

No more a 'test' case



CHINTITO SINCE 1995
NIZAMUDDIN AHMED

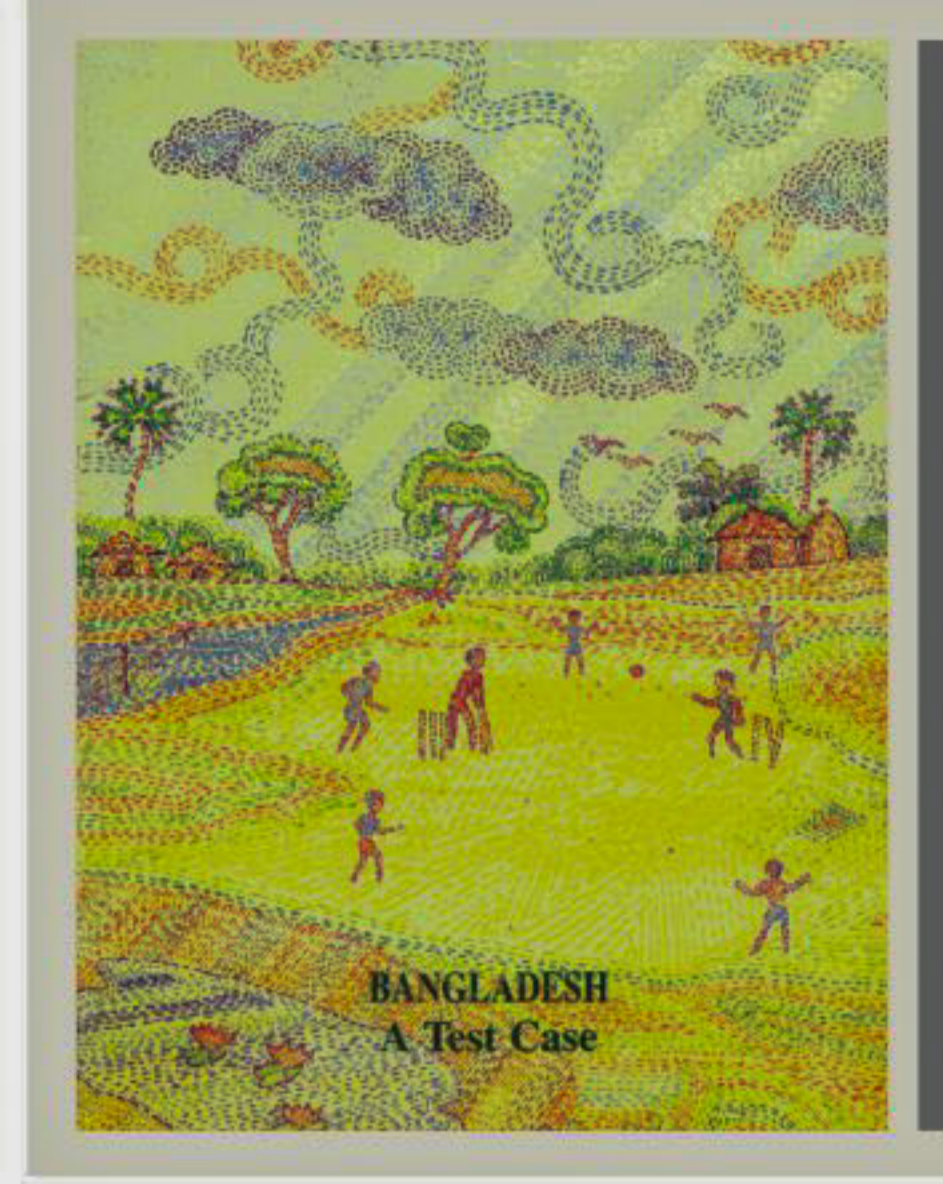
NOW not many people know this, fewer still care about it, but the recent double dhamaka from the Tigers compel me to dig back to well almost twenty years.

