


Behind the camouflage

PLEASURE IS ALL MINE



SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

LATELY, Pakistan-Bangladesh relations have been in the news, mostly for negative reasons, and very sparsely for the positive ones.

Let's begin with the souring, embarrassing and sensibility-hurting incidents which have been quite a handful. And, then we try to make sense of some of the positive vibes topped up by a sense of incredulity at the receiving end, what with their rarity.

In the latest incident, one saw Pak authorities' attempted whipping of a diplomatic row over a reported remark by Bangladesh's Information Minister Hasanul Haq Inu in New Delhi. This was on the troubled Baluchistan province of Pakistan. What apparently stirred the hornet's nest was our Information Minister's affirmation of support for Modi's critique on Pakistan's human rights violations in Baluchistan. It predictably irked the foreign ministry in Islamabad in the context of Pakistan's relations with India having taken a dip over Kashmir and the Indian prime minister's riposte against Pakistan in his Independence Day speech without so much as naming the country.

In today's highly communicative world, countries read like open books; there is no point pulling the wool over the eyes of scrutinising observers intent on fathoming the depths of an entrenched crisis. It is time pro forma diplomatic practices are updated in order to be compatible with the

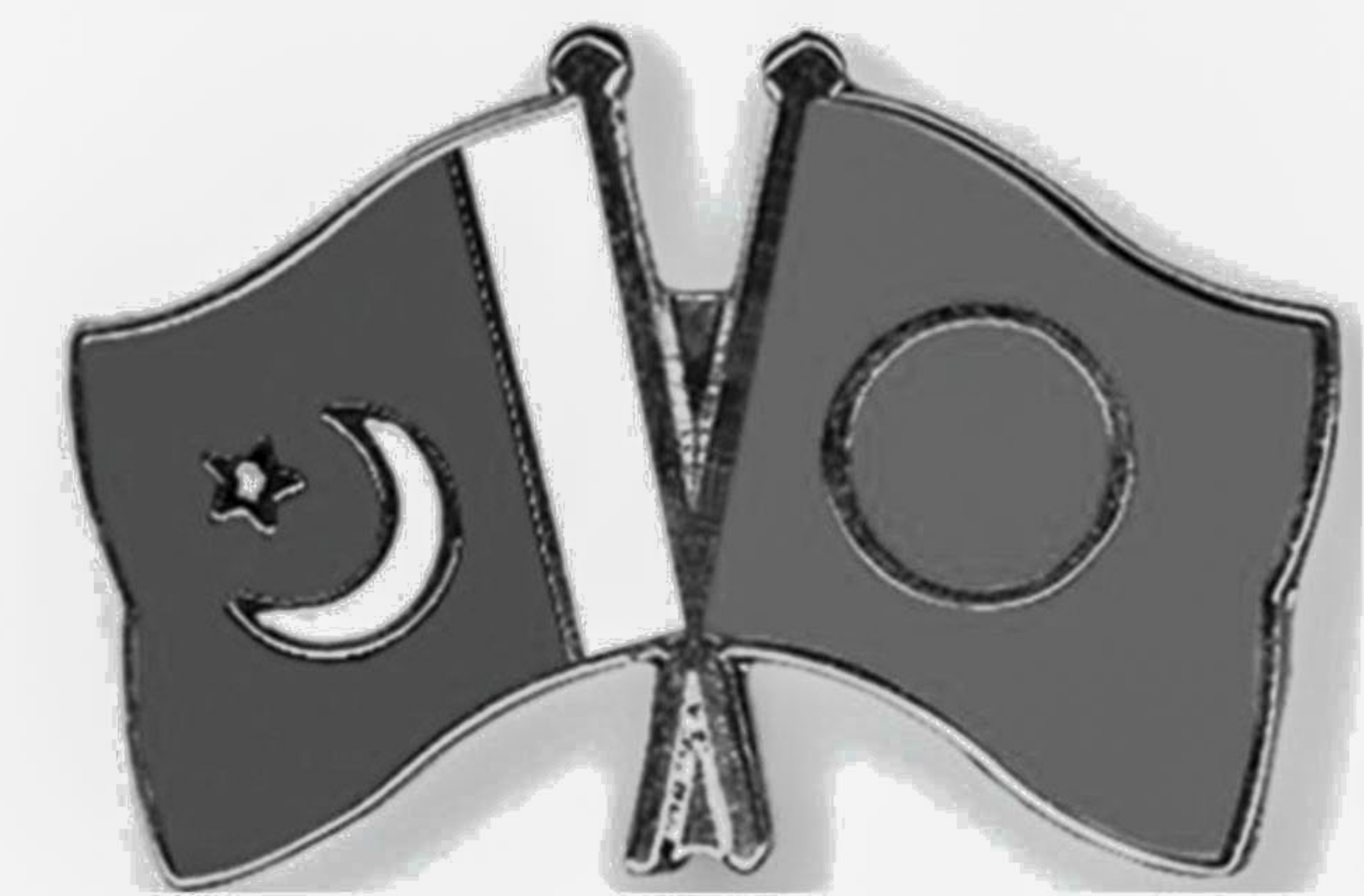


PHOTO: STAR

contemporary human rights concerns. The idea is to enable a country in focus for all the wrong reasons to evolve a solution-oriented approach to an explosive situation.

Without recourse to a holier-than-thou posturing, countries need to wake up to a hard truth: The line between a genuine expression of concern and the allegation of interference in the internal affairs of a country is fast disappearing. Also, we have to recognise that meddling in the internal matters of a country by another comes in different hues and shapes, some in crude, others in

subtle forms.

The foreign ministry in Islamabad called the Bangladesh High Commissioner Tarik Ahsan over to the office of the Director General for South Asia and Saarc to convey Pakistan's strong reactions to the Bangladesh minister's comment. Our foreign ministry officials, with palpable diplomatic finesse, one may add, said that they had no position on the information minister's comment. This has been dove-tailed to a strong reiteration that just as it is an unequivocal policy of the Bangladesh government not to meddle in another

