

# Mother earth, wailing humanity, sacrificial lambs

PLEASURE IS ALL MINE



SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

**S**LOVAKIA, the tiny republic in the middle of Europe has imparted a lesson that the high and mighty in a disordered world would do well to listen to. Falling on the route of the 21st century's biggest surge in migration driven by wars, chilling insecurity and severe economic hardship, the country has taken a significant moral lead. Some 10,000 Slovaks in a populace of 5 million signed a petition titled 'Plea to humanity' and put it on the internet. Huge outpourings of sympathy and support welled up from across Europe to the cause flagged off by civil society dictated by conscience.

The Slovaks made three points: One, that their government accepting 100 Christian migrants is not only not enough but also discriminatory; two, it should embrace refugees with open arms irrespective of religious or ethnic origins; and three, they bluntly said that joining the EU for money was selfish without discharging the responsibilities such a union devolved on the partners.

In parallel, the movers of the petition have not failed to notice a neo-Nazi profile within the frame.

Europe is deeply troubled and divided in matters of dealing with the waves of refugees outside the set parameters of providing political asylum and granting entry to economic refugees. The countries with stronger economies are obviously the preferred destinations of the migrants. But the EU members are apparently moving in the direction of accepting numbers proportionate to their abilities.

Let's face it, multilateralism had failed to address the root causes of this stupendous migration that lay in Myanmar, Syria and IS' dominated territories. That being the case, it now becomes obligatory on the part of powers that be to cope with the consequences of their failure.

There is no point magnifying the neo-Nazi, pro-right or racist fears that are more than balanced out by the long-term dividends promised by migrants to the host countries. It is a well-researched finding that western countries have hugely benefited economically from the enterprising presence of other nationalities in them. More to the point, without being blunt, the aging population of European countries some of which have shown a negative growth in procreation should be taking in more of younger people from developing countries. This is considered essential for the long-term

sustenance of the developed economies. The fear of unwanted import of extremism is better tackled at the roots namely drastically reducing the space for inequality, poverty and discrimination.

Coming to the home front, there is an issue with economic governance, the new genre of protective umbrella, we hope, there is to unfurl in a weather that harbours 'ready money as Aladdin's lamp.'

The communication minister has been his usual enthusiastic self in assuring the commuters that no increase in transport fare should follow the gas price hike till the government has drawn up a revised rates chart in consultation with stakeholders. But the red rug to the bull has been flung to provoke it to do some aggressive pur-

thought through the likely consequences and taken safeguards against charging extortionist fares from the passengers before announcing the increase? In the first place, the spike should have been staggered; secondly, the justification for increase spelled out in clear terms; and last but not least, an indicative fare chart, based on a formula, should have come as part of the package. Understandably, taking that route would have entailed diligent persuasion with the transport owners which the authorities seemingly avoided for reasons best known to them but not beyond guessing. So, the short-circuiting of the process allowing a field day for transport operators to fix the rates arbitrarily as the commuters silently or not-so-silently endure. These unwanted doses of tension should be averted.



chase. Even though bull fight as a sport is banned in its place of birth — Spain, lure of prize money, as it were, remains a pastime with our transport owners with each raise in fuel costs.

Within a few days of around 27 plus percent increase in gas price 'anarchy is going on' in the transport sector, some Bangla newspapers reported with a screaming headline!

Public transport system in Dhaka comprising buses, mini-buses, tempos and other three-wheelers are gas-based, let alone bigger vehicles. As though natural gas is a finite resource with no ceiling to be put on conversions; but that is a different story. For the moment, we are concerned with the repercussion of a lump increase in the gas price. Shouldn't the authorities have

Overall, it came foisted on the commuting public without sufficient notice. First, the finance minister struck a populist note assuring a reduction in the oil price in a matter of weeks. The import price had dropped to a half of the previous level and yet the BPC persisted in hanging on to the artificial price level. While the finance minister's positive hint at bringing down oil price still suspends in the air, other energy costs including even that of electricity has been raised. If it was an attempted soft-peddling of hard news on the pipeline to the consumers, the latter couldn't brush aside the impression of being left as bleating lambs.

