

# Politics or performance art?



**KNOT SO TRUE**  
RUBANA HUQ

WITHIN the first 200 feet of the Banani Graveyard, there were at least 50 posters of a "valiant freedom fighter," "a haji" and the ruling party's local "ex general secretary" of that particular thana, expressing his "deepest respects" to Bangabandhu through his deftly photoshopped smiling mug shot which could have passed off as an advertisement of Colgate instead of a token of grief. August is indeed the cruellest month for Bangalis, but it is highly unacceptable to watch a senseless parody of appeasement through local leaders sponsoring and printing the grief banners with their own names and photos in banners (which cost 1200 taka per piece), gate décor (Taka 50000), posters (1800 taka per 100 pieces), billboards (Taka 12000) and spend another 100-500 on purchasing gum, ropes, people and engaging a van that is on rent at the rate of Taka 200 per hour to go around pasting their items of self promotion. Is this how we grieve for our Father of the Nation? Is this how we deal with our most unfortunate closures? Most unfortunately, many of these local leaders have learnt to walk but have no sight of their end goal. There is a lack of purpose here and the need to serve the people is no longer exists in their platter. What they don't realize is that these moves don't impress the voters and these don't secure their political lives and that, at the end, only purpose prevails and the end goal must be in sight.

Not long ago, Shahbag movement had gained a momentum. Unsure of sustainability, many seniors were advising the rebellious, dreamy bunch that the movement should have a specific time frame. The roads were not expected to remain occupied for too long; the regular people thronging to the site on their way back from office reminiscing their 1971 moments were not expected to gather forever. But then what? How could one close an awakening? How could one, in pure faith, foil their dreams and tell them that strings were being tied to them and very soon, the puppeteers would be taking the central stage and that they would soon be divided amongst themselves, inviting controversy and piling in relative oblivion...in no time.

When Imran Khan, the Tehrik-e-Insaf chief vouched for justice over the simple concept of "Roti Kapda Aur Makaan" (a 1974 Indian Bollywood film) back in February 2010, people believed him and he voted 34 of his members to the National Assembly in 2013 elections. So when Imran and Dr Qadri moved towards the D-Chowk last week and threatened to march on the Prime Minister House, the

government invoked Article 245 and troops began looking after the security of Islamabad. Imran's Azadi March seems to have suffered a blow while within PTI, leaders themselves debate on whether to stick firmly to their main demand of the prime minister's resignation or be flexible. Currently PTI is pressing for just a probe to Nawaz Sharif's role in "rigging" the elections last year. On ground, the Imran march was drummed up by media support from houses like GEO, which was taken off air for 15 days a few months ago. The screen is still sensationalizing Imran's stand, while the PTI chief's backchannel contact with Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan, continues.

In reality, while Imran Khan, draped

depend on stunts rather than on actual negotiation? What is the ultimate destination? One perhaps also needs to tell them that there is a thin line between politics and performing art and that perhaps, when lacking in political conviction, one ought to choose the latter.

The Serbian born performance artist, Marina Abramović, once drove a car in a circle for 16 hours. She is one of the biggest stars in the contemporary art world who became a legend at MoMA, when half a million people visited her show, waited patiently in line for hours to sit on a chair opposite the artist and stare into her eyes. She herself sat in the chair for 700 hours and 'sitting with Ms Abramović' became the most discussed New York event. Today is the last day of



in white kurta and with a red/green stole draping his "kaptan" frame stayed on top of the container, hoping that the moment was his, like many in South Asia, I stayed glued to the Geo TV screen and fed my daughter medicine which had expired two years ago. Ironically, just like the neglected Nyquil bottle on the medicine rack, rebellion must also come with a shelf life. That is the ultimate truth. Leaders must have a sense of their path, draw a route map and pledge rebellion or unflinching loyalty.

A few days, a labor leader was vowing a similar rebellion against the owner of Tuba Garments and finally concluded that she would now go to the court. The owner of Tuba had no work since May and closed the factory down, took the help of all quarters, got the bail and then finally declared closure. Instead of lobbying with specific authorities on compensation, the labor leader has opted for a muddy battleground where the route would involve giving "hope" to a few workers and somehow fuelling the rebellion and agitation and gaining advantage of a massive media exposure. Does the report card of a trade union

her being at the Serpentine Gallery in Kensington Gardens where Abramović's only tools will be herself, the audience and a selection of items that she may or may not choose to use. Upon arrival, visitors will leave their baggage behind, literally and metaphorically, and simply join the artist. Bags, jackets, electronic equipment, watches and cameras are not allowed. With every move, her audience will move with her and become the performing body, participating in art. By practice, Abramovic borders on the absurd while the diligent art critics write volumes about her. But Art is absurdly challenging and so is Politics. At the same time, it may seem equally difficult to understand a piece of art and a piece of politics. And...there may be times when even a performance artist will have more to offer to the followers when the performance comes to an end, while the undecided politician often gropes in the dark, marches towards uncertainty, pipes in vain and drowns the followers... himself unable to either declare war or subscribe with faith.

