

# Puppeteers go in different directions

PLEASURE IS ALL MINE



SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

OVERWHELMED by the vociferous postmortem of the city corporation polls, two footfalls on the cityscape have gone unnoticed, unappreciated, as though coming and going on stealth. The winners and their supporters were muted in their 'celebrations', way short of the waltzing jubilation one would have expected from the victorious side following three major mayoral elections in a row.

In the DCC and CCC polls, the winners had little to boast about the virtual walkovers they had, that too blemished like a tattered blanket. So you discern a whiff of humility on the part of the winners translating into subdued exchange of greetings.

The sign of maturity has been observed since the upazila polls where there were hard-fought contests with the results too close to brag about. No party had made a clean sweep over the other in the number of positions secured at the polls.

The restrained celebration lately reflected a moral qualm at the subliminal level, one would have liked to think.

The second positive development, albeit of greater importance, is BNP-led alliance's abjuring impulsive hartal and oborodh calls with ruthless regularity. The knee-jerk incendiary but arm-chair announcements of such programmes have been apparently subjected to rigorous reality checks. It is as well that they have acknowledged the monumental folly which severely damaged BNP-led alliance's standing with the people. That this has happened after the nation had

paid irreparable costs and BNP having been reduced to a beleaguered state for its high-strung boycotts in huffs and puffs, should make the party abandon the path of violence altogether now. Formally, the BNP has yet to call off the oborodh which a senior party leader thought was superfluous because the call for shutdown in any case was not being heeded.

That said, you come to one least discussed fact: The representational mandate of the newly elected mayors. The Dhaka North mayor, for instance, clinched around one sixth of the votes of the total electorate and his colleague in the South around one fourth of voter support. True, in the first past the post system, a candidate having an edge of one vote over his rival is the winner, no questions asked. All the same, he is morally tasked to be working in consultation with other politically influential people and a whole lot of experts, a new breed of the latter having emerged from around the globe.

After having taken oath of office, they are mayors for all the citizens. They need to stave off regional propensities and attempted politicisation valuing professionalism in their functioning. Then only Dhaka and Chittagong metropolises will grow along progressive lines. With the required will and non-interference thrown in it is unachievable. They should focus on deliverable options rather than costly undertakings mindful of environmental costs, efficiency and average man oriented amenities.

Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, is an example. He derives powers from the Greater London Authority Act 1999 as amended in 2007 and completed by Location Act 2011.

The list of his functions is most exhaustive -- education, housing planning, strategy planning, transport planning, highways, reducing traffic congestion, bike lane operation, social services

including library, garbage recycling (following EU standards), environment, waste collection and disposal, water and power supply, rates collection, maintaining air quality and keeping noise pollution within safe limits. He is also in charge of facilitating services of the biggest airport in the world (he is having a Boris Island of an airport on the Thames to ease the burden off Heathrow!).

Of particular note is his involvement in policing and operating CCTV cameras. Fire and emergencies are also his beat. Significantly, he has a moral office. We wish our mayor take up some of these specialised functions. One that particularly comes to mind is ramping up against earthquakes and the other wish is obviously 'fault-free' operation of CCTV camera which is such a big scandal!

As late as in December 2004, Ramesh Ramanathan, founder of Bangalore's Janaagraha civic NGO, discussed the subject of uncoordinated municipal services under the title "Too many cooks in each other's way for the urban services kitchen." He picturesquely elaborated on this point thus: "Imagine a puppet whose strings are being pulled by different puppeteers: the hands by one, the legs by another, the head and shoulders by a third. Sitting in the audience, the show would not look pretty. City governance in India is similar, being pulled and pushed in different directions..."

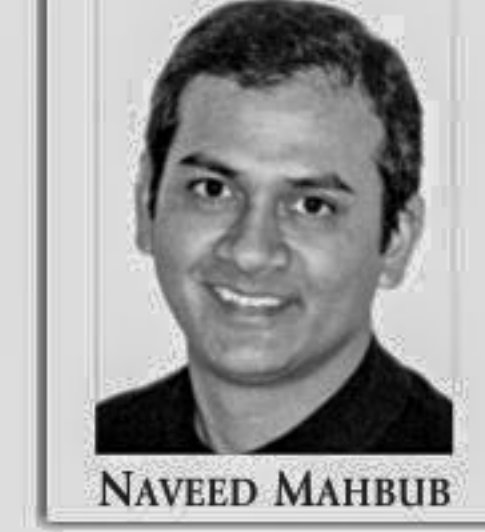
Since then there have been targeted improvements in city governance in major metropolises in India; yet coordination remains a nightmare. Bangladeshi cities do need to get around the deficit of coordination or virtual absence of it. Best practice methods offer the proverbial silver bullet.

The writer is Associate Editor, The Daily Star.



