

Sayedee's virtual reprieve ...

PLEASURE IS ALL MINE



SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

Remember, the photo-shopped Sayedee image on the moon surface and the Jamaati cult driven carnage taking around 80 lives and maiming many more after the war crimes tribunal had pronounced death penalty against him on February 28 last year. It was a display of the raw power of the evil. Indeed, that terror campaign, though touted as a measure of his influence by his followers added to the heinous crimes against humanity he had been charged with under the War Crimes Trial Act.

The commutation of his sentence has predictably left the victims' families discontented; proponents of the war crimes trial and the people in general were disappointed. Come as it does from the apex court, it has drawn respect from most quarters. Many also expressed reservations about the handling of the case on the government side. Even law minister, the attorney general and the prosecution while expressing their discontent over the outcome showed their deference to the judgment of the highest court. Some blame has been traded between the insiders saying that witness protection was lacking affecting corroboration of circumstantial evidence and that the preparation and presentation of the prosecution case were 'weak'. If that be so, it evidently reflects on the failure of those who steered the case. There is thus a need for introspection and appropriate steps to avert the pitfalls in handling the future war crime trials.

There has been an issue with international standards of the trial for which, of course, we have lately got a cleaner chit from an American legal expert.

At any rate Al Jazeera cited the instance of Shukhranjan Bali, a witness for defense, having apparently been abducted from the gate of the tribunal adding that it 'made the trial controversial'. Sayedee verdict commuting the sentence may have helped remove such a misgiving. The verdict on him has hogged the international media headlines attaching considerable importance to the trial process.

The political fallout of the judgement inside the

country will unfold in time, but already there has been a swift silencing of the protest from Gonojagoron Mancha. This platform originally led the movement exerting relentless pressure on the government to hand in maximum punishment to the war criminals. As a result of their constant vigil and pressing of demand, the AL government added a provision to the law whereby both prosecution and defense could appeal the verdict of the tribunal. Earlier, Quader Mollah had been given life-term imprisonment but on a retrial, he was sentenced to death.

The government's gradual distancing from the Gojagoron Mancha which also became divided driving a wedge into its leadership is viewed by many as the ruling party soft-lining its approach to Jamaat to neutralise BNP. There is a surmise that with the passage of the aging Jamaati top leadership, the younger generation would step on to the helm. Consequently, Jamaat may be reformed. The other school of thought furiously contests this view pointing to the rising spectre of theocracy in the Muslim world.

The verdict has set afoot a speculation in certain circles that the ruling party may have been strategically cozying up to Jamaat-e-Islami to offset BNP's capacity for launching a movement. It is pretty much making the rounds that divested of Jamaat-Shibir's spearheading

