

LET THERE BE LIGHT

PLEASURE IS ALL MINE



SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

THE see-saw between the government of Bangladesh and the Western diplomatic community over threats to foreigners' lives shows no sign of remission. It is on a feverish pitch.

insidious linkages of it all. To that end, we have to ensure effective and credible investigation to bring the culprits of the foreign citizens' murders to speedy and deterrent justice.

The episode has overshadowed some of the sterling reports we need to own up to and draw inspiration from in our strivings for a better tomorrow.

A case in point is the Country Partnership Report of the World Bank released in a workshop held in conjunction with ERD last Monday. It reminded us once again of our vastly improved human development index (HDI). This places us above not just India but many other developing countries.

From a scratch in 1971, Bangladesh has made amazing progress on socio-economic indicators. Amartya Sen has been a tireless exponent of Bangladesh's leading socio-economic edges over others and now this is confirmed by no less a discerning institution than World Bank itself.

In terms of longevity, child mortality, net reproductive rate per woman, adult literacy, child immunisation, sanitation coverage, nutrition and, above all, per capita income, Bangladesh is forging ahead. In fact, it has overtaken a lot of other developing countries. One omission to the Bangladesh scorecard is, however, women's empowerment.

In an update on Bangladesh economy, WB chief economist Zahid Hussain and its outgoing Country Director Johannes Zutt aired their insightful observations through the press.

Zahid Hussain saw no point in juggling with figures about GDP growth rate in Bangladesh. Because "this only generates heat and no light." Also one might argue that the range of variations being limited to between .5 and 1 percent, why make much about the aggregative evaluation, anyway?

Borrowing a part of WB chief economist's phrase about the lacking light, we could wish let there be light.

The WB update dubbed the economy as being stable with the caveat that external and domestic risks do loom. World Bank finds a propeller of growth in domestic consumption and exports.

Nevertheless, we need to be wary of

exports declining and competitiveness sliding. But import going strong, particularly of capital machinery, could mean two things: A fillip to industrialisation but the low import duty on capital goods will have to be monitored. Given the possibilities of mis-invoicing, a sure-fire vehicle of capital flight, we have loose nuts and bolts to fix.

But the outgoing World Bank Country Director Zutt hits the nail on its head. He said, "Traffic congestion is slowing down mobility and reducing efficiency of the people." He has also given a recipe to tackle the stubborn bull of a problem that traffic jam personifies. In place of 6 to 8 organisations currently involved in traffic management (read mismanagement), the task should be assigned to one authority only. That such an advice had to come from a WB Country Director is shaming; for, local experts had been crying hoarse for a single authority, only to draw a blank so far!

The second obvious thing that passes for a pastime rather than a national concern is made up of concentration of wealth in a few hands (not quite!) and the yawning rich-poor gap. It makes mockery of a seminal objective of the Liberation War which aimed at establishing a just and fair society.

In 2009 individual and institutional bank account holders of Tk 1 crore and above were 19,663. In December 2014, account holders in the same category soared to a whopping 54,727. 40 percent of the national wealth is held by 40 to 50 thousand people in the country - the portrayal of disparity in incomes couldn't be more compelling.

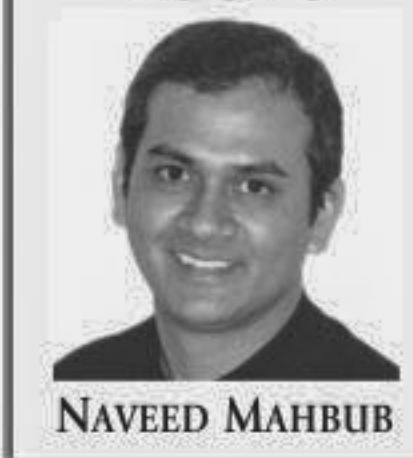
This leaves out the stupendous capital flight earning Bangladesh a celeb status, if you like, of a 'rich country' in the eye of the beholder!

Let me crave your indulgence in reflecting on the following two quotes from way past but with some relevance even to this day: One is attributed to Benjamin Disraeli who dubbed rich and poor as "Two nations". The other is by famous Spanish writer Miguel de Cervantes who said, "There are but two families in the world as my grandfather used to say, the Haves and Have-nots."

