

The need to negotiate is now



KNOT SO TRUE
RUBANA HUQ

IT'S a condolence meet. Heads have gathered around a single figure and are seen consoling. The loss was inevitable. Whatever happened has happened. And finally the ultimate Nietzschean monologue: This too shall pass has been uttered. After all we all live for hope. The person who has suffered the loss is the only one knows what grief truly means. He knows what it was to nurture and then finally lose out to uncertain winds that uproot him. Special prayers are offered. All pray for a graceful closure. All pray for such a tragedy never to happen again. This is not a family scene and this is not home. The venue is the office of a company that exports garments; the people grieving are all merchants of the office soothing their colleague who has just had to air 100,000 pieces of garments which cost the company US \$130,000. The price was US \$ 7.00 and the cutting and making charge was US \$1.5 per piece. Air freight has eaten into the CM and the company will now have only 20 cents in hand that will obviously not cover not even 10% of costs. The session of grieving would have ended with colleague gathering around the aggrieved party, but the extra long stretch to the prayer session was simply because the company is also facing a reputation loss. The buyer at the brand head office has panicked because of a 12 days delay and since the stores have empty shelves, he has had to impose airfreight on the manufacturer. While the manufacturer goes on to talk about the 12 days delay not being "that" deviant specially taking the Eid holidays in consideration, the buyer considers even a single day's delay as a delay, and therefore a penalty is obvious. Meantime, the entire head office of the brand is experiencing Chinese Whisper. All are talking about how that particular supplier has failed the flow.

This is a regular scenario for many manufacturers. For many, a 5% discount and airfreight is a happening thing in peak months specially when the national calendar has a 10-day holiday cycle at the factories with both the Eids happening at a two and a half months difference. Why should the buyer be festival-sensitive anyway? Shop floors don't slow down because factories in the third world are closed. Therefore, during any crisis or emergency, hundreds of manufacturers end up being super eager to procure business and as a result just end up not negotiating hard enough for a better price and a better lead-time.

Hundreds of manufacturers in this country are busy trying to deal with the outcome of their audits and guess what, at the end of the day, they are mostly ending up with a list labeled: Corrective Action Plan which specifies dates and promises remediation. There are huge investments to be made and even without much pressure from the brands, most of the owners are busy buying "fire resistant" doors and building "fire resistive" walls. Point is, where is the picture of labor here? What about the basic Workers' Welfare Fund that we should have meaningfully invested in long ago, where the buyer and the seller would match each other's contribution and set up a substantial fund from where the workers would be able to draw money from in case of need. Truth is, the garment manufacturers are busy defending their positions in media where Tuba/Tazreen seems to be the general picture for the entire industry, where Rana Plaza seems to have sent out the message of overall non-compliance out to the world, where Hallmark stands as the face of bad loans, bad news and bad name. So at a time when this community needs to negotiate harder and make a mark with investing in workers and technology, more than half of the community is busy responding to emergency situations. In the process, most manufacturers are unable to bargain the right terms with the buyers. By right terms, your columnist means better arrangements of delivery that will give the brands and the manufacturers the prestigious label of a sustained sourcing-supply chain. And that prestige can only come from working with labor and improving their lot.

At a global level, there are retailers, importers and European manufacturers who are pressing the EU policymakers for a clearer and stringent trade agenda which includes a feasibility assessment of EU-China FTA and the total overall of EU trade law which stressed on working conditions. At the same time, ASEAN member states and China have agreed on a negotiation to upgrade the ASEAN China Free Trade Area (ACTFA), the largest FTA in the world that will give the economies a target to achieve US\$500 billion in trade by 2015 whereas the current figure rests at US\$350.5 billion that accounts for 14% of ASEAN's total trade including a 9.7% increase year on year. In the meantime, Chinese model is also being seriously questioned by the US that focuses on the historically under-valued renminbi, air pollution that caused more than 470,000 deaths in 2008, widespread corruption, lack of regulation of contracts, poor protection of intellectual property rights and treatment of labor. But there are more countries like India that are keen to explore ties with China, and have just signed an MoU with China