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# Rohingyas are full citizens of Myanmar

FAKHRUDDIN AHMED

ROHINGYA crisis has been weighing on the world's conscience for decades. The UN Human Rights Council lists Myanmar's 800,000 Rohingya Muslims among the world's most persecuted minorities. Residents of Myanmar for over 600 years, Rohingyas have been stripped of their Myanmar citizenship. Oppression and expulsion have been repeatedly perpetrated on them by Myanmar's Buddhist majority for centuries. An estimated 300,000 Rohingyas languish in Bangladeshi and Thai refugee camps.

Rohingya villages have been cordoned off, and many Rohingyas have been confined to concentration camps. Humanitarian agencies such as Doctors without Borders have been barred from entering and treating patients in those camps. Rohingyas are perishing while the world looks away.

Rohingya is an Indo-European Rohingya language; the words Rohingya means a resident of the state of Arakan. Myanmar has recently renamed the Rohingyas' tiny home state, Arakan, (5% of Myanmar) "Rakhine" to appease its Rakhine Buddhist residents. To obliterate every trace of Rohingya heritage, Myanmar government has deleted the ethnic category "Rohingya" from the official list and replaced it with "Bengalis," with the innuendo that the Rohingyas are illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, which they are not.

Buddhist King Narameikhla first invited the Rohingyas to Arakan from neighboring India as advisors and courtiers in the 1430s. In 1785, Buddhist Burmese from the south conquered Arakan, massacred Rohingyas and expelled many to British Bengal, eliciting unwelcome British attention.

The British took control of Arakan through the First Anglo-Burmese War (1824-26) and encouraged Indian immigration to the sparsely populated region. Through two additional wars, Burma was fully incorporated into British India in 1885.

At the outset of World War II Britain abandoned Arakan. While Burmese nationalists sided with Japan, the Rohingyas remained loyal to the British and served as spies behind Japanese lines. This infuriated the Japanese who embarked on a hideous pogrom of torture, rape and murder against the Rohingyas, driving thousands into Bengal.

Between Burma's independence in 1948 and General Ne Win's putsch in 1962, the Rohingyas advocated a separate Rohingya nation in Arakan. The junta brutally crushed Rohingya nationalism.

After Myanmar army's 1978 "Dragon King" operation drove 300,000 Rohingyas to Bangladesh, the junta enacted the draconian Burma Citizenship Law in 1982 with the malicious intent of making the Rohingyas stateless, "resident foreigners," to be repatriated worldwide.

The law stipulates that a full citizen of Myanmar must belong to one of the ten "national races" (Rohingyas are excluded), or their ancestors must have settled in Burma before the British invasion of 1824. Rohingyas do not qualify for the two lesser citizenships either which require the illiterate peasants to produce documentary evidence of their centuries-long residency in Myanmar.

Colonial Britain had also encouraged Indian immigration to Africa and the West Indies as indentured workers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, yet citizenships for those immigrants and their progeny has never been in question. Neither should it be for the Rohingyas.

No internationally acceptable metric can deny the Rohingyas Myanmar's citizenship. It is unconscionable to disenfranchise people who have lived in Myanmar for hundreds of years before current Myanmar was founded. In a civilized society, the

majority cannot legislate away the citizenship rights of a despised minority. This is ethnic cleansing through legislation.

Critics call the anti-Rohingya vendetta linguistically, religiously and racially motivated. While 89% of the Myanmar's population practice Theravada Buddhism and are of Mongoloid stock, the Rohingya Muslims are easily identifiable by their dark skin.

Amnesty International reports that "the Rohingyas' freedom of movement is severely restricted," and "they are also subjected to various forms of extortion and arbitrary taxation, land confiscation, forced eviction and house destruction." They are used as forced laborers on roads and military camps. By law, they are forbidden to have more than two children. The children are born stateless, perpetuating their bleak future.

As non-citizens, Rohingyas are treated as illegal immigrants, with restrictions on movement, no right to own land, receive an education or public service. This is unacceptable. The world must persuade Myanmar to amend the ill-intentioned law and restore the Rohingyas' citizenship rights. Nothing short of full citizenship for the Rohingyas will solve the crisis.

