

Blatant disregard for human life

SHAHNOOR WAHID

There is veritable disrespect for opposing views and blatant disregard for human life. Records of horrific deaths and destruction are piling up as common, non-political people are coming under petrol bomb attacks inside passenger buses, private cars and auto-rickshaws.



ON the darkened highways of Bangladesh; in the gloomy forests of Niger; in the merciless deserts of Iraq, Libya and Syria; in the windy ravines of Afghanistan; inside quiet mosques and vibrant schools in Pakistan, precious human lives are being ripped asunder by guns and bombs of demons of hell who call themselves humans. Why? To crush, conquer, control, exploit, extort and rule over the unarmed common people. Terrorising them into subjugation through display of brutality unrestricted with wanton killing is the name of the game. Territorial gain with an eye on natural resources of the country are the main motivating factors that work behind such attacks on human settlements and destruction of human lives. Many of these murderers take pride in declaring themselves as followers of Islam. But, in reality, the only religion they believe in is -- power. And power brings them infinite wealth. To achieve their objective they do not hesitate to shoot a baby in its mother's arm. Taking human lives under one pretext or another has become the order of the day and blood-letting has taken the form of a sport, once enjoyed by the sadistic Roman emperors of the likes of Caligula and Nero.

But, history tells us that the days of the barbarians are over and Attila the

Hun and Halagu Khan are long gone. Political pundits tell us that now is the age of education and enlightenment, of civility and refinement, of free thoughts and freedom of speech, and of justice and rule of law. They tell us that this is the era where democracy is the most accepted means of governance, where people enjoy the right to vote to elect their chosen candidates to power. They tell us about the benefits of multi-party democracy and the freedom of press in eloquent language.

But when we look around the globe we do not see any reflection of the above in two-thirds of the world where more people jostle with one another to

survive than anywhere else. In these countries, some man-made disaster-like situations are kept alive to make it possible for some corrupt political leaders to sweet talk, bribe and coerce the people into electing them to power, and in return they exploit them and loot public wealth with total impunity. Poverty and illiteracy, food shortage, unemployment, disease and disability, inequality and injustice, disparity and depravity are perennially present in these countries. No matter how good the GDP may look, the vast majority will always have to break their back to manage two decent meals a day. The chasm between the rich and the poor

will keep widening and "never the twain shall meet."

Present Bangladesh situation

When we narrow down our vision and look at Bangladesh; when we take a stock of what is happening here in the name of politics, we cringe in fear of the unthinkable that may happen to us as we venture out on the roads to earn a living. Voice of wisdom is being rejected by the powers that dwell in the dark. Anti-people elements are dancing to the maddening beat of war drums. Violence and vulgarity have become order of the day.

It is of least concern to them that the wheels of economy are slowly coming to a standstill, or that education has virtually stopped in its tracks. People are unnecessarily divided into many factions, brewing contempt for one another. The common people find breathing in the highly politicised environment almost a rib-breaking exercise. In a supposedly democratic country people's voice hardly rises above the exploding cocktails. And in the chaotic situation the goons of the political parties are taking the country's coffer apart.

There is veritable disrespect for opposing views and blatant disregard for human life. Records of horrific deaths and destruction are piling up as common, non-political people are coming under petrol bomb attacks inside passenger buses, private cars and

auto-rickshaws. The burn units at the hospitals are running short of medicine and space. Every day arson victims are dying, some remaining unrecognisable and some un-identifiable.

There is a growing and self-destructing trend here to 'glorify' politics over every other institution, over every other occupation. According to the politicians in this country it is politics first, everything else is secondary. In their attempt to seize state power, they have created a war-like situation throughout the country and are coaxing the common people to join in and lay down their lives for them. In this volatile situation, education, agriculture, office work, factory production, shipment of exportable commodities, port activities, hospital work, transportation of perishable goods etc., are suffering immensely and yet we find little concern among the politicians who are actually supposed to facilitate smooth work in all sectors. It is beyond our comprehension why people do politics if it obstructs development. If not for development, growth and progress, why should politics be there anyway? It should be 'development' first, not politics. And sooner the politicians will accept this, the better it will be for the country.

The writer is Special Supplements Editor, *The Daily Star*.

The times, they are a changin'?

