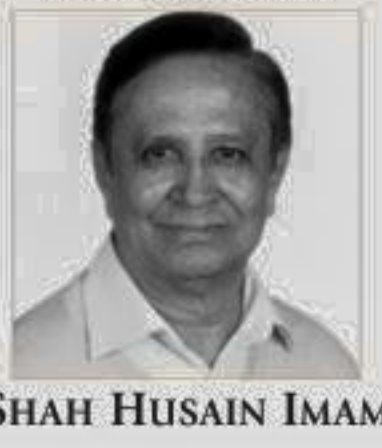


An elephant eloquent, instructive in his death

PLEASURE IS ALL MINE



SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

If while living, the wild animal had animated us, in death it has enlightened us. We saw and felt its nearly six-week long odyssey through the elements of nature before he died—all live and palpable. The educative effect of experiencing the saga first hand has been more pronounced on our minds than perhaps watching a dozen episodes on the Discovery and National Geographic channel, among others. We gave it a name in its dying moments—Banga Bahadur - almost with a posthumous ring to it. But we gave it alright with love and empathy for an animal in dire distress, its occasional rampaging fury regardless, primarily owing to its circumstances. In part, it may also have been a conscience-salving gesture for not being able to do as much for its rescue as we should have. Let's, however, highlight a wildlife interest in the fact that the animal must have had a herd identity, a surname, so to speak. It could not have been anonymous among elephants who live in herds. What's particularly relevant is, they have deep family bonds and live in tight matriarchal groups led by the oldest and

often largest female in the herd.' One can thus feel in one's bones the pain and trauma the wild elephant, separated from its herd by severe flooding in Assam, must have gone through all the way down to Bangladesh. Totally disconnected from its habitat and without a mother figure, sibling or a friendly companion to look up to, Banga Bahadur was thrown completely off-gear, disoriented and dazed. Sucked on to the roller-coaster journey of well over a 1000km (Western media puts it at 1700km), the animal cascaded, turned, rolled over and violently pushed around the contours, landing on shallow waters, chasms or marshy pockets. We know that wild elephants can swim but that it could for such a long distance was a revelation! Two astounding features of elephant behaviour are their high intelligence and memory levels. Banga Bahadur must have used some of these in howsoever a miniscule degree to navigate to safety. It is the memory that serves the herd chief during dry seasons to guide the flock to watering holes tens of miles away that it had seen a long time ago. They also display, wildlife experts have found, signs of grief, joy, anger and playfulness. It must have been terribly unsettling for the elephant that despite having an ability to communicate among its peers, it was so rudely left incommunicado to begin with.

For all we know, the animal can communicate over long distances by producing 'a subsonic rumble that can travel over the ground faster than sound through air. Often elephants receive the messages through the sensitive skins on their feet and trunks.' Sadly, none of these could have worked

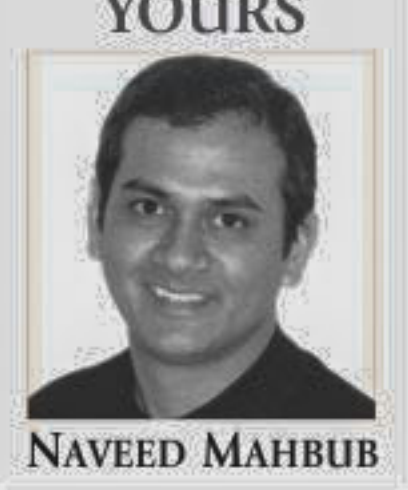
One can thus feel in one's bones the pain and trauma the wild elephant, separated from its herd by severe flooding in Assam, must have gone through all the way down to Bangladesh.

for Banga Bahadur! It is interesting to note, however, that Banga Bahadur at one stage returned to the spot he had once unshackled himself from to jump into a pond, apparently of its own volition. So left to himself, given his superbly brainy navigation of the Brahmaputra and managing to get by some 45 days, he could have survived the ordeal with the human assistance around.

