


On to a stand apart Eid

PLEASURE IS ALL MINE



SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

EID has always been a special occasion. But this time it stands apart from the Eids in recent years. The rather unique backdrop to the festival is as much carved out by our cricketing success as it is riddled with despicable acts of inhumanity.

The joy of ODI series victory against South Africa, a highly rated national side is the pinnacle of glory in an unbroken chain of wins against Zimbabwe, Pakistan and India. As an emotional people we are truly over the moon in greeting the Eid-ul-Fitr with added enthusiasm and a huge sense of self-worth. United in our joy with a stronger sense of belonging, we feel the spirit of nationalism has been renewed.

Even Mark Twain once said, 'I can't stand prosperity. I mean yours.' Possibly, given his literary stature it was not meant to be a reflection on his persona; rather he was making a joke of the jealous side of human nature.

Our cricketing prosperity may not be received as well as it merits. Perhaps who had said something adverse in the past over a 'minnow' scampering up to inch ahead and not quite making it wouldn't change their opinion overnight. They are likely to stress the home advantage and dare our team to win on foreign soil. Of course, on test side and the issue of doing equally better in matches hosted by other countries we have to prove ourselves.

Nevertheless, we have defeated Australia, England, India and Pakistan on matches played out of Bangladesh.

Excelling in sports and games can give a new dimension to a country's image and by God, cricket has a huge magnetism. Just think of Ashes, England having been defeated by Australia at the Oval on August 29, 1882, a sport journal wrote an obituary on the demise of English cricket. So intensely had the emotions welled up among the disappointed English cricket fans. The legend goes that a wooden ball would be subsequently burned to ashes and



encased in an urn. That made the trophy which to this day changes hands between Australia and England.

That said, are we with a clear conscience going to celebrate the greatest festival of the Islamic calendar that enjoys universal appeal across faiths? We cannot say 'yes' with hands on our chest in affirmation. When contemptible crimes are committed against helpless children the whole community's role comes under

severe questioning.

Martin Luther King said, 'I follow conscience because it is safe and right'. Conscience is right as it is a moral voice from within urging us to perform good acts, at least not to abet in inhuman acts under human guise. That following conscience is 'safe' is an obvious thing to say and a practical rule of behaviour as well. If you follow conscience you save yourself and anyone you might have targeted as a victim from the consequences of your action by pulling out of it in time. Some people fail both tests. They not only commit blatant



crimes but are damnably unmindful of the dire consequences they face.

Just recall the Rajon murder and its aftermath, you conjure up a spokes-of-a-wheel involvement, directly or indirectly, of so many persons -- it simply boggles the mind. Those involved in video recording, putting it on the YouTube, witnesses to the medieval cruelty, the police who tried to sweep it under the carpet and helped send a perpetrator out

of the country, are all accomplices in the crime. They were just enjoying the barbaric act; though any one of them could have stopped it by sending a word around. This means that individuals are not merely devoid of conscience, the whole society has stooped to a degraded state of losing its conscience.

Within a few days of beating Rajon to death, two girls in a Barisal orphanage were whiplashed by a staff in all the 20 minutes of the video clip. As the victims' bodies coiled up in pain and cries for help rent the air nobody came to their aid. Why, because the orphanage administration has been applying such corporal punishment against what they alleged as attempted 'truancy' of the girls!

We are adept in the art of expressing public outcries after something has happened and not showing the flair in a preventative sense. Expression of anger, shock and protests means blowing some hot air and then cooling off before another barbarity comes to haunt us.

In the past, we used to say, 'Every secret crime has its reporter. There is no den in the wide world to hide a rogue; commit a crime and the earth is made of glass.' Now we say, there are video recording enthusiasts with small devices whose pastime it is to capture the images of a crime being committed rather than standing up against it with social commitment. Today, it is another person, tomorrow it might be one of our own.


So, listen to what the publicists say, 'You yourself are guilty of crime when you don't punish crime.'

So long as we do not hand down the stiffest of punishment to a social offender, the impunity culture will feed on itself as an all devouring monster.

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The writer is Associate Editor, The Daily Star.

Animal Planet

HUMOROUSLY YOURS



NAVEED MAHBUB

THERE is ecstasy upon discovering the ancient boat in Kutubdia, immediately followed by agony. The vessel is already DoA -- Dead on Arrival. Sigh! Ok guys, drop the sticks and machetes and go home. Party's over.

