

Mixed fruit salad sweet and sour



PLEASURE IS ALL MINE
SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

LATELY, three exceptional pieces of news must have grabbed your attention, even sprung pleasant surprises at you, not without a 'toxic' bit lacing them.

These are about a transformational change in our slums, Bangladesh's formal elevation to the lower middle income country bracket and our youth emerging as 'highly moral' in a finding by the Transparency International, Bangladesh (TIB).

Let me analyse them in an ascending order from the baseline to a skyline-- of a conceptual framework so that you have a connective understanding of what the story is all about -- where we are now, how could we have bettered it, and where we need to refocus our priorities. All for a transparent, inclusive and sustainable development process secure from the vagaries of politics. These are major concerns with us.

A Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics' survey on slums reveals that in 17 years between 1997 and 2014, floating population has been halved from 32 thousand to 16 thousand and the number of *jhupris* (shacks) has dropped by as much as 75 percent.

There's been a significant improvement in the standard of living across the slums. 62.45 percent dwell in all tin or bamboo stick walled homes with thatch roof while a decent 26.43 percent in brick walled tin-roofed abodes. As many as 84 percent use mobile phones, 48 percent television sets, 79 percent cool off by electric fans. Sanitary toilet coverage has increased from 7.9 percent to 26.25 percent while the grimy hanging ones have dropped from 53.8 percent to 8.63 percent. Signs that they are slowly but steadily fending off the dreadful ghettoisation of mega cities. Our slums are only a push away from deliverance into an acceptably cleaner living.

The health and morbidity survey places them in a spot of bother, though fever is prevalent as communicable diseases are on the rise. Drinking water supply, largely self-managed, can be reasonably improved, sanitation and hygiene must be ensured by efficient garbage disposals, and affordable basic medicare made available around major slum concentrations.

The self-enterprising people deserve utmost material help from the government, NGOs and corporate sector considering that they are a lifeline to various services the citizenry cannot do without.

Now to our lower middle income status the World Bank has formally heralded Bangladesh into. We fulfill the lower end of the criterion for middle income country with a Gross National Income per capita (GNI) of between \$1,046 to \$4,125. Actually, it is a belated formalisation of our status; for, Bangladesh's per capita income has risen to \$1,314.

It is quite relevant to pit our rising per capita income against capital flight through illicit means tripling in 2012 at \$1.78 billion. Even this figure needs an update with statistics for the last three years adding to a more whopping total altogether. Capital flight to Switzerland, a financial haven, rose by 36.02 percent in 2014 alone reaching Tk 4,283 crore.

Capital flight from Bangladesh per capita amounted to \$205 in 2010. Add to this, per capita debt burden which increased from Tk

time existence of so many ultra poor and slum-dwellers around us?

J.K. Galbraith had debunked the trickle down theory of economics as 'less than an elegant metaphor that if one feeds the horse enough oats, some will pass through to the road for sparrows'.

The diamond in our demographic crown is the youth. A TIB survey went ebullient with the finding that 97 to 98 percent of the youth surveyed reflected a strong sense of morality. 'A person of integrity never lies, cheats or break laws' as if that is their ideal, although 30 percent granted that such a person can make exceptions to bend over backwards if it benefits his or her family.

How does it fit in with reports that certain college student leaders ate in a restaurant and off they went without paying the bills? Having



2,982.19 in FY 2011-12 to Tk 3,389.84 in FY 2012-13. These potential add-ons couldn't be reflected on the per capita income calculations. Had the economy not suffered from these illicit outflows, let alone Bangladesh ranking among the top three countries after China and Japan to have citizens with second homes in Malaysia, we would have been firmly on course to next 11 emerging economies.

The answer is stabilising political order, good governance, consequently revamped security for investments.

Bangladesh has been ranked as the 35th largest economy of the world by the World Bank. The attainment is no less than a miracle and the prospects ahead holds a magical wand to turn copper nickels to gold coins, what with our blue economy assets. How can we possibly reconcile such bright possibilities with the real-

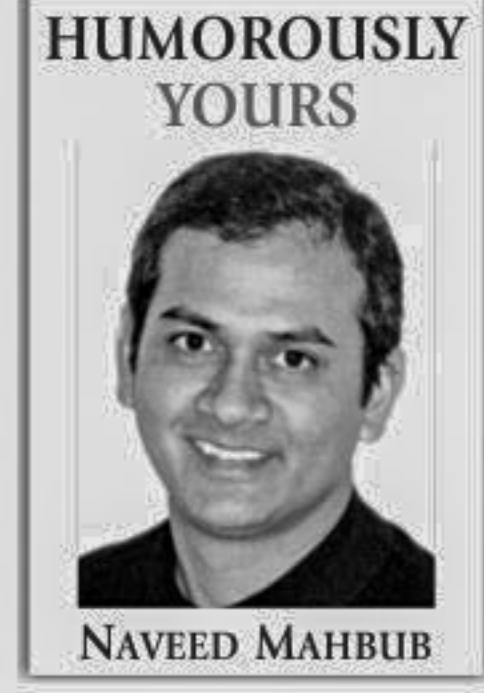
consequently suffered a minor mob beating they came back in strength for revenge and fell for car-bashing to let off their anger, as if the people owed them that much!

