

# Worst year in Asia in 2014?

## Not Obama, or airlines, but an entire people...

CURTIS S. CHIN and JOSE B. COLLAZO

AS 2015 unfolds with Asia reeling from yet another airlines tragedy, we take one last look at the year we left behind. A year ago, taking a page from Washington Post political columnist Chris Cillizza's award-winning U.S. President Barack Obama the dubious distinction of "Worst year in Washington," we took to the digital pages of Fortune Magazine. The challenge – naming who had the "Worst year in Asia" – and the "winner" then of that least desired of 2013 prizes: Obama also, for what proved to be his lost year in Asia, marked by cancelled trips and persistent questions of where's the substance to a much ballyhooed pivot to Asia amidst China's rise.

This past December, Cillizza returned to Obama, and not in a good way. 2014 may well have offered numerous contenders, but the prize of "Worst year in Washington" went again to the U.S. president – this time "for losses at home and crises abroad" as midterm elections saw the president's political party lose control of the U.S. Senate. "His sixth year in office was, inarguably," Cillizza wrote, "his worst, when the problems that had been building throughout his second term all came crashing down around him."

When it comes to Asia though, let's not count Obama out. He fails to make an appearance on our "Worst year in Asia 2014 edition" and the year ahead awaits. Read who took the "honour" – along with our take on the people who had a really bad year, a bad year, a not-so-good-or-bad year, a good year and the best year in Asia. Congrats, of sort, to all.

Western business executives have grown accustomed to in a world dominated by social media and a 24-hour news cycle. In Kuala Lumpur, CEO Yahya continues for now as head of an airlines still struggling in the wake of one missing airliner and another shot down over Ukraine. In Tokyo, CEO Hirai has had a lot of explaining to do, first over the struggling conglomerate's billions of dollars in losses in five of the last six years. Now comes the "mother of all email leaks," deriving from a cyber-attack suspected to be of North Korean origin and detailing tension between Hirai and its Hollywood subsidiary Sony Pictures Entertainment – one of its few, if not only profitable units. Not everyone can be a Jack Ma, the founder of China e-commerce pioneer Alibaba who saw a 2014 IPO turn him into China's richest man, or Air Asia CEO Tony Frances whose perfor-

"Umbrella Revolution," and an image of "Umbrella Man" – that of a defiant protestor clutching an umbrella amidst tear gas – was beamed across the globe to become the symbol of the movement. Much more than a symbol of Hong Kong's struggle to find a way forward under Beijing's heavy hand, the Umbrella Man though speaks to the plight of democracy in the region. The parallels to images of a lone man staring down tanks near Tiananmen Square in June 1989 were obvious. Whether the jailing of pro-democracy bloggers in Vietnam and anti-coup activists in Thailand, or stalled reforms in Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos, 2014 was clearly a not so good year for democracy in Asia.

sion, officially called M-O-M, for Mars Orbiter Mission. Launched by the Indian Space Research Organisation, ISRO, in November 2013, its Mars craft or "Mangalyaan" in Sanskrit, after a 298 day journey, successfully entered Mars's orbit on September 24. In doing so, India became the world's fourth nation to embark successfully on an interplanetary journey, and did so in its first attempt – something, the U.S. and other space powers can't claim – and in a triumph of low-cost engineering, at a US\$74 million price tag. That's less than the cost of the Hollywood movie Gravity. Meanwhile, China's Chang-e moonlander and Yutu rover faded from the headlines due in part to technical difficulties with the crafts after their 2013 soft landing on the lunar surface.

# Vow for the New Year

ABDUL MATIN

AS we prepare to welcome the New Year, we tend to look back and evaluate our achievements vis-a-vis our expectations. Soon after our independence, we firmly believed that the spirit of the War of Independence would be our driving force and the sacrifices of three million martyrs the source of inspiration and unity of the people. It was also expected that every citizen of Bangladesh would maintain austerity in life and work with patriotism, sincerity, honesty and devotion for the betterment of the country. Unfortunately, most of the cherished qualities gradually vanished from some of us. To these people, greed has become the driving force, money the inspiration and muscle power the strength. Luckily, the vast majority of the people, comprising farmers, factory workers, expatriate Bangladeshis and day labourers, do not belong to this group. They have been doing their jobs sincerely and honestly. Thanks to their hard work, Bangladesh has made remarkable progress in both economic and social sectors. Of course, we could do much better had we not faulted in some important sectors.

munities. Our farmers do not get fair prices. The middlemen are robbing both the producers and the consumers of agricultural produce. We are consuming fruits, vegetables and fish contaminated with harmful chemicals. The poor garment workers do not get fair wages for their labour. The gap between the rich and the poor remains wide even though the rate of poverty has been decreasing, albeit at a slow pace.

