

Act of God, absentee mothers!

PLEASURE IS ALL MINE



SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

FOCUS on the battle and not the war. One step at a time and then move on to the next stage -- is the golden rule to follow for the highly confusing and self-

with and she has done it with fortitude. As expected, Khaleda Zia has expressed her profound gratitude to all those who stood by her to share her grief and lessen her woes. An act of God was followed by a note of providential coincidence in the public eye when Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina took the initiative of personally condoling to Khaleda Zia at her party office where she was billeted. But the sign said (the pad-

unmistakable. The lesson to take here though, is politics is too important a matter to be left to staffers! Anyway, the whole point is, the people expect Khaleda Zia to now reflect an extension of her mourning over her son's death to share the grief of many families who have lost their near and dear ones, including those groaning in third degree burns and much more. Many house-

acting general secretary on remand have provoked them into a rigid position. But did they not say on the heels of mourning the death of Arafat that they will turn the grief into strength? Yet, why continue with the *oborodh* which has already cost the economy Tk. 54,000 crore and makes it count a loss of Tk. 277 crore per day. Add to these material casualties, the famished daily wage earners and a body blow to education. Uncertainty hangs over some 14 lakh SSC examinees' fate while O and A level students have lost one full year. Be motherly to them as well.

The prime minister for her part has given a *carte blanche* to police to 'do whatever needed to stop violence and she would take responsibility for their actions.' This rhymes in with the backdrop of comments by BGG JD, IGP, social welfare minister and JSC lawmaker Mayeen Uddin Badal on use of force to quell disturbances. The towncriers' drums are beating full time, so beware.

Sadly, "Duty is what one expects from others, it is not what one does oneself," to quote Oscar Wilde. Both the current and former prime ministers should see themselves in the role of mothers of their people. Whoever makes a tactical retreat first will not be a loser, rather a gainer leading the charge of trouble-shooting.

Nature has been kind to us for a number of years, manifestly sparing us the usual visitation of its annual fury. Such an extraordinary stroke of luck is being replaced by a man-made political disaster now. What a tragic prospect to look at. So act here and now to roll it back to normality, the spice of life.

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Mother of Sanjid Hossain Ovi, who died from bomb blast, cries her heart out at the Burn Unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

lock at the gate) "this door is not to be used as an entrance or an exit," a Gerald Hazzard quote conjuring up a stereotypical reality of Bangladesh politics. That was a mindless affront to PM as she was not given the common courtesy of being even received. And with it, a valuable opportunity was squandered to melt the ice between the two leaders. One can only hope the PM would attend the *Qul* as a mother just as she had dashed to be by Khaleda Zia's side to share the agony of a mother. Populist maybe, but the underlying human emotion is

holds have lost their only earning members and have no money to bear treatment expenses of survivors. Has she uttered a sympathetic word for them? All she did was allege the ruling party's hand in the violence. What is more horrific is that after the mourning spell, the BNP is fixated on ratcheting up *oborodh* in a lethal mix with *hartal* in an apparently do-or-die struggle. BNP would argue that the cases lodged against Khaleda Zia as being accused of issuing directives (*hukumer aashami*) and taking of

Momentary Lapse of (Un)Reason

HUMOROUSLY YOURS



NAVEED MAHBUB

ASK for a noun. You are guaranteed to not only get a noun, but a highly emphatic one based on rock solid confidence. As a bonus, you get a decorative adjective.

"Do you know Naveed?" "Of course! I had tea with him just yesterday." The emphatic noun. Then a frown: "He's a..." What follows is a barrage of expletives, i.e., adjectives.

So, answering your boss's off the cuff query "Do you know what was Christopher Columbus' second cousin's name?" with "No, I'm afraid I don't have the answer to that right off the bat" comes with the 'adjectives': "What? You don't know? You have an MBA and you have been working here for the last 10 years! You still have no brains."

Sotto voce: "Uhm, if I did have the brains, I wouldn't be working here for such a pittance."

So, confidence is a must as a 'no' is never a valid answer. Oh yes, there is one time when we DO use a 'no' -- "No problem", which really means BIG problem.

Now you know why we have walking Google Maps when you ask a stranger for directions. Of course, there is a good chance you'll end up at Lal Bagh Kella instead of your intended Lal Matia.

Yes, we assume. Assume = A\$\$ + you + me. Assume and you make an a\$\$ of you and me.

And so brings about our mapping using Bush-ism, though not quite as binary as "You're either with us, or with them." We are a tad liberal, though not quite as liberal as the human race shoehorning seven billion living people into just twelve distinctive characters based on the Zodiac. So, I praise the maneuverability of the nimble Maruti and I'm a *Bharoter Dalaal*, I grow a five o'clock shadow and I'm on ISIS watch, I hold the door for a young lady (not expecting a thank you) and I am a flirt, I have a cup of coffee with a competitor and I'm a traitor...

