

# Narendra Modi and his newfound power



SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

**PLEASURE IS ALL MINE**

**A**FTER Modi's landslide victory in the trend-setting states of India, three straight gains have been garnered by BJP as the party in power and Narendra Modi as the country's prime minister.

In the first place, the outcome may be viewed as a mid-term endorsement of Modi government. Normally, beyond the half way point of a government's tenure, it would look for a vindication of some sorts. And Modi needed a vote of confidence following the rattling demonetisation exercise a few months back. Much as the outcome tried to capitalise on the issue, voters were amnesiac, being reconciled to it as a drive against black money and corruption - a symbolic effort to bridge the rich-poor gap.

Secondly, the election results may have bolstered Modi's chances of clinching a second term as prime minister in 2019.

Last but not least, the outcome amplifies BJP's strength in the Rajya Sabha, the upper House of the legislature. This will facilitate the passage of bills required to be routed through both the Houses of Parliament for an enactment.

Now the question is: With such strengthening of his political position or clout, would Modi turn autocratic at home and try to play 'big brother' in the region?

On the domestic front, there's a concern that he might aggressively pursue his far-right agendas. Actually, he had played the Hindutva and caste cards in line with BJP chief Amit Shah's masterstroke of an electoral strategy for UP in particular. The party concentrated on a so-called 60 percent formula based on the assumption that Muslims and majority of Yadavs and Jatavs will not vote for BJP. Thus, on the one hand, BJP emphasised on Hindutva, refraining from allocating any seat to Muslim candidates; on the other, it did some social engineering by granting 150 seats to non-Yadav OBC, i.e. other backward castes. The social intervention also included alignment with sub-regional parties like Apna Dal and Sahadev Bharatiya Samaj Party (BSP).

For social re-engineering to be durable after the

election, it needs to cast off its exclusionary content and be somewhat inclusive. Besides, although BJP captured a large number of seats in UP, the percentage of votes tallied by it works out to 34 percent.

Thus, the reality checks are there for BJP, so as not to be too aggressive with its far-right predilections.

A *Times of India* piece commented that Modi's political strength may help him go around Mamata Banerjee's obstructions to work out a 'deeper security and resource-sharing relationship with Bangladesh'. On the face of it, we thought that problems centring around sharing of common river waters, including Teesta water sharing in particular, would be effectively addressed by a stronger Modi government.

Yet, updated versions from the Indian media and comments or snippets in the local press thereon suggest that India may be looking for strategic/defense accords, including the arrangement for cooperation in Blue Economy. There is no official confirmation on these

serious matters that admit of no unilateral approach to be sure, so that we treat them as part of a speculative realm unless proved otherwise.

It is worth mentioning that when Modi assumed power three years ago he had invited all heads of government of the Saarc region to his oath-taking ceremony. It was acclaimed as Modi's 'Neighbour First' policy. A man of his pragmatism and increased economic and political clout should lead the way to harmony and peace in the region.

You had Narendra Modi tweeting with a two-fold response to his triumph: First, he expressed his jubilation at the advent of what he called a "new India", standing for development and progress based on the strength and dexterity of 1.25 billion people. He wants to take the process of creating a new India forward.

Pointing to the 75th anniversary of India's birth in 2022, he set himself and the people a task of creating an India that Mahatma Gandhi, Sardar Ballabh Patel

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PM Modi's popularity amongst the Indian masses helped BJP clinch victory at the recent UP elections.

and Ambedkar would be proud of. No mention of anyone from the Nehru-Gandhi family.

An anti-dynastic flair is discernable.

Some analysts, however, tend to wonder whether the Gujarati leader is approaching the mass appeal of independent India's most popular politician yet - Jawaharlal Nehru!

BJP chief Amit Shah claimed at a post-election press conference that "Modi has emerged as the most popular (Indian) leader since independence (surpassing Nehru)."

Such complimentary drawing of parallels goes on in terms of the vote-catching charisma of Nehru and Modi, if not their respective statures. But in contrast, the BJP camp avoids making references to Indira Gandhi or Rajiv Gandhi, to say nothing of Rahul and Priyanka, even Mulayam Singh Yadav and Akhilesh. The torch-bearers of their respective dynasties are swamped by the saffron tsunami.

Nehru had been critiqued by his detractors for being a parliamentary autocrat, even though at heart he was staunchly democratic and secularist. Would Modi be autocratic minus Nehru's secularist beliefs?

The writer is a commentator on current affairs and former Associate Editor, *The Daily Star*.

## WORLD WATER DAY

# Taking responsibility for our future



ERESH OMAR JAMAL

**THE OVERTON WINDOW**

**T**HERE is no greater natural resource on this earth than water, as without it, life on this planet would cease to exist as we know it. But because the majority of the Earth's surface is covered in water, it is difficult for most people to imagine the types - and severity - of problems that the scarcity of safe drinking water is increasingly creating around the world at present.