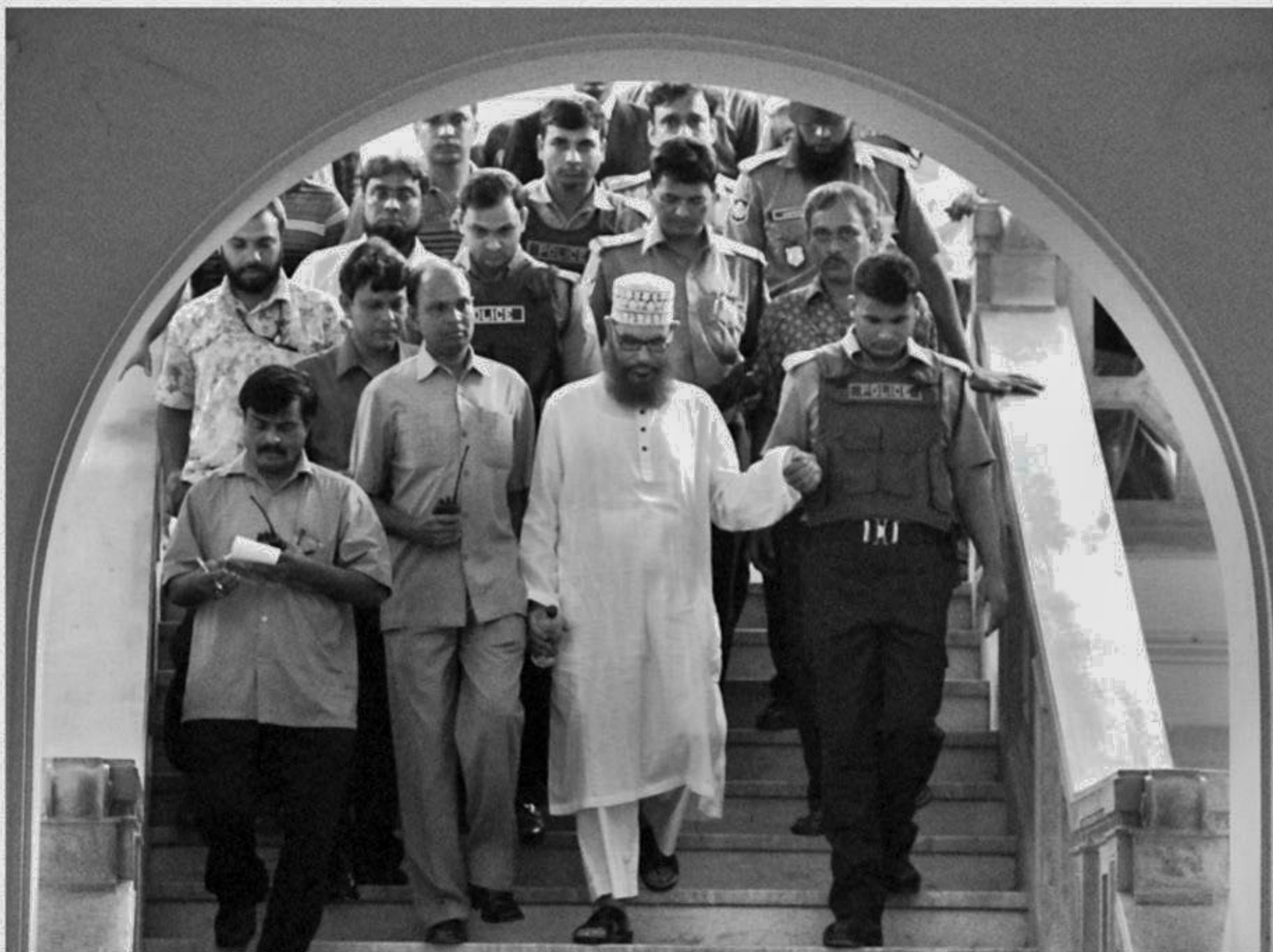
role, BNP's planned agitation against the government will not take off. As if to reinforce this thought, Begum Khaleda Zia herself, when asked about the possibility of rethinking her party's link to Jamaat she hinted at considering it in due course. To add to all this, Tareque Zia said to party followers in London that no political party could be evolved on the basis of religion alone.

It is worthwhile to note that in the local government electoral calculus BNP and Jamaat fought on their own, thereby cutting back on each other's vote banks. In fact, Jamaat emerged with considerable gains in a number of such elections.

Let's not forget, Jamaat's existence as a religious party is under a scanner at the highest judicial level, so that it can't afford to go berserk. Or conversely, it just may when pushed to the wall. Another possibility is for them to reappear under a different label.

For the government's part, it has the compulsion of completing the war crimes trials and handing out the convictions to those found guilty, meeting the standard criteria of justice, sooner rather than later. For given the vagaries of politics, a change of guard could lead to a reversal of the trial results.

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I Came, I Saw, I Conked Out

HUMOROUSLY YOURS



NAVEED MAHBUB

THE judge listens to the arguments from both sides. He concludes: "I still can't understand where the problem is. Case dismissed."

The two Bangladeshi Associations of the same city, USA, grimace at each other as the defamation lawsuit goes down the tube. I am shocked. Just two groups only! I would

have expected seven, given the large metropolis.