## Some Mothers Do Have 'Em

HUMOROUSLY YOURS



NAVEED MAHBUB

I'M the 'coach' - the lone, accompanying partner of the expectant wife for nine months. The job description includes catering to her gastronomical cravings at three in the morning as she demands mango chutney with vanilla ice cream. Not only do I provide immediate room service, but also give her company, 'relishing' with an emphatic, 'yummy!' as endorsement for her brilliant recipe.

Over the span of three trimesters, her belly gradually gets big...and so does mine.

I am there with her all through to D-Day (Delivery Day), taking the front seat in the delivery room. She makes it into the hall of fame of hospitals in Bangladesh for going through a normal delivery without epidural.

As I stare through the window of the hospital nursery, admiring my one hour old daughter, I realise that she is the first delivery of the day. Then comes the runner-up - the next baby with her young mom on the trolley and the proud dad. An obvious case of C-section.

I greet them: "Congratulations!" And then the massive gloat: "My wife - normal delivery, no epidural." I almost end the sentence with a Dhallywood villain's sonic boom-like 'Muwaah-haaa-haaa-haaa!' laughter.

For the next four hours, it is an identical exercise at precisely thirty minute intervals - little baby, C-section mom, proud dad, congratulations and my showing off.

With the delivery stream over for the day and my swagging adrenaline far from waning, I turn to the security guard on duty: "My wife - normal, no epidural. Yours?"

"Sir, we had our baby at our village home. My wife delivered her own baby, cleaned herself up, cut the umbilical cord herself, cleaned the baby, fed the baby and then she herself cooked rice, vegetables and daal for me."

Earth calling Naveed, come in...

Later in the evening, I bring my (now) 12 hour old daughter to the hospital cabin where the mom is resting. Baby cries. I pick her up to my chest, and she tries to suckle my...

Too bad I can't breast feed her, but it's a wake-up call that I need to hit the gym. This moment also makes me appreciate the sea horse, the only male species that bears a child.

I will never know how it feels to have a human grow inside me, let alone the pain of delivering a child. So, here's what we do. There's my wife, the high-flying executive and there's myself, the comedian and stay-at-home dad. It is a conscious and proud choice of 'reversed roles'. After all, interdependence and teamwork comes in many shapes and forms...

I take a back seat from my corporate career from where I have retired, though I am far from being tired. Sure, you can call it being domestic or domesticated but please don't call it effeminate - trust me, you can't get manlier than this. After all, the word 'husband' is a derivative of 'house-band', i.e., someone who just may also be capable of keeping the household together, and thus just might make it to the elite class called 'homemaker'.

So, all in a day's work for me is spending the whole day with the kids while maintaining a home office. Seeking endorsement, I ask my 3 year old: "So, who's the best daddy in the world?"

She answers: "Why? Mommy of course!"

Relax! That surely means that I'm the best mom in the world. My wife then asks her: "Who's the best mom in the world?"

Daughter: "Why? You of course, mom!"

Sigh. Well, she's just three years old. She'll come around. Let's focus on the 10-year-old who asks mom as soon as she comes home after a long, hard day's work: "Mommy, can't you stay home just like daddy?"

Mom: "Aw! But I have to work - we need money."

Daughter: "Why? There's the ATM!"

I guess this explain why all day long, kids ask the stay-at-home mom a thousand questions but ask the dad only one question: "Where is mom?" This also proves that the top position is irreplaceable. The role I play as a stay-at-home dad is at best, a substitute of the best. Nevertheless, what I have the privilege of doing is still the greatest job on this planet - with just one boss to please.

Happy Mother's Day!

The writer is an engineer & CEO turned comedian (by choice), the host of NTV's The Naveed Mahbub Show and the founder of Naveed's Comedy Club. E-mail: naveed@naveedmahbub.com

# The signing of land boundary agreement: 'Neighbour first' back on track

SMRUTI S PATTANAIK

THE NDA government's 'neighbour first' policy received further boost in the recent past. From taking a lead in operationalising the rescue plan in Nepal to the passage of the long pending landmark Land Boundary Agreement (LBA), the signature determination of the government's intention to boost India's neighbourhood policy is apparent.

Politically, a consensus on the LBA, a rare commodity in today's contentious competitive politics where vote bank politics dominates motivation, is significant as the political parties cutting across the party lines voted overwhelmingly for the LBA. The BJP also made the rare gesture when Ms Sushma Singh, the External affairs Minister, acknowledged the contribution of the previous government headed by Dr Mamohan Singh in finalising the agreement.

The amendment as per article 368 of the constitution was pending before the Parliament for its ratification. The previous Congress regime though tried to introduce the bill but it faced stiff opposition from the BJP's Assam unit as well as from the Asom Gano Sagram Parishad. The BJP, which had initially taken the stand that it will support the LBA as it is in 'national interest', buckled under pressure of its state unit as it was felt that any support to LBA will mar its electoral prospects in Assam where the party has been trying to gain a foothold.