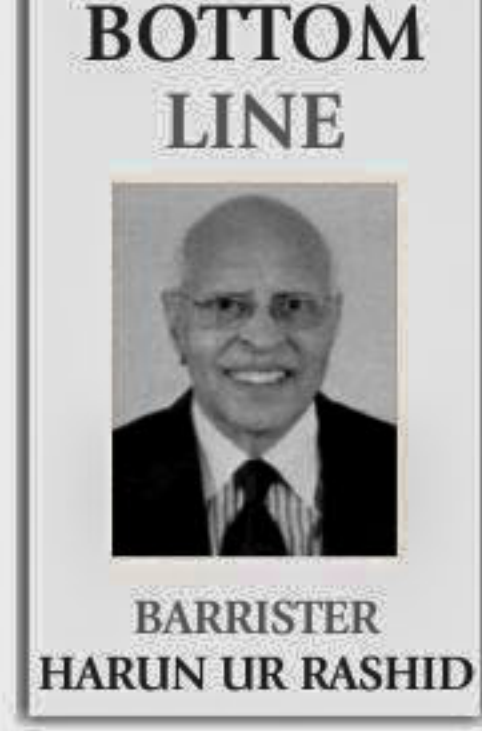
to promote businesses to exchange technologies and enter into joint ventures. Bilateral trade between India and China has reached US\$75.5 billion in 2011-12 with a trade deficit of \$40billion. In the meantime, in Myanmar, brands have detected poor pay, poor working conditions, proof of under-age workers, excessive working hours, lack of disciplinary policies, lack of fire safety and weak structural integrity in the Myanmar factories. Yet, the US and Myanmar have just announced going ahead with promoting fundamental labor rights in Myanmar. The strategy will promote internationally recognized labor standards and encourage decent business practices in Myanmar. Needless to say, in spite of any negative observation, in paper, Myanmar will still end up being the international model in the next 5 years. That's it. This is how a particular nation is promotion or dropped. Bangladesh probably happens to be in the West's current drop list.

In order to fight the negativity that hangs around like an ominous cloud over the country's manufacturing sector, the entrepreneurs have little choice but to improve their commitments to labor. With every negotiation, the manufacturers will need to plead for improved working conditions in the sector that can only be brought about with a decent price. While China will continue being the giant of this century, while India will always manage to carve out an innovative economic landscape, while Myanmar will continue being showcased by the West, Bangladeshi entrepreneurs too must emphasize on labor, make meaningful changes and maximize opportunities that come their way.

Long ago, in a journal, Young India on December 20, 1928, Gandhi had pleaded against industrialization. He wrote: "God forbid that India should ever take to industrialization after the manner of the West. The economic imperialism of a single tiny island kingdom (England) is keeping the world in chains. If an entire nation of 300 million took to a similar economic exploitation, it would strip the world bare like locusts." The same India today boasts of growth and instead of the concept of the evolving Gandhian villages, India's space has towns popping up like popcorns bursting in a microwave. Let us not allow industry to dehumanize us. Let the careful consideration of working through our challenges, prioritizing labor be our route-map. While we focus on worker's training, awareness and drills, the checklist of 'just' compliance relating to 'just' sprinklers and 'just' fire doors can wait a few more years.

The writer is Managing Director, Mohammadi Group.

Attracting Japanese investment



BOTTOM LINE
BARRISTER HARUN UR RASHID

THE visit of the Japanese prime minister has been very successful for his country, Japan got what it wanted. Dhaka has withdrawn its candidacy for a non-permanent seat at the Security Council for 2016-17, the election that will take place at current session of the UN General Assembly. Because of the withdrawal, Japan is likely to secure a seat uncontested on the Council from the Asia-Pacific region.

Abe wants to play a high-profile global role and the Security Council is the best forum for Japan to achieve it. Furthermore, Japan supports American policy to contain China's influence in the Asia Pacific region, and Japan is likely to use the Council to this end.

At the end of talks between the two prime ministers, a joint communiqué was issued. It consists of 25 paragraphs emphasizing deepening bilateral relations on political, economic, cultural, and peace and security issues. It does not mention any new commitment of Japanese funds to Bangladesh which it had expected following its withdrawal of candidacy.

However, Prime Minister Abe, reportedly, has told the Bangladesh-Japan Business Forum that Japanese entrepreneurs want to invest in Bangladesh's transport, infrastructure, power, and garment sectors, among others, to boost bilateral economic cooperation.

In the communiqué, to attract investments from Japanese companies, Prime Minister Abe emphasized on location, competitive incentives, improvement of infrastructure and labor supply issues which are critical factors for Special Economic Zones (SEZs). He further stressed the need for improving services rendered by Bangladesh's foreign investment regulatory authorities and making serious effort to ensure stable supply of primary energy and power to the industries. In this context, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina directed relevant authorities to address these issues as soon as possible.