On World Water Day, seven years ago, today, the then United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon said that more people were dying in the world from unsafe water than from all forms of violence, including wars. According to the '2014 World Water Development Report' released by UNESCO and UN-Water, 240 babies were dying from unsafe water every hour of every day. Another 2013 UN report estimated that 783 million people did not have access to clean water at the time of its release.

Moreover, unless we as a species "manage" our water resources "more effectively", the world's fresh water availability will fail to keep up with its demand by the year 2040. This will cripple the "ability of key countries to produce food and generate energy, posing a risk to global food markets and hobbling economic growth", says the UN (World Water Day: Why it matters, *CBS News*, March 22, 2013).

Bangladesh too faces these risks, as well as some of its own. For example, two decades after it was discovered in Bangladesh's water supply, about twenty million people in the country are still drinking water contaminated with arsenic - a potentially deadly toxin (Twenty million people in Bangladesh drinking water contaminated with arsenic: Human Rights Watch, *ABC News*, April 6, 2016). This, the Human Rights Watch says, leads to the death of about 43,000 Bangladeshis every year, particularly in poor rural areas.

The reasons why this issue has remained so

pervasive, according to the rights group, are because of poor governance. In the absence of proper oversight, politicians earmark new wells for their own supporters rather than placing them in the worst-affected areas. This means that the situation has remained "almost as bad" as it was, "15 years ago". In fact, according to the World Health Organisation, Bangladesh's arsenic crisis is "the largest mass poisoning of a population in history" and would result in the death of millions if not urgently addressed.

Another cause for concern is the drastically decreasing groundwater levels, even in cities like Dhaka, because of excessive extraction to meet growing demands. As Dhaka's underground aquifers are refilled with underground fresh water from its nearby districts, which too is on the decline, the risk of seawater seeping into the aquifers is gradually

And this is perhaps what is most concerning - that we have taken the supply of fresh drinking water and our rivers and other water bodies that play a key role in guaranteeing that for now, for granted. And, hence, are not caring for them enough, which is putting them and our availability of fresh water at risk.

And it is not only us who have failed to appreciate the value of, having available to us, this most basic human need, which has allowed for a very disturbing global trend to set in. That is, the growing privatisation of water across the world. Only a few years ago, Peter Brabeck-Letmathe, the former Chairman of Nestle, which is the largest producer of food products in the world and a major player in the bottled water industry, said that "access to water is not a public right"; nor a "human right", and thus, called for water to be privatised (The Privatisation of Water: Nestlé Denies that Water is a Fundamental Human Right, *Centre for Research on Globalisation*, August 29, 2016).

In response, Indian scholar, environmental activist and one of the leaders and board members of the International Forum on Globalisation, Vandana Shiva, said: "Since nature gives water to us free of cost, buying and selling it for profit violates our inherent right to nature's gift and denies the poor of their human rights" (Humanity's Big Fight: The Corporate Ownership of Food and Water, *Natural Society*, September 5, 2015). Yet, despite the risks associated with handing over the control of the world's water supply to some of the biggest multinational corporations, the World Bank (WB) too has been advocating for its privatisation (World Bank wants water privatised, despite risks, *Al-Jazeera*, April 17, 2014).

according to the *Al-Jazeera* report: The WB's "project database for private participation in infrastructure documents a 34 percent failure rate for all private water and sewerage contracts entered into between 2000 and 2010, compared with a failure rate of just 6 percent for energy, 3 percent for telecommunications and 7 percent for transportation, during the same period."

Why then is the World Bank advocating for the privatisation of water, when there is overwhelming evidence of such schemes turning out to be major disasters all across the world? Is it not time for us to wake up and ask such questions? Is it not time for us to have a say in the future of the world's - and our own - fresh water supply? Are we really going to let private corporations, which are most responsible for polluting

the world's water supply, now take full control of it? Can we really not see why that is such a terrible idea?

Instead of going forward with such rapid privatisation of water, I would like to propose an alternate solution to the coming crisis. That is that we, as individuals, take responsibility for our own local water supplies; collectively pressurise our respective governments to take responsibility for our national water supplies; and as human beings, cooperate with each other, to ensure that access to safe drinking water for all is prioritised above all, as despite what some may say, water is, indeed, a "public and human right", and a most important one at that.

The writer is a member of editorial team at *The Daily Star*.

*What is perhaps most tragic is just how thoughtlessly we are polluting and destroying our rivers and other water bodies.*

increasing. If allowed to continue, this could, over time, make Dhaka's drinking water undrinkable, according to experts.

