

Misplaced sympathy breeds criminality

CHINTITO SINCE 1995



NIZAMUDDIN AHMED

THE name Barack Obama will remain etched in history as the first black President of the United States (POTUS). Soon, with a little more help from Donald Trump (Conservative/Independent), the US might be having its first woman

peacefully in the States. As far as political opinion is concerned, Bangladesh has many shades, some proponents eternally at loggerheads with each other, but they do not escape to another country. And socially, we are one of the most companionable, unreserved and talkative people in this Old Earth, assuming a new one is in the offing. Just look at the booming business our mobile companies are doing.

Why is Chowdhury a fugitive? Because

nation from a stigma that would shame any law-abiding people.

The president's son Sheikh Russel was three years younger than Obama at the time, but he too was gunned down most brutally by Chowdhury and company. The 11-year old wanted some water and got riddled with bullets instead. Also murdered were Sheikh shaheb's wife, his two adult sons and two daughters-in-law.

Let us imagine a scenario: an American

government of Bangladesh, on behalf of its people, is seeking the extradition of Chowdhury because he has committed one of the vilest crimes in history. He has been tried, given the opportunity to defend himself, and found guilty.

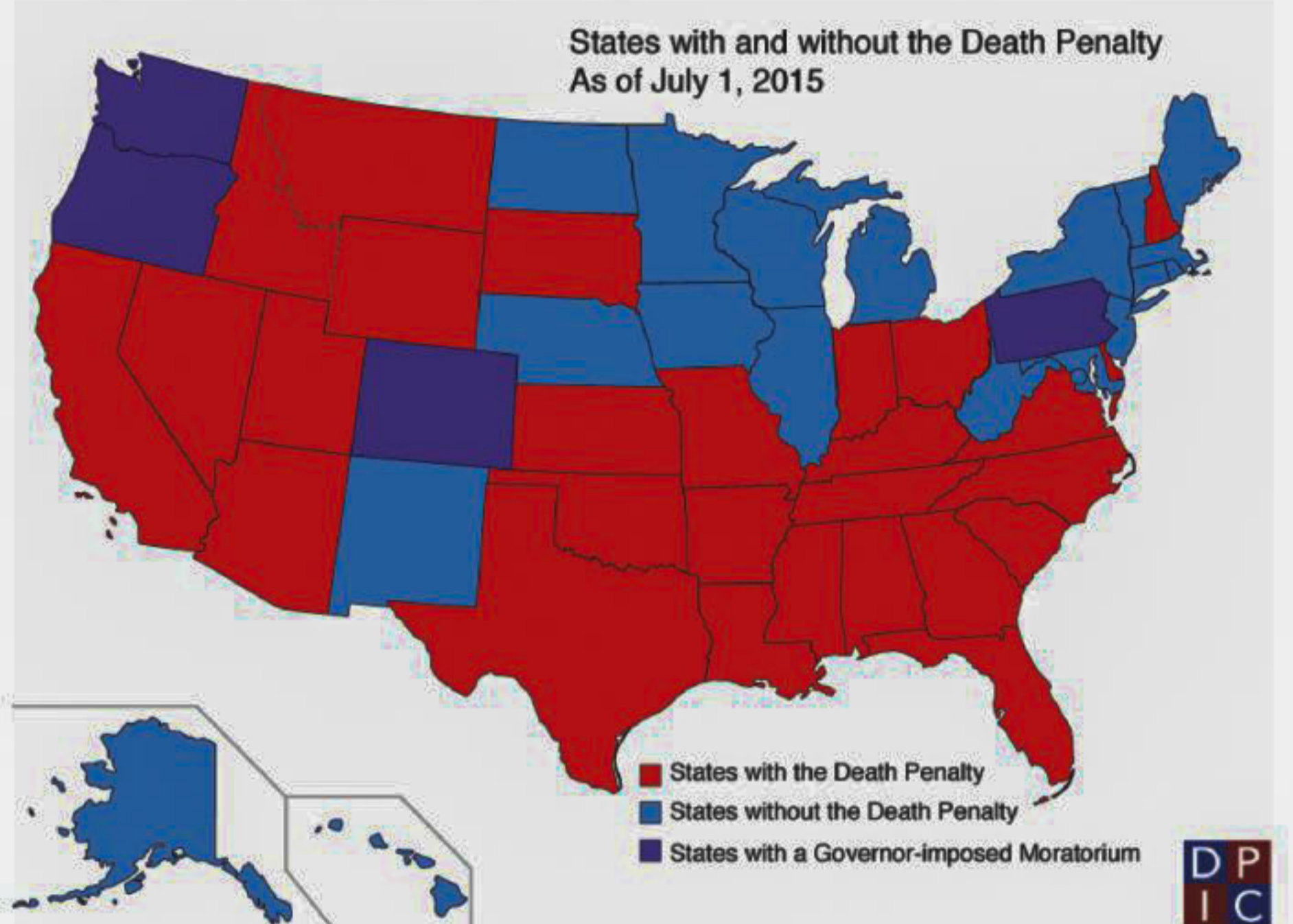
The West occasionally builds an unjust wall just saying that if such killers are sent to places like Bangladesh they will face the death sentence; this assumption gives the impression to the rest of the world that there is no capital punishment in western countries. You are well aware, President Obama and aspirant Clinton, that capital punishment (aka the death sentence) exists in 32 states of the USA; that is well over 60 percent of the 51 states. If death as an appropriate punishment for nefarious crimes is legal in the States from Montana to Florida, from New Hampshire to California, why cannot you accept that reality in Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Singapore and Japan...?