Student leadership once the gravitating point for just struggle has become a byword for extortionist forays and scramble for tender business.

The youth power is a potential agent of change for a better world. We have to give them work, a sense of purpose and opportunities to grow and advance. Otherwise, they will lack sense of importance and belief in self-worth, a lethal mix for them to go astray into taking drugs or be vulnerable to extremism. We have to whet their appetite for adventure, meet their creative urges and give them avenues for self-assertion.

The writer is Associate Editor, *The Daily Star*.

VEGETABLE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES



HUMOROUSLY YOURS
NAVEED MAHBUB

THANK Heavens for the recent smuggling bust at Dhaka Airport. Things were getting rather boring. To make it interesting, this time it's not gold, but rather, pond turtles from India en route to Malaysia. Remember the tale of *The Tortoise and the Hare*? Slow and steady wins the race. The 'exporters' (traffickers) rush to take us to Malaysia by sea which results in us languishing there or being three feet under. Slow down and you can fly us comfortably on a jet plane, that is, if you pack us neatly in boxes labeled 'Vegetables'. Please learn from the case of the intercepted turtles.

Good going Customs boys and gals! Hope you can now catch the much larger consignments of vegetables, aka, cute turtles which arrive on tourist visas and then all of a sudden become ninja turtles, aka, expert consultants, presenting Bangladesh the best thing since sliced bread. Gurugi, at least please don't give us business cards with Shakespearean Hotmail accounts...

Of course, we never dare argue. Have we ever seen any of us engaging in a furious road rage or cussing contest with a *bideshi*? I may rush out of my car with my nunchucks, "Why you!..." and the minute I lay my eyes on the soon-to-be-skinned person's skin tone which we would give an arm and a leg and a tube of *Fair and Lovely* for, I am now the vegetable, as I instantly transition from being ominous to propitious "...oh! What a 'my dear' person you are!" Besides, S@ifurs doesn't teach us to quarrel in English, but rather, to sneeze in the Queen's language (I still prefer the pure Bangladeshi one -- a two minute pre-ambles, a gusty and squally tsunami of a crescendo, 7.6 on the Richter Scale with the pleasure of a mild orgasm).

But there is an explanation. We are historically a hospitable people. We lay out a lavish five course meal:

The starter -- 'vegetable' turtle soup.

The second course is the sweet waters of the Ganges. Bangladesh is apparently getting more than its share based on the flow measurements made by Mamata Banerjee by viewing CCTV footages at the Farakka Dam. Damn! This is *Dum Maro Dum 2*, starring Super Didi! Professor Jamilur Reza Chowdhury, move over, you have competition.

Course three. Six Giga watt Indian power transmission from Assam to Bihar to go via Dinajpur. Actually, that's a side dish for us too. Aside from claiming standard wheeling charges, how about Bangladesh applies some, ahem, 'system losses'?

Course four. India to lease bandwidth from Bangladesh. Good. We can now build a digital Farakka to whimsically control the bit rate and hence the download/upload speeds downstream.

And finally, finishing off with the perfect dessert. The free-wheeling BSF jawan Amiya Ghosh of Felani fame is on an acquittal streak. I am sure the tribunal has determined that he, like many of his comrades-in-arms, is from among a lot fresh on a rotation from the high energy India-Pakistan border and is thus a victim of PTSD -- Pakistan Traumatic Stress Disorder. It is therefore only natural to be jittery and trigger-happy at the beefed up, beef-intercepting India-Bangladesh border. So, what really is the beef, eh?

Oh well. It's all part of the package -- *see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil*. Thus, *ONLY see Zee Bangla, hear Sidhu and speak Hindi* just like Pokemon.

Let's be fair. If East India Company can lay anchor, so can India Company.

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

Flushing out complicit cops



STRAIGHT LINE
MUHAMMAD NURUL HUDA

MEDIA reports reveal the shocking existence of a syndicate of members of the police force that are allegedly involved in smuggling Yaba drugs. Reportedly, the syndicate had been using their professional identity as law enforcers to ensure safe passage and sale of illicit drugs. We are given to understand that the shady transaction involves many players including powerful persons wielding authority. In such a situation, the urgency of rooting out the delinquents within the law enforcement agency, in public interest, should be a priority.

The principal task of flushing out the complicit lawmen falls on the police department. It is necessary to look into the causes of breeding deviance for ensuring remedy and public relief. It is also significant to know how suspected unhealthy desires to make quick bucks have impacted the enforcement culture.

Nobody would dispute that when protectors, howsoever small in number,

become violators, the criminal justice administration gets a bad name. Therefore, one needs to know if the standards of recruitment in the police have declined over the years and undeserving candidates have managed to get entry through unfair means.