What Bangladesh needs is to create investment facilities in the country. Japanese companies want efficient, speedy and workable "one stop service". This means all relevant government agencies-BOI, Bangladesh Bank, BEPZA, and BEZA should be easily accessible to them at one place. In addition, good governance, an independent judiciary, and investor-friendly laws are requisites for sound business climate and the absence of these would shy the investors away.

Some of the searching questions that Japanese investors would like to ask before investing in Bangladesh are as follows.

For instance, is the country politically stable? How skilled is human capital? Has it good roads and transport system? Are the ports working at their best? Has Bangladesh introduced sound macroeconomic policy for investment? Will the policies be intact with the change of a government? How long does it take to operate a business? Statistics show that in Singapore it takes only five to eight days to start a business with a telephone, while it takes at least 35 days, if not longer, in Bangladesh. Recently, CPD added a few factors such as corruption and restrictive labour regulations as barriers to investment.

The two prime ministers shared a view on the direction of economic cooperation to be pursued under the initiative of the Bay of Bengal Industrial Growth Belt (BIG-B) and the need for strengthening collaboration and cooperation in project formulation and implementation through policy dialogue

In June, JAICA President mentioned that to realize the potentials of BIG-B, it emphasized on two points. First, construction of deep seaport at Matarbari which can be developed into a massive supply base of primary energy (such as coal, LNG, and oil).Electricity produced from those sources can support a quantum leap in industry and trade, not only within the area covered by BIG-B but also all over Bangladesh. Secondly, the construction of Dhaka-Chittagong-Cox's Bazar highway.

The strategic location of Bangladesh between Southeast Asia and South Asia can provide the gateway to the sea for the South Asian hinterlands, comprising Bhutan, Nepal and India's seven North-Eastern states. These land-locked area is now considered to be a huge untapped market with more than 70 million people. This means that Bangladesh can be a "hub" of the regional economy. In addition, Bangladesh is also able to play a vital role as an inter-regional intersection between South-East Asia and South Asia.

Economists say that investment up to 34% of GDP is needed in the next three to five years to cut poverty and to become a middle-income country by 2021. In this respect private international capital flows, particularly foreign investment are vital complements to national development efforts. It is particularly important for its potential to transfer knowledge, technology, create jobs, boost overall productivity, enhance competitiveness and promote entrepreneurship. Eventually it eradicates poverty through economic growth and development.

Japanese companies are ready to invest and it is up to Bangladesh authorities to meet the Japanese investor's expectations. Bangladesh must not fail to seize this great opportunity to build a comprehensive economic partnership with Japan which will help the country reach to a higher economic growth.

The writer is former Bangladesh Ambassador to the UN, Geneva.

Dhaka is the global epicentre for celebration

MANZOOR AHMED

A half century ago, in 1965, the World Conference of Ministers on the Eradication of Illiteracy, adopted the concept of functional literacy. This concept viewed literacy as a means for development, an integral part of the development process and not just an end in itself.

Since then it has been accepted that literacy skills developed from a basic to advanced level throughout life is a part of broader development of competencies required for life and livelihood, critical thinking, participation in civic responsibility, sustainable consumption and life-styles, poverty reduction, and protection against disaster risks.

International Literacy Day is celebrated worldwide on 8th September every year since 1966. The main global celebration this year takes place in the Bangabandhu International Conference Center in Dhaka.

The Government of Bangladesh in cooperation with UNESCO is holding the International Conference on "Girls' and women's literacy and education: Foundations for sustainable development and the awarding of UNESCO Literacy Prizes."

Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO will join Bangladesh leaders in hosting the conference.

The occasion is planned also as an expression of support for the UN Secretary General's Global Education First Initiative (GEFI) – a programme to mobilise resources and bolster national and international commitment to fulfill the right to education.

The theme of International Literacy Day 2014 is "Literacy and Sustainable Development". Literacy is intended to empower people to make the right decisions in social development and environmental protection, and economic growth. Literacy can lay the foundation for life-long learning and thus enable people to build sustainable, prosperous and peaceful societies.

As a champion country for GEFI, Bangladesh expects to contribute to the

global movement for basic education by sharing its experience in promoting girls and women's education and literacy. The programme for the literacy day includes the award of the annual UNESCO-Confucius Prize for Literacy and the UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize which recognize outstanding performance and innovative practices in literacy. The international winners of the awards will travel to Dhaka to receive their prize.