Test Case" is ageing in my locker because my punning title was accepted by Saber & Co. But they had kept the worst for the last. On a January 1997 afternoon, I was standing in a meeting room at Sonargaon Hotel, my lips parched from thirst, as I went about explaining via slides why Bangladesh needed, if not deserved, full ICC membership for cricket to survive in this land.

cover. I admire the strength of a fast bowler, the magic of a spinner. I am elated by the sound of tumbling wickets - when the other side is batting. I represent what you (two) may say the cross-section of people of Bangladesh. We are head over heels in love with this game."

ated my heart was) I managed to deliver the epic statement: "Cricket is in the heart of Bangladeshis. Where else in the world would you find travellers on rickshaws hooked to radio sets listening to running commentary of a match between countries they have never set their foot on or have no relation with whatsoever? Many Bangladeshis may embarrass a Gavaskar, or a Cronje, or a Gattling, or a Khan with knowledge of their cricket statistics that may be Greek to their own countrymen or even to themselves.

On a fine day in 1996, my cousin and then advertisement executive Asaduzzaman Noor (now minister and still my cousin) called me to a meeting at the Kakrail office of Saber Hossain Chowdhury, then president of the Bangladesh Cricket Board. We were joined by Aly Zaker, Noor Bhai's office colleague. There was little beating around the bush and the trio told me point-blank that Bangladesh was bidding for Test status (Huh!), and I am supposed to prepare a write-up as BCB's official submission to the visiting ICC team. (Huh again!)



We washed out Pakistan 3-0 in an ODI series last April and we convincingly defeated India 2-1 last week; situations unthinkable for me to pen or utter two decades ago. Yes, indeed, we have come a long way.

When I saw the duo from the ICC Development Committee shift in their seats (what to me was a nod of approval), I knew our ODI status was on the plate. Granted that in 1997, the full membership (Test ranking) was bestowed in 2000, but not before I made a second presentation to ICC.

Back then I was Sports Editor of The Daily Star, and so I accepted their choice and my appointment with as much humility as was possible for a person thrust into internationalism. I was short on cricketing data and so hinged on my talented Star Sport colleague Hasan Masood, a married man who soared to stardom with 'Bachelor'.

With information on Bangladesh cricket (there obviously was not a lot), under our sleeves, we conjured perhaps the greatest piece of 'literature' that concealed more than it revealed about where we stood circa the state of the game of gentlemen (this was long before Mild Steel Dhoni showed us his WWE manoeuvre).

nowhere near that of the other illustrious sub-continental giants, our below par coaching and umpiring, and yet our packed-to-rafters venues.

From figures that were more of an apology, from uncertainty expressed as mortification, from performances that reeked of amateurism, Bangladesh today is a name to contend with. We washed out Pakistan 3-0 in an ODI series last April and we convincingly defeated India 2-1 last week; situations unthinkable for me to pen or utter two decades ago. Yes, indeed, we have come a long way. Somebody please pat me on the back.

With information on Bangladesh cricket (there obviously was not a lot), under our sleeves, we conjured perhaps the greatest piece of 'literature' that concealed more than it revealed about where we stood circa the state of the game of gentlemen (this was long before Mild Steel Dhoni showed us his WWE manoeuvre).

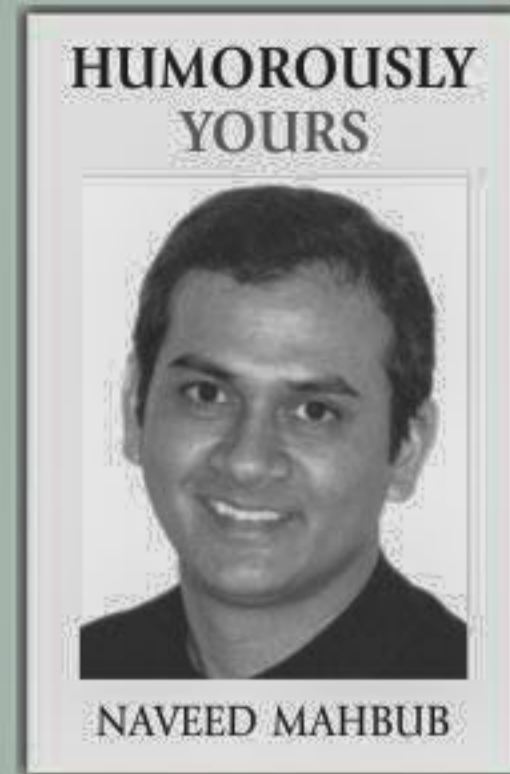
A copy of the critique "Bangladesh - A

then (or now) was the fervour that we involuntarily attach to cricket, and that was my winning stroke on which I cashed in my presentation. Holding my hand on my 'right' chest (where I indi-

When I saw the duo from the ICC Development Committee shift in their seats (what to me was a nod of approval), I knew our ODI status was on the plate. Granted that in 1997, the full membership (Test ranking) was bestowed in 2000, but not before I made a second presentation to ICC.