You see, when you and I, two of Bangladeshi origin, are together, we form three groups – you are one group, I am another group and together we form the third group.

Hey guys, if you really need to fight, make it sexy. Instead of sending mass hate emails on Yahoo groups, how about shove sand into the fuel tank of a rival member's car or threaten (make fake attempts) to gouge out the eyes. Then put up the video on YouTube, *Spring Break 2014 – Bangus Gone Wild!*

But it's a boon for starving artists. I go to the same city and do the same comedy routine at three different shows put together by three break-away organizations, with my earnings increasing three-fold. For an even brighter fiscal year, I pray for further fragmentation.

Then there is the Diaspora WMD (Weekly Mandatory *Dawat*) where we engage in endless debates on PR (politics and religion) with solutions (that never leave the living room) to every conceivable problem of the old country. The concluding remarks: "Oof! How DO you live in Bangladesh?" ("Why? Exactly the same way you did before heading out to the West...")

The WMD, by no means, is any ordinary gastronomical exercise. One needs a Harvard MBA to strategize the guest list. After all, if Brad (formerly known as Badrul) is invited during the Independence Day weekend, Mo Hawk (formerly known as Monirul Hoque) has to wait till the Thanksgiving Weekend to enjoy the upgraded meal. That's because the two still have their horns locked with no signs of disengaging. On top of that, there is the burden of adding at least two extra dishes on the menu from last weekend's *dawat* at the house of Ash (formerly known as Ashfaque).

Finally, the customary gifts at the WMDs. They sure hit the domestic bottom line. Then again, we are smart – we recycle gifts. Let's just make sure we maintain good databases – once, the gift I gave to someone came back to me after a mere three weeks...

Such is the life of the Diaspora as a home is created away from home. The home from where we start the journey to destiny – nervous interviews at the US Embassy (we are so uncharacteristically polite, even squeamish, once inside the premises), the long flight to USA, more panic stricken encounters (interrogations) at US Immigration, stammering explanations to US Customs about the gigantic (two year supply of) oil laden pickle jar, labor through degree after degree in college, the first job, promotion to the H-1B work visa, green card, US citizenship... Busy, busy, busy. But we always make time to form associations. We start from Bangladesh and make a long, long voyage that ends in...Bangladesh.

But it is nothing but nostalgia, our desperate attempt to not completely cut off the umbilical cord from our origin. As such, here is the one last component of our DNA that we carry to the new home. The former stranger from the native country may now be a familiar enemy in the land far away, but a known one who in turn knows everything about you, to the point that he will unconditionally be at your side the moment you hit disaster.

We have conquered the West as the Julius Caesar of the twenty first century. A slight difference though – instead of the sword (in which case the FBI would be after us), we carry the club, ready to knock down the other fellow Bangladeshi – "I came, I saw, I conked out."

Ok, no need to drop the club (pun of the day), that's part of the fun. Let's perhaps emulate the Indian Diaspora. Surely we can – just look how we can never have a *gaye holud* now without twenty one (identical) Bollywood dances. If so (and please, don't start labeling me as a *Bharoter Dalal*), we can truly be the head bobbing Julius Caesar: "I came, I saw, I outsourced."

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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Australian terror plot foiled, for now...

ANDREW EAGLE

IN recent raids involving nearly 900 police Australia's security agencies claim to have foiled a serious terrorism plot. But have they done enough since 2001 to address the causes of extremism rather than only the symptoms?

Yesterday's raids on homes of alleged Muslim extremists in Sydney and Brisbane were dramatic. According to media reports, police and intelligence officials foiled a plot to kidnap a random member of the Australian public, drape them in the Islamic State flag and behead them on YouTube. If true, it is indeed terrifying.

Such criminal intentions must be motivated primarily by the rise of the so-called Islamic State and the much-publicised beheadings of three westerners, among other, larger-scale atrocities against locals.

Arguably it was the ill-conceived 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq that created the power void which allowed for the rise of the Islamic State, with disastrous global security consequences. Be that as it may, western governments have also needed to meet the security challenges of a post 9/11 world at home.