But, like a few, I dare to hold on to childlike naiveté. So, when I see the recent attempt of a mother to console another fellow mother as the latter loses her child while the bereaved mother (later) appreciates the compassionate gesture of the former, I happily shed the nouns, adjectives, confidence and assumptions and take it all at face value. Momentary lapse of (un)reason? So be it. Just pause, cherish, hope, imbibe and respect -- like pausing an action scene from an action movie, as the seventeen cameras do a 360 scan from all angles.

Sigh. Even face value is tied to the stock index. TIB (This Is Bangladesh), where every action has an instant reaction. Un-pause the scene and let all the nouns, adjectives, confidence and assumptions spring back to life. After all, the trust factor is at an all time low, even lower than the Dow Jones Industrial Average of 1929. Speaking of which, it's America, the Land of Opportunities while it's Bangladesh, the Land of Possibilities - where anything is possible.

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REMEMBERING ZAGLUL

Not a requiem but a will to remedy needed

KHALID SHAMS

TWO months have gone by since Zaglul Ahmed Choudhury passed away in a tragic road accident at a very busy intersection in the heart of the city. More important, the spot where the accident happened was within ten meters of a police box. There were policemen directing traffic. According to various news reports, Zaglul fell from a bus that did not stop completely before allowing an elderly passenger to get down.

As expected, the government promptly set up an enquiry committee headed by a member of the BRTA and declared that a report would be submitted within a week. It even announced a reward for information on the errant driver of the coaster and very quickly sealed the hospital where dying Zaglul was first taken for treatment by a compassionate young man from Gaibandha. We do not know if the enquiry report was ever submitted.

Officially, mourning for Zaglul is now over. There was the initial demonstration of public outrage at another tragic death on our bleeding roads. Seminars and condolence meetings eulogised Zaglul Ahmed Choudhury's accomplishments as a highly gifted journalist. He was probably the only media personality in the country who used to write and talk regularly on international affairs, focusing on Indo-Bangladesh relationships. He was known for his great human qualities, kind and compassionate, who would befriend not only his professional colleagues, but also young and old, rich and poor alike. He would rush to help a close kin or a distant relative. His helping hand would be extended to even a totally unknown person who was in distress. Dhaka Club has lost one of its most ardent devotees, an indomitable socialite, who could jell easily, seamlessly, with any crowd. He was my brother-in-law, and I had always found him by my side at my hour of need. He was a true nationalist, a patriot who loved this country, its music and its cultural heritage.

Zaglul is gone now. He has left behind a vacuum, an emptiness amongst his family, his circle of friends and professional colleagues, which can never be filled. He will now remain on records as another victim of ever increasing road accidents, another piece of statistics, to be commemorated, no doubt, every year on the occasion of his death anniversary.

According to a study done by the Accident Research Centre (ARC) of Buet in 2011, on the average 12,000 precious lives are lost annually in such accidents. The number



of fatal accidents keeps on rising. In addition, about 35,000 are injured, many of whom would die later or, worse still, become crippled and languish for rest of their lives in utter misery, losing all means of livelihood and health care support. ARC, under the leadership of Professor Shamsul Hoque and his team at Buet, has already done a lot of research to determine the specific causes of these accidents and has suggested the corrective actions that need to be taken to reduce such tragedies. Numerous enquiry committees have also clearly established what causes such accidents. We know what measures must be taken to bring about the required systemic changes. Yet we have failed miserably to take any meaningful remedial action.

This is one problem which is amenable to solution. What is required is a firm political commitment from the government to implement the reform measures. Our flickering hopes rose when, last December, the communications minister publicly declared his determination to check all public transports for their fitness. It did not happen. According to the minister's own admissions, he had to

yield to pressures from powerful quarters and the drive was abandoned even before it had started.

The first move has to start with BRTA, which has said that a vast majority of drivers do not have valid driving license. Nor do they receive any special training as bus drivers or operators of heavy vehicles. It was our misfortune that the bus that killed Zaglul did not stop when he was getting down from it. It is our misfortune that bus drivers have not been trained to stop when passengers get down. It is our misfortune that there is no bus stop at Sonargaon intersection, where thousands of people get on or off buses every day. It is our misfortune that buses race against one another to pick up additional passengers, changing lanes recklessly to overtake other vehicles. They have not been instructed not to change lanes while driving along busy thoroughfares. It is our misfortune that sophisticated traffic lights installed at huge cost are not followed by the traffic policemen. It is our misfortune that zebra crossings are not respected by vehicular traffic, just as it is our misfortune that vehicles of VIP's use the opposite lane to avoid traffic jams. Traffic police will make a show of launching a big campaign once in a while, but before long the situation goes back to where it was ab initio.