country's affairs, so also it is avowedly resentful of other country's interference in her internal matters.

In an intriguing but emotionally serious vein, let's turn to the gist of a Prothom Alo Tokyo correspondent, Manjurul Huq's opinion piece, published recently. It centred around Pakistan Embassy having organised a condolence meeting in memory of the victims, in this case the Japanese, who lost their lives in the terrorist carnage at Holey Artisan restaurant in Dhaka on July 1.

Manjur reported that the Japanese media adopted a low-key approach to

the programme. To them perhaps, and to many others, it betrayed a lack of conviction under a thin veil of courtesy, even perhaps perceived propriety. Japan, our largest development partner, which has emphatically assured us of continuing support could not have been taken for a ride.

Certain quarters in Pakistan may like to draw a false sense of vindication, even deja vu that Bangladesh, after all, does not appear to be immune to a diabolic terror attack.

The press in Bangladesh has never failed to grieve over the substantial losses of lives sustained in Pakistan through terror attacks, often spearheaded by suicide bombers. Is not this glossed over?

Mesbaul Huq, who captained the Pakistan cricket team to a series leveler with England, attaining the top slot in Test rankings, has done a bit of advocacy for the Bangladesh cricket side. He said if England did not play in Bangladesh, it might impact adversely on the country's cricketing future.

He is speaking from Pakistan's own experience which has a value of its own. But where he is being a little presumptive is when he is crystal-ball gazing into Bangladesh's cricket future.

Pakistan, for reasons well-known, engages itself in denunciatory statements against Bangladesh every time death penalty is executed in case of a person found guilty of war crimes or crimes against humanity in 1971.


While Pakistan is pathologically opposed to it, Turkey in the meanwhile, has changed its stance on the issue by 168 degrees.

The writer is a columnist of The Daily Star.

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Rome wasn't destroyed in a day

