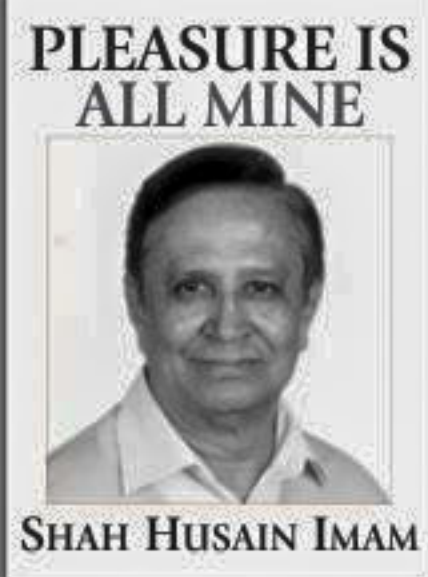


Passports ranking, IS' mapping and us



SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

PLEASURE IS ALL MINE

THE endearing identity that Bangladesh passports had carried for its holders abroad after the liberation of the country would subsequently mutate into subtle-to-crude forms of 'reception' at the immigration desks. Now octogenarian Kazi Fazlur Rahman, a reputed civil servant of the country once wrote a piece in *The Daily Star* lamenting the loss of magnetism of the Bangladesh passport.

But now, thankfully, we seem to have landed on a comeback trail. Arton Capital, a global financial firm headquartered in Montreal, QC Canada, has put together an index of the 'best passports to have'. According to its rankings, Bangladesh is 67th out of 197 countries listed with 50 of them being easily accessible for the Bangladeshi passport holders. Sri Lanka, Pakistan and even Iran (which should now be placed higher though!) ranks lower than Bangladesh with 70th

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position for all of them and countries easily accessible being 47 for Iran and Sri Lanka and 46 for Pakistan.

Kia's article dated July 11, 2015 under the title 'The world's most powerful passports - ranked' opens with a reader all at once: *Travelling can be a bureaucratic nightmare for those on restricted passports.* Here we look at the best passport to have based on the freedom it provides. 'Best' is defined by the number of countries the passport holder can visit either without a visa or by obtaining one on arrival.

US and UK are joint # 1 with accessibility to 147 countries. In spite of the turmoil-ridden US' international relations, the country is welcome with open arms across most of the world.

The worst passports to have, in the eye of Arton Capital, the industry-leading global advisory firm specialising in investor programmes for residence and citizenship around the world, are from 'comparably unstable countries' like South Sudan, Palestine and

Myanmar. They secure the joint ranking at 80 with access to only 28 countries.

Bangladesh being assessed favourably, as one of the fast emerging eleven economies of the world, entitles it to a niche reckoning. The up-scaling of the passport is indicative of the country's potentiality as a vibrant investment destination. We must build up on the image, and not allow it to be chipped away by any indiscretion whatsoever from any quarter. In concrete terms though, the priority strategic concern must necessarily centre on putting in place a composite, modernised infrastructure for development. In such a context we need to take into account the global extremist threats.

Speaking of which, we have the mapping of the spread of ISIS done by Foreign Policy (FP), a think-tank of a magazine based in the USA. The gist of what it says is, 'The Islamic State is rapidly expanding its operations far beyond its strongholds in Iraq and Syria. Washington - initially reluctant

for political reasons to acknowledge the group's growing reach - is scrambling to keep up.'

Constantly morphing and outside Iraq and Syria, the IS has declared 'provinces' for its self-declared caliphate in nine other countries - Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nigeria and Russia.

The FP article by Dan De Luce, C. K. Hickey warns that the IS may soon plant its flag in Tunisia, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Somalia.

There is an irony in the American position in that while they are so knowledgeable about the phenomenon they are not proportionately proactive in fighting IS. The US is focused on supporting anti-Assad forces rather than combating the IS.

US President Obama who came on a promise 'to reduce America's involvement in the Middle East, is weighing sending more US troops to Iraq to bolster the fight against the Islamic State and is poised to open a

new front against the militant group in Libya.' He is still caught up in a rhetoric web as he weighs up the pros and cons as the cliché goes.