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

Chivalrously Regal

HUMOROUSLY YOURS



NAVEED MAHBUB

THE flight deck of an aircraft carrier boasts the shortest runway for jet aircrafts while being one of the most dangerous places to stick around at. North Gulshan Avenue is the land based sister - shortest Formula 1 race track and as dangerous a place to hang out at.

Just like a Top Gun fighter jock (the hunk) strapped to a sleek fighter jet, is catapulted from the flight deck of the USS Nimitz, our own USS Gulshan Avenue catapults a hunk of an SUV, driven by a sleek teenager, into the side streets of the diplomatic-turned-notorious area.

Such is the ideal place to earn notoriety. Besides, who doesn't want to be a Bollywood star? Ok, so it's a stretch to have the looks, body, and oh, the skills needed to manoeuvre an SUV onto sleeping people on Bombay's sidewalks like those of Salman Khan. But we at least have our own young star. After all, some kids today can really multi-task - drive a mammoth of an SUV, take it through knee deep water in a Navy S.E.A.L. like amphibious exercise, drag race, drink, smile, take selfies, instagram, hit two rickshaws, knock down four live humans and wet his diapers, all at the same time. Forgive me if I have left anything out.

It all happens near the Dutch, i.e., 'foreign' Club. Hence, law enforcement is at the scene in an instant. It's a stretch to expect a sobriety test on the spot and the eventual US type scenario where a drunk driver squirms: "I'm sorry officer!" T.I.B. (This Is Bangladesh). If there were such a thing remotely similar to that of a sobriety test, the driver's remorse here would be: "Do you know whose son (nephew) I am?"

So, the kid is taken to the police station. His identity is still unknown, though those of all in his family tree are out instantly. It's like the matrimonial 'bio data', a one pager Who's Who while Who Cares about Who's the Groom.

At the police station, he is calm. So what if he doesn't have the license to drive? He's got the license to chill and be chivalrously regal: "Where is my stuff?" Reminds us of Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay's *Notun Da's* first words upon being rescued from the village dogs and his (Notun Da's) submerged refuge in ice cold river water: "Where is my other pump shoe?"

Meanwhile, one injured rickshaw puller is compensated Taka 15,000. Micro Economics guys, what's the pricing strategy here on life? Equivalent to two bottles of Chivas Regal or half an SUV tank of gasoline? Or should it be measured in terms of pegs, bongos, pints or drops? I don't know. But considering that not too long ago we had birth registrations and now we're going through SIM registrations, the price of human life, by deduction, is Taka 350. Ok, plus VAT. So, Taka 15K is quite a handsome amount.

And what about the elusive Chivas Regal bottle? One minute it's there, the next minute it isn't. Every artefact used by a famous or infamous person eventually becomes priceless. So, this bottle in the limelight is a collector's item and not People's Exhibit 1. The Kotkotiwala who eventually ends up buying the (in)famous bottle is a soon-to-be millionaire. Definitely quite a bargain buying it for Taka 15,000 ('hush' money included).

Gazi TV, you can make not just an episode of Crime Fiction, but a full length movie out of this story. Remember the movie *Gods Must Be Crazy* where it all started with just one cheap Coke bottle? You got a priceless bottle of Chivas Regal here. We're all eyes for *Kids Must Be Crazy*.

Jokes aside, I say we parents listen up. Instead of expensive presents, let's give our kids some of our priceless presence. Chances are, in that case, we will have to merely deal with benign parent-teacher meetings and not headline making parent-victim meetings...

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

Canadian election and Trudeau's victory speech

MOZAMMEL H. KHAN

THE general election that took place on October 19 ushers in a new era for Canada, as Justin Trudeau, the son of a former Prime Minister and Canadian legend Pierre Elliot Trudeau (a recipient of Bangladesh's Friends of Liberation War honour), was swept to power on the vow to change how Canadians were governed and a commitment to end what he branded as the Conservatives' divisive style of politics.

Final results had the centre-left Liberals at 184 seats, comfortably more than the 170 seats needed for a majority government in the 338-seat House of Commons. It's a stunning rebound for a party that had been knocked down to 34 seats in the 2011 elections and left for dead. The centre-right and governing Conservatives won 99 seats (190 in 2011), and the left leaning New Democratic Party (NDP) won 44 seats (109 in 2011).

