

With confidence we move ahead



PLEASURE IS ALL MINE
SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

We see the back of 2016 and soak up the freshness of the dewy dawn of a new year. The year gone by, however, has left the world

at a precipice of uncertainty, graver perhaps than it has experienced before. What a turbulent year 2017 may be internationally! Bangladesh is no stranger to global turmoil, especially of the economic meltdown type.

In the coming year though, Trump's unsettling theories on recasting US' relationships with Russia, Europe, China, Middle East, Mexico and Iran could put the traditional geo-political equations under strain. In the unlikely event that it happens in a potentially game-changing manner, Bangladesh must keep its antenna high on such an unfolding scenario. She needs to keep her analyses ready to respond to shortsighted impulses in the international arena without compromising her principled positions.

Having said that, we rejoice in the fact that our hard-earned national independence 45 years ago has been redeemed by our remarkable socio-economic progress outstripping that of Pakistan. We have to traverse some more distance to remove economic inequalities towards building an egalitarian society in honour of the freedom fighters, dead or living. Yet in meeting such a solemn obligation, we can claim to have made some tangible headway.

The country is doing significantly better than Pakistan in human



development indicators and in some cases India as well. According to the Human Development Report (HDI-2015), life expectancy at birth in Bangladesh stood at 71.6 years compared with 66.2 and 68 years respectively in Pakistan and India. On the human capital index of the World Economic Forum Bangladesh is placed 104th among 130 countries with Pakistan trailing at 118th position.

With food autarky having been achieved, the latest global hunger index placed Bangladesh in a better position. Its score at 27.1 this year marked an improvement from 32.4 in

2008. Over the same period Pakistan's score declined to 33.4 from 35.1 and India's to 28.5 from 36.

As part of the chain effect, Bangladesh has the second best country brand value in South Asia after India.

Be it competitiveness or innovation or reduction in gender discrimination indices Bangladesh is ahead of Pakistan, although the latter has crossed 70 years since its independence.

Whether in GDP growth rate or poverty alleviation or the size of Forex reserve that country is lagging behind us.

While the economy has become vibrant its structure too has changed. Where agriculture was dominant contributing 60 percent to the economy, now industry and service sector are coming up steadily. Jute's place as a major export—up to 65 percent—has been taken up by garments. Per capita income of once a meagre USD 50-60 has shot up to USD 1,465.

Indeed, as Zahid Hossain, chief economist of the World Bank, Dhaka office puts it, "A small industrial revolution has taken place in Bangladesh."

In addition, our scientists,

sportsmen and women and adventure-lovers keep stunning the world with their achievements. Discovery of five pairs of stars bigger than the Sun, genome, cholera forecast, electricity without fuel, winning Oscar twice, co-founding of youtube— to name only the major ones. The list can be multiplied annually, such is the growing profile of positive Bangladesh!

With such upbeat and eye-catching performances how do we reconcile to GDP growth-whittling corruption, hideous traffic congestion, highway accidents and violence? How do we explain our highest per km flyover cost at Tk. 123-250 crore when resourceful countries like China, Malaysia and India manage it at a much lower cost? Cost escalations in our development works are a shameful reflection of mis-planning, and malpractice. For instance, it does not pain us to see 'no let-up in woes of city women commuters' as an English daily poignantly brought up recently.

We have come to a stage in our national life where we have to deal with successes and failures with equanimity, objectivity, and more importantly, ownership. We must do it in a way that the fruits of successes are preserved, built up on, enhanced and shared whilst the latter are phased out duly backed by collective will of the stakeholders.

Success stories give us a leap of the mind and a spring to our feet, inspiring us to scale newer heights so that replication may not be an issue there. But repeated pitfalls are depressive where no magic formula will work except determined doses of political will.

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Brazil followed by the winter mayhem with the US Presidential Elections, which I have to say, takes the cake for 2016. Just like the Zika outbreak of this year, Mr. Trump unleashes the outbreak of stubborn intolerance. It's a blessing in disguise that Muhammad Ali leaves us this year, as his passport, along with those of all bearing the same first name, would be in Trump's cross hairs.

By way of Melania Trump, there is the story of the naturalised US citizen making it to the White House. Arnold Schwarzenegger, here's one way YOU could've had your dream of moving in to the White House come true – be married to someone who's on his way there. Maria Shriver (don't forget, she's a Kennedy), may perhaps have been a far better candidate than Hillary Clinton. But no, you couldn't keep your hands off your housekeeper Mildred Baena.

Melania Trump, a stark contrast to her pre-pre-pre-pre-predecessor, Nancy Reagan, who also left the cruel world in 2016, not having to endure the painful fall of the legacy of the First Lady.

Speaking of women, Narayanganj gives Bangladesh its own Ivy League while France unveils its plans on the veil.

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the gold medal."

There is double double pain at the loss of Zsa Zsa Gabor and Butros Butros Gali.

We lose Shimon Perez, who at least tried to give peace a chance, and we

while NASA's Juno spacecraft enters orbit around Jupiter.

Competing with detonations all over the world (and a bonanza for the armaments industry), Samsung Note 7 explodes.

Lahore, Istanbul...and Dhaka as Bangladesh changes forever on July 1. Oh, there is the hungry Mediterranean, devouring not only fleeing refugees, but Egypt Air flight 804.

There's the Summer Olympics in

QUOTABLE Quote



ROBERT FROST
AMERICAN POET

Two roads diverged in a wood and I took the one less travelled by, and that has made all the difference.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Cotton pod
- 5 "Dallas" star
- 11 Clarinet's kin
- 12 For each
- 13 Salamander
- 14 Like some interests
- 15 Fabric color
- 16 Speech copy
- 17 River of France
- 19 Buddy
- 22 Fancy tie
- 24 Purloined
- 26 Speckled horse
- 27 Really impresses
- 28 Snooped (around)
- 30 Suits
- 31 Binary digit
- 32 Studio sign
- 34 Easy gait
- 35 Coal holder
- 38 Priest's title
- 41 Green gem
- 42 Wise sayings
- 43 Ibsen's home
- 44 Sweet-heart
- 45 Freshman, usually

DOWN

- 1 Investor's buy
- 2 Toe the line
- 3 Like most of these letters
- 4 Rent out
- 5 Refuge
- 6 High points
- 7 Basic idea
- 8 Ran into
- 9 Good service
- 10 Homer's neighbor
- 11 Small child
- 18 Sharpen
- 19 Politician's loyal supporters
- 20 Guinness of film
- 21 River of Italy
- 23 Before long
- 25 Curbside cry
- 29 Money, in stang
- 30 Put away
- 33 Like Loki
- 34 Brother of Loki
- 36 Not active
- 37 Very bright
- 38 Craze
- 39 Logger's tool
- 40 Acapulco aunt
- 41 Werite hastily

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YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

MOAN	SAVOR
OPTED	ADORE
LETTINGSLIP	
ARE	LIE AGE
RASCAL	ARIA
STATE	TENT
DEBTS	
CAPE	AHEAD
OMIT	SOAPED
MOS	BIN ORE
BETTINGSLIP	
EBOOK	SALVO
DANTE	POET

BEETLE BAILEY



BABY BLUES