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## VENICE the Menace

HUMOROUSLY YOURS



NAVEED MAHBUB

**P**ERHAPS it is nature crying due to the hike in power and gas tariffs. But all it takes is a daylong downpour and Dhaka is the new Venice (is Narayanganj then the new Vanish?). Then who is the Merchant? Well, at least the share market scam is being addressed.

With the new Venice, I would have thought some romance would be kindled with styrofoam attached rickshaws turning into romantic gondolas. Hold on Romeos - in the open you can't kiss, but you sure can piss.

But that doesn't happen. BRTC (could merge with BIWTA) double-deckers all of a sudden become very popular with all scrambling for the upper deck. Announcement for the not so lucky passengers on the lower deck: "The floatation devices are under your seats."

Those buying properties in Noakhali predicting that with the rise in sea level, Noakhali would be the new coastal area, are disheartened. Dhaka beats Noakhali to the punch by becoming the new coastal area. People from Cox's Bazaar are now coming to Dhaka for a vacation. Finally, Dhaka is vindicated of having skyrocketing real estate prices.

Meanwhile, St. Joseph's in Mohammadpur is now St. Martin's, two heads sticking out of a crowded Toyota Noah microbus is the Noah's Ark, Dhaka is included in the Bangladesh-India-Myanmar water treaty talks, Mamata Banerjee itches to build a barrage in Farmgate, traders for the upcoming Qurbani Eid contemplate water buffaloes, the World Bank mulls funding a Badda Bridge (with the Padma Bridge being 'water under the bridge'), I sing The Beatles' *Yellow Submarine* seeing bottom-invisible Toma taxis, some report seeing the Loch Ness monster, there's a rickshaw *baich* on Manik Mia Avenue, all Dhaka bound flights emphasise on the announcement: "In the event of a water landing..." while omitting the phrase "in the unlikely event of", car workshops convert businesses from CNG conversion to EOR (Engine On Roof) conversion, kids re-write essays on 'A Journey by Boat' as a memorable (to say the least) trip from Mohammadpur to Dhanmondi while pre-schoolers chant:

Row, row, row your boat  
Gently down the street  
If you see a CNG  
Don't forget to fleet!

Karma? You bet! Forget the inadequate planning of storm drainage. It is us who have clogged drainages with polythene bags. It is us who have encroached rivers and filled up low lands for development despite warnings from experts about waterlogging. It is us who have always had a readymade answer, "We will 'cross that bridge' when the time comes." Uhm, I think we DO need that bridge now to cross the streets in Dhaka.

All (remaining) low lands now sport the classic tin signboard sticking out from the water on two bamboo sticks announcing the arrival of some future 'city'. If we don't get our acts together, very soon we will see similar signs on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue sporting 'Dhaka City'. The last thing we want is for the Buriganga to be permanently situated on the banks of Dhaka.

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## LETTER FROM AMERICA

# The rise and fall of "Bobby" Jindal

FAKHRUDDIN AHMED

**T**WO-term Governor of Louisiana, Piyush "Bobby" Jindal, the first Indian-American to be elected governor of a US state, is one of the 17 candidates vying for the 2016 Republican presidential nomination. Gov. Jindal shuns the label "Indian American" (he calls himself "an American"), and resents referral by his birth first name, "Piyush," (he likes "Bobby"). Gov. Jindal's perplexing disavowal of his heritage is symptomatic of what is wrong with his candidacy, and why he will never be elected president.

Born and raised in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, of immigrant Indian parents, Jindal is very smart. A brilliant student throughout, Jindal attended Brown University and won a Rhodes Scholarship. Piyush Jindal had a religious epiphany in high school, and over the objection of his Hindu parents, converted to Catholicism. Although his official name remains Piyush Jindal, he uses "Bobby Jindal" as his name, even while taking the oath of office.

Gov. Jindal's detractors wonder if his conversion to Catholicism was politically motivated, with the calculation that a Hindu could not win high office in America. That innuendo is unfair. There is no reason to impugn his motive for conversion, or to suspect that it was anything

other than genuine. The switch to "Bobby" is harder to comprehend, because Bobby has little resonance with Piyush. If it was to invoke the memory of the most beloved political "Bobby" in America - Senator Bobby Kennedy - the exercise is disingenuous. Bobby Kennedy was a liberal Democrat, and although personally rich, was an advocate for the poor. Bobby Jindal is a right-wing conservative Republican, and although personally not-so-rich, is an avid advocate for the rich! "Jindal" is not a typical Indian name. Detractors contend that if Jindal's last name was Singh or Patel, he would have Americanised those to "Singer" or "Patrick!"