From figures that were more of an apology, from uncertainty expressed as mortification, from performances that reeked of amateurism, Bangladesh today is a name to contend with. We washed out Pakistan 3-0 in an ODI series last April and we convincingly defeated India 2-1 last week; situations unthinkable for me to pen or utter two decades ago. Yes, indeed, we have come a long way. Somebody please pat me on the back.

TIGER Balm



HUMOROUSLY YOURS
NAVEED MAHBUB

I go to the restroom way before lunch time. By the time I'm back at the stands, the game is over and the skipper is giving his interview. Perhaps he thought it was a 20-20 game. It's the Bangladesh vs. West Indies game during the 2011 World Cup.

2015. Same stadium, same game, same weather, same crowd, same team. Well, almost the same team with 'just' some fresh blood while the old hands are amply seasoned. And what a difference that makes.

The mid morning showers before the start of the 2nd One Day International (ODI) against India is, in retrospect, the harbinger of a near perfect Bangla wash. Shuwarma (the Rohit type) is devoured with relish in front of millions of salivating, fasting fans. The ducks are lined up for subsequent ducks - Ambati Rayudu quickly following Rohit Sharma while making me and probably many other iftar expectants crave duck curry.

Millions are thrilled at the mojo of Mustafiz, cool as a cucumber, or should I say, seven cucumbers (Shaat khira), presenting his dad with the best Father's Day ever. After Norail Express, the Tigers now add Shatkira Express to its formidable arsenal. *Lonely Planet Bangladesh* is sure to add Shatkira in its next edition as the next big tourist destination in Bangladesh.

To put the brakes on the Mustafiz blitz, rain comes for the second time that day. Maybe this is the Teesta water that India promised Bangladesh - rain from Teesta's precipitation.

Is that a depression in the Bay of Bengal? Regardless, the visiting team is warned to obey the number seven maritime signal from Tropical Storm Mustafiz.

The D/L method kicks in with a 200 target for the Tigers. Nales biting. That fateful catch is ruled out with the ball touching the ground. This is one time I say, "Thank Heavens for gravity!" With the loss of 4 wickets, the Tigers are well poised to win. The only way for India to get the last 6 Bangladeshi wickets would be to get Mustafiz on their team. During iftar, many a Bangladeshi fans gladly swap Fakhruddin's *Haleem* for the Tigers' *Haloom*.

With the win in the ODI series and with a million eyes on him, the wonder kid proves that public speaking is still the second most fearful experience after death. He is a shy nineteen year old in front of the cameras and the microphone. The world falls in love with the kiddo all the more. Oh, and sorry Joel Garner, Mustafiz is the new Flying Albatross!

Curious to get a sense of the mood across the border, I momentarily switch away from Gazi TV to Star Sports to see how it is sporting the score board. With the full force of my family including my parents and kids glued to the TV, instead of the detailed score, we get to see the steamy ad of Skore...

Flip back to GTV! There are plenty of reasons to celebrate. The Tigers have come of age. We now have the perfect Tiger Balm to cure our cricket migraine. Boys, thank you! And thank you Team India, for graciously acknowledging that the *Bachchas* have finally grown up.

Instead of the end, it is at the beginning of Ramadan that Eid comes for us. The celebration is complete. Well, almost. It'll be fully complete as soon as we get BGB trooper Razzak back home from Myanmar unscathed to unite with his wife and newborn baby. Oh wait, it's a ransom game as Razzak comes only with Bangladesh's unconditional 'acceptance' of 555 human trafficking victims. Ok, it's the early special of the early Eid - buy one get 555 free. Or maybe it's 'Cigarette Diplomacy' powered by a 666 policy...

The writer is an engineer at Ford & Qualcomm USA and CEO of IBM & Nokia Siemens Networks Bangladesh 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.

