

# GOODBYE Wonderful Bangladesh

DAN MOZENA

OVER three years have passed, but it seems like yesterday when the plane landed at Shahjalal Airport, bringing my wife Grace and me to Dhaka to take up my assignment as America's Ambassador to Bangladesh.

Having traveled halfway around the world, we were so tired ... Grace got off first ... and I followed behind, dragging a huge bag. It was so heavy, but I dragged it through the terminal and thumped it down the stairs and into the lounge, where I held a press conference. Just as the press event was ending, a journalist queried, "What do you have in that big bag?" "Oh," I responded, "that is my mandate ... my mandate to broaden, to deepen, to strengthen America's partnership with Bangladesh."

The journalist wondered why my mandate is so big. The answer is simple. Bangladesh is big; Bangladesh is important. It is the world's eighth largest country, the world's third largest Muslim-majority country. Bangladesh is a moderate, tolerant, secular, pluralistic alternative to the violent extremism that scars other countries.

Bangladesh matters strategically to America in countering terrorism and violent extremism, fostering regional security, sustaining global peace through peacekeeping, achieving global food

security, expanding trade and investment, promoting democracy and respect for human rights, and coping with disasters, especially earthquakes.

To advance these many interests, America promotes a Bangladesh that is peaceful, secure, prosperous, healthy and democratic.

On the eve of my departure from Bangladesh, I am pleased to report that America's partnership with Bangladesh is broader, deeper, stronger than ever, benefiting the people of both countries.

Secretary Clinton's 2012 visit to Bangladesh institutionalized the bilateral relationship by creating the Partnership Dialogue, which met for the third time in Washington two months ago. Earlier this year we also held the third annual sessions of the Security Dialogue and the Bilateral Defense Dialogue and the first session of the Trade and Investment Cooperation Framework Agreement (TICFA). All of these engagements energized, redirected and focused our partnership.

America's partnership with Bangladesh is helping to make history in so many amazing ways.

Slashing maternal and child mortality rates, so Bangladesh can achieve these Millennium Development Goals.

Enabling Bangladeshis to have the family size they want, Bangladesh is on a trajectory to achieve replacement level of 2.1 births per woman next year ... a

voluntary achievement that rewrites history.

Putting Bangladesh, once famously described as a bottomless basket, on the path to food self-sufficiency ... an achievement that no one ever imagined.

Preparing for the impact of global climate change by preserving the forests that buffer the nation from rising sea levels and by introducing new saline, drought and flood-tolerant seeds.

Securing maritime and land borders to stop trafficking of persons, arms and drugs, to interdict terrorists, and secure the nation's maritime assets. America will provide a second 378 foot cutter next spring to enhance maritime security.

Safeguarding Bangladeshis from disaster by building another 130 cyclone shelters and helping preparations for an earthquake.

These achievements set the stage for Bangladesh to become Asia's next economic tiger.

This tiger would have four powerful legs: a massive apparel industry that has transformed itself to global standards for fire safety, factory structural soundness, and respect for workers' rights; huge shoe and finished leather goods industries that surge onto the global market once the eco-friendly tannery park in Savar opens; made-in-Bangladesh generic pharmaceuticals that sweep into America starting next

year; and information technology, especial software development.

Small freighters, frozen shrimp, bone china, flowers, and jute and silk products would strengthen the tiger.

Bangladesh's success in bringing quality education to all children, improving the infrastructure (roads, railroads, ports, and power and gas supplies), and strengthening governance (corruption, red tape, rule of law, and threat of political instability) will enable Bangladesh, Asia's next economic tiger, the Royal Bengal Tiger, to strut powerfully across the global economic stage.

My heart is heavy as I prepare to depart from this great, rich nation and its wonderful, hard-working, creative, generous, entrepreneurial, and resilient people, whom I have gotten to know from my visits to all 64 districts.