As recently as last Sunday, the Supreme Court in India ruled: capital punishment in heinous crimes is not inhuman or barbaric and will not violate the right to life and liberty guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution. I rest my case.

In 1975, Sheikh Mujib's two daughters escaped death because they were abroad. The elder of the two later became prime minister. The next time any US president shakes hands with Sheikh Hasina or Rehana, spare a prayer for them because you are greeting orphans, at least one killer of their parents is nestled and remains protected in your country.

Mr. Obama, your second and final term will end on January 20, 2017. Let the deportation of Chowdhury be your parting gift to the people of Bangladesh. And then perhaps, Ms. Hillary can virtuously assume office with her charismatic smile.

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he is one of the absconding killers of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and 23 others (mostly his family), who were murdered in cold blood, on the gruesome dawn of August 15, 1975, in three separate premeditated military attacks. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was then the president of Bangladesh. Barack Obama was then only 14 years old and Hillary twice as old. Yes! The peace-loving people of Bangladesh have been waiting long to sanctify the

citizen has committed a cold-blooded murder which was proven in his own country. He somehow escapes to Bangladesh and gets 'political asylum'. Would the US Administration not demand and then compel Dhaka, if needed, by economic and diplomatic sanctions, to hand over the criminal, although he will be persecuted in the States? So, why is the reverse so difficult and being made so fudgy? The

Increasing our maritime awareness

MASUDDUL KARIM SIDDIQUE

BEING a littoral state, we are naturally blessed with an access to the outside world for unhindered maritime trade and commerce via the sea. More than 90 percent of our trade, including 100 percent oil transportation takes place by the sea. But, not very encouraging for us, Chittagong is the only major port handling about 92 percent of the total import-export. This 'economic engine' has recently seen a substantial increase in container traffic growth, which is about 14 percent. Subject to its capacity enhancement, this commercial hub has the potential to contribute immensely to our national economy, including employment generation.

The second port at Mongla, besides its inherent disadvantages of long routing and navigation problem, is still underutilised because of expensive road connectivity. Despite limitations, the port is making profits and it is believed that its operation will multiply once the Padma Bridge comes up. Another port at Patuakhali's Payra has come up lately, but needs more time to be fully operational. Thus, coping with the growing trend of trade and commerce is quite challenging for us, in which case, enhancing existing port facilities and building a deep sea port could be better options.

Bangladesh is heavily dependent on foreign carriers, as nearly 2,500 foreign ships visit our ports annually. Such dependence is not good for our economy because a lot of foreign currency is being spent to meet their freight charge.

Bangladesh has only 74 registered merchant ships, of which the Bangladesh Shipping Corporation (BSC) has just eight vessels having a total deadweight tonnage of 121,820 metric tons. The fleet strength is even lesser than many private enterprises of the world. Our private participation in the shipping business is not encouraging either; hence, the country needs more and more individual entrepreneurship to enhance the size of the existing fleet.

Bangladesh has not yet been able to optimise the full potential for supplying

skilled mariners to the international market. Our contribution till now is about 4,000 skilled mariners out of 160 million people, which is in no way close to the world's largest producer the Philippines that supplies around 400,000 marine-sector experts. Although this sector has enormous prospects, our youth are still unaware of this golden opportunity.