**Our salvation lies in quality education. If we can modernise our education system to reflect our aspirations and make it accessible to all children, rich and poor, solution to the rest of the problems will be easier.**

Traffic in Dhaka is in a chaos. Reckless driving is common on highways resulting in frequent accidents, often causing fatalities. If a bus or truck driver is arrested for any traffic offence, strikes paralyse the transportation system. Similarly, any traffic accident involving the death of a student or factory worker creates road blocks with accompanying vandalism.

Students do not get proper lessons in classrooms and are advised to take private lessons. Question papers are leaked out frequently and examiners are advised by higher authorities to grade answer scripts liberally to make more students pass and get better grades. Some private universities are involved in selling degree certificates without offering courses.

These are some of the issues that worry us. Even though we may not have instant solutions to these issues, it is believed that we have the capability of solving each and every problem provided we all come forward with necessary determination, honesty and sincerity. Under any circumstances, we can't and shouldn't let a handful of greedy people fail a whole nation.

As the New Year is approaching, it is time for us to take a fresh vow to overcome our shortcomings. We may not achieve full success in one year but, at least, let us begin. Our top priority should be education and moral upliftment. Our salvation lies in quality education. If we can modernise our education system to reflect our aspirations and make it accessible to all children, rich and poor, solution to the rest of the problems will be easier. Education is a self-correcting but lengthy process. We may have to wait with patience and perseverance to get the end results.

The writer is a former chief engineer of Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission and author of "Bangladesh: A Perspective of Dynamic Resilience".

## BEST / WORST 2014

**Best year:** Asia's new management  
**Good year:** India's space program  
**Not-so-bad year:** Kim Jong Un  
**Not-so-good year:** Umbrella man  
**Bad year:** Cho Hyun-Ah  
**Really bad year:** Asia's once anonymous CEO  
**Worst year:** The Rohingya people

### WORST YEAR IN ASIA

**The Rohingya people**  
 Stateless. Marginalised. Persecuted. These are the words used to describe the plight of Myanmar's Muslim minority the Rohingya – a people whose very identity Myanmar's leaders and would-be leaders including Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi decline to recognise. Sectarian riots have killed hundreds. Thousands have fled, easy targets for human traffickers, and at least dozens have drowned, fleeing on rickety boats to Malaysia or Indonesia. Those that stay in Myanmar face restrictions on movement, marriage, and education. 2015 is unlikely to bring any respite as the nation's primarily Buddhist and majority Bamar (or Burman) ethnicity electorate and all too many foreign investors, enamoured of a new Burma, look the other way.

### REALLY BAD YEAR

**The once anonymous Asian business executive**  
 Can it get it much worse for Malaysia Airlines CEO Ahmad Jauhari Yahya or Sony CEO Kaz Hirai? In a region all too often stereotyped as the realm of crony capitalism and secretive CEOs – shareholder accountability, what's that? – 2014 saw tragedy and a cyber-attack bring to Asian executives the sort of scrutiny that

mance so far in the midst of the latest air tragedy to strike Asia has so far been hitting the right notes.

### BAD YEAR

**Cho Hyun-ah**  
 And then there's Cho Hyun-ah, also known as Heather Cho, the one-time Korean Air vice president, whose father Cho Yang-ho runs the airline. Cho took it upon herself to order a plane back to gate in order to remove a steward who failed to ensure that her macadamia nuts were served to her on a plate, not in a bag. The incident of "nutrage" went viral, and has brought unwanted attention to South Korea's conglomerates, the families who run them, and the power they wield. The only winner: sellers of macadamia nuts who saw sales jump after the incident became public.