We are luckier with the rare dolphin though. It even smiles as we beat it to death. And then all pose in front of it -- the poor man's version of the black and

white photo of the British Raj posing in front of the freshly shot tiger.

This is our idea of entertainment. After all, we grow up kicking the dog which was minding its own business, pouring hot water onto it to enjoy the instant yelping, taunting while stoning the entangled, enamoured pair of quadrupeds engaged in procreating.

But does it mean that we're inherently cruel to animals? Definitely not. The whole country is one big animal shelter, providing a safe shelter for all the animals who are *Amused to Death* at the notion of inflicting slow death onto a 13 year old. Then again, one shouldn't call these people animals -- doing so is an insult to animals.

Nevertheless, the benevolent shelter provides the additional service, albeit not quite free of cost, of enabling one in the pack to travel from Sylhet to Jeddah in record time.

It is also in record time that the sick minded stick wielder is apprehended, thanks to the Bangladeshis in Jeddah who get from us nothing but the rough end of the stick.

Never underestimate the power of social media...

Neither did the killers of Rajon. They upload the video of their version of a scene from National Geographic in Masai Mara, hoping to have this video be out-viewed compared to the one by the hunter from Down Under in Chittagong shooting his pet deer at close range and then slaughtering it (ISIS, you got competition). I'm sure the producers have regrets from not capturing any selfies. After all, the hands were busy beating up Rajon with a stick. Or, maybe it was the selfie stick that was being used to 'poke' the boy.

The mark of a man! And others need to know about it too to boost the ego. In the digital age, the manifestation of this age old desire is to go viral online with acts of one's own prowess. The high comes in seeing the high number of 'thumbs up's or 'views' of the videos. Who cares if there are as many number of 'thumbs down's.

The bragging rights also give social media vigilantes their bragging rights to bring the bragging blights to justice. After all, each upload is evidence etched in stone and everybody online is CNN's iReporter.

The Rajon incident is lynching in its true form. However, we don't use this word which makes us otherwise picture a lone, helpless black boy up against a full local chapter of the Ku Klux Klan. Instead, we have novocained the word 'lynching' to 'gonopituni', which sounds playful, even adorable. Hence, 'chor petano' is a popular sport, not of being innocent until proven guilty, but rather, of being guilty as soon as a passerby makes a passing remark, literally, until proven dead.

"Yes, I saw him do it." What follows is the instant, synchronised and highly enthusiastic collective: "Chor! Chor!!"

We may not even move our lazy behinds to fetch a glass of water for ourselves, but this Pied Piper like electrifying beckoning gets us to spring up and sprint down to home in on the one lone target, usually someone not our own size. Hey, we don't want to be left out of the evening *adda* on how many punches we were able to land on the perpetrator.

It's like a scene from *Animal Planet* as the leopard toys around with the terrified gazelle that he has caught before going in for the kill. The camera zooms in and the narrator whispers, "Oh, what a beauty!"

The not-so-lucky, who are unable to partake in the sport, are relegated to the stands to chant "Ole!" at every bodily strike.

'Steal' (if at all) a pint, and we merrily lynch. Steal Mervyl Lynch and we kiss on till eternity that area of the anatomy of the mastermind which sees no sunlight. *Shabash* Bangladesh!

Then again, it is this very Bangladesh where we can defy gravity as even the most complex job gets done quickly once it is escalated. For the sake of Rajon, let us collectively levitate, so that once and for all, we see an end to all such tragedies...

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"Zakat-Deaths" in Bangladesh An old story of piety and power

STRANGER THAN FICTION



TAJ HASHMI

YET another stampede, and yet another spate of tragic deaths of 27 dirt-poor people in Bangladesh, 23 women and four children! This happened last Friday (July 10) in Mymensingh. Several thousand poor people went to the residence of the owner of a

chewing tobacco (*zarda*) factory to collect free clothes, supposed to be handed in as Zakat or Islamic charity. This, however, did not happen for the first time. These "Zakat-deaths" are as common as poorly paid garment factory workers' frequent deaths in avoidable accidents in the country.

As this daily reported the day after the tragedy, the number of Zakat seekers far exceeded that of the clothes available for the purpose; and that: "With Zakat seekers running and pushing and shoving each other in their frantic effort to get the clothes, some fell to the ground and got trampled....workers of the factory had swooped on them with truncheons, worsening the situation during the incident".

While the garment factory workers' accidental deaths at work place are mostly due to the collective corruption and negligence of law-enforcers and factory owners, the "Zakat-deaths" are attributable to the arrogance and neglect of the pretentious rich and powerful.