Bangladesh owns more than 1,18,813 square kilometres of sea territory. The sovereignty of our state, according to Article 2(1) of the United Nations

three potential fishing grounds and contains 475 different species of fish. Compared to the vast territory, our fishing activity is extremely limited as merely 200 fishing trawlers are currently operating in the bay and that too to a maximum distance of 60 kilometres, mostly because of a lack of deep sea operation capabilities. In order to exploit full fishing potential, we need to reach out to the furthest limit of our sea, and in this case, both public and private initiatives are required to introduce technology based deep sea fishing, of course, keeping the

order at sea is a vital maritime security concern. Maritime crimes like petty thefts, armed robbery and killings, smuggling and illegal trafficking of people, goods, arms and drugs, illegal poaching and fishing, and deliberate pollution are regular challenges being confronted by maritime law enforcers. The most serious issue occurs when people attempt to seek fortune by the sea, which often leads to loss of life or abject misery.

There is no denying that our maritime association has increased a lot as evident from the recently launched initiatives



Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982, extends to a zone called 'Territorial Sea' up to a maximum limit of 12 nautical miles. Under the same convention, Article 55 grants us the sovereign right to enjoy 200 nautical miles 'Exclusive Economic Zone' (EEZ), including its seabed resources from the baseline from which the breadth of the 'Territorial Sea' is measured. Although the country has exclusive rights over all living and non-living resources in the EEZ, the means available are not sufficient to optimise them fully. Our portion of the sea hosts

Marine Protected Areas (MPA) safe. Our sea can serve us with energy, including oil and gas. Until today, only two gas fields have been discovered at sea, but more marine scientific surveys using state of the art technology are necessary to discover further reserves. Delay in exploration is unlikely to bring any positive result for us; hence, we can think of collaborations between private and public sectors for extracting precious natural energy from the sea. Finally, the issue of maintaining good

during the past few years. Nevertheless, further engagement is necessary to realise the full maritime potential, in particular, increasing port facilities, shipping fleets, deep-sea fishing and initiatives to extract marine resources, and overall, ensuring law and order at sea. We cannot forget that the sea is the mainstay of our economic system, and the future of the country depends immensely upon its effective and efficient use.

The writer is the Commanding Officer of a Bangladesh Navy Ship.

The Elephant in the Hole

NASIM FIRDAUS

MY mother was a great bedtime storyteller. A particular story was about her grandfather who was a chess player. He used to be visited sometimes by zamindars from adjoining villages for a game of chess. The visitors travelled on the back of elephants as was the custom back then. While they played their game, the visiting elephants would be chained to very strong trees to ensure the security of the villagers. One evening, as the chess players were busy checkmating each other, they heard a hue and cry outside. At first the noise was ignored, but as it rose to a crescendo, the brave lords reluctantly left their game to come out and see what the commotion was all about. They were dumbfounded by what they saw. The largest elephant in the square was knee deep in quicksand, sinking rapidly. Mahouts and villagers struggled to pull the poor beast out of the hole but the combined strength of the other elephants did no good. Slowly but surely, the elephant sank into its grave, leaving behind a pond sized crater for all to see in wonderment.

These days I often remember the pond when I see BNP and its leadership trying to checkmate their opponent while their own house is on fire. The elephant is sinking rapidly but its leaders are unaware. As a party with more than 30 percent of popular support, BNP is a huge elephant. Alas, the leadership has no idea about how to keep its party from sinking. In fact, BNP sank itself by protesting against the popular demand for the judicial inquiry into war crimes. Then, it went knee deep by not participating in legitimate - alas not democratic - elections in 2014. After the mayhem caused by hurling fire bombs on innocent people, including their own supporters, the once huge elephant went into the quicksand waist deep. Every time it does something irrational or speaks carelessly about the fall of the government, it sinks deeper and deeper into the hole. This way the elephant will not remain visible for too long. Many of the top leaders, along with their workers, have already consciously moved away as they are weary of the sinkhole. Others have been sent to oblivion for trying to talk sense and do the sensible thing. It was showing the door to a sitting president that lead to the 'off with your head' process of senior and sensible political figures. Soon there will be no BNP left but only the gaping hole where it once stood. For now, we can only hear the desperate elephant calls for a neutral government, a fresh election, dialogue, and *andolon* - all in one breath from only one person.

A party with support of one third of the country is still an elephant to reckon with, be it in power or in the opposition. Without a strong elephant called the opposition, politics in this country will no doubt sink into that sinkhole sooner or later. Politics is more than playing a game of chess; it is about working together with opponents. It is not about annihilation of each other but the survival of the opponent, albeit, weaker but not so weak that it stops to breathe. Politics is about unseating each other and grabbing the seat through legitimate means. Restructuring political parties through a democratic process is the sensible and only way out if politics and democracy are to be saved.