The priority was not to be hung up on tranquilisers, but to let his body mechanism take over with nutrient doses administered for his recovery. The per day food intake of 300—400 lbs, that he on the whole missed for six weeks, was too much of a drag on his strength to be able to keep standing for any effective length of time. The security concern could not have been insurmountable. On the contrary, a 30-foot trunk-to-tail long animal, weighing around four tonnes and that too gone weak and tired (the smallest truck is 5 tonnes) looked highly manageable. Rather than point finger at each other, we should concentrate on staying prepared with specialised, auto-reflexive equipment and manpower base to respond on a short notice to a similar challenge in future. We must pay heed to the following, "Preservation of wildness enhances both our capacity and our worthiness as a species and a civilisation, to survive on the earth." Asian elephants are listed by IUCN 'as endangered' while their African cousins are categorised 'as near threatened.' With the Asian elephants reduced to 35,000—40,000, we would not have been one short of that dismal number if we had saved Banga Bahadur. The writer is a columnist of The Daily Star. He can be reached at shahhusainimam@gmail.com

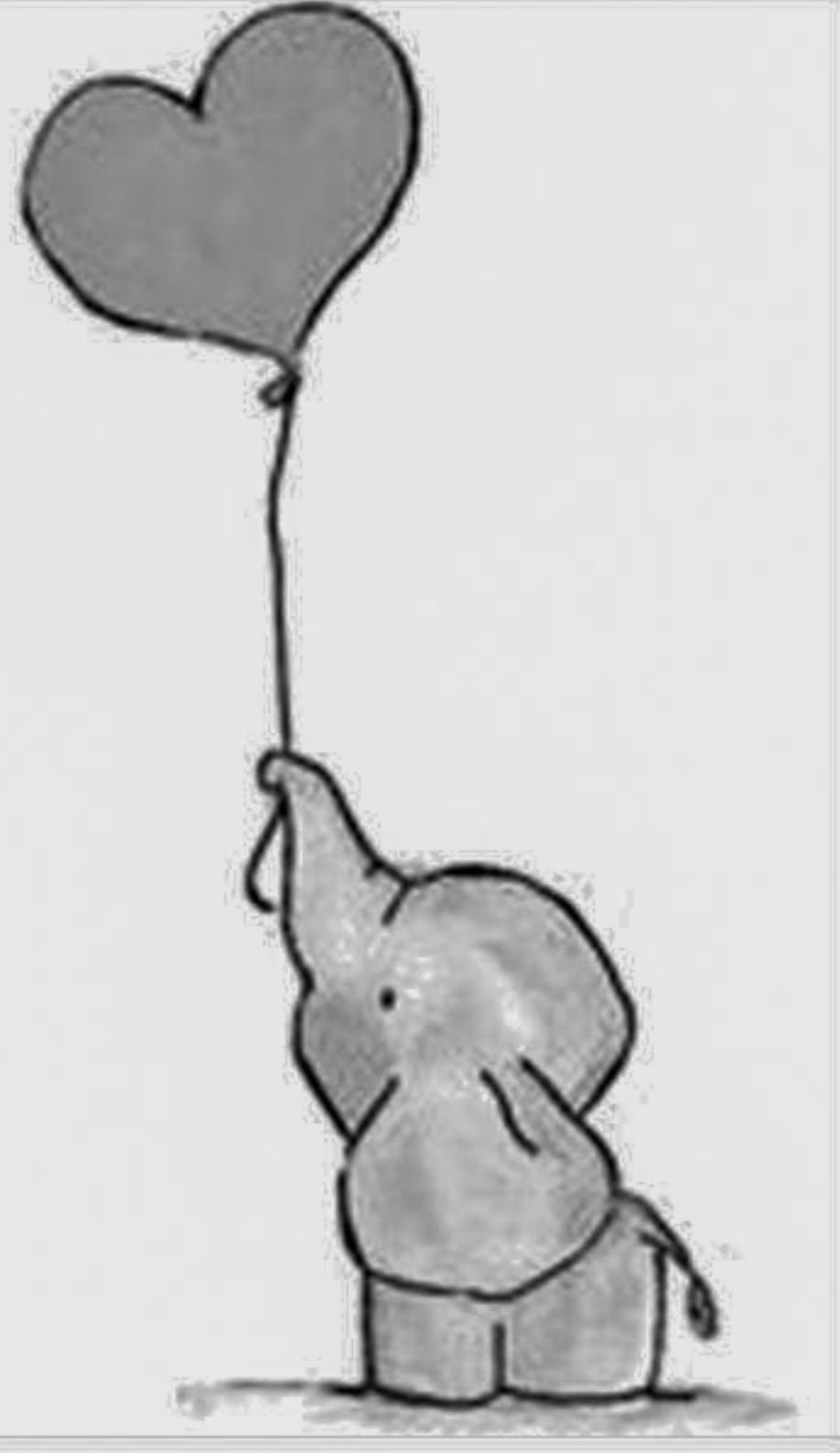
Animal Kingdom

HUMOROUSLY YOURS



NAVEED MAHBUB

I hope Donald Trump doesn't get wind of this border. If so, he will surely be itching to build a wall and halt, once and for all, humans crossing it in both directions. But has he accounted for quadrupeds? I think not... So, a lone elephant gets separated from his herd and enters Bangladesh. And no, he is not accorded the BSF-like reception. Quite the contrary. But no matter which direction one moves across this border, it seems that there are triggers involved while the intentions are starkly different. In one case, it is the lifeless body of a girl dangling from a barbed wire, in the other case it is a four-legged mammal going in the other direction, not with any intention other than merely being lost and being tranquilised with the hope of safe passage to a safe habitat. What ensues in the following days is a tale of cooperation between two nations in an exemplary effort to rescue and rehabilitate the giant mammal. For once, a 'strange' lone animal is not beaten to death followed by a group photo of grinning people standing around the carcass. Definitely not hunted down either for his tusks (tsk, tsk - not that he had any). But it