While scope to shape favourable security realities abroad can be limited, at home there are always choices. It is arguable that Australia's security agencies have not risen to the challenge.

It is worth considering such a plot's aims. The Middle East beheadings were justified by the executioner as being a warning to the west not to attack. Given such a strategy has no chance of deterrence it is clearly a smoke screen.

Rather, the goals may be threefold: to instil fear; to demonstrate "strength" as an enticement to those inclined to fight for the Islamic State; and to goad western nations into direct confrontation. Deepening religious divisions can polarise fringe elements into viewing the Islamic State as standing up to western anti-Muslim aggression.

The actions of Australian authorities in preventing any beheading are of course commendable. However, in respect of the foiled plot two of the three terrorist goals have been achieved. Fear has been generated. Strain has been added to cross-religious relations.

In the coming weeks it would not be surprising were Australia to experience more successful acts of violence – this time against Muslim Australians and those mistaken for Muslims, such as Lebanese Christians or Sikhs. Short of violence there will certainly be discrimination. Levels of fear and anger are high.

In the long term security for any multicultural society must involve building strong intercultural relations capable of withstanding the criminal plots of an extremist few. Only with strong relationships can Australia limit the duration and extent of the current security challenges – obvious since at least 2001.

In this aspect – addressing causes rather than symptoms and building a society more able to withstand terrorist action – Australia has largely failed.

Since 2001 intelligence agencies have grown at least three times larger in both personnel and budgets. At a cost of several billion dollars these agencies have foiled a handful of plots relying primarily on top-down law enforcement measures.

Intelligence agencies have constantly been requesting more powers, at least annually, and the current time is no exception. With such recent history in mind it is alarming that the Australian public are being told the security situation is worse than before.

What Australia's intelligence agencies have failed to do is effectively engage with Muslim communities and address islamophobia.

Australian Muslims as agency employees, for example, could offer useful knowledge of the risks and better develop workable prevention and response initiatives.

It is unfortunate it was not until 2012, more than a decade after 9/11 that the largest intelligence agency, the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO)

became serious about Muslim recruits. At the time ASIO head David Irvine's public appeal came as a surprise to Muslim communities, unconsulted before the announcement.

More worrying was that he chose to point out that terrorism kills both Muslims and non-Muslims. It is difficult not to take from his words the implication that while non-Muslims might wish to protect everybody Muslims may be more motivated to protect their own.

In any case, by 2012 cloak-and-dagger activity had already destroyed the potential for close cooperation in the short term. Though figures on religion are unavailable, at 2013 ASIO had 94.2% of employees from an English-speaking background. The national figure is 85%. It is suggestive of an intelligence sector that remains almost wholly non-Muslim and overwhelmingly white. There can be no surprise to an in-house culture gap.

Unfortunately the "us-and-them" approach has continued. In recent weeks the government embarked on consulting Muslim communities over the latest round of extra powers. Several Muslim community organisations boycotted meetings due to Prime Minister Tony Abbott's use of the divisive term "Team Australia" which implies intolerance for diversity, and because "consultation" meant the government arriving with fixed proposals to be digested.

Muslim organisations have labelled the new proposals draconian and said that although they want to consult, they would like to be listened to. The Australian intelligence community is yet to outgrow entrenched prejudices.

The tragedy is that until genuine agency reform occurs there can only be a continuation of the addiction to democracy damaging and hideously expensive stop-gap measures.

The writer is English Instructor and Feature Writer, *The Daily Star*

QUOTABLE Quote

For beautiful eyes, look for the good in others; for beautiful lips, speak only words of kindness; and for poise, walk with the knowledge that you are never alone.