Amidst all of this, what is perhaps most tragic is just how thoughtlessly we are polluting and destroying our rivers and other water bodies, which directly affects the lifestyle and livelihood of thousands of people, if not more, living in this country, in more ways than we can imagine. Despite the concerns, not only isn't the situation getting any better, but it is actually getting worse by the day. Reports of how our water bodies and rivers are being damaged irreparably have become such a daily routine that it has reached a point where no one seems to care about it anymore.

It has, in fact, been going more than that - becoming the largest funder of water management in the developing world, with loans and financing channelled through its International Finance Corporation (IFC), promoting water projects "as part of a broader set of privatisation policies". Perhaps unsurprisingly, however, its own data shows that a high percentage of its private water projects are in complete disarray. For example,

বাংলা একাডেমি		ঢাকা ১০০০	
স্মারক নং : প্রমাপ-সা-৫৮০/২০১৭/৭৩৭/২/বাএ			তারিখ : ১৯.০৩.২০১৭
<b>উনুক্র দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি</b>			
১	প্রতিষ্ঠানের নাম	:	বাংলা একাডেমি
২	সম্মোহক সন্ত্রের নাম ও ঠিকানা	:	মহাপরিচালক, বাংলা একাডেমি, ঢাকা ১০০০
৩	কোন ধরনের সন্ত্রের জন্ম দরপত্র	:	মূল্যের জন্য বিভিন্ন ধরনের কাগজ (বিশেষ) সন্ত্র
৪	দরপত্র আবেদনের সূত্র নম্বর ও তারিখ	:	প্রমাপ-সা-৫৮০/২০১৭/৭৩৭/২/বাএ তারিখ : ১৯.০৩.২০১৭
৫	সম্মোহক পদ্ধতি	:	উনুক্র দরপত্র পদ্ধতি (OTM)
৬	ব্যাংক ও অর্ডার উল্লেখ	:	কর্মসূচি
৭	দরপত্র বিক্রয়ের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	:	১১.০৪.২০১৭ তারিখ অফিস চলাকালীন
৮	দরপত্র গ্রহণের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	:	১২.০৪.২০১৭ তারিখ দুপুর ১২:০০টা
৯	দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ, সময় ও স্থান	:	১২.০৪.২০১৭ তারিখ কোর্ট রুম বাংলা একাডেমির সজ্জাক্ষেত্র দরপত্রাভ্যন্তরে উপস্থিত হলে (যদি কেউ উপস্থিত থাকেন) দরপত্র বাজ খোলা হবে।
১০	দরপত্র বিক্রয়ের স্থান	:	ক. কোম্পানি, হিন্দুস্থানি ও ব্যাংক উপবিভাগ, বাংলা একাডেমি, ঢাকা ১০০০ খ. সিনিয়র সেকারী সচিব (৪), সজ্জাক্ষেত্র মন্ত্রালয়, বাংলাদেশ সচিবালয় ঢাকা ১০০০
১১	দরপত্র গ্রহণের স্থান	:	ক. বাংলা একাডেমির সজ্জাক্ষেত্র বিক্রয় দরপত্র বাজ খ. সিনিয়র সেকারী সচিব (৪), সজ্জাক্ষেত্র মন্ত্রালয়, বাংলাদেশ সচিবালয় ঢাকা ১০০০
১২	দরপত্রাভ্যন্তরে যোগ্যতা	:	ক. উপাদানকারী/প্রকৃত ব্যবসায়ী/সরকারীকারী খ. সরকারি/আধ-সরকারি/পারভাসিত প্রতিষ্ঠানে বিভিন্ন ধরনের কাগজ সরকারের অধিগ্রহণ
১৩	দরপত্রের সাথে যে সমস্ত কাগজপত্র জমা দিতে হবে	:	ক. দরপত্র অর্ডার মুদ্রা রসিদ। খ. দরপত্র প্রতিষ্ঠানের ফলকট প্রিন্ট লাইসেন্স, ডাটা নিবন্ধনপত্র, তফসিলি ব্যাংক থেকে অর্থিক সন্তোষতার সন্দপত্র, টিআইএনসহ ফরমপাল আয়কর পরিশোধের সন্দপত্র ও কাজের অভিজ্ঞতাপত্রের সত্যায়িত কপি। গ. বিভিন্ন ধরনের কাগজ (বিশেষ) ১(এক) শিট করে নমুনা হিসেবে সিডিউসের সাথে জমা দিতে হবে। ঘ. দরপত্রের জামানত পে-অর্ডার 'বাংলা একাডেমি, ঢাকা'- অনুকূলে জমা দিতে হবে। এছাড়া দরপত্রে বর্ণিত অন্যান্য কাগজপত্র ও শর্তাবলি।
১৪	দরপত্র আবেদনকারীর নাম	:	সমীর কুমার সরকার
১৫	দরপত্র আবেদনকারীর পদবী	:	উপপরিচালক (প্রশাসন)
১৬	দরপত্র আবেদনকারীর অফিসের ঠিকানা ও টেলিফোন নম্বর	:	প্রশাসন, মানবসম্পদ উন্নয়ন ও পরিকল্পনা বিভাগ, বাংলা একাডেমি, ঢাকা-১০০০ ফোন: ০২-৫৮৬১১২৩৯
১৭	লট	বিবরণ	অবহাল
		দরপত্র নিলামের মূল্য	দরপত্র জামানতের টাকা
১.	* অফসেট কাগজ (বিশেষ) ডকল ডিমাই ২৩"x৩৬"-৮০গ্রাম	ঢাকা	৮০০.০০ (আটশত) টাকা
	* অফসেট কাগজ (বিশেষ) ডকল ডিমাই ২৩"x৩৬"-১০০গ্রাম		৪০,০০০.০০ (চল্লিশ হাজার) টাকা (পে-অর্ডার)
	* ম্যাট পেপার ডকল ডিমাই ২৩"x৩৬"- ১৫০গ্রাম		
	* অর্ট পেপার ডকল ডিমাই ২৩"x৩৬"- ১২০গ্রাম		
১৮	অন্যান্য তথ্য	:	দরপত্র সময়েই অন্যান্য তথ্য নিবন্ধনকারীর কার্যালয় থেকে জানা যাবে।
অনির্বাচনযোগ্য দরপত্র দাখিলের দিন কার্যদিনকা ব্যাহত হলে অপসর্জন কার্যনির্বাহে উল্লিখিত সময় ও স্থানে দরপত্র গ্রহণ ও খোলা হবে। কর্তৃপক্ষ কোনো কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকে যে কোনো দরপত্র গ্রহণ বা সফল দরপত্র ব্যক্তি করার ক্ষমতা রাখে।			
(সমীর কুমার সরকার) উপপরিচালক (প্রশাসন) প্রশাসন, মানবসম্পদ উন্নয়ন ও পরিকল্পনা বিভাগ বাংলা একাডেমি, ঢাকা ১০০০ ফোন : ০২-৫৮৬১১২৩৯			