Gov. Jindal has stated recently that he is "done being hyphenated (Indian) American. If my parents wanted us to be 'Indians,' they would have stayed in India." The Jindals consume only "American food," whatever that means; they do not eat "Indian food." Jindal is virulently anti-immigrant, especially anti-Muslim immigrants.

During his campaign for governor in 2007, Jindal emphatically declared that he was not a Muslim. The crusade against "radical Islamic terrorism" constitutes a substantial plank of his platform. Last January, on a visit to London, Jindal claimed that there were Sharia-zones in the UK closed to non-Muslims. Challenged by reporters to name such an enclave, Jindal avoided answering

the question, and instead lashed out at "the left-wing media," for presumably doubting him.

All this pandering is so unnecessary! It is a pity that Bobby Jindal learned nothing from Barack Obama, 10 years his senior. Jindal has fundamentally misconstrued America.

When the Democratic presidential nominee, Senator John Kerry, gave an unknown Illinois state senator the opportunity to deliver the keynote speech at the Democratic Convention in 2004, Barack Obama hit it out of the park with catchy phrases like, "We are not Republican America or Democratic America, black America or white America; we are the United States of America!"

When the Republican Party gave Bobby Jindal the opportunity to respond to President Obama's first State of the Union address in 2009, Jindal bombed! Trying too hard, he over-enunciated words, and came across as phony. Americans like authenticity. They reward politicians who remain true to who they actually are.

When Barack Hussein Obama was running for office post-9/11, his handlers were adamant in their advice: "Change your name!" Obama did not, and the rest is history.

Obama never denied his Muslim roots either. In his famous speech in Cairo in June, 2009 Obama reiterated that many of his relatives are Muslims. Even today, over 20 percent of Americans believe that Obama

is a Muslim; yet, Americans elected him president twice. President Obama never shied away from his African-American, especially Kenyan-American, roots. As was evident on his visit to Kenya in July, Obama celebrates his African heritage.

Unlike Obama's trip to Africa, it is inconceivable that Gov. Jindal would visit India to fortify his Indian roots. Consequently, Indian Americans, too, are lukewarm towards him. They complain that Gov. Jindal is "Indian" only when he needs to raise funds from the Indian American community. When Jindal disrespected his community by saying, "I am done being Indian-American," Indian Americans initiated a "ridicule-Jindal" Twitter campaign with the hash tag: "BobbyJindalIsSoWhite..." (Jindal's official gubernatorial portrait shows his skin colour several shades lighter than his dark complexion.)

Unlike Muslim Americans, there is no stigma attached to being Hindu Americans, who excel in every field, especially in academia, medicine, politics and the corporate world. Gov. Jindal did not have to hide his Hindu Indian origin, or slavishly mimic "whiteness" to gain acceptance. He is selling his ethno-religious origin short, and is underestimating America's eagerness to embrace diversity. If Gov. Jindal had cast himself as a Hindu Indian-American, many more Americans would have flocked to his corner.

Louisianans have come to realise that Jindal is using the governorship to propel himself towards the presidency. Jindal signed Grover Norquist's "no tax increase" pledge, and did some legislative somersaults to keep that pledge, while Louisiana's economy tanked. Jindal's gun advocacy backfired in July when a gunman shot two women dead in a movie theatre in Lafayette, Louisiana. Gov. Jindal is so unpopular in the staunchly Republican Louisiana that even Democrats not named Hillary Clinton will now beat him there.

Bobby Jindal is seeking the nomination from a party (Republican) that is not the home of his natural constituency, Indian Americans, who are predominantly Democrats. A big mistake! Looking at what Jindal says and does, it is sometimes hard to figure out whether he is running for the office of the commander-in-chief or the pandering-in-chief!

Based on latest national polls, only 10 of the 17 candidates will make the cut for the second nationally televised Republican presidential debate on September 16. With 0 percent support nationwide among Republicans (he was at 1 percent before the first debate on August 6), Gov. Jindal will not be invited to participate in the primetime debate, essentially sinking his candidacy.

The writer is a Rhodes Scholar.