The outcome of the conference is expected to feed into the discussion on post-2015 global education and development agenda, highlighting the critical role of education and lifelong learning, especially of girls and women, in advancing towards the goals of sustainable development.

It will be an opportunity to showcase Bangladesh's holistic approach to girls and women's education including its efforts in non-formal education for out-of-school children and adolescents as well as adult illiterate populations, especially women.

It has been proclaimed repeatedly that literacy is a human right, a tool of personal empowerment and a means for social and human development. There is no disagreement that literacy is at the heart of basic education for all, and essential for eradicating poverty, reducing child mortality, curbing population growth, achieving gender equality and ensuring sustainable development, peace and democracy.

It is well-known that literate parents are more likely to send their children to school; literate people are better able to access continuing educational opportunities; and literate societies are better geared to meet pressing development targets.

Yet today, 781 million adults worldwide cannot read, write or count; two thirds of them are women, as Ms. Bokova reminded the world in her message for the 2014 International Literacy Day.

Progress has been made since 1990 when in Jomtien, Thailand, the Education for All (EFA) global movement was launched by the international community. Opportunities for basic education including adult literacy have expanded

more rapidly in the last quarter century than any comparable period in history. But the momentum of population growth in developing countries makes it a formidable race between needs and expanding opportunities.

Bangladesh has recorded remarkable progress since the 1990s, especially in overcoming gender disparity in access to primary and secondary education. Primary education net enrolment has increased from 60.5 % in 1990 to 98.7 percent in 2011. For girls the increase has been from 50.8% to 99.4% in the same period. Adult literacy rate for population over 15 years has jumped from 35.3% in 1991 to 57.7% in 2011. For women it has increased from 25.8% to 53.4%; thus a lingering gap still persists.

Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), the civil society coalition for education, has formulated a charter of demands on the occasion of the International Literacy Day. CAMPE, inter alia, demands:

- Recognise right to education as a fundamental right of citizens.
- Take urgent steps to implement effectively all the provisions in National Education Policy 2010.
- Launch a special programme for adult literacy as part of a lifelong learning strategy.
- Link the literacy programme with skills development and take steps to implement the National Skill Development Policy 2011.
- Build a structure for non-formal and lifelong learning complementing formal education as required by Education Policy 2010 and formulate skills programmes linking these with literacy skills.
- Expand lifelong learning facilities for women, working children, street children, people in inaccessible and remote areas, indigenous people, people with disabilities - and all children and youth in special needs including children of sex workers, orphans and those in homeless shelters.
- Prepare and implement area-based local plans for quality basic education and

literacy.

- Expand opportunities for coordinated and collaborative contribution along with government of capable and committed NGOs for implementing literacy and non-formal education programmes.
- Allocate adequate funds in national budget for lifelong learning for adults and youth and ensure their proper use.

In spite of the lessons from global experience of more than half a century, hold-over from past thinking fuels a debate about a simplistic approach to "eradicate" illiteracy through a limited project-based campaign in contrast to programmes of lifelong learning with functional literacy as the foundation built through a permanent network of community learning centers (CLCs).

In Bangladesh, concern about appropriate assessment of competency of learners and how professional support and capacity of the lead government organization, the Bureau of Non-formal Education (BNFE) can be strengthened has also stymied action and mobilization of resources.