BUDGET 2015-16

An unconventional perspective

In any case, the lowering of corporate tax is bad for the economy holistically as it will serve to widen inequality between the super-rich and the waged worker.

SEVERAL key points went under the neo-classical radar in Finance Minister AMA Muhith's budget speech. Along with placing the largest proposed budget in Bangladesh's history - a whopping Tk. 295,100 crore - Muhith also revealed plans of financing this budget that may be termed ambitious at best, and that's if we're being generous. From a neo-classical economist's perspective, Muhith's words were music, albeit from a record player they have come to regard with wariness when it comes to planning. It hit all the right notes at the right time - 'lower corporate tax', 'breaking growth trap of 6.0 pc', 'investment friendly atmosphere'. Indeed, these matters are taken to be sacred for the functioning of the economy and a country that is moving in the right direction. The heterodox perspective offers a different take on economic matters because it aims to study holistically the implications of economic policy and the structures behind the accumulation of capital. 'Growth' no longer remains the magical word that is taken without examination. In this article, we shall examine the many aspects of the new budget and ask critical questions- growth for whom? Where would the bulk of the financing come from? Will the government's plan fail simply because it contradicts itself at its base?

The firm will thus make larger amounts of profit that will lead to its expansion under the nature of capitalist accumulation. However, with increasing production and services there also needs to be increasing consumption. How will the employee, whose income has not increased in tandem with corporate expansion, be able to purchase the products that are now being produced? This institutional dynamic may lead to under-consumption in much the same way that it looked set to plague the US economy from 1980-1990 during the Reagan era. The US, however, avoided this particular problem by one simple mechanism- by lowering the interest rates close to 0 percent. This meant that the average consumer could now borrow more at lower rates in order to prop up the economy (a nexus of debt-ridden consumption that eventually led to the global financial crunch in 2006). The reason behind the FBCCI's call to lower the interest rates follows this same logic that fears there will be under-consumption in the economy very soon because of this dynamic. The government has done a commendable job of raising the interest rate to avoid this problem but how long it can survive without caving to corporate pressure remains to be seen. In any case, the lowering of corporate tax is bad for the economy holistically as it will serve to widen inequality between the super-rich and the waged worker.

of these problems. Indeed, they have even taken measures to make sure it does not affect the entire economy too negatively by planning a large amount of government expenditure on both the developmental and non-developmental sectors. The government plans to implement a 100 percent pay rise for government employees by July 1 and Tk. 56,696 crore in public spending and Tk. 16,725 crore in social security and welfare. This, along with infrastructure development promises means that the government aims to create more jobs and consolidate current ones in order to boost consumption. The problem here, as it has historically been for Bangladesh, is one of poor implementation that is exacerbated by political instability and rampant corruption. Taking these into consideration it is unlikely that the government's measure will boost any kind of consumption at all. It also has to be kept in mind that the revenue collection process is integral to this expenditure and that has been a notoriously inefficient sector of the government which is most harsh on the lowest income groups - a Tk. 4000 minimum uniform tax on all tax payers will serve to only perpetuate the widening the gap between the rich and the poor working class.

The FBCCI has welcomed the slashing of corporate tax while urging the government to lower interest rates for borrowing. The reasoning behind this can be unpacked once we move past the rhetoric of financial growth. Lowering corporate tax will increase the amount of profit that a corporation is able to keep for itself. This incentive will no doubt motivate firms to invest more into its infrastructure in order to expand the avenues of profit accumulation. The wage of the private sector employee, however, is not set to increase in tandem with the increased amounts of profit as it is up to the firm to set the limit on wages above the legally required minimum wage (something that has not budged from its position in the RMG sector).

At the same time, the government will aim to finance the debt by private sector borrowing that will form a huge part of consolidating the deficit. The banks will not be as forthcoming in its private sector loans under these current circumstances and so, coupled with the slashing corporate tax, this is sure to result in a stunting of competition among smaller firms while the historically large conglomerates will expand to monopolistic industries. Again, this spells widespread inequality and the creation of a '1%' that owns and controls most assets.