The fear is that undesirable appointees, once in uniform, would most likely deviate from the expected norms of behaviour and commit unlawful acts. A relevant query would relate to the suspected neglect of training, especially of the lower ranks. The question is, has there been a distinct lack of emphasis on the various aspects of police behaviour?

In reality, we may have to appreciate that the responsibility for alleged failure to improve the standards of police recruitment and training fall on both the political executives and the police professionals. Lack of appropriate action from them has to be replaced by strong proactive response.

Under the circumstances, recruitment standards must be improved by strictly curbing alleged corrupt practices at the time of recruitment. Officers with a record of commendable honesty and integrity should be entrusted with the responsibility of conducting police recruitment. This is important because the crux of good policing is the efficient and amiable presence of a well-qualified, trained and motivated constable. The need is to embark upon



training programmes for the grooming of sensitive enforcement professionals.

There should be a concentrated drive to make it difficult for a dishonest person to remain in focal position. Superior officers have to set examples by maintaining their private lives above board. Simultaneously, service conditions should improve commensurately with the performance of a policeman.

While corruption of law enforcers should be dealt with an iron hand, the objective of

securing attitudinal change must not be ignored. In addition, proper environment has to be created so that policemen can perform with a sense of pride and fulfillment.

In view of the above, this writer urges the Inspector General of Police to vigorously pursue the criminal case that must have been registered against the officers arrested on charges of drug smuggling. Evidence available prima facie indicates that it should not be

difficult to submit a charge sheet in a few days and assist the court in punishing the guilty, thereby denying him any scope for a re-entry into the service.

It is also felt that criminal acts by policemen will definitely lessen and stand discouraged if officials following law and straight legal methods are not sidelined. Preference of officials that resort to illegal methods to achieve so-called results will always be counter-productive because such desperate officials will naturally indulge in unlawful acts, considering such acts as compensation for their extra zeal.

Interestingly, in Bangladesh the opportunity cost of being corrupt is very low; if the cost of losing one's job is very low compared to losing the corruption related money, then the rational choice at times may be to resort to illegal practices. Additionally, if alleged extra-departmental pressures replace professional considerations and penalty for deviance becomes ineffective on account of extraneous interference, there will always be incentive for inefficiency and corruption.

The considered view is that a punishment and reward-based system would be critical to achieving the goal of minimising corruption. A strong accountability mechanism coupled with commensurate compensation policies could be the essential elements of a desirable system.

The writer is a columnist of *The Daily Star*.

QUOTABLE Quote

HENRI CARTIER-BRESSON

There is a creative fraction of a second when you are taking a picture. Your eye must see a composition or an expression that life itself offers you, and you must know with intuition when to click the camera. That is the moment the photographer is creative. Oop! The Moment! Once you miss it, it is gone forever.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

1 Track event

5 Swallowing sound

9 News summary

10 Writer Asimov

12 Love, in Lombardy

13 Blitzen's boss

14 Hair worker

16 Poorly lit

17 Storage sites

18 Rap's kin

21 Ones with power

22 Knick-knacks

23 Metal man

24 President from Missouri

26 Argon or xenon

29 Child of the 1950s

30 Portion (out)

31 Gallery fill

32 Ken's girlfriend

34 Unbending

37 Like some floors

38 Wild card, at times

39 Kitchen appliances

40 Hearty dish

41 Citi Field team

DOWN

1 Stay

2 Squirrel's stash

3 No-no on some diets

4 Fencing sword

5 Basic soldiers

6 "Born in the--"

7 Cry from the crow's nest

8 Cookout sites

9 Temple leader

11 Summer spot for some

15 Noisy fight

19 Wrinkle remover

20 Peach center

22 Show up

23 Toddy ingredient

24 British party

25 Cheap booze

26 Drinking glass

27 Visitors from afar

28 Garden starters

29 Poet singer

30 Car trip

33 Physics particle

35 Cubes in a glass

36 Grass moisture

Yesterday's answer

CADSD BOOST
ARIEL UPPER
BEENE STATE
ITS BUY QUE
THERAM SUPS
ALANBATES
DORIA
ALANARKIN
CZAR GREGOR
LAB SEAU SE
ALOHA ISAID
MERIT DINED
PASTE CARY

BEETLE BAILEY by Mort Walker

THERE GOES LT. FUZZ TRYING TO SELL THE GENERAL ON HIS BATTLE PLAN

WHAT KIND OF BATTLE PLAN IS THAT?

HIS "LATE NIGHT, SCARE-EM-TO-DEATH" BATTLE PLAN

BABY BLUES by Kirkman & Scott

THERE'S MY BEAUTIFUL GIRL!

HOW'S IT GOING, BIG GUY?

THERE'S MY SWEET, SWEET BABY!

IT'S SO OBVIOUS WHEN YOU GET TO THE CHILD CREDIT SECTION!

GOTTA LOVE OUR LITTLE REDUCTIONS!