The day was a humiliating loss for Conservative Leader Stephen Harper, who has served as prime minister since 2006, and a crushing night for NDP leader Thomas Mulcair, the incumbent official leader of the opposition in the House of Commons. Harper, who had led Conservatives to three successive victories, immediately signalled that he would be stepping down as leader and instructed the Conservative party to appoint an interim leader and launch a process to select a new leader, according to a party statement.

Speaking to supporters in his election headquarters in Calgary, Alberta, Harper said he had the "incredible honour" of serving as prime minister. "We put everything on the table. We gave everything we had to give and we have no regrets," he said. While the outcome was not the one he wanted, Harper said, "The people are never wrong," adding that he accepted the results "without hesitation."



The results mean that 43-year-old Trudeau, will become Canada's next prime minister, following in the footsteps of his illustrious father Pierre Trudeau, who served as prime minister for 16 years before retiring in 1984. He died in 2000 at the age of 80. The Canada Act, which included the Constitution Act, 1982, and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, was proclaimed by Queen Elizabeth II, as Queen of Canada, on April 17, 1982, an accomplishment by the Liberals under the helm of Pierre Trudeau. In fact, it is

the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the mantra for civil liberties has made Canada one of the best countries on our planet to live and it made Pierre Trudeau one of the most admired statesmen of his times.

The election results mark a huge win personally for Justin Trudeau, who had been derided by his critics and underestimated by his rivals, and for the Liberal party, which had only known failure in the previous three elections.

When the wave engulfed Harper (Conser-

vative leader and former PM) - a Justin Trudeau wave, the most galling way for Harper to end a long political career - he stood more solitary than ever before," wrote the *Toronto Star* columnist Tim Harper.

"Harper's practice of wedge politics, such as his attempt to demonise Muslims by outlawing 'barbaric cultural practices,' or his hard line on Syrian refugees, left too many with too much of a bad taste in their mouths," wrote another *Toronto Star* columnist, Thomas Walkom. The Bill C-51 is forcefully touted as protecting Canadians against terrorism. It exploits amorphous fear in the same way that occurred in the United States after 9/11 where the Bush government introduced sweeping laws restricting civil liberties under the guise of protecting the United States from attacks. As part of their fear tactics to support Bill C-51, the Harper government has been using words to subtly denigrate and vilify Muslims. As if that was not enough, a controversial provision of a newly enacted Bill C-24 came into effect last May, allowing the government to revoke Canadian citizenship from dual citizens who are convicted of terrorism, high treason and several other serious offences. This draconian law is applicable even if one was born in Canada.

During his impassioned 23-minute speech following the victory, Trudeau applauded the nation for making "history". "I didn't make history tonight; you did. And don't let anyone tell you any differently. I know that I am on stage tonight for one reason and one reason only: because you put me here," he said.

Toward the end of his passionate speech, he shared a story that tugged at everyone's heartstrings. "There are a thousand stories I could share with you from this remarkable campaign," Trudeau told the hushed crowd. "But I want you to think about one in particular. Last week, I met a young mom in St. Catharines, Ontario. She practices the Muslim faith and was wearing a hijab. She made her

way through the crowd and handed me her infant daughter. And as she leaned forward, she whispered something to me that I will never forget. She said she's voting for us because she wants to make sure that her little girl has the right to make her own choices in life and that the government would protect those rights."