Although my next home is far away, I will continue to do everything that I can to help Bangladesh build the Sonar Bangla of our shared vision.

Abar dekha hobe!

The writer is U.S. Ambassador to Bangladesh.



## The business case for trade unions

CHAUMTOLI HUQ

THE state minister for labour was quoted recently as saying that too many trade unions are bad for the garment sector. In a workforce of 4 million workers, the garment sector only has 200 registered unions, of which the bulk of those were registered in the last year. So there is no evidence to support the minister's statement. We sadly do know from experience that an unregulated industry, which fails to see all workers from the factory floor up to middle level managers as key partners to this industry's growth, is harmful for the owners and workers.

This is a curious public statement from a high ranking government official in light of the suspension of Generalised Systems Preference (GSP) for trade, which allows countries like Bangladesh to export to US markets at a duty free or preferential rate. One of the factors for GSP is for the country to demonstrate a genuine commitment to workers' rights, including the ability to form trade unions. Similarly, the European Union's Sustainable Compact with Bangladesh reflects a desire to see increased unionisation in the garment sector. For a government that is so reliant on funds from this industry, which totaled \$21 billion in 2012-2013, it is surprising that the government fails to see how improved labour management relations are better for its own political and economic interests. Instead, both garment owners and government respond reflexively against unions thinking that they are giving up powers to workers, when they gain so much more in the process.

Instead of expending resources to prevent unionisation, the government should take a proactive effort to remove any and all obstacles to unionisation, and the BGMEA as the trade association in this industry should take a public stand against owners who

prevent unions. Facilitating unions and empowering workers can only serve to enhance the image of an industry that is in dire need of improvements.

In many ways, employers benefit from unions in that they have one entity to deal with when they need to bargain with workers. Unions were formed to equalise the bargaining power between employer and workers, but in practice, they serve to maintain industrial peace and minimise industrial disruptions. Ultimately, workers give up the right to strike

demand their rights in the street. In the last year, much of the grievances from workers concerned wages, and routine factory level disputes. Failure to address these disputes in a systemic way forces workers take their grievances to the street. If they do this for routine matters, it only creates disruptions for the employer.

Unions also can make factories attractive to buyers and investors. They will be assured that the presence of a union or a mechanism allowing for workers to have a voice most likely will minimise

to unions in their factories for shortsighted reasons, which is due to a lack of training on best labour-management practices. Owners see unions as intruders in their homes versus a potential value-added to their business. This mindset is in part due to the origins of this industry that grew exponentially with minimal regulations and no opportunities to understand best practices in labour-management. Comments against unions only serve to harm the industry at this critical juncture of its growth when there is



and seek redress for their grievances through a collective bargaining process that helps employers to maintain day-to-day functions of their business. Stability is particularly critical in the highly competitive export oriented garment industry where owners need to meet strict deadlines, and cannot afford production delays. While workers surely benefit in this process, employers also have much to gain from unions. In the absence of a mechanism to redress basic grievances, workers have no choice but to

any disruption in production. It is a way that a sophisticated owner can market him/herself in the highly competitive global market. Consumers have said they would be willing to pay more if they were guaranteed that workers were being paid fair wages. Garment owners can stand out from their competitors and can attract business by demonstrating best labour-management practices, especially after Rana Plaza, where brands are concerned with their reputation.

Yet, owners are often opposed

increased scrutiny on the sector from the international community. Owners should build an image of collaboration and partnership with their workforce, not one of control and competition. It is not always the case that all parties will benefit from an issue, but here, trade unions benefit both managers and workers in the industry.

The writer is an American Institute for Bangladesh Studies (AIBS) Research Fellow examining the garment industry. She is also the editor of www.lawatthemargins.com Follow her on twitter @lawatmargins

## It's now... or never!

### SHIFTING IMAGES



MILIA ALI

A columnist wears many hats -- at times she is a voice that expresses an opinion on issues that affect a segment of the populace. At others she is a mere observer commenting on an event that deserves attention. But no matter how objective or analytical a column writer may wish to be, she is above all a real person -- a friend, a wife, a mother. Someone who feels, emotes, laughs and sheds tears. Today, I want to discard the façade of objectivity and connect with my readers as a fellow human being - grief-stricken and tormented.