turns out to be a 'mammoth' task to bring him to safety, ending in his death. In fact, many weep the demise of the guest. There is even a legal notice served to probe the death of the animal and mete out punishments - all in contrast to the double acquittals in the Felani case.

Though Bangabhadur's fate never allowed him to make it to Bangabandhu Safari Park and the big question remains on the series of tranquilisers administered, it gives many hope - if there is so much care and concern for a lone animal, there will surely be a whole lot more for a mangrove full of fellow living beings along the River Poshur. I'm sure along with the fauna, the flora will manage to squeeze in to curry favours from man so that he does not inflict (any more) harm on nature.

Only time can tell - at a time when humans continue to inflict pain on humans, with tools made by humans and motives devised by humans. Stack them all up and it's a tall order to ask for consideration of the habitat of the largest mangrove forest in the world, straddling the two very nations involved with Bangabhadur, when the focus is for our cities which need to be lit up.

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

The untold miseries of 25 Bangladeshis in Afghanistan

BELAL HOSSAIN BIPOB

FOREIGN remittance is definitely contributing to the country's rising development in many areas. Today, every year around eight million Bangladeshis across the globe are remitting about USD 15 billion, which has gradually been boosting the country's economy. More than two-third of the total Bangladeshi migrants work in the Middle Eastern countries, namely, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Libya. The rest of them are basically based in Western countries, namely, the UK, the US, Canada and Australia. In Southeast Asia, Bangladeshis are only aspiring to find jobs in Malaysia. Some Bangladeshis might seek work in other countries in the region. But when the name of Afghanistan, a war-torn country which has been almost ruined in the name of security and economy, recently came up in several print and electronic media as the destination country for 25 job seeking Bangladeshi workers, the rest of the country inevitably reacted with surprise and even concern.

The 25 Bangladesh, who used to work in different steel mills in Dhaka and Narayanganj before migrating to Afghanistan in October last year to work at Afghan Fozad Steel Mill Co Ltd, have been living in miserable conditions. They have claimed that they have been stranded in a factory for over seven months without work and salary.

