

This column is not about...



RUBANA HUQ

"If the descent [i.e., Sisyphus' returning to the bottom of the mountain to start pushing the rock upward all over again] is sometimes performed in sorrow, it can also take place in joy," and "The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy."

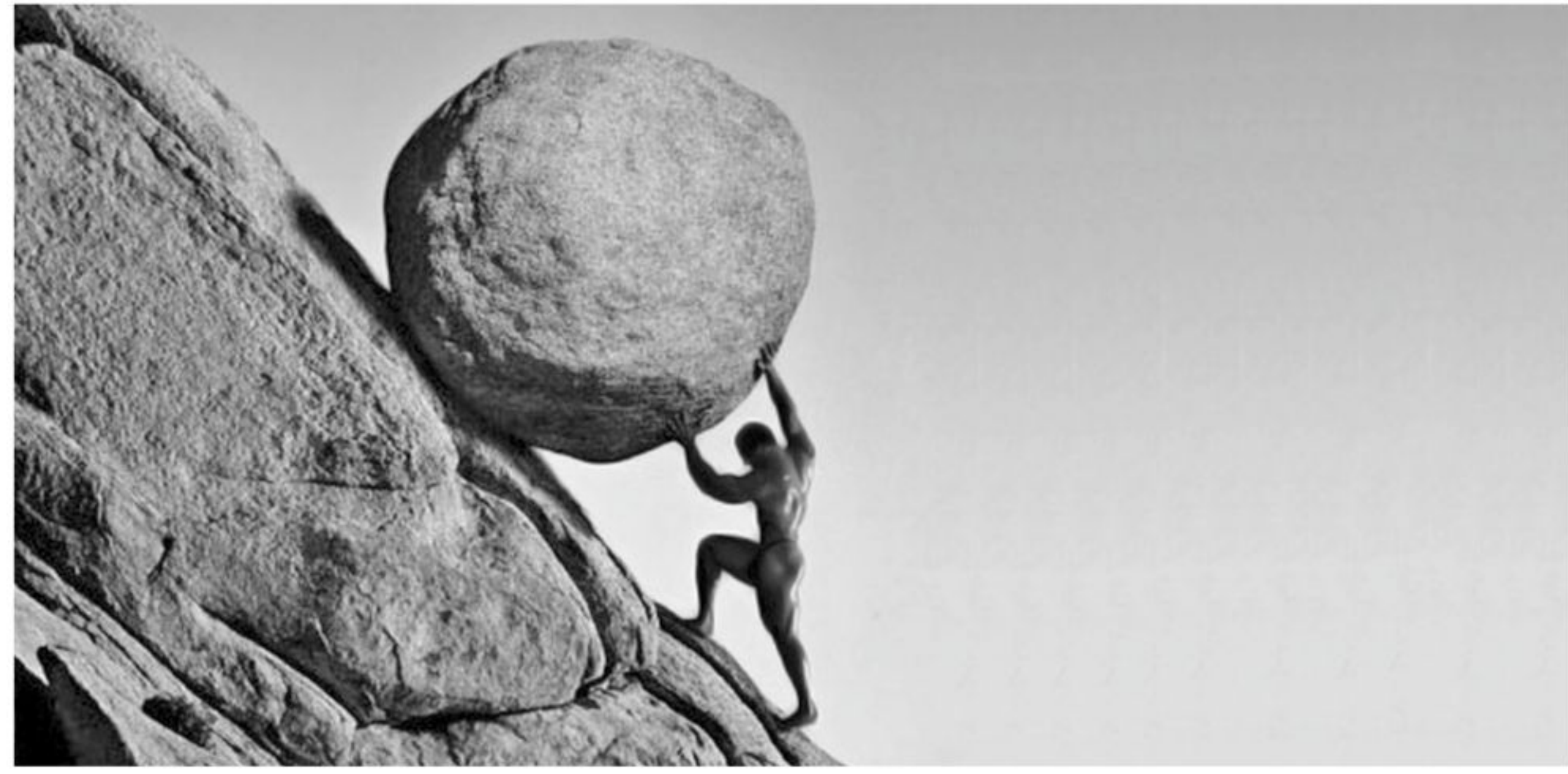
MAHIM UDUR an Manna. It is not about he who invested over four decades in politics, and jumped off the cliff because of two conversations that turned him into a villain. This column is not about a man who, till date, is referred to as "bhai," even in talk shows where he is being critically dissected and against whom thirty cases have already been filed while I pen this column. This column is not about a man who is a once-upon-a-time icon, a current day leader at the forefront of most of the talk show discussions, and one who has fallen overnight. Whether Manna indulged in evil ploys of power grabbing or not is not in discussion here. This column is about how often leaders fail the faith of the people. We breathe life into myths. Sisyphus, a mere mortal, had tricked the gods and was condemned. As for this myth, one watches the effort of a body to raise a huge stone and push it up a slope a hundred times over. The face is tense, the cheek stays tight on the stone, the shoulder braces the mass, the foot wedges it, and arms are stretched to drive humanity to the peak... only to watch it rush down in a few moments toward the bottom from where he will have to push it up again. The myth of Sisyphus apparently is a sad commentary on futility. In this land of ours, the mass happens to be Sisyphus and the big rock that the masses push to the peak is only an accumulation of the dreams of the citizens of the country. Every time a political leader disappoints and betrays the real cause of democracy, regular people in this country start their dismal journey downhill, and prepare to climb