You may have guessed that this column is about the frustration, anguish and, yes, anger that I feel at the massacre of 132 children and nine adults in a school in Peshawar on December 16. My anger is mostly directed at myself since I feel responsible for not addressing the issue of Islamic terrorism and its gradual infiltration into our social milieu in a more resolute manner. The media often employs intellectual rhetoric to explain extremist acts ... a reaction to the collateral damage of the Iraq war and drone attacks, or the outcome of economic exploitation by the western backed elite, or the retaliation of the Taliban Frankenstein created by the US during the cold war. In the welter of such complex arguments I find myself groping for a plausible explanation for why and how human beings turn into monsters.

True, that the drones and the Iraq war have caused deaths of innocent people. We all condemn these deaths. But no matter how much we try to cloak the truth by using sophisticated terms like "clash of civilisations" or "retaliation of the underdogs," the truth is, this is all out war! We cannot escape the consequences of war unless both sides agree not to engage in armed combat. It's also true that the United States and Pakistan are responsible for creating and supporting the Taliban through the '80s to counter the Soviets. But the cold war ended more than 20 years ago and the Taliban have changed their tactics and ideology since then. They have mutated into a deadly force, with enormous killing power aided by modern communication systems. Today, the Taliban operate in scattered groups with a common goal -- destabilising the world through terror killings.

What was shocking was that the killers in the Peshawar school were heard invoking the name of "Allah" before the shootings. I wonder which "Allah" has given them the right to take the lives of His creations indiscriminately! I could quote the Quran that says that the killing of a single innocent soul is equivalent to "murdering all of mankind." But is there any point? Because it's obvious that the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), who have accepted responsibility for the killings, are following a different Holy Book. Or they are interpreting the Quran with their warped sense of reasoning.

The TTP openly stated that they wanted the parents of the victims to "feel the pain of losing their children" since this was a revenge for the Pakistani military action against the Taliban in North Waziristan. What breed of men would willfully cause pain to parents by killing their children and then gloat over it? We could dismiss them as psychopaths or madmen. If they are indeed insane, they cannot be allowed the freedom to carry weapons and create havoc and destruction in the lives of peace loving people who are not even remotely involved in the struggle for dominance ... religious or political. The terrorists conducted targeted shootings of 12-16 year olds who were hunted down in every nook and corner of the school premises and murdered mercilessly. How were these innocent children responsible for military attacks on North Waziristan?

I expect that the world leaders will react to this brutal crime. Most importantly, Pakistan needs to revisit its duplicitous policy of supporting terrorists while pretending to oppose them. As for the Muslims around the world, I hope the grisly terror act will galvanise the "silent majority" against the extremists, who are abusing and hijacking Islam. The apologists and appeasers must also stop placating those who kill people because they do not fit their description of a "believer."

All of us ... whatever our religion, colour, class, ethnicity ... must protest and unite in pain to act against these enemies of humanity. We cannot allow a similar crime to be committed again. Posterity will not forgive us if we do.

For now, let us grieve and express our solidarity with the afflicted families. Let us reach out to the parents who will always carry the painful burden of their loss in their hearts. Who will see the empty pillow in the bed each night and ask: "Why? Why my child?"