HUMOROUSLY YOURS



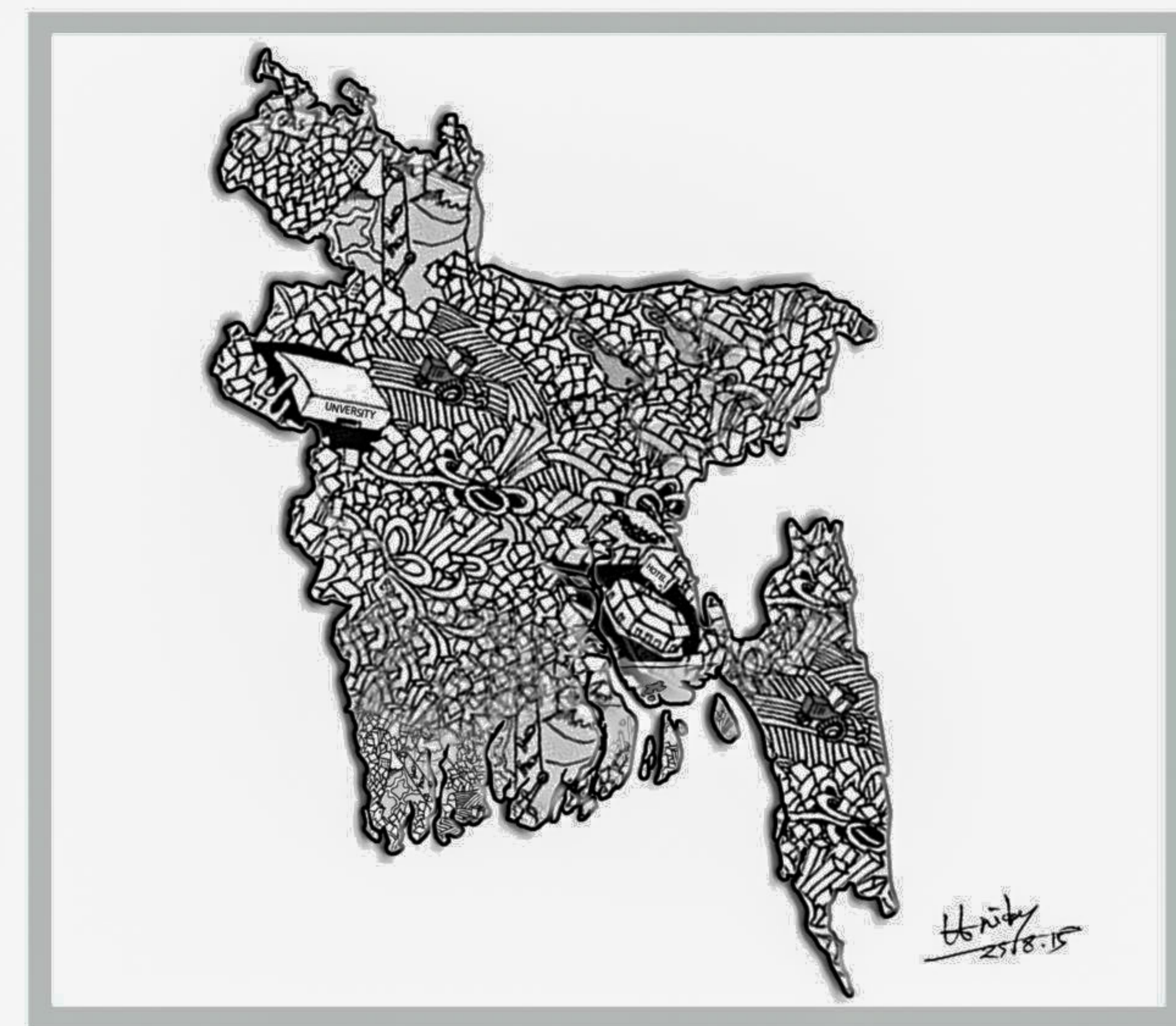
NAVEED MAHBUB

A restaurateur once described to me that the palate of a Dhanmondian is different from that of a Gulshanite. Hmm. I never knew that. Are there differences in accents too? Were we anticipating a visa system to travel from Banani to Dhanmondi?

I jump out of my skin as the motorbike honks for me to move sideways. By reflex, I try to step aside, only to realise that there is no room but a not-so-welcoming drain. A further realisation that I am on the sidewalk (footpath) as the motorbike behind me is honking for me to give way. If food can take over the footpath with food stalls, so can motorbikes with their foot pedals. Humans, make way.

In essence, our age old tradition of char (surfaced land from receding river levels) dakhla (grabbing) has merely taken a more urbanised form as seen on the footpaths. The 2.0 version of char dakhla is with actual brick and mortar real estate where the tenant one day all of a sudden becomes the landlord.