Lately, US intelligence chief James Clapper said: 'The government (Bangladesh) has denied that Islamic State group has a presence in the country and has accused domestic Islamist groups and political opponents for the violence.'

In a typical American perspective, he thought such an approach may 'provide openings for transnational groups to expand their presence in the South Asian countries.'

Pertinently, it needs noting that the Indian central intelligence organisation found out that as many 30,000 Indians were preparing to join the IS. Going by the Indian influential newspaper *The Hindu*, at least in 12 states of India IS influence has been detected. Although Maharashtra and South Indian states have the most IS influence, West Bengal and Assam are not far behind.

An AFP news report from Abu Dhabi says, 'A majority of Arab Muslim youths in a poll voiced in chorus their disapproval of IS and al-Qaeda for committing a perversion of Islamic teachings.'

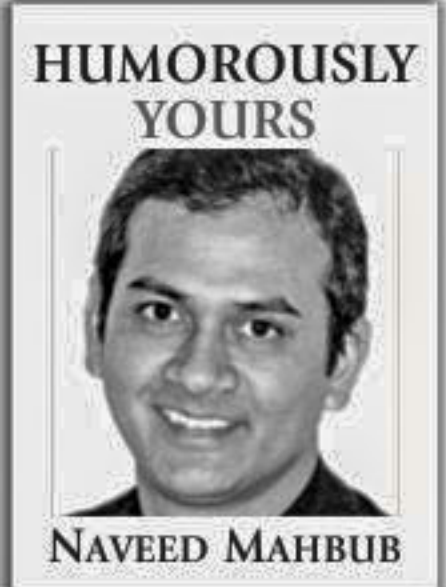
The same news item attributing to Zogby Research Services poll of 5,374 young Muslim men and women from the Middle East and North Africa also 'blamed corruption and repressive governments for the rise of jihadist groups'.

Of necessity, the primary antidote to the IS must come from the communities themselves. They are the ones who see up close the embryonic stages of the doctrinal infusion into the minds of malleable young boys and girls and that's where they are ideally suited to deter them convincingly away from the suicidal path. A sense of importance that bewildered youth is hungry for must be catered to them by providing a new feeling of self-worth and direction.

They are a dynamo of energy and information, something that demands superior thought process to replace the bigoted radicalisation mode.

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

Dumb and Dumber



NAVEED MAHBUB

HUMOROUSLY YOURS

THE Air India flight makes an emergency landing after a rat is spotted on-board. No, Donald Trump doesn't fly commercial airlines, let alone foreign owned ones. For he has vowed to take a strong stance on illegal immigration that started all the way back in 1492. All deportation documents will steal the line from his hit TV series *The Apprentice*, "You're fired!"

It's called disruptive marketing that is bound to make waves. Just as we see in every story where one is out of tune (to some) - the comic character Cacophonix in *Asterix*, the comic character Castafiore Bianca in *Tintin* and now, the comical character Donald Trump in *Grandpa Goes to Washington*.

So, there he goes again. He does a no-show at the Republican debate in Iowa stating that the moderator Megyn Kelly of Fox News is biased against him. If this is a true assumption, then it says a lot about Donald Trump that even Fox News is biased against him.

So, is Trump over-trumped? Not quite. Aside from New Hampshire, Sarah Palin endorses Donald Trump. The latter's thumbs up galvanizes Disney into starting work on a sequel of its classic - *The Lady and the Tramp*. But Hollywood is contagious - there's humour of *Forest Tramp*. Oh,

don't forget the franchise in the making - *Dumb and Dumber to Dumb and Dumbest to Trump and Trumpery to Trump and Tempest*.

This is what makes it fun. Sure, gone are the days of being entertained by *The Wits of Winston Churchill*. But no less amusing is *The Fits of Donald Trump*.

