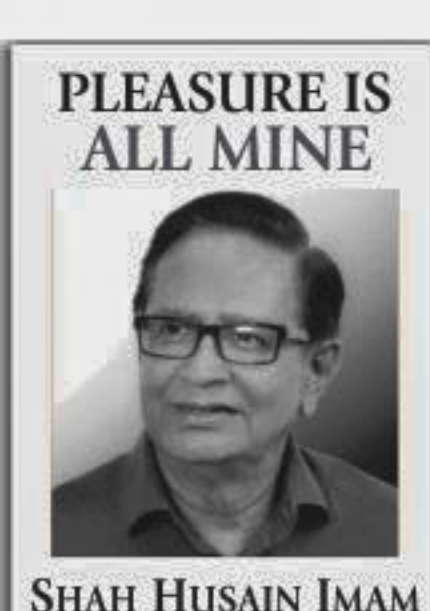


# Missiles, politics and cascading effects



PLEASURE IS ALL MINE  
SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

**T**O say that the situation revolving around the IS has been convoluted and muddy until very recently would have been an understatement. Nevertheless, lately we see through the clouds a flicker of hope for a reasonably well-judged response to the IS challenge. This should begin with a reassessment of IS' strengths and weaknesses. Let's not forget, it had carried out 15 terror attacks in 2014 worldwide, quite sparsely distributed by present standards to be sure. A territorially insulated and encircled ISIS in 2015 has made 150 attacks, a ten-fold increase in less than a year. Shrunken in geographical space, it is making its presence felt through a string of mindless extraterritorial attacks at the time and place of its choice. That is why, the red alerts all over, even when the IS should have been on the run. The IS' selling point is: life after death is more important than life herein, a spiritual message that is exploited for wrong ends. It is catchy enough for the bewildered and culturally self-alienated youth to take to and even die for. Mentors have been cocooned in safety and comfort while the foot soldiers risk their lives. The modus operandi of the IS is equally innovative, constantly responsive to newer operational challenges they get to face. Self-motivated sleeper cells take on dangerous missions independently of the centre. They do not wait for command from the headquarters to act. Its strength lies in being unstructured, loosely knit but at the same time catalyzed by a single-minded pursuit of deadly goals. Arrayed against them are formidable forces now. In a free vote without any party whip, the British parliament with

an overwhelming majority including 67 Labour MPs, voted for bombardment in Syria. George Osborne, Chancellor of Exchequer, has allocated £1.9 billion in extra funds to tackle the militant threats. He apparently added with a sigh that offence is less expensive than defense. Almost simultaneously, the US has decided to send a Specialized Expeditionary Targeting Force to Syria and Iraq in its fight against Islamic militants. Germany and France are already in it. Differences still dog collective steps.

**If there is a generic confusion at the top in terms of decision-making to fight fundamentalism of all hues and stripes this will have a cascading effect on to the bottom.**

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al Abadi bluntly said, Iraq does not need foreign ground troops to defeat the Islamic State group. After all, it is a 100 personnel-strong Expeditionary Force that still comes under fire of the Iraqi PM. He wants to distance himself from the deployment as a political expedient contingent upon the US ground troops having fought a nearly nine year war in Iraq. Russian intervention is a powerful element in the political equations. Pro-Assad in focus it has helped subdue the IS. Moscow's verbal duels against Ankara are getting intense by the day. Turkish President Erdogan and his family have been accused of involvement in illegal oil

deals with Islamic State jihadis ratcheting up the heat over Ankara's alleged downing of a Russian warplane. Montenegro receiving Nato's invitation to join in, Russia was quick to react to the organisation's expansion eastward, this adding to the bad blood between Moscow and West over a slew of issues including Ukraine. The prospect of real headway against IS pivots around one single point. The 70,000 moderate people comprising Shi'a and Sunni who can make difference from within are a ragtag force without a chain of command as they fight against Assad. Kurdish and pro-Assad army have a chain of command but anti-Assad and anti-IS forces are lacking in it. Where the Muslim world should have been a part of the solution of IS crisis it is being the perpetrator of the problem. That said, we endorse the efforts at political solution through Vienna Conference which has already had two meetings. The worst case scenario is predicted to be carving up of Syria into parcels held by different stakeholders. At any rate, even a homogenous country like Bangladesh cannot afford to bury its head in the sand in the face of terrorism that is becoming an increasingly borderless phenomenon. Just as an epidemic knows no frontier so also terrorism, a new epidemic of hatreds. The bottom-line is that if there is a generic confusion at the top in terms of decision-making to fight fundamentalism of all hues and stripes this will have a cascading effect on to the bottom. We need to be watchful of the anti-terrorism trends so that we can pick right countries to garner expertise and technical support from. Importantly, the agenda for freezing sources of funds for terror networks must receive topmost priority at the moment.

The writer is Associate Editor of The Daily Star.