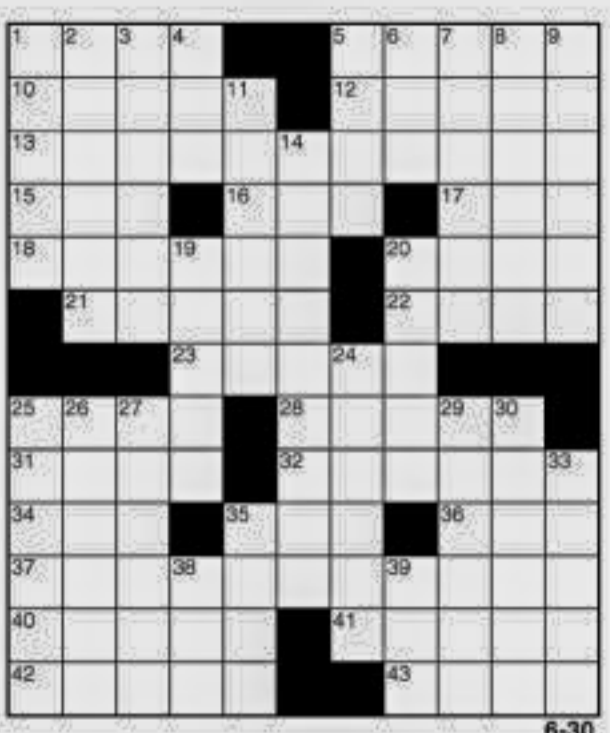
There are several problems with the current budget and its ambitious nature is only a small aspect of it. The policies proposed by Muhith signal a growing focus on the development of private firms. However, as we have seen, some of the policies means that not only will competition suffer, but the largest firms will thrive. Whether this decision has been taken consciously to satisfy under-the-table dealings remains speculative at this point. There will definitely be GDP growth in some form or another. This writer only asks readers to not confuse GDP growth with an improved standard of living for the entire population. The budget, like Bangladeshi bourgeois society at large, is kind only to those who don't have to worry about where the next meal is coming from.

It would be doing a disservice to the economic think-tank of the country if we were to say that they have not anticipated at least some

The writer studies at Knox College, USA.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Lawn material
 - 5 Minimum amount
 - 10 Some wood-winds
 - 12 Birch's cousin
 - 13 D.H. Lawrence book
 - 15 Scot's denial
 - 16 High card
 - 17 Stephen of "The Crying Game"
 - 18 Bowling feat
 - 20 Ernie's pal
 - 21 Tender areas
 - 22 Keats poems
 - 23 Crooked
 - 25 Informal talk
 - 28 Skating jumps
 - 31 Take cover
- DOWN**
- 1 Burgs
 - 2 German subs
 - 3 "Dawn of the Dead" director
 - 4 Phone bill addition
 - 5 Road division
 - 6 Building wing
 - 7 Found
 - 34 "That's gross!" charming
 - 35 -- amis (my friends)
 - 36 Sheep call
 - 37 D.H. Lawrence book
 - 40 Franc replacers
 - 41 Factions
 - 42 Gushes forth
 - 43 Fizzy drink
 - 8 Stringent
 - 9 Rover's rewards
 - 11 Serpents
 - 14 Rink wear
 - 19 Fuming
 - 20 Bent downward
 - 24 Is real
 - 25 Skydiving needs
 - 26 Holding an important rank
 - 27 Stick
 - 29 Lusty drive
 - 30 Blackened
 - 33 Party dip
 - 35 Forest growth
 - 38 Depressed
 - 39 Basic soldiers



YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

SASH PARACH
ALTO ANALOG
TART COMETO
AMASSED ADA
NOWHERE NOT
OAS HUGO
WHITS COPSE
IONS LAT
PTA GASTANK
ELK EPSILON
RINUSES MINT
SPOUSE EVENS
STEED SETH

Our customers speak for us...



"I feel complete and fully content. I have everything in life now, and bti is a big reason for that."

Md. Abu Jafor Miah & Family
bti Premier Plaza
Tower # 2, Flat # A6
Progoti Sharani, Badda, Dhaka

bti Premier Plaza
Progoti Sharani, Badda, Dhaka

REHAB MEMBERSHIP #001
ISO 9001:2008 CERTIFIED
www.btibd.com

building technology & ideas ltd.
in pursuit of excellence...