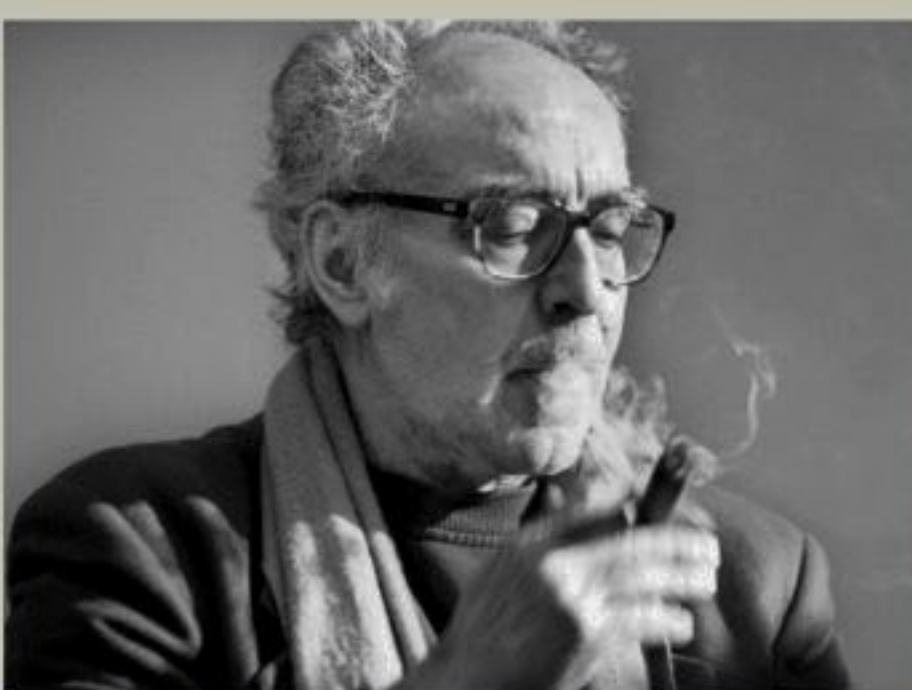
By sharing this anecdote, Trudeau was referring to the *niqab* issue, which plagued the campaign. Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper had attempted to ban women from wearing the *niqab* during citizenship ceremonies, which the Supreme Court overturned.

Trudeau continued his speech: "To her I say this: you and your fellow citizens have chosen a new government. A government that believes deeply in the diversity of our country. We know in our bones that Canada was built by people from all corners of the world who worship every faith, who belong to every culture, who speak every language. We believe in our hearts that this country's unique diversity is a blessing bestowed upon us by previous generations of Canadians, Canadians who stared down prejudice and fought discrimination in all its forms".

Many voters cast their ballot in the hopes of restoring Canada to its previous status as an inclusive, respectful moral leader. What Canadians seem to want most is for Canada to again be their kind of Canada. This is the multicultural, do-goodish, respectful-of-differences, ready-to-hear-others'-opinions Canada that once caused so many outsiders to admire its "idealistic global face". The key accomplishment of this election has been to enable Justin Trudeau to convince Canadians that he can bring back that Canada and that he, indeed, is Canada's man for tomorrow.

The writer is the Convenor of the Canadian Committee for Human Rights and Democracy in Bangladesh.