We must realise that fatalities and injuries on our roads are not random, unavoidable accidents, willed by the Almighty. They are definitely predictable, largely avoidable and amenable to rational solution. Ilias Kanchan and others have waged a laudable movement against errant drivers, demanding severe punishment for reckless operators. Enforcement of traffic discipline, reforms of licensing and rigorous training, along with retraining for drivers of heavy vehicles, are all doable things. It is no doubt necessary, but definitely not sufficient, to go after individual errant drivers and sentence them to death after an accident has happened. The drivers are indeed responsible for culpable homicide under the law, but we should stress that they are inevitable products of a system that has failed. Capital punishment alone does not provide any remedy to systemic faults. It is the system that needs to be urgently reformed. Our nation owes it to Zaglul Choudhury, Tareq Masud, Mishuk Munir and thousands of other who had lost their precious lives on our bleeding roads. We must mobilise all our resources to remedy a seriously malfunctioning traffic regulatory system.

The writer is a former civil servant.

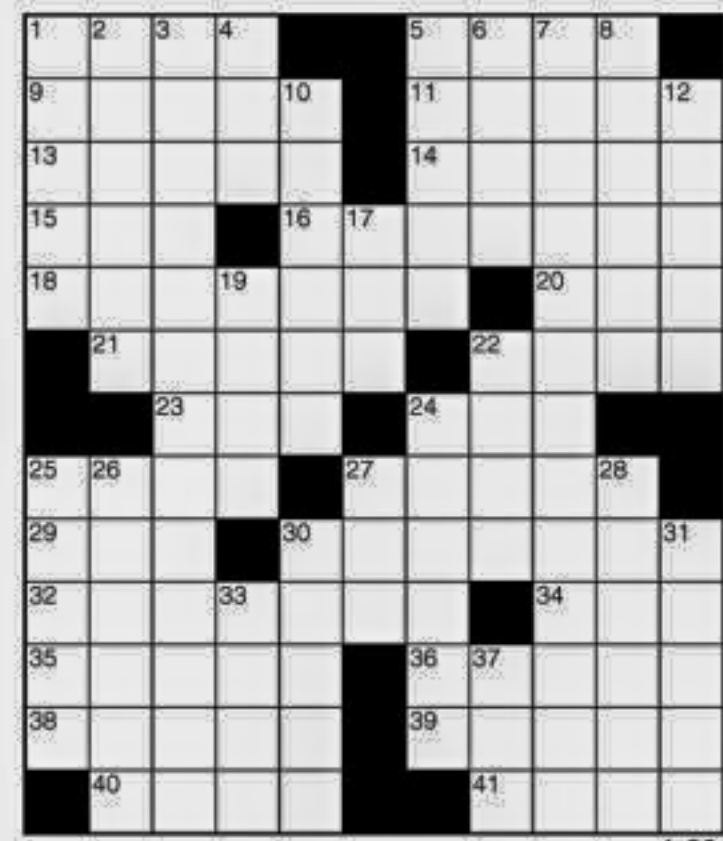
QUOTABLE Quote

The greatest way to live with honor in this world is to be what we pretend to be.

Socrates

CROSSWORD by Thomas Joseph

- ACROSS
- 1 Place
- 5 Doofus
- 9 Taboo acts
- 11 Cheryl of "Curb Your Enthusiasm"
- 13 Game setting
- 14 Pick
- 15 School org.
- 16 Yet to come
- 18 Tennis category
- 20 Stephen of "The Crying Game"
- 21 Said further
- 22 Bud holder
- 23 Smidgen
- 24 "That's obvious!"
- 25 Needing aspirin
- 27 Skin features
- 29 Sheltered side
- 30 Like decimal increases
- 32 Fit
- 34 Pot brew
- 35 Flight unit
- 36 Broadway worker
- 38 Score speed
- 39 Tick off
- 40 Take a breather
- 41 Rep on the street
- DOWN
- 1 Loses it
- 2 Moon of Uranus
- 3 Identical
- 4 Great amount
- 5 Mating game
- 6 Bouncy tune
- 7 Either
- 8 Edict
- 10 Went yachting
- 12 Iron output
- 17 Homer's neighbor
- 19 Aussie greeting
- 22 Ride the waves
- 24 Decorated
- 25 Celeb roster
- 26 Heart
- 27 Vitality
- 28 Jactant part
- 30 Mystical deck
- 31 Was bold
- 33 Hula swayers
- 37 Brief time



Yesterday's answer

SMO G H A G A R
 T A P E D U H U R A
 I R A T E M O N E T
 F I R C O P Y C A T
 F A T C A T A W E
 A G T S S A D
 M I R O T R E Y
 T I S N A P A
 O N O H E P C A T
 W I L D C A T A R E
 E M A I L E L U D E
 L A T K A R I S E N
 S L E E P D E N Y

CRYPTOQUOTE 12-17
 Q XQWG HZF XRCQNT HZF CSKH
 CTKHFYQSPK RWG XRKBQWRHQWA
 QWKHQHPHQSW SX HZF MSYNG.
 -- RCSK SU

Yesterday's CRYPTOQUOTE:
 A LITTLE BIT OF LIGHT PUSHES AWAY A LOT OF DARKNESS.
 HAPPY HANUKKAH.
 -- YOUR PUZZLE FRIENDS

BEETLE BAILEY

by Mort Walker



HENRY

by Don Trachte