The LBA has three major components. It includes the exchange of enclaves and land under adverse possession and demarcation of 6.1 kilometres of the border that in the past had witnessed conflicts. Out of 162 enclaves, 111 enclaves constituting 17,160.63 acres of land that belongs to India will be exchanged with 51 Bangladeshi enclaves constituting 7,110.02 acres of land. All the Bangladeshi enclaves are situated in Cooch Behar whereas Indian enclaves are spread in four districts of Panchagarh, Lalmonirhat, Kurigram and

Nilphamari districts in Bangladesh. Out of 5,044 acres of land in adverse possession, India would receive 2,777 acres and Bangladesh would get 2,267 acres. It needs to be noted that Bangladesh shares 320 km of border with Mizoram, 436 km with Meghalaya, 264 km with Assam, 874 km with Tripura and 2,262 km with West Bengal. According to media reports, Assam would be gaining more land which was under the adverse possession of Bangladesh in Goraibari, Dhubri and Pallatal in Karimganj. It will get a net land area of 445.6 acres after the LBA comes to force.

The government, after consulting

agreement. The JBWGs agreed to conduct a census in their meeting held in November 2010 and it was duly carried out jointly in July 2011. The High Commissioners of the two countries signed the strip maps in August 2011. In February 2013, India and Bangladesh exchanged 1114 strip maps prepared by both the countries. It needs to be noted that while Bangladesh ratified the LBA in 1974; India could not ratify it as demarcation of the border was a pre-requisite for ratifications as per the constitution.

Initially, Assam was part of the LBA. When Modi visited Assam in November 30, 2014, while addressing



A security official opens the gate of Indian-ruled Rangpur 350km north of Dhaka.

the people in the enclaves in 2007, decided to maintain the status quo to avoid the exchange of population as per Article 3 of the 1974 agreement. Out of 6.1 km of the demarcated border, 1.5 km is at Doikhata (West Bengal), 1.6 km in Muhirir char in Belonia (Tripura) and 3 km in Lathitilla-Dumabari (Assam).

India and Bangladesh constituted two Joint Border working Groups (JBWGs) in June 29, 2001 to resolve the longstanding border demarcation issue. However, things did not progress as the BNP government in Bangladesh was not willing to allow carry out a census in the enclaves as per the 1974

BJP workers in Assam on November 30, he emphasised that "there will be no compromise on security," and assured that the BJP government will "always protect the interests of Assam and the country." While keeping the rhetoric on illegal Bangladeshi migration in mind, Prime Minister Modi said "I am going to use the land swap deal to stop illegal infiltration from Bangladesh, which has been a perennial problem for the state." However, as the BJP was preparing ground to introduce the bill in the Parliament, it decided to exclude Assam. Both Tarun Gogoi, the Chief Minister of Assam, and the Congress opposed the exclusion of

PHOTO: AFP

QUOTABLE Quote

Nobody can hurt me without my permission.

Mahatma Gandhi

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- Disney deer
- Top card
- Swabbing tool
- Eternal City resident
- "Good luck!" to an actor
- Oak nut
- "Skyfall" singer
- Plains abode
- Make fun of
- Dr visit
- Silent assent
- Sailors
- Singer Fitzgerald
- Overly enthusiastic
- Limbo residents
- Muslim's Abdul
- Brews, as tea
- Shoelace problem
- Well behaved people
- Movie role for George Burns
- Notion
- Some messages
- Andean animal
- Chop finely
- Houston native
- Spirited horse
- Hollywood dealmaker

DOWN

- Flying mammal
- Top card
- Swabbing tool
- "Good luck!" to an actor
- Clumsy
- Sturdy building
- Poem of praise
- Nasty
- Too
- Must have
- Golf goal
- "New Girl" girl
- Oodles
- Detective's find
- "Hurry up!"
- Ladder step
- Sleep like...
- Toppers
- Overindulged
- Lawn material
- River area
- Precious stones
- Leave out
- Copenhagen native
- Rink surface
- Chopping tool
- Chess piece
- Industrious insect

Yesterday's answer

CRYPTOQUOTE

MV VANC MV IEC VBNFTR ZFKK HQKQZ IEC ZFTICN, BNQVBCNFIL MTY CGQTQJFG RNQZIE ZFKK HQKQZ NCGCVVFT. --WQ WCTTCII

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: PEOPLE ASK ME WHAT I DO IN WINTER WHEN THERE'S NO BASEBALL. ... I STARE OUT THE WINDOW AND WAIT FOR SPRING. --ROGERS HORNSBY

BEETLE BAILEY by Mort Walker

BEETLE! YOUR SHOE IS UNTIED!

YOU CAN'T SEE ME! HOW DO YOU KNOW IT'S UNTIED?

BECAUSE I KNOW YOU!

HENRY by Don Trachte

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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