## QUOTABLE Quote

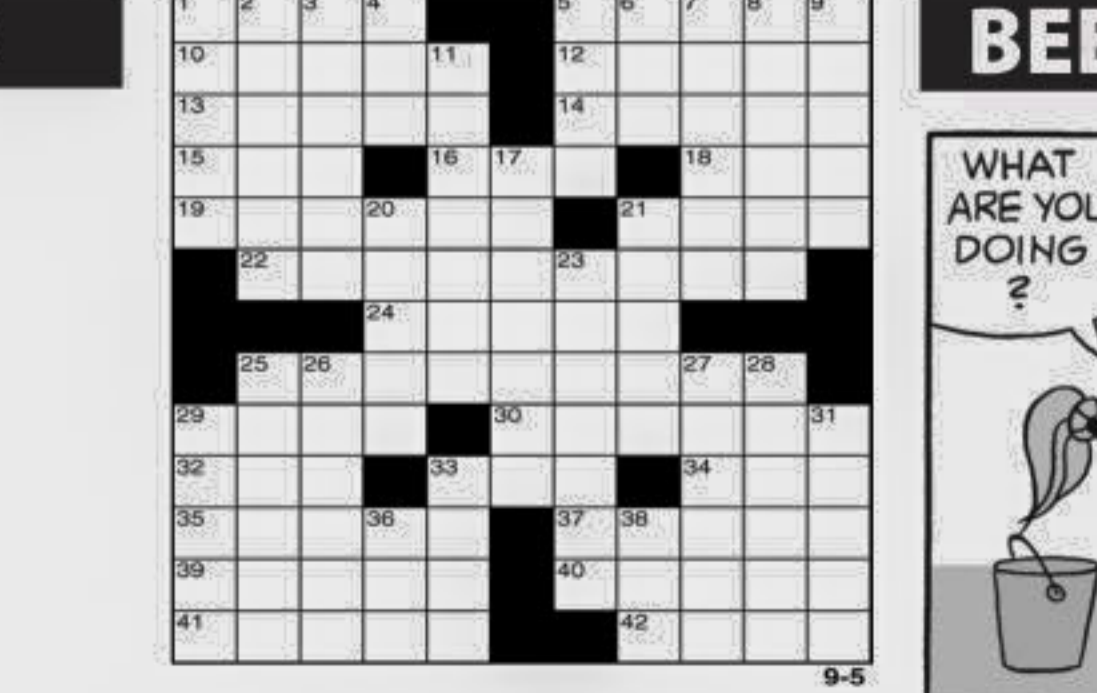


ALDOUS HUXLEY

THE END CANNOT JUSTIFY THE MEANS, FOR THE SINGLE REASON THAT THE MEANS EMPLOYED DETERMINE THE NATURE OF THE ENDS PRODUCED.

## CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Checkout act
  - 5 Squash, for one
  - 10 Printer need
  - 12 Blender button
  - 13 Ham it up
  - 14 Cartoon genre
  - 15 "Blue?"
  - 16 Skid Row woe
  - 18 Martini base
  - 19 Crow's nest cry
  - 21 Storage spots
  - 22 "Yentl" star
  - 24 Yorkshire landscape
  - 25 School no-no
  - 29 Lion's pride
  - 30 Like Russian dolls
  - 32 Play part
  - 33 Mayo ingredient
  - 34 Bright beam
  - 35 Sideways umlaut
  - 37 Like gymnasts
  - 39 Improve, in a way
  - 40 California cager
  - 41 Merchandise
  - 42 Sleep sites
- DOWN**
- 1 Real bargain
  - 2 List separators
  - 3 Sprinkle with oil
  - 4 Tennis need
  - 5 Relaxing resorts
  - 6 Groan inducer
  - 7 Source
  - 8 Prompt
  - 9 Cold forecast
  - 11 Lucy, for one
  - 17 At work
  - 20 Eminem collaborator
  - 21 Diamond comers
  - 23 Mali neighbor
  - 25 Puget Sound city
  - 26 Elk feature
  - 27 Bowling feat
  - 28 Closed tight
  - 29 Showy parrot
  - 31 Fabric workers
  - 33 Some linemen
  - 36 Low digit
  - 38 Talker's gift



## YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

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

## BEETLE BAILEY by Mort Walker



## BABY BLUES by Kirkman & Scott