Surprisingly, those who cannot care less about the welfare of the poor and powerless, and have no qualms with bribery and stealing right and left, love ostentatious display of piety and philanthropy at the same time.

Thanks to the prevalent culture of collective neglect and antipathy towards the poor and marginalised, their hunger, misery and deaths remain least discussed,

hence least important in the priority list of the government. The frequency of accidents in Bangladesh has also desensitised the people. Being fatalist and powerless, the poor in general remain inert and passive, and accept the unacceptable deaths and misery as acceptable as natural disasters.

Without debating the issue of whether law-enforcers will be able to prevent "Zakat-deaths" in the future, I think it is time to raise some questions, shatter some myths, and break some taboos to find out whether: a) misconceptions about the institution of Zakat, especially the methods of distribution are at fault; b) egotistical and irresponsible rich men --



obligatory sadaqah used to reach the poor through state machinery. Again, as Christianity, Islam also prohibits "sounding a trumpet" before doing charity so that "they may be honoured by men". A *hadis* elucidates this with no ambiguity: "The best of alms is what the right hand gives, and the left hand does not know". We may contextualise these sayings to the pretentious public philanthropy in Bangladesh, which at times becomes very costly for poor Zakat-seekers.

Now, one must not lose sight of the most important factor behind all these tragic "Zakat-deaths", which is glaring poverty in the country. Despite all the hyperbolic claims from the public and

Egotistical and irresponsible rich men -- who are hell-bent to demonstrate their wealth and power through piety and religion -- are mainly responsible for these deaths.


who are hell-bent to demonstrate their wealth and power through piety and religion -- are mainly responsible for these deaths; and c) despite what we hear from the government, economists and development practitioners, grassroots poverty is the most important factor behind these deaths of destitute men, women and children in Bangladesh.

Firstly, the ostentatious distribution of Zakat as practiced in Bangladesh negates the teachings of Islam. During the Prophet (PBUH) and early Muslim rulers up to the Ottomans, the state, not individuals, distributed Zakat. Zakat is not a voluntary charity like *sadaqah*; it is a mandatory asset and income tax for the well-to-do Muslims, from land, cattle, ship, goat and camel for the benefit of poor widows, orphans, travellers, non-Muslims, revenue officials, and others. And even the non-

private sectors, NGOs and development practitioners, there is nothing hidden or not-so-obvious about the prevalent poverty in Bangladesh. The World Bank's recent upgrade of the country, from the low-income to the lower middle-income category does not mean much for the hoi polloi. Although questioning the myth of "substantial poverty alleviation" in the country is a taboo, considered offensive and politically incorrect, yet the truth is very different from the myth, around 31.5 percent of the population earn less than \$2 per capita, per day (World Bank, 2010). They simply live below the poverty line.

Since there cannot be any convincing counter-argument against the reality and a large portion of the population does not get enough to eat, good clothing, shelter, health care, and good education for their children, there is nothing surprising about

QUOTABLE Quote



EDWARD SNOWDEN

I WOULD RATHER BE WITHOUT A STATE THAN WITHOUT A VOICE.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Rigging support
- 5 Cell feature
- 9 Took an oath
- 10 Put up
- 12 Insertion signal
- 13 Player
- 14 Star in Scorpio
- 16 Anger
- 17 Caffeine source
- 18 Reception aid
- 20 Pick
- 22 Sweeping
- 23 "Vive--!"
- 25 Fling
- 28 Soothers
- 32 Tummy relief
- 34 At present
- 35 "Cry -- River"
- 36 Island near Barbuda
- 38 Pan, for one
- 40 Namely, in Latin
- 41 Parcel out
- 42 Lawn pests
- 43 Eye part
- 44 Otherwise

DOWN

- 1 River of song
- 2 Door
- 3 Vicinity
- 4 Go back over
- 5 Monster
- 6 Rainbow shape
- 7 Eye part
- 8 Derides
- 9 Sings like Ella
- 11 Minister to
- 15 Go aboard
- 19 Good opponent
- 21 "Frozen" princess
- 24 Long-standing
- 25 Lightning setting
- 26 "The iceman Cometh" author
- 27 Basic need
- 29 Little dears
- 30 "Get it?"
- 31 Tries for flies
- 33 Shoppers' aids
- 37 Fan's favorite
- 39 Near-eternity

Yesterday's answer

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

BEETLE BAILEY by Mort Walker

BABY BLUES by Kirkman & Scott