Running out of excitement, the next step is to snub zoning. The West has the urban sprawl, we have the urban mix. Perhaps the intention was to build cities within cities, given that it takes two days to get from Dhanmondi to Gulshan, thanks to traffic. So, it makes sense to turn each residential area into a self sufficient city – why just have homes with nothing to do once one steps outside? So, there are schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, hotels, offices, shops, restaurants, banquet halls...in residential areas. Hey, Dhanmondi even boasts its own airport – legend has it that the city's emergency back-up landing strip is



the Manik Mia Avenue.

Some claim that the people from different areas are different (???). A restaurateur once described to me that the palate of a Dhanmondian is different from that of a Gulshanite. Hmm. I never knew that. Are there differences in accents too? Were we anticipating a visa system to travel from Banani to Dhanmondi? Or vacation packages from Baridhara to Dhanmondi – "3 days, 2 nights, with jet ski-ing on Dhanmondi Lake and greenery at Crescent Lake while dining on Road 27. Includes return AC bus ride from Kakoli to Sobhanbagh and back."

And there is more. Sourav Ganguly steps off a helicopter, describing a futuristic city with simplex, duplex, triplex, multiplex,

cineplex... a whole concrete complex that is super complex, as he further claims that it is something that we have 'never seen before'. He is right, we have never seen TV, surfed the net or travelled overseas. And what's up with the chopper? Oh wait, there's an international airport nearby – sure I would love to have jet planes landing over my head every night.


Yes, Dhaka has changed and has morphed into a melting pot – a pot with everything melting everywhere. But it has happened at tectonic plate speeds, right in front of the eyes of the concerned but helpless, as right under the noses of the concerned authorities and supposed helpful as Gulshan turned into Gulistan, Banani into Banana Republic (Kalabagan), Baridhara into Jatrabari, while of course, Gulistan, Jatrabari and Kalabagan have steadfastly maintained their own inherent charm.

The reversal is a step in the right direction – making Dhaka great again and building walls around Gulshan (paid for by Banani). What may not work is to take seven tablets in one day whereas the doctor prescribed dosage is one tablet daily for seven days. But just as Rome was not built in a day, it was not destroyed in a day either. Again, the intention is perfect, but do factor in the time given the economics and practicality.

Now, let's see, how long has it been since the tanneries were asked to move from Hazaribagh?

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.

QUOTABLE Quote



MAYA ANGELOU

History, despite its wrenching pain, Cannot be unlived, and if faced with courage, Need not be lived again.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

DOWN

1 Prison head

7 Winter blanket

11 Each

12 Cork's country

13 Henhouse raider

14 Land unit

15 Focused at work

17 Road division

20 McCoy's nickname

23 Yale supporter

24 Healthy snack

26 RN's forte

27 Yank's foe

28 Ignited

29 Honeyrich dessert

31 Low digit

32 Take pleasure in

33 Citi Field team

34 Marked down

37 Eat in style

39 Lustrous fabrics

43 Caspian Sea feeder

44 Showy bush

45 Effortless

46 Bit of buckshot

1 Simple card game

2 Gorilla, for one

3 Relieve

4 "Robinson Crusoe" writer

5 Bus, course

6 Waiting room call

7 Fall, for one

8 "Affliction" star

9 Bruins legend

10 Tiny

16 Addis --

17 Not bother

18 Poe's middle name

19 "Jealous" singer

21 "Cats" poet

22 Fills up

24 Shows age

25 Gun

30 Desolate

33 Silver or gold

35 Pronto, in memos

36 Take it easy

37 Expected

38 Lyricist Gershwin

40 Suffering

41 Formerly named

42 Plopped down

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

ATHOS	SALSA
CHART	CROON
HONEY	LOCUST
ERG	LEO
DOE	DOE
DEEPS	
PARIS	SITUP
ALAN	ZONE
REGAL	GENOA
HAYES	
CPU	WET
SET	
HONEY	SUCKLE
OLIVE	POISE
PETER	SODAS

BEETLE BAILEY by Mort Walker

BABY BLUES by Kirkman & Scott

STUPID! WHAT A DUMB PLAY!!

HE SWITCHES CAPS DEPENDING ON WHO'S WINNING

GREY WORK WALKER

ZOE IS PLAYING ON THE COMPUTER, BUT I NEED TO WRITE MY REPORT!

CAN'T YOU JUST WRITE YOUR REPORT WITH A PENCIL AND PAPER?

MOM! DAD'S BEING OLD AGAIN!