# Bollywood Premier League



HUMOROUSLY YOURS  
NAVEED MAHBUB

**O**H hello! You DO look so sickly after your Dengue. How are you doing now? I tell Mashrafe Bin Mortaza. My wife grumbles and scolds me *so to voice*, "This is Tamim Iqbal, NOT Mashrafe!" I smile a sheepish smile at the not-so-happy, perfectly fine and fit Tamim Iqbal as I slowly make way to the rush (thank goodness) of fans flanking him. Just as David Beckham is this year's Sexiest Man Alive (does that make Rock Hudson the Sexiest Man Dead?), Justin Trudeau is Sexiest Man in Office, Imran Khan is the Sexiest Man Talking through His Hat, Tamim Iqbal, thanks to my cricketing dyslexia, is now the Sexiest Man with a Punctured Ego. Maybe I am the one who makes his fuse thin, which eventually blows during his locking horns with the Sexiest BPL Team Owner Cussing, not sparing multiple generations of Chittagong's star. Money can buy you tiger's milk, and maybe a tiger too, but most definitely not a Tiger, aka, a national cricket player. Oh well, *Can't Buy Me Love...* The games have begun. A hat trick, a one game suspension, ICC's Best ODI player of 2015 and a player going home for a crooked bowling arm, all starting from a glitzy inauguration ceremony of BPL - Bollywood Premier League. Jacqueline Fernandez enters the stage. I'm no Farzana Shakil, but I thought the only other time I saw those two vertical pony tails were on my 3-year-old preschooler. I was expecting a coquettish glance into the camera with a husky voice, "I'm barely eighteen" ... Icing on the cake are KK and Hrithik Roshan. Nothing is complete without the interviewing being outsourced to Pamela

Singh Bhutoria, with many an aspiring local failing S@ifurs' qualifying rounds. Consolation prizes for Momtaz and Chirkutt, but after all they are 'second tier' to us. That's ok, a Dhallywood Premier League wouldn't sell as many tickets to the opening ceremony. Hey, for a programme in Bangladesh (now a middle income country), we can hire Indian stars at will. Lopsided? Not quite. The balancing act is at the enclaves as there is a redistribution of citizens between Bangladesh and India, amidst tears of separation. Adding to the tears while making all bilateral activities asymmetric, BSF fatally shoot two Bangladeshi cattle traders along the Toluigacha Border in Shatkhira Upazila. To break the odd number jinx, another is shot to death within days, making it 24 to date this year. I know it's the year-end with hard targets (an ironic pun) to achieve. Maybe an attempt to up the target 'realisation', the BSF enters Bangladesh and beats up and injures five in Kolora Upazila of Sathkira District near the Goalpara Border. Meanwhile, Bangladesh sends its advertising dollars across the border while Dipto Bangla TV launches to replicate Zee Bangla's soaps. Good business model, considering 70 percent of Bangladeshi viewers are high on soap. But I also say good luck - considering how Bangladeshi viewers viewed *Bangladeshi Idol* and *Ke Hobe Kotipoti* as the viewers want the real deal, not a 'deshi' version. So, start growing a mustache and practice bobbing your head, you just might get a top job through the Tamil Nadu quota. The writer is an engineer at Ford & Qualcomm USA and CEO of IBM & Nokia Siemens Networks Bangladesh turned comedian (by choice), the host of ABC Radio's *Good Morning Bangladesh* and the founder of Naveed's Comedy Club. E-mail: naveed@naveedmahbub.com

# DIGITAL BAN IN DIGITAL BANGLADESH?



NO OFFENCE  
NAHELA NOWSHIN

**I**T has been a little more than two weeks since the Bangladesh government enforced a ban on Facebook, WhatsApp and Viber for security reasons in order to "save lives". At first, there was a sense of ambivalence towards the ban but with time many have started questioning its effectiveness. While there's no doubt that social media is abused by many in this country (even cricketer Nasir Hossain wasn't spared), does it justify a nationwide ban? In a digitalised era where social media has infiltrated the very psyche of netizens, particularly that of young people, a ban on social media is bound to raise questions, and people expect justifications for the ban to be compelling. The ban can easily be justified by magnifying the 'cons' of social media, which seems to be the case here. But by the same logic, one could protest the ban by highlighting the virtues that social media brings. Had it not been for Facebook, where the video of Rajon being tortured at the hands of grown adults was released, the teenager's brutal murder would have never gained countrywide attention. The power of social media at that moment lay in the national outcry following Rajon's killing and in the rare moment of unity as the people of the country demanded justice... Rajon's murderers now await their execution. Take the popular page on Facebook, *Moja Loss?*, for example. It played somewhat of a role of a vigilante when the Pahela Boishakh sexual assault happened earlier this year. *Moja*