up again. For most people in this country, there's no choice but to rise again. The next journey may mean eternal futility yet again, and there may not be any silver lining in the grey clouds that cover us. The people are almost caught up in a human hamster wheel, ceaselessly toiling at a pointless task, without pleasure, reward or promise of justice. With Sisyphus' rock peaking in Bangladesh, little Imon Hossain, a fifth grader in Azimpur, picks up a cocktail, mistakes it for a stone, targets a fruit, throws it and gets hurt. While the rock of democracy starts rolling again and Sisyphus is all set to begin his climb, Nur Hossain from Jinjira, a Chhatra League leader himself, gets arrested for being in possession of petrol bombs and cocktails that puts a fresh spike in the process. But good news is that even incumbency is not a consideration for the government. Good news, also, is that last weekend in Moulovibazar, AL and BNP representatives agreed to work together to eradicate vandalism. While,

with this news, Sisyphus is assured and is taking baby steps upward, in Rajshahi, on the 22nd of February, Shibir activists are chased away by local residents for trying to light a pile of bricks with petrol. Sisyphus is even happier now watching three young men being beaten up by locals when trying to set a car on fire as an infamous miscreant, Abdul Wadud, dies in an encounter. But how does Sisyphus react when, in Faridpur, someone from the police guised in plain clothes strangles

losophies. In that house, Nur Hossain and Md.Kamal belonging to AL and BNP respectively, are arrested on the 20th of February for being in possession of four petrol bombs and five cocktails. Violence and greed are not loyal to blood, Sisyphus thinks. Yet Sisyphus pushes the rock. In spite of all the political oscillations, Sisyphus in Bangladesh will not give up as he smells hope. Sisyphus' hope does not stem from failed leaders who preach and practice separately; Sisyphus

and called it a Cocoboard; others had offers of commercial production of mushroom pickles which is a boon to pregnant mothers, paper products made from rice, an organic pesticide, and a bag made from banana trees. The very next day, this English daily covered another report on the excellence of a young man, Ian Kazi Shakil, the chief executive officer of San Francisco-based Augmedix. He has set up an office at Panthapath where 45 young Bangladeshis are building a solution to allow patient documents to be entered into the US government-mandated electronic health records (EHRs) without manual data entry by doctors. All that needs to be done by the doctors is wear Google Glass and speak to patients while someone listens and documents the whole patient history at the back end. Ian plans to employ 7000 Bangladeshis in this project! Unlike commentaries on cocktails, petrol bombs and failed statesmen who dash the hopes of the common people that push Sisyphus' rock on a regular basis, news of the agro entrepreneurs and Ian Kazi Shakil give us a reason to believe, yet once again. In 1940, the Nobel laureate for literature Albert Camus wrote a brief essay, "The Myth of Sisyphus". In that essay, Camus writes: "If the descent [i.e., Sisyphus' returning to the bottom of the mountain to start pushing the rock upward all over again] is sometimes performed in sorrow, it can also take place in joy," and "The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy." Sisyphus in Bangladesh is also a happy man. In moments when the rock drops to the bottom and Sisyphus sinks toward the lairs of the lesser gods, he remains superior to his fate. He becomes stronger than his rock and so does Bangladesh. The writer is Managing Director, Mohammadi Group.