## A WORD A DAY

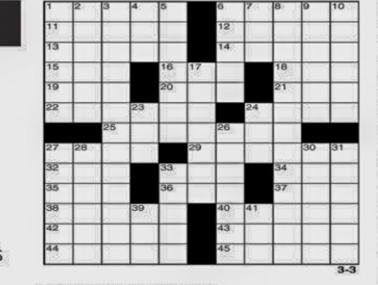


**A RUKWANGALI WORD**

*Rukwangali is the native language spoken by Namibians*

## CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Like a corset
  - 6 In the area
  - 11 Pol's concern
  - 12 Ridiculous
  - 13 A googol has 100
  - 14 Brink
  - 15 Everybody
  - 16 Finish the cake
  - 18 Depressed
  - 19 Carnival city
  - 20 Warning color
  - 21 "... man -- mouse?"
  - 22 One of Santa's team
  - 24 Brit's exclamation
  - 25 Movie techniques
  - 27 Decisive win
  - 29 Records of history
  - 32 Common verb
  - 33 Diner sandwich
  - 34 Hoop attachment
  - 35 Sewing aid
  - 36 Exploit
  - 37 Sailor
  - 38 Smidgens
  - 40 Not out
  - 42 Put in office
  - 43 Freshen
  - 44 Work breaks
  - 45 Remains
  - DOWN**
  - 1 Gecko, for one
  - 2 Activist Bloomer
  - 3 Mexican author
  - 4 Freud topic
  - 5 Coveted
  - 6 Dwelled
  - 7 Early hour
  - 8 Rock guitarist
  - 9 Wool variety
  - 10 Tolerance
  - 17 Breakfast choices
  - 23 Pillbox, e.g.
  - 24 Travel stop
  - 26 Distraught
  - 27 Dueling sword
  - 28 Baltimore player
  - 30 Anthropologist
  - Louis
  - 31 Scatters
  - 33 Police raids
  - 39 Play part
  - 41 Drenched



**YESTERDAY'S ANSWER**

BOWLS CANIT  
ONEAL AWAKIT  
YESNO PAGED  
TAWDRY  
RAPERA VAC  
ELOISE PILE  
POINTSPREAD  
RONASHOWME  
OFTLEOPOD  
BORNEO  
DAMAZEVIAN  
AMAZE ENLLO  
MINOR ENTER