The current anti-Rohingya crusade is spearheaded by Buddhist monks, notably Ashin Wirathu, who proudly calls himself "Buddhist Bin Laden" and warns that the Rohingyas (1.4% of population), aim to subjugate Myanmar. He laments that Buddhists have already lost Afghanistan, Malaysia and Indonesia to Islam; he is not about to let that happen in Myanmar on his watch. Monks are greatly respected in Myanmar.

Myanmar's most respected citizen, Aung San Suu Kyi, is ambivalent about the Rohingyas' citizenship status, saying that she does not know if Rohingyas qualify as Myanmar's citizens. The Economist noted that Suu Kyi's "halo has even slipped among foreign human-rights lobbyists disappointed at her failure to take a clear stand on behalf of the Rohingya minority."

On May 7, 2014, the US Congress passed a resolution urging the Burmese government to end the persecution of the Rohingyas. America and its President are greatly admired in Myanmar, as President Obama experienced firsthand during his Myanmar visit in 2012. If the President and the Congress and the world firmly demand that the Rohingyas must be given full citizenship before further trade with Myanmar, Myanmar will see the wisdom of acceding.

One expected the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, Presidential Medal of Freedom and Congressional Gold medal, and a current member of Myanmar's House of Representatives, Aung San Suu Kyi, to speak out against the human rights abuse of the Rohingyas, just as her father, General Aung San, had done. The world stood by Ms. Suu Kyi during her travails. She should do no less for her beleaguered Rohingya compatriots.

I should also like to suggest to Bangladesh government that it does not behoove Bangladesh to compete with Myanmar in inflicting cruelty on the Rohingyas. Granted that unlike Myanmar, Bangladesh is a very densely populated country. Still, it is unconscionable to ban marriages between Rohingyas and Bangladeshis, or between Rohingyas themselves. Instead, Bangladesh should extend its legendary hospitality towards the Rohingyas, shelter and feed them well, offer them medical service, educate their children, and take some Rohingyas in. After all, the Rohingyas' ancestors had lived in the area.

Generosity nourishes the soul of a nation. Hatred towards others not only destroys an individual, it can also destroy a nation. By treating the Rohingya refugees humanely with dignity, impoverished Bangladesh can teach humanity to those nations who lack it.

The writer is a Rhodes Scholar.

**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.

**CRYPTOQUOTE**  
IZ IZKSP'D IEQ MIZ'A DZIAMC QS OEHQ ACS KEIUS; PSKGHZD HO IZKSPD MIZ'A MHZOGZS QS ACSEX.  
- SJXIEJ FHTZK

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: **WOMEN AND CATS WILL DO AS THEY PLEASE, AND MEN AND DOGS SHOULD RELAX AND GET USED TO THE IDEA.**  
-ROBERT A. HEINLEIN