IN REMEMBRANCE OF BDR TRAGEDY

Tearful adieu

SYEDA NAZNEEN FERDOUSI

WE say life moves on and it is only wiser to look forward. But is there anyone who can deny the power of memory? In fact, what we call the present is given shape by an accumulation of the past. Even unpleasant memories are revisited – sometimes intentionally -- to reimagine if things could have been said or done differently, if we can 'undo' the past. Alas, little do we realise the harsh reality – "Time is like a river. You cannot touch the same water twice because the flow that has passed will never pass again." A part of us wants to forget these unpleasant memories, while another part of us wishes to preserve them. And it is with these mixed emotions that I remember my brother-in-law Shaheed Col Mojibul Hoque. Col Mojib was due to retire on April 3, 2009 but the BDR massacre on 25-26 February didn't let him enjoy the leisure of retirement. My wishful thinking over the past six years has been: What if he were still alive? What if he had retired earlier? What if he had fallen ill after the parade on 24 February and wasn't present there that day? After six long years, I have finally reconciled with his death. Knowing the person he was, I am sure the prevailing situation in the country would have killed him spiritually, anyway. The erosion of values – socially and politically, rising trend of violence, unending greed for power, lack of vision for national interest and the disrespect towards the general public – would have been reasons enough to quash his zeal were he alive today. We were close friends and shared our views on a wide range of issues. His devotion, patriotism and loyalty were just out of the world! I admired and respected him not only because he was my sister's husband but also as a human being. I remember a very small incident – my sister and I went to a supermarket for picking up groceries and other essentials.

Col Mojib accompanied us. As I was about to put a foreign toothpaste in my shopping trolley, he immediately asked why I didn't use Bangladeshi ones, adding, "If we don't patronise our own industries, how will they survive?" He lived a simple life. His family was his estate. He bought only Bangladeshi sarees for his wife and always preferred Bangladeshi products to give away as gifts. He had a vision for Bangladesh – that someday this country will shine in the world map, the youth will take the lead in shaping the political dynamics for the ultimate good and 'people' will be the biggest asset for this country.



Today, as we somberly observe the sixth anniversary of the Pilkhana massacre, I express my deepest respect to the 74 lives that were senselessly slayed in just 2 days. I am praying for the families they left behind; little do I know how their days are passing. So, here is the tearful adieu to my ardent wishful thinking that he was still alive I sync my thought with that of Sydney Carton, just before he faced the guillotine in A Tale of Two Cities – "It is a far, far better rest that I go to than I have ever known." Rest in eternal peace dear Mojib. The writer is sister-in-law of Col. Mojibul Hoque.

A father's bleeding heart

HABIBUR RAHMAN

IT'S an utterly haunting recollection of my lost son Shaheed Colonel Quadrat Elahi Rahman Shafique, ndc, psc. From his very childhood he appeared to be extremely sharp and meritorious. He was known as one of the most brilliant officers in the Bangladesh Army. Finishing his studies at Jhenaidah Cadet College he joined the Bangladesh Military Academy (BMA) and commissioned on 10th June 1983. While undergoing his military training in Bhatiyar he stood first in B.Sc. from Chittagong University. Then he continued his career as an officer of 3 East Bengal. He went to the UN Peace Keeping Mission in Bosnia for one year. Soon after his return he was posted as Brigade Major (BM) in 69 Infantry Brigade in Bandarban just for a few months. Meanwhile, he appeared for the examination for Defense Services Command & Staff College (DSCSC) for PSC. For his outstanding result in DSCSC, he was sent to Malaysia for doing his second staff course for a year. He was one of three officers who went to the Institute of Business Administration (IBA) under University of Dhaka qualifying through its competitive intake examination. In the two-year regular course Elahi stood first in MBA (Marketing) bringing glory to the Bangladesh Army. Later, Elahi was posted to MIST as an Instructor for the MBA course. He was promoted to Full Colonel in 2007 and posted as Senior Instructor (SI) in the Staff College. A few months later he was sent to Sudan in the UN Peace Keeping Mission as Sector Commander for one year. While in Sudan, the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon decorated him with the Medal of Gallantry which only a few officers of the UN Peace Mission have received. He successfully completed his NDC in December 2008. While doing his NDC