QUOTABLE Quote

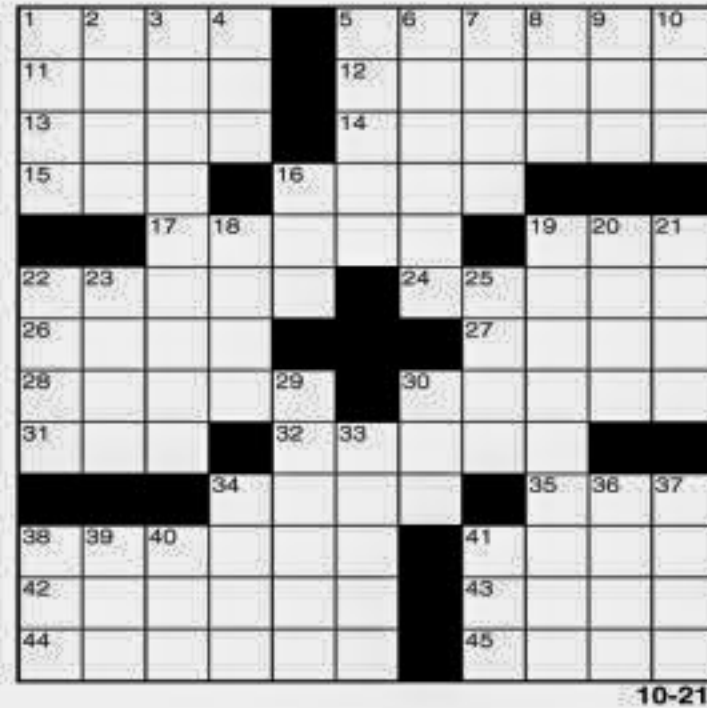


JEAN-LUC GODARD

POETRY IS A GAME OF LOSER-TAKE-ALL.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS
- 1 "Edward Scissor-hands" star
 - 5 Distant radio source
 - 11 Final, for one
 - 12 News recap
 - 13 Smart phone downloads
 - 14 Worn down
 - 15 Opponent
 - 16 Some July babies
 - 17 Safari sighting
 - 19 Fido's foot
 - 22 First performance
 - 24 Refrain bit
 - 26 Track shape
 - 27 Some primates
 - 28 Chooses
 - 30 Prague native
 - 31 Antlered animal
 - 32 Mat of "Today"
 - 34 Opulence
 - 35 Groceries holder
 - 38 Shrink in fear
 - 41 Mexican peninsula
 - 42 Right away
 - 43 Uttered
 - 44 Sacred river of India
 - 45 Gumbo vegetable
- DOWN
- 1 Unhearing
 - 2 Trade fair
 - 3 Bookstore buy
 - 4 Brown and Cameron: Abbr.
 - 5 Chess piece
 - 6 Displace
 - 7 Commotions
 - 8 Feeling down
 - 9 Had lunch
 - 10 Warning color
 - 16 Set fire to
 - 18 Unwieldy ship
 - 19 Honey myrtle
 - 20 Guinness of film
 - 21 Launder
 - 22 Inside in for
 - 23 Demonic
 - 25 Fear down
 - 29 Floodgate
 - 30 Stage prompt
 - 33 Wheel connectors
 - 34 Protracted
 - 36 Cracked
 - 37 Fancy do
 - 38 Clochy scrap
 - 39 Seventh Greek letter
 - 40 Swindle
 - 41 Scary shout

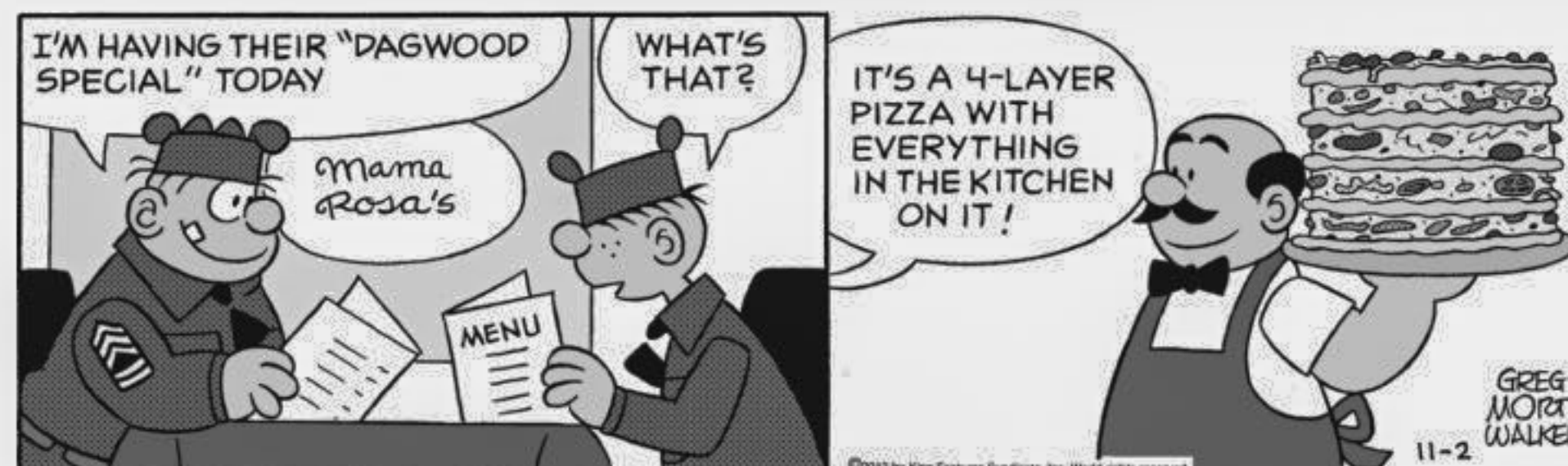


YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

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

BEETLE BAILEY

by Mort Walker



BABY BLUES

by Kirkman & Scott