Audrey Hepburn

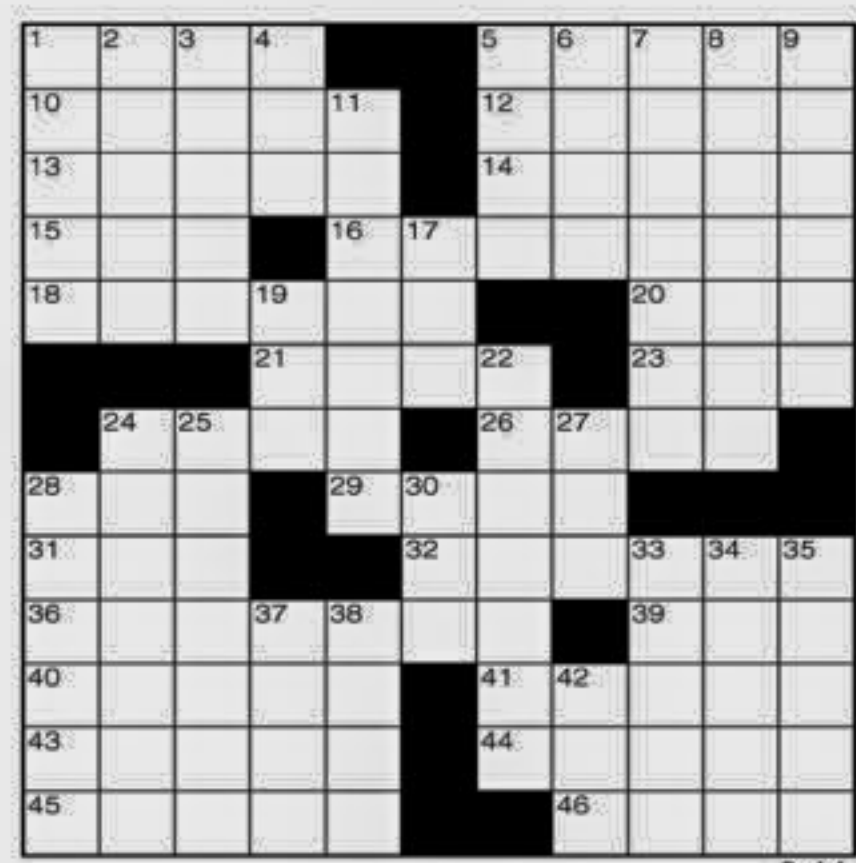
CROSSWORD by Thomas Joseph

ACROSS

- 1 Sign of freshness
- 5 Army group
- 10 Funny
- 12 "Emami," e.g.
- 13 Lover of drama
- 14 Majestic
- 15 Simile center
- 16 Championship emblem
- 18 Schoolbag item
- 20 Tea cooler
- 21 Occupied
- 23 Homer's neighbor
- 24 Lusty look
- 26 Senator Feingold
- 28 Energy
- 29 Declares
- 31 One-time link
- 32 Booth Tarkington book
- 36 Fine
- 39 Genesis name
- 40 Use a soapbox
- 41 Icicle holders
- 43 Inform against
- 44 Sozzled
- 45 Sacked out
- 46 Base meal

DOWN

- 1 Scuffle
- 2 Untethered
- 3 Capital of Jordan
- 4 Kind of chart
- 5 Hokey stuff
- 6 Frank
- 7 Wins back
- 8 Cavorts
- 9 Like some peanuts
- 11 Office machines
- 17 Building wing
- 19 Friend of Fidel
- 22 Unmoved
- 24 Not loose
- 25 Come forth
- 27 Fumes
- 28 Fumes
- 30 Suitable
- 33 Skit show
- 34 Kitchen fixtures
- 35 Newsroom fixtures
- 37 Resting on
- 38 Spring period
- 42 Tattoo setting



CRYPTOQUOTE

QFBRAQK WJQ IF JUAQJBO J HFBOS
DSFZ BRO VFUABAWJU IEIBOZ JIMJWYAK
J NAQQAQK WJQXAJBO.

- ZJSY M. WFROQ

Yesterday's Cryptoquote:

WHY DO GRANDPARENTS AND GRANDCHILDREN GET ALONG SO WELL? THEY HAVE THE SAME ENEMY - THE MOTHER.

-CLAUDETTE COLBERT

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