### NOT-SO-GOOD YEAR

**Umbrella Man**  
 In late September, thousands took to Hong Kong's central business district demanding fully free elections only to be met by police using pepper spray and tear gas to disperse them. Thus was born the

whole blow-up behind Sony Films' political comedy "The Interview," which depicts the assassination of North Korea's supreme leader Kim Jong Un by a newsman and producer played by actors James Franco and Seth Rogen, may have been exactly what Kim wanted to announce his return, and relevance, after disappearing from public view earlier this year. Joining the likes of Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie on the pages of popular magazines that normally don't cover diplomatic news, Kim is now a household name to people who had no idea who he is or what's going on in the Korean peninsula. His nation's economy may be failing fast, and his conventional arms rusting away, but there's no questioning that Kim had made headlines from Hollywood to Washington to Tokyo at year's end.

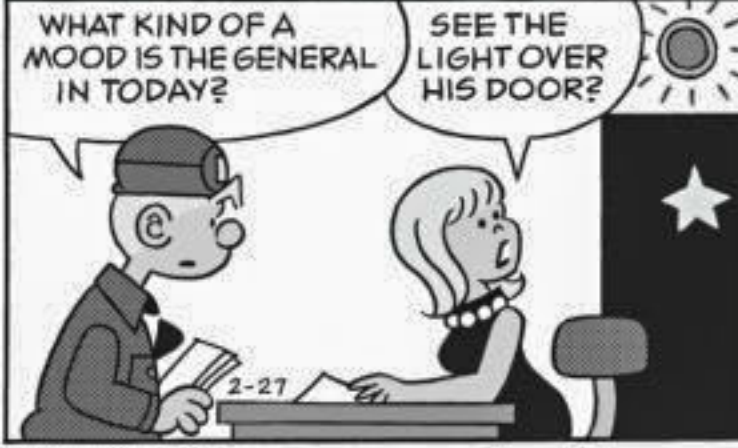
### GOOD YEAR

**India's Space Program**  
 Many Asian nations talk about moving up the knowledge and value chains, but no one did it in such a dramatic fashion as India with its first interplanetary mis-

Jokowi, Modi, and even Xi and Abe. Best year in Asia goes to leaders of countries representing the vast majority of Asia's populace. "Under New Management," a sign often signalling changes to come, would also be appropriate across a map of Asia as China, India, and Indonesia, home to a third of the planet's population, have undergone a change in leadership these past two years. India's Narendra Modi, and Indonesia's Joko "Jokowi" Widodo are seen as pro-business and reform minded and whose agenda have the potential to kick into high gear their respective countries' economies. They will face a tough, uphill battle to root out corruption and improve each country's business environment, as will Xi Jinping in China and Japan's Shinzo Abe, but if successful, together will assure the region's critical role in growing the global economy, and accelerate the rise of the "Asian Century."

The writers are former U.S. Ambassador to the Asian Development Bank and managing director of advisory firm RiverPeak Group, LLC, and Southeast Asia analyst and an associate at RiverPeak Group respectively.

### BEETLE BAILEY



### HENRY



### CROSSWORD by Thomas Joseph

**ACROSS**  
 1 Foes  
 7 Plot unit  
 11 With a low pH  
 12 Eschew  
 13 Biology categories  
 14 Beach stuff  
 15 French fragrance  
 17 It's true  
 20 Drive  
 23 Cabinet wood  
 24 Bitter brew  
 26 Mex. neighbor  
 27 Holiday lead-in  
 28 Collins base  
 29 Tennis star Pete  
 31 Silent approval  
 32 Sorts  
 33 Catches  
 34 Margin for error  
 37 Enjoy the tub  
 39 Brass and bronze  
 43 Pennsylvania port  
 44 Gems  
 45 Watch over  
 46 Upright

**DOWN**  
 1 Cloth scrap  
 2 Rink surface  
 3 Coq au --  
 4 Skilled  
 5 Old Italian coin  
 6 Surgery memento  
 7 Take for granted  
 8 December 31 drink  
 9 Baseball score  
 10 Purpose  
 16 Does clerical work  
 17 He made a deal with the devil  
 18 Test for purity  
 19 New England lake  
 21 Poet T.S.  
 22 Gives for a time  
 24 In itself  
 25 Gardner of movies  
 30 Cheated at hide-and-seek  
 33 Backpack material  
 35 Launder  
 36 Choir voice  
 37 Clique  
 38 Vein contents  
 40 Small bill  
 41 "You betcha!"  
 42 Retired plane