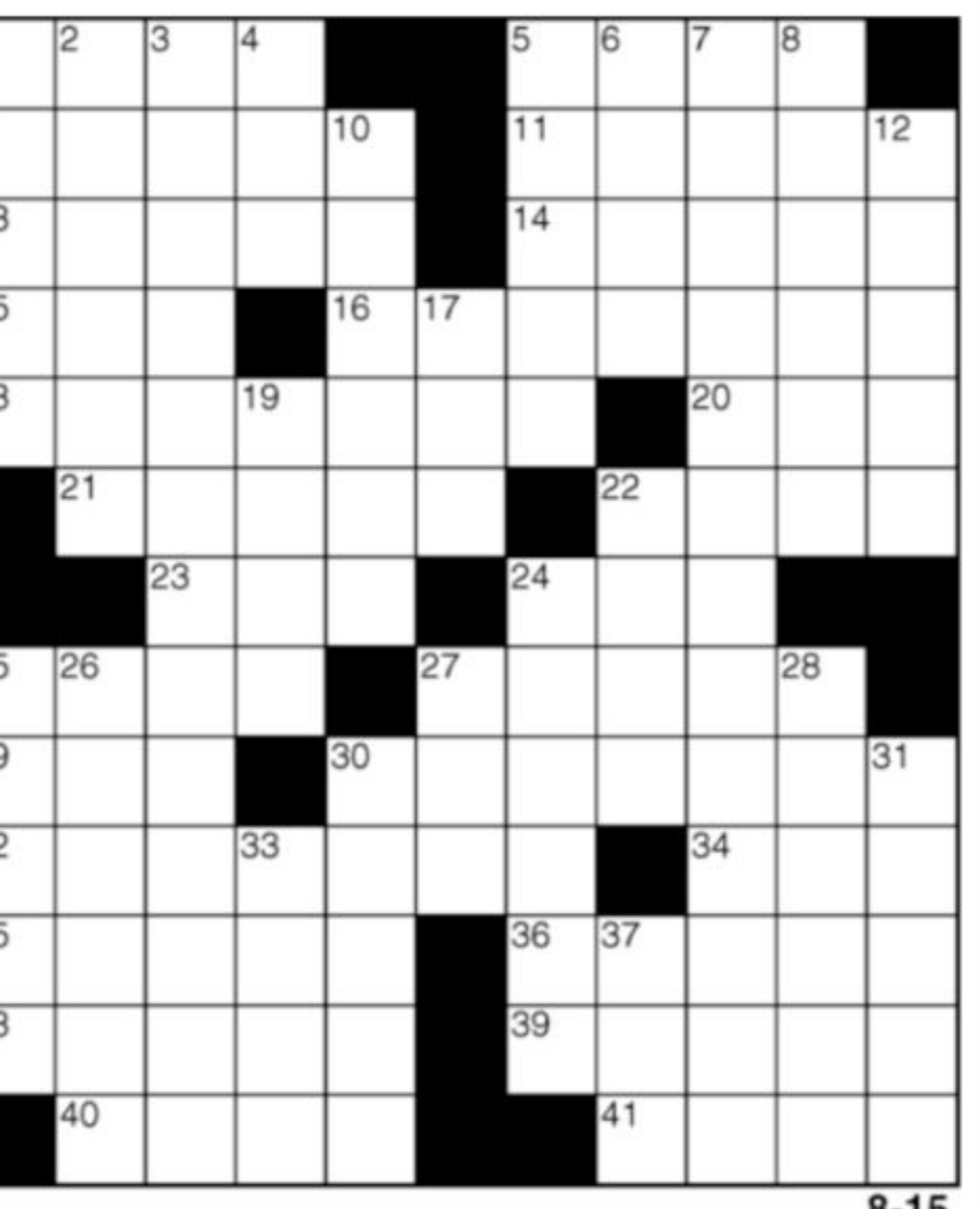
**QUOTABLE Quote**  
The most perfidious way of harming a cause consists of defending it deliberately with faulty arguments.  
-Friedrich Nietzsche

## YESTERDAY'S ANSWER



## CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- |                       |                             |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>ACROSS</b>         | <b>DOWN</b>                 |
| 1 "Memory" musical    | 1 Docket listings           |
| 5 Diamond clubs       | 2 Voters and drinkers, e.g. |
| 9 Impromptu           | 3 1949 Lassie movie         |
| 11 Aisle worker       | 4 Lawn material             |
| 13 Shoe material      | 5 City vehicles             |
| 14 Martin of movies   | 6 Hammett pooch             |
| 15 Golfer Ernie       |                             |
| 16 Traveling trunk    |                             |
| 18 Artists' places    |                             |
| 20 "...man -- mouse?" |                             |
| 21 Pig part           |                             |
| 22 "Fargo" director   |                             |
| 23 Web address piece  |                             |
| 24 Director Howard    |                             |
| 25 School event       |                             |
| 27 Deserve            |                             |
| 29 Crater part        |                             |
| 30 Bullies            |                             |
| 32 Pigged out         |                             |
| 34 Bill stamp         |                             |
| 35 Mexican moolah     |                             |
| 36 Cussed             |                             |
| 38 Publicity act      |                             |
| 39 Put in stitches    |                             |
| 40 Relaxing resorts   |                             |
| 41 Concludes          |                             |
|                       | 7 John Steinbeck novel      |
|                       | 8 Harsh                     |
|                       | 10 Soft metal               |
|                       | 12 Showed over              |
|                       | 17 Young one                |
|                       | 19 Downfall                 |
|                       | 22 Bottle plug              |
|                       | 24 School break             |
|                       | 25 Respect, in slang        |
|                       | 26 Metal fasteners          |
|                       | 27 Cambridgesch             |
|                       | 28 Saw the sights           |
|                       | 30 They may be checkered    |
|                       | 31 Calls for                |
|                       | 33 Writer Jaffe             |
|                       | 37 Minus-cule               |



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Master degree from any recognized public / private university (preferably in business discipline) with good track record. Age: up-to 32 years. Experience: Minimum 02 years in retail/institution level marketing and operating manpower as well as ability to handle sales monitoring of 4 to 5 administrative Upazillas/Police Stations (Thana).

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