The writer is a renowned Rabindra Sangeet exponent and a former employee of the World Bank. E-mail: shiftingimages@gmail.com

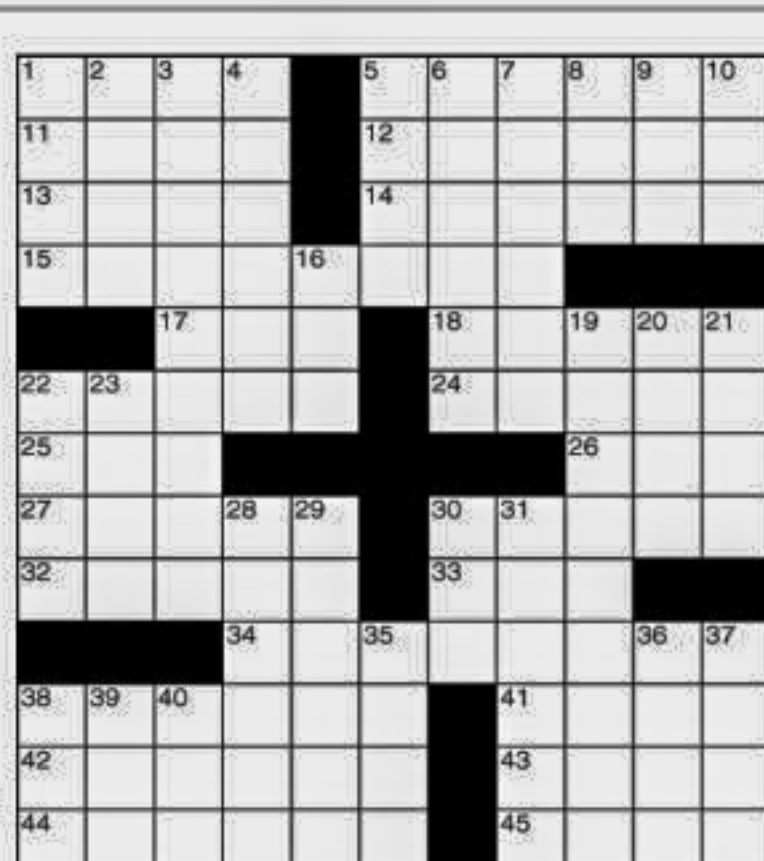
## CROSSWORD by Thomas Joseph

### ACROSS

- 1 Litmus reddener
- 5 Heart quickeners
- 11 Vatican surrounder
- 12 Book blunders
- 13 Phone down-loads
- 14 Convene in
- 15 Lorenz Hart, e.g.
- 17 Pitcher's stat
- 18 School paper
- 22 Beginning
- 24 Pago Pago setting
- 25 Not neg.
- 26 Poker prize
- 27 Turn away
- 30 Flock makeup
- 32 Intense beam
- 33 Ripen
- 34 Ohio port
- 38 Volcanic rock
- 41 China setting
- 42 Stage comments
- 43 Bottle part
- 44 Current fashion
- 45 Invites

### DOWN

- 1 Shrinking sea
- 2 Duplicate
- 3 Blows away
- 4 Yen
- 5 Convoy truck
- 6 Wave peaks
- 7 Singer Franklin
- 8 Mob pariah
- 9 Greek vowel
- 10 Was inactive
- 16 Purr producer
- 19 Catherine and others
- 20 General feeling
- 21 Chow
- 22 Milky stone
- 23 Flaring star
- 28 Dwell
- 29 Vestiges
- 30 Misbehaving
- 31 Large lizard
- 35 High home
- 36 Punt
- 37 Is loquacious
- 38 Buddy
- 39 Olympics chant
- 40 Cambridge sch.



### CRYPTOQUOTE

QBC NXX APNEPAU NAP XPNEPAU, RMD NXX XPNEPAU NAP APNEPAU.

- ZNAAV U. DAMWNQ

### Yesterday's CRYPTOQUOTE:

A LOYAL FRIEND LAUGHS AT YOUR JOKES WHEN THEY'RE NOT SO GOOD, AND SYMPATHIZES WITH YOUR PROBLEMS WHEN THEY'RE NOT SO BAD.

-ARNOLD H. GLASGOW

## 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

Success is getting what you want. Happiness is wanting what you get.

Dale Carnegie