Some may draw a similarity between Donald Duck and Donald Trump as the word 'quack' may apply to both. Quite the contrary. He did qualify somewhere down the line, I guess, through an unaired (and blooper filled) episode of *The Apprentice*.

It is bound to be fun, at least for comedians who are having a field day.

The US Presidential race, as complex as it is with delegates and electoral colleges and caucuses, is still the levellest playing field in a democratic system. Ok, minus the dimpled and hanging chads...

In a land far, far away, on another field, literally level, Rameez Raja tells Tamim Iqbal, "I can't speak your language. What we'll do... English?"

Rameez, I also don't understand your language. Oh wait, I do a little bit: "Bay Tameez Raja". And don't tell me you don't know a little Bangla, like the classic "Ami tomakey b'alobashi!"

Rameez didn't really expect Tamim to start speaking in Bangla just like an Urdu-speaking person starts speaking in Urdu with me thinking that it's unthinkable that I don't understand his language? Or was Rameez luring Tamim to an IELTS duel, despite knowing that the latter is fluent in English and Rameez's statement was merely the endorsement from a fresh



graduate of S@ifurs, Karachi? Perhaps Rameez Raja and Navjot Singh Sidhu can join hands in improving the Indo-Pak relationship. Fashioned after the US-Sino 'Ping Pong Diplomacy,' it'll be called the Indo-Pak 'Ding-Dong Diplomacy'.

But this is where I end on Rameez Raja, getting a good laugh and perhaps making a few others laugh, not at his cost, but at the cost of his gaffes for

which he has become famous just as much as he has with his cricket. Of course, there is the benefit of the doubt where his intentions were nothing short of making Tamim comfortable. The humorist draws the line at a safe distance from the profanity and name calling that has gone viral on social media. This is what we should do as has been brilliantly and rightfully done in the case of Donald Trump with all

the punches way above the belt.

So, Trump and Rameez, chug along. Laughter, after all, is the best medicine.

Meanwhile, stay tuned for another sequel from Disney - *The Raja and Trump*.

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

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QUOTABLE Quote

SAMUEL BECKETT

Nothing is funnier than unhappiness, I grant you that. Yes, yes, it's the most comical thing in the world.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Searcher for a vein
- 6 Express stop
- 11 Undermine
- 12 Wed in secret
- 13 "-- Doone"
- 14 Stratagems
- 15 Further
- 17 Curator's concern
- 18 Caffeine source
- 19 Select smokes
- 22 Essay
- 23 African runners
- 24 Add up
- 25 Peter Pan's creator
- 27 Jack Sprat's no-no
- 30 We count in it
- 31 Gardner of "Mogambo"
- 32 Crumb bearer
- 33 Claim markers
- 35 Ticket remnants
- 38 Sluggish
- 39 "Parade" composer
- 40 Urban pollution
- 41 Letter after psi

DOWN

- 42 Door sign
- 1 Giants great
- 2 Laundry worker
- 3 Sweden neighbor
- 4 Writer Buchanan
- 5 Term of affection
- 6 Lawn coating
- 7 Peyton's brother
- 8 Belarus neighbor
- 9 Met events
- 10 Battery makeup
- 16 Lollygags
- 20 Card for a sweetie
- 21 Some
- 24 Uno plus due
- 25 Diminutive
- 26 Shrewd
- 27 Improvise
- 28 Reluctant
- 29 Wine expert
- 30 Low singer
- 34 Shortly
- 36 Whopping
- 37 School setting

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

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

BEETLE BAILEY by Mort Walker

WE'LL PRETEND TO ATTACK HERE, THEN GO HERE TO CONFUSE THEM ...

THEN DIVIDE OUR FORCES AND ATTACK THEM FROM BOTH SIDES, SURPRISING THEM!

OR WE COULD JUST SURRENDER NOW...

BABY BLUES by Kirkman & Scott

GAA!

HAMMIE!

WHAT?

I TOLD YOU TO STAY OUT OF THE MUD!

I THOUGHT YOU LIVED IN EARTH TONES!