QUAZI ZULQUARNAIN ISLAM

WHEN Nuwan Kulasekara sent down the first ball of the 2015 World Cup in Christchurch on Saturday, it marked the World Cup's return to Trans-Tasmania after nearly a quarter of a century. In those halcyon days of 1992, Imran Khan was the prevailing heartthrob, coloured clothing considered a passing fad and T20 cricket the output of a devil-spawned brain on drugs. Powerplay were commercial parlance in North American courts and scores above 300 deemed as insurmountable as an Everest summit.

Almost all of those things are now standard fare as cricket launches into the 11th version of what is still considered its foremost format. The thing is, it might not be so, much longer.

Cricket's World Cup began some 40 years ago on a blissful English summer and proved to be a huge success. This was partly because the West Indies took home the crown in a daring show of boldness, undeniable talent and beachbum cool. The pinnacle tournament of the shorter version of the game, it turned out, was here to stay.

Following football's highly successful formula cricket too arranged for a quadrennial fare. England hosted the first three times but by 1987 it had spread to its former colonies in the sub-continent

and by 1992 it had expanded to the further reaches of the Southern Hemisphere. Trouble is, in those 17 years, the number of teams playing had just expanded from 8 to 9. Despite its inherent snob appeal, cricket it seemed did not have universal appeal.

This has been a constant challenge facing the powers that be and to mitigate that the authorities have over the last decade bowed to the free market forces of franchises and T20 cricket. Not wholly different in formula to club football, this looks likely to be the future of the game despite cricket clinging on to the idea that international competition is the sport's gold standard. In any case, this stunted version of the game has already had four versions of the World Cup and proved a hit with the fans. If this sounds complicated, it is because it is.

The 50-over World Cup, long recognised as the most legitimate of the World Cups is now struggling for legitimacy. This is partly because of the huge quality disparity. Although 14 teams are lining up Down Under, only eight have even the slightest chance of winning.

Additionally, what was a compact two week tournament has now ballooned to a six week fare to appease the television men. And games have been structured to make sure that the group phase is no more than a much-publicised dress rehearsal for the real business. In other words there are 42 fairly meaningless

games to troll through before you get to the seven important ones at the end. So if you are the kind of fan who cares about games that really matter, you can tune in to just the last 11 days of the tournament. The 2019 edition of the World Cup may therefore be a tighter tournament, because there will be just 10 teams, including two who have to qualify.

In the backdrop of the growing power of T20 franchises, the inane fixture lists in the 50-over format of the games, and Test cricket's historical power, cricket is at a crossroads. The outfit may have changed but in the end the power brokers have largely remained the same. It looks likely to continue for some time yet. To quote a famous philosopher, it seems that the more things change, the more they remain the same.

To mitigate this impending conflict, cricket can do well to just go back to the future.

The tight nature of the schedule of the 1992 World Cup with nine sides, made it one of the more open tournaments in memory. Pakistan, a team that seemed destined to exit in ignominy pulled the proverbial rabbit out of the hat to crown a glorious achievement. It was one of the sport's greatest moments. And this unpredictability is exactly what cricket needs. The quicker the ICC realises it, the better it is for the sport.

This writer is a sports journalist.