course he completed M.Phil from Dhaka University aiming to do his Ph.D at a suitable time. On 11th of January 2009, as a full Colonel he joined as Sector Commander of BDR in Dinajpur Sector (being there for only 1 month and 10 days). He came to Dhaka for the BDR Annual Conference on 21st February 2009. As ill-luck would have it, the hellish BDR carnage occurred on February 25 in Pilkhana, Dhaka. Among others he was also a hostage in the Darbar Hall, shot in his head and left this world forever. Around 9.30 am on Feb 25, hearing



about some trouble in BDR, I frantically tried to contact him on his mobile but to no avail. He had such an unflinching affection for his family that he would always make a telephone call or send messages to us wherever he was. But on this tragic day, he did not make a single call or send any message to any one of us realising that we would worry unnecessarily. It simply shows how considerate a child, father and husband he was! As usual, the Promotion Board sat in July- 2009 and Elahi was top on the list to be a Brigadier General – a pity he left this world in the prime of his Career without a

Star (Brigadier) although he proved himself a bright star in the Bangladesh Army. Albeit so many moons and monsoons have passed by, the question remains unanswered: Why were 57 brilliant unarmed officers so brutally murdered? Was it a conspiracy, national or international, to weaken the Bangladesh Army? Will the truth ever come out? So many moons and monsoons have passed by, but the question remains unanswered: Why were 57 brilliant unarmed officers so brutally murdered? Was it a conspiracy, national or international, to weaken the Bangladesh Army? Will the truth ever come out? As I write the above lines in memory of my son, my eyes are getting moist, tears are blurring my vision, my heart is bleeding. I cannot write any more! May Allah grant Elahi and all his fellow shaheed colleagues Jannatul Ferdous. The writer is father of Shaheed Col. Quadrat Elahi Rahman Shafique, ndc, psc

QUOTABLE Quote

To succeed in life, you need two things: ignorance and confidence.

Mark Twain

CROSSWORD by Thomas Joseph

ACROSS

1 Mocking work
7 Prepare for a bout
11 Lisbon's setting
12 Bohemian
13 Casual pants
14 Big book
15 Start a journey
17 St. Louis sight
20 Lament
23 Twosome
24 Foreign
26 Writer Radcliffe
27 Outlaw
28 They hold power
29 Bakery buys
31 Granola bit
32 Unexpected growth
33 Just
34 Method
37 "I cannot tell--"
39 Company firer
43 Elevator part
44 Lug
45 Mafia bosses
46 Park art

DOWN

1 "Ice Age" sloth
2 Justice Fortas
3 Finger count
4 Limerick people
5 Frost
6 Sunrise site
7 Had done, as a portrait
8 Excess
9 Money machine
10 Reuben base
16 Some signs
17 Washington's successor
18 Incur, as debts
19 Mix-up
21 Kidney-related
22 Mean-spirited
24 Sombre notices
25 Big truck
30 Doughnut shop fixtures
33 Last letter
35 Bar bills
36 Way to go
37 Throw in
38 Old card game
40 Small rug
41 Clerk on "The Simpsons"
42 Once called

Yesterday's answer

P	E	S	O	S	S	T	R	A	P
A	C	T	U	P	C	A	I	R	O
C	H	A	I	R	W	A	R	M	E
T	O	Y	E	A	R	S	A	T	
			S	A	X	E	S		
S	Q	U	A	D	D	A	R	E	D
A	U	N	T		L	A	V	A	
M	O	D	E	M	B	O	W	E	D
			D	I	J	O	N		
A	D	S	G	A	G	E	G	O	
B	E	N	C	H	W	A	R	M	E
E	L	I	O	T	R	H	I	N	E
L	I	P	P	Y	T	O	T	E	S

2-25

CRYPTOQUOTE

VK ZMK EKMK QO KZMRE RQ GQ SQQG JQM QREKMN. VEZR REK QREKMN ZMK EKMKJQM, LGQ OQRDOQV.

-- HQEO JQNRKM EZYY

Yesterday's CRYPTOQUOTE: ALTHOUGH ALWAYS PREPARED FOR MARTYRDOM, I PREFERRED THAT IT SHOULD BE POSTPONED.

-- WINSTON CHURCHILL

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