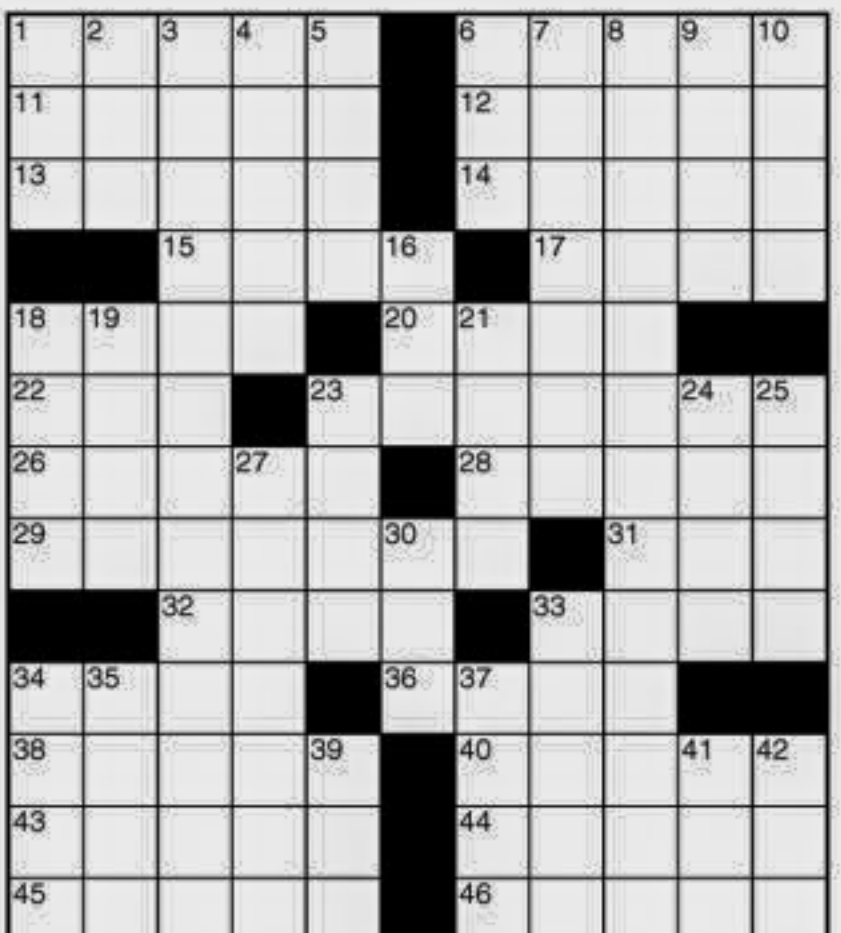
There is no alternative to finding ways for establishing permanent CLCs and resource centres to back up the CLCs, thereby creating sustainable lifelong learning structures at the grassroots with local government involvement, and public budgetary allocations complemented by other resources. A close working relationship with National Skill Development Council has to be forged for this purpose.

Commitment has to be made to develop a medium and long-term approach towards capacity development for NFE including that of BNFE, the government focal point for NFE and lifelong learning. BNFE has to perform its multifaceted role effectively of policy articulation, oversight and facilitation. A mechanism for monitoring and evaluation of initiatives to measure actual outcome and impact vs. reporting mere participation numbers is needed.

The writer is Vice Chair of Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) and professor emeritus at BRAC University.

CROSSWORD by Thomas Joseph

- ACROSS
- 1 Skill
- 6 Korean or Thai
- 11 Speed checker
- 12 Score speed
- 13 Atlanta school
- 14 Bulls and bucks
- 15 Wilde character
- 17 Cut drastically
- 18 Luau dish
- 19 Made still
- 22 NFL measures
- 23 Reunion attendees
- 24 Venice sight
- 25 Humphrey's love
- 27 Russian space station
- 30 Piece keeper?
- 31 Count start
- 32 Coffee dispenser
- 33 Bee groups
- 35 Theater units
- 38 Rolling Stones song
- 39 Floor squares
- 40 Plain silly
- 41 Start
- 42 Looks after
- DOWN
- 1 Unsettling
- 2 Strict boss
- 3 Handsome youth
- 4 Going rate?
- 5 Wood-working aid
- 6 Cash dispenser
- 7 Mermaid's home
- 8 White Rabbit's plaint
- 9 Summits
- 10 Nudged, like a horse
- 16 Some escape routes
- 20 Cry of anticipation
- 21 Wing
- 24 New reporter
- 25 Entice
- 26 Historical records
- 27 One of the Earps
- 28 Not forgotten
- 29 Views over
- 30 Relish
- 34 Last Stuart ruler
- 36 Kick off game
- 37 Retired plane



CRYPTOQUOTE

SVN BTEENGNDYN UNSMND
ETYSTZD LDB GNLFTSP? ETYSTZD
VLX SZ KLWN XNDXN.
-- SZK VFLDYP

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: YOU DON'T HAVE TO SUFFER TO BE A POET; ADOLESCENCE IS ENOUGH SUFFERING FOR ANYONE.
-- JOHN CIARDI

Yesterday's answer



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.

BEETLE BAILEY

by Mort Walker



HENRY

by Don Trachte



QUOTABLE Quote

Fight for your opinions, but do not believe that they contain the whole truth, or the only truth.

Charles A. Dana