Senior leaders who have been sidelined must be called in again, given a clear mandate and authority to clean the mess, oil the engines, have a dialogue with opponents with a clear outline for negotiation, and start anew with renewed strength to build Bangladesh - not destroy it. BNP, as the loser in this game, needs to quickly turn the page and get out of the hole it has dug for itself. For now, it should concentrate on strengthening and energising the party from the grassroots to the top; engage people who matter because of substance and not for their sycophancy; change the leadership at every level; create a gender balance within the party to attract real voters; forget about a fresh election until the time is ripe; and finally, sail a ship that has left its rusted nuts and bolts behind and has been built anew. Only then can the citizens of this country heave a sigh of relief.

The writer is a former Ambassador.

QUOTABLE Quote

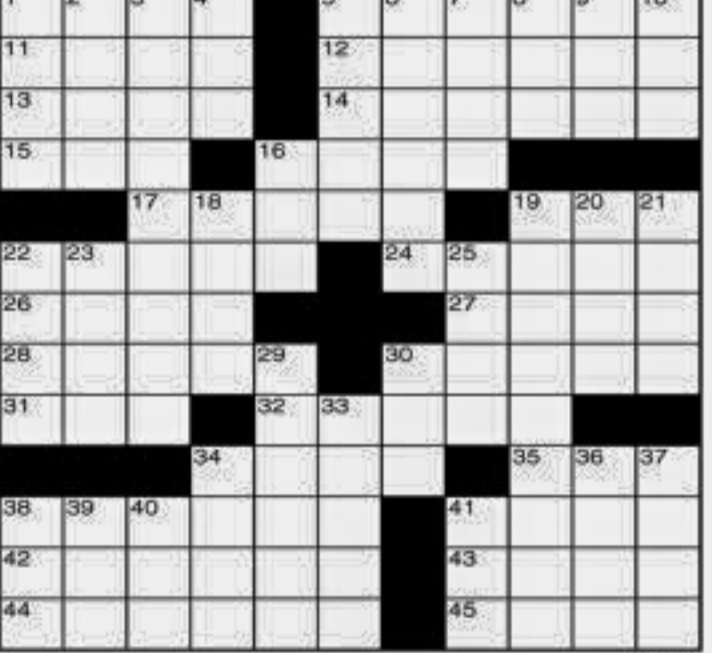


MIKE HONDA (US POLITICIAN)

EQUAL PAY ISN'T JUST A WOMEN'S ISSUE; WHEN WOMEN GET EQUAL PAY, THEIR FAMILY INCOMES RISE AND THE WHOLE FAMILY BENEFITS.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Crevices
 - 5 Crevices
 - 11 Stacking shade
 - 12 Mauna Loa setting
 - 13 Like dimes
 - 14 Starting bid
 - 15 Buddhism branch
 - 16 Peach centers
 - 17 Capital on the Nile
 - 19 Football's Marino
 - 22 Fancy flapjack
 - 24 Student of socrates
 - 26 A ton
 - 27 Aphrodite's son
 - 28 Some woodwinds
 - 30 Posh
 - 31 Singing need
 - 32 Deep crevice
 - 34 Hunted animal
 - 35 Clumsy fellow
 - 38 Insect section
 - 41 Tedious
 - 42 Land west of the Urals
 - 43 Director Preminger
 - 44 Judged
 - 45 Pork serving
- DOWN**
- 1 Stan of jazz
 - 2 Dull pain
 - 3 Ivy League school
 - 4 Day warmer
 - 5 Hymn singers
 - 6 Portable PC
 - 7 Flock females
 - 8 Summer cooler
 - 9 Father's Day gift
 - 10 Army address
 - 16 Diner dessert
 - 18 Church area
 - 19 Ivy League school
 - 20 Full range
 - 21 Inquisitive
 - 22 Hoof sound
 - 23 Lounge attire
 - 25 Floral rings
 - 29 Precament
 - 30 Beam of light
 - 33 Cast a spell on
 - 34 School event
 - 36 Singing voice
 - 37 Movie dud
 - 38 Tycoon Turner
 - 39 Color
 - 40 Mine yield
 - 41 Clinic nickname



YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

SETA SHARP
 EXALT TENDOR
 MAKE ABUNDLE
 ICE HON RAT
 STUDIO CENT
 SPENT LADY
 BILGE
 COST ARABS
 ACES CARRIE
 RTE HEM YET
 MAKE ASPLASH
 EVENT SANTA
 NERDS STAN

BEETLE BAILEY by Mort Walker



BABY BLUES by Kirkman & Scott

