create more burdens!

In the apparent anarchy, inefficiency, indecision, or sometimes abrupt decisions, careful scrutiny may find a well organised roadmap for the sector. The roadmap is to turn power and energy sector into an open space for big business -- local and global -- at the cost of people and national economy. Erosion of national authority over its own resources and continuous price rise of gas, electricity and oil have really been a success of that roadmap.

I conclude by citing a letter from Davison Budhoo, a senior economist with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for more than 12 years. In his 100-plus pages open letter to Michel Camdessus, managing director of the IMF, titled "Enough is Enough" he said: "Today I resigned from the staff of the International Monetary Fund after over 12 years, and after 1000 days of official Fund work in the field, hawking your medicine and your bag of tricks to governments and peoples in Latin America and the Caribbean and Africa. To me resignation is a priceless liberation, for with it I have taken the first big step to that place where I may hope to wash my hands of what in my mind's eye is the blood of millions of poor and starving people."

The writer is Professor, Department of Economics, Jahangirnagar University, and Member Secretary, National Committee to protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Ports.

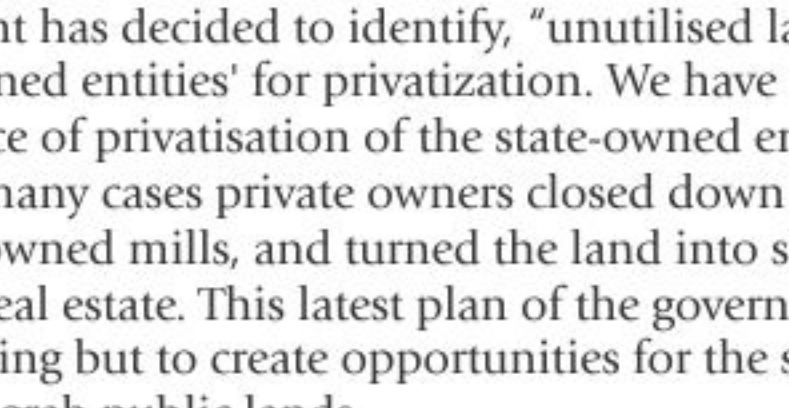
QUOTABLE Quote

It would be nice if the poor were to get even half of the money that is spent in studying them.

Bill Vaughan

CROSSWORD by Thomas Joseph

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------|
| ACROSS | DOWN |
| 1 Partiality | 1 One of the chessmen |
| 5 Hold tightly | 2 Sort of |
| 9 Remove suds from | 3 Inquired |
| 10 Daisy Mae's beau | 4 Mammal with flippers |
| 12 Japanese port | 5 Opening |
| 13 Jigsaw puzzle unit | 6 MLB stat |
| 14 "That's life" | 7 "The very thought" |
| 16 Mover's truck | 8 Praline nuts |
| 17 Frog's cousin | 9 Alex Haley book |
| 18 Scope | 11 Tenant's fee |
| 21 Secret agent | 15 "Move on already!" |
| 22 Takes the wheel | 19 TV warrior |
| 23 Back-bone | 20 Golf peg |
| 24 USSR premier Khrushchev | 21 Whirl |
| 26 That lady | 23 Njoy the slopes |
| 29 Model's job | 24 Noggin |
| 30 Atkins of country music | 25 "Honest!" |
| 31 Use oars | 26 Aussie gal |
| 32 "Sez who?" | 27 Fastball, in slang |
| 34 Perfect | 28 Old anesthetic |
| 37 Bring together | 29 Prudish person |
| 38 Forest clearing | 30 Jaded type |
| 39 Distance runner | 33 Runs smoothly |
| 40 Historic times | 35 Oklahoma city |
| 41 Surgery reminder | 36 -Miserables |



Yesterday's answer

A	S	T	A	R	O	O	K	S	
T	H	I	N	G	E	R	N	I	E
L	A	N	D	O	P	E	R	S	E
A	R	S	I	P	O	A	M	S	
S	I	E	N	N	A	A	M	E	S
F	L	A	G	S	H	I	P	S	
D	A	T	E	S					
W	H	I	T	E	F	L	A	G	
G	E	A	R	U	T	E	R	U	S
R	E	V	F	R	I	D	I	E	
I	N	A	N	E	N	O	N	E	
D	I	N	E	D	G	L	U	E	D
S	E	A	T	S	D	R	A	Y	

CRYPTOQUOTE

SUV RFKEEVRS WVWV PR MVSSVJ SUKO
SUV IJVKSQRS POSVOSPTO.
- CTUO MDJJTDIUR

Yesterday's CRYPTOQUOTE:

WHEN I'M DEAD, I WANT TO BE REMEMBERED AS A MUSICIAN OF SOME WORTHAND SUBSTANCE.
- FREDDIE MERCURY

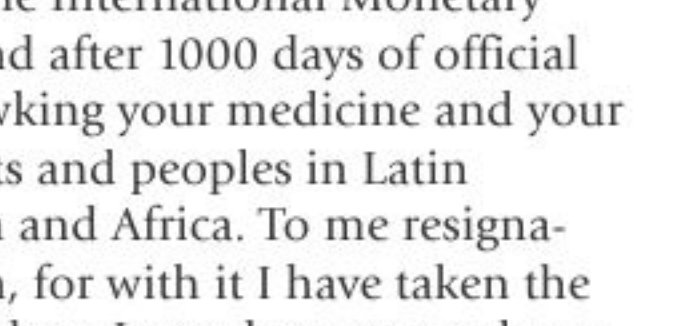
BEETLE BAILEY

THIS IS A LOUSY PLACE SARGE CHOSE TO DIG FOXHOLES

LOOK AT THE SIZE OF THESE ROCKS!

I THINK OTTO CHOSE THE SITE

GREG+MORT WALKER

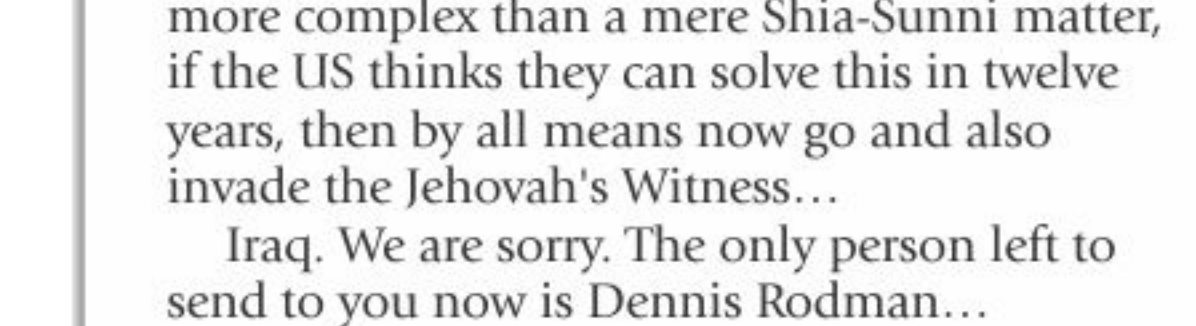


HENRY

HENRY! YOU'LL BE LATE FOR SCHOOL!

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.



by Don Tranchte