BEETLE BAILEY

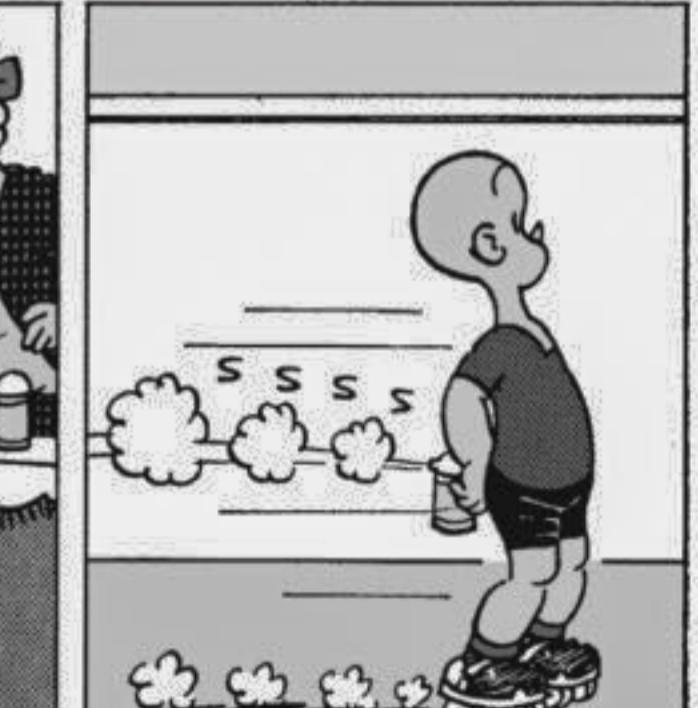
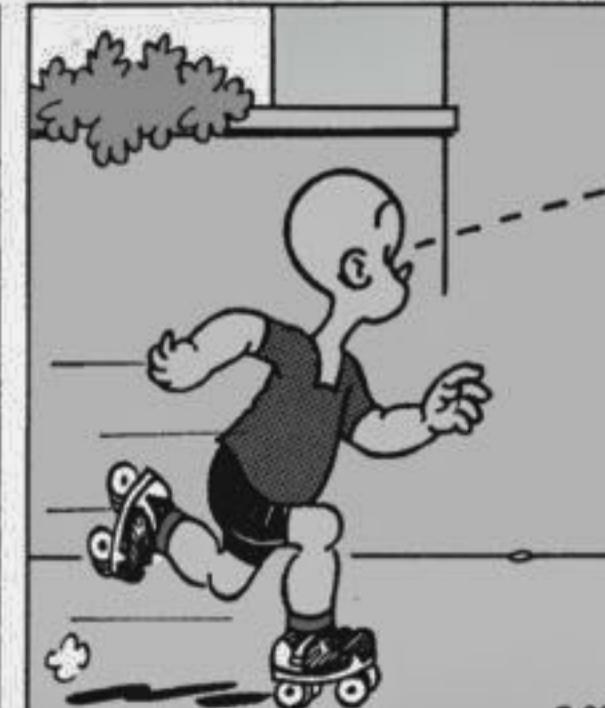


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by Mort Walker



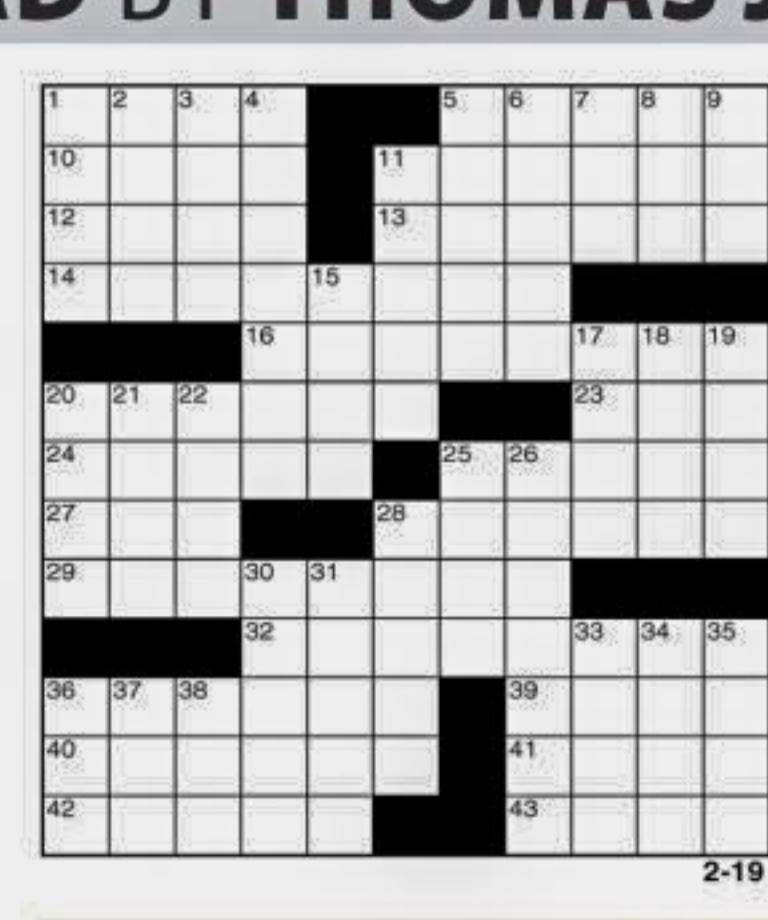
HENRY



by Don Trachte

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

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41 Perfect placew
42 Vein settings
43 Future flower



Yesterday's answer



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CRYPTOQUOTE

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-- SDUHQ XLGLLU

2-19

Yesterday's CRYPTOQUOTE: DON'T TAKE THE BULL BY THE HORNS, TAKE HIM BY THE TAIL; THEN YOU CAN LET GO WHEN YOU WANT TO.

-- JOSH BILLINGS

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.

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