**Yesterday's answer**

OMEGA LAMAR  
 MACES ARENA  
 ASHLEYS SCOTT  
 RHO VET WEE  
 GENES  
 LAGER DATES  
 ALOT IOTA  
 MEDIC KNEAD  
 NOTIT  
 AMI MOO TIS  
 RIDLEY SCOTT  
 INLET KOREA  
 DEEDS SLIMY

**CRYPTOQUOTE** 11-3  
 LDK LB RFK WRRMWRGNK RFGDXU WALOR BPLEKMU GU RFGKM AKWORG BOP MKUKMKNK -FKDMI VVNGV

Saturday's Cryptoquote: **WITH FREEDOM, BOOKS, FLOWERS, AND THE MOON, WHO COULD NOT BE HAPPY?**  
 -OSCAR WILDE

**KATALYST**  
 Improving business, improving lives

**Request for Concept Notes**

Katalyst is a market development project that aims to contribute to increasing the income of poor men and women in rural areas. It does this by facilitating changes in services, inputs and product markets, which in turn increases the competitiveness of farmers and small enterprises. Katalyst is co-funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the UK Government, and the Danish International Development Agency (Danida). It is implemented by Swisscontact under the umbrella of the Ministry of Commerce, Government of Bangladesh.

Katalyst is looking to finance innovative ideas on the following topic:  
**Developing ICT based market price information service for poor farmers**

Katalyst invites interested and experienced market players, such as telecom operators, value added service providers of telecom operators, to submit concept notes on the topic. Details regarding the Request for Concept Notes and the templates for submitting the concept notes are available at: <http://katalyst.com.bd/procurement-of-services/>

In partnership with — Implemented by — Funded by —

swisscontact ukaid DANIDA

**Bangladesh Services Limited**  
 (OWNER OF RUPOSHI BANGLA HOTEL)  
 1 Minto Road, Dhaka-1000

**Tender Notice**

Ruposhi Bangla Hotel owned by Bangladesh Services Limited is to be rebranded as InterContinental Dhaka hotel. A full refurbishment of the existing buildings together with further building additions is to be undertaken in order to reposition this hotel in the Dhaka market.

Sealed tenders in two envelope systems are hereby invited by Bangladesh Services Limited from eligible tenderers for different works under the following Packages at 1 Minto Road, Dhaka-1000 Bangladesh:

Package No.	Name of the Works	Selling date of Tender Document	Closing date of Submission
Package-2A	Internal and External Plumbing and Sanitary Works including Supply and Installation of Sanitary Wares as outlined in the tender documents.	05/01/2015	26/01/2015
Package-2B	Fire Protection Works including Fire Sprinkler and Hydrant System as outlined in the tender documents.	05/01/2015	26/01/2015
Package-2C	HVAC Mechanical Works including Building Automation System BAS, Testing and Balancing and all other Mechanical Works as outlined in the tender documents. Work	05/01/2015	26/01/2015
Package-2D	Electrical Power Distribution and Lighting Works including Fire Alarm and Detection Systems as outlined in the tender documents.	05/01/2015	26/01/2015
Package-2E	IT Data Comm. PABX, AV, Public Address, and Security Works including CCTV Card Access System as outlined in the tender documents.	05/01/2015	26/01/2015
Package-2F	Two New Elevators Works as outlined in the tender documents.	05/01/2015	26/01/2015

The details of this Tender Notice may be seen at the [www.bsl.gov.bd](http://www.bsl.gov.bd) website. Eligible tenderers may submit their bid for any number of the six packages (Package 2A-2F) advertised for this project if they meet the requirements stipulated in the Tender Notice and Instructions to Tenderers. The Tender Document will be available at the office of the inProjects Ltd project office located at Ground floor, Building No. 3, BSL office Complex, 1 Minto Road, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh.

(Md. Abul Monsur)  
 Secretary

**QUOTABLE Quote**

The world breaks everyone, and afterward, some are strong at the broken places.

Ernest Hemingway