*Loss?*, with the help of social media users, tried tirelessly to identify the molesters in photos and was even successful to an extent. Screen grabs of distasteful, misogynistic comments made on Facebook in the aftermath of the incident were captured and shared widely; some of the users (all of whom were men) who wrote those comments disabled their Facebook accounts due to guilt and shame. The undeniable power of social media lies in its unparalleled ability to spread a message, whether good or bad, to the multitudes. Part of the reasoning behind the ban is to protect girls and women from cyber sexual harassment, and without a doubt, this is a widespread crime that many fail to even

acknowledge. But it is also through the cyber space that an increasing number of Bangladeshi girls and women are bringing to the fore their personal experiences of sexual harassment, online or otherwise, inspiring others to be vocal about this issue. The day-to-day role that social media plays in our lives is larger than we may realise. Blood donations are solicited on Facebook; fake products and fraudulent companies are exposed on Facebook groups like Desperately Seeking Dhaka; and crowdfunding by charity organisations and volunteers assist the underprivileged. The list goes on. Granted, social media can be a dangerous place; but it also provides a safe haven for ordinary people who, lacking trust in law

*Had it not been for Facebook, where the video of Rajon being tortured at the hands of grown adults was released, the teenager's brutal murder would have never gained countrywide attention.*

enforcing agencies and/or the judicial system, use the digital space to air their grievances and protests in order to seek solidarity and some sort of justice. So let's be careful not to discredit the positives of social media. One of the pro-ban arguments is that lives could have been saved in the recent Paris attacks had social networking sites been temporarily shut down. Now, one may ask, can we really compare France, a developed country in the West, to Bangladesh, a developing country? *Context matters.* The temporary social media ban in Bangladesh is completely understandable given our limited capabilities, resources and infrastructure to deal with the threat of militancy, or what

have you, head on. But it is highly doubtful that a temporary ban on social media sites in France would have prevented the large-scale, orchestrated attacks said to be the deadliest that France has seen since WWII. It is absurd to think that the sophisticated French counter-terrorism intelligence, despite all its surveillance measures and collaboration with foreign intelligence, could have foiled the attacks simply with a social media ban at home. The assertion that the ban on social media prevented subversive activities this time around is debatable. The major reason behind this most likely lies in the beefing up of security nationwide, and it could very well be that criminal gangs are laying low only for the time being. Social media is simply a means to an end and bans aren't an antidote to the country's woes (e.g. rising extremism). Social media does not "provoke" a man to harass a woman; a sexist mentality is to blame. Social media does not "cause" militant activities; a flawed ideology is to blame. Social networking sites are no longer just a medium of entertainment and leisure; they are a source of livelihood for many. Social media bans hurt businesses that rely on F-commerce (or Facebook commerce) and such businesses are now thriving across Bangladesh. The root causes of whatever it is that threatens the state's security are complex and lie outside the realm of social media. Without efficient law enforcement agencies and intelligence community armed with the resources and infrastructure to deal with security threats, we will achieve little with bans on social media in a Digital Bangladesh. The writer is a member of the Editorial Team at The Daily Star.

## QUOTABLE Quote

**EDWARD W. SAID**

My argument is that history is made by men and women, just as it can also be unmade and rewritten, always with various silences and elisions, always with shapes imposed and disfigurements tolerated.

## CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS	DOWN
1 Potting need	1 Stable section
5 UV stopper	2 Belly button type
10 Yam or truffle	3 Spanish resort isle
12 Inspid	4 Writer Stanislaw
13 Grisham's " -- to Kill"	5 Bassoon's cousin
14 -- a customer	6 Writer Grey
15 Designer Claiborne	7 Possible puzzle start
16 Made available	8 Normal states
18 Preparatory stage	9 Wed in secret
20 Mine material	11 Stops at the pump
21 Moore of movies	17 LP unit
23 Tie the knot	19 HST follower
24 Lively folk dance	22 Thorough
26 Some sisters	24 Protective wall
28 Scathing review	25 International understanding
29 Beer, in slang	27 Much of N. Amer.
31 Quantity: Abbr.	28 Successfully imitate
32 Study	30 Braz. neighbor
36 Accelerate	33 Because of
39 First numeró	34 Indiv winner AI
40 Annie's dog	35 Rap entourage
41 Lock	37 TV's Falco
43 Band-leader Shaw	38 Colored
44 Can't stomach	42 Unrefined
45 Spirited horse	
46 Had on	

## YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

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## BEETLE BAILEY

by Mort Walker

WHAT'S SARGE'S PROBLEM THIS TIME? HE HAD THE HICCUPS.

## BABY BLUES

by Kirkman & Scott

SUDDENLY HE HICC-ED, BUT HE COULDN'T UP!

## BABY BLUES

by Kirkman & Scott

THUD!

## BABY BLUES

by Kirkman & Scott

HOW DID A BOWLING BALL EVEN GET ON THE ROOF? REMEMBER THE CATAPULT YOU TOLD ME NOT TO BUILD?