Strapped for cash, they can hardly meet their daily needs, let alone sending money home. Some local workers at the factory help them manage food. They have been asked by the factory authorities not to leave the fac-



Bangladeshi migrant workers sitting at a factory in Herat city of Afghanistan. They have been stranded there for over seven months. PHOTO: COLLECTED

tory compound for security reasons.

The unfortunate and helpless Bangladeshis had left home for Afghanistan under the arrangement of an Indian national from West Bengal, who had pledged lucrative salary packages to the workers. They obtained manpower clearance from the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET) under the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment. This means that the manpower export of the country knowingly allowed its citizens to travel to one of the riskiest and most economically vulnerable country in the world, Afghanistan.

The country is now facing multiple problems from both inside and outside forces. The emergence of militant groups Taliban, Al Qa'eda and some other groups are still carrying out

their brutalities against innocent victims. And there is little hope that it can overcome the security and economy concerns any time soon.

Thus, we are struck by the question as to how the concerned authority, despite being aware of these threats of security, militancy and a vulnerable economy, permitted its nationals to go to Afghanistan for work. We could even view it in a positive light of foreign remittance, however, why then didn't the authority monitor the condition of these workers once they reached Afghanistan?

As there is currently no Bangladesh mission in Afghanistan, it could be argued that it would be very difficult to monitor the issue. But there is no scope of denying the fact that the concerned authority has failed to ensure the security of our people,

who have been living in inhumane conditions, without pay or security.

Family members and relatives of these workers submitted a written complaint to the Afghan Embassy in Dhaka in April. They have also met the embassy officials and sought their help to bring back their dear ones. In the first week of this month, they met the embassy officials but the lack of any positive feedback has left them frustrated.

The Afghanistan Embassy in Dhaka also cannot deny its failures. They apparently were informed of the state of these captive workers in April - four months ago - and yet, failed to do anything about it. They should have immediately informed the matter to the Bangladesh Foreign Ministry. As far as we can tell, this has not been done.

QUOTABLE Quote



MUHAMMAD ALI

The man who has no imagination has no wings.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- Intellectual showoff
- IK
- Muse of astronomy
- Aspirin target
- It's pushed in a crisis
- Like many dorm rooms
- Phobia
- Amorous archer
- Jack's friend
- Bring together
- Boxing great
- Track trip
- "You there!"
- Boards, as a train
- Hand over
- 1920s art style
- Golf goals
- Dizzying designs
- Navel
- 40 in the thick of
- Queued up
- Squirrel's cache
- Was abundant

DOWN

- Young seal
- Historic time
- Football's Marino
- Zoo resident
- More polite
- Barbills
- Nymph chasers
- Halloween mo.
- Letter after pi
- Finger count
- Deplete
- Did clerical work
- Select group
- Different
- Garden starters
- Drinking spree
- Fellow
- Deli bread
- Eccentric
- Bawls out
- Some livestock
- Wrinkly fruit
- Some what
- Outlaw
- Outback bird
- Ignited
- Singer McGraw
- Count start
- Homer's neighbor

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

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

BEETLE BAILEY

by Mort Walker

FIRST THEY OFFERED DELIVERY WITHIN 3 TO 5 BUSINESS DAYS, THEN OVERNIGHT DELIVERY, THEN PIZZA TO YOUR HOUSE IN 15 MINUTES. NOW THIS!

WHAT'S "THIS"?

DRONES DROPPING STUFF AT YOUR DOOR WHILE YOU'RE JUST THINKING OF ORDERING IT

GREAT. MORE WAIVER

BABY BLUES

by Kirkman & Scott

MOM SAID THERE'S NO WAY I'M GETTING A REAL BABY CHICK FOR EASTER.

WHY NOT?

MOST CHICKENS DIE FROM STRESS OR NEGLECT!

BABY CHICKS ROSE A SALMONELLA RISK!

CARING FOR CHICKENS CAN BE EXPENSIVE!

IT'S AGAINST THE LAW TO KEEP CHICKENS IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD.

NO GOOD REASON.