

A visit high on hopes, reliant on trust

PLEASURE IS ALL MINE



SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

THE build-up to Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's four-day official visit to India beginning today has been eventful, if somewhat

inviting the heads of government in the Saarc region to his oath-taking ceremony. That initiative was short-lived as far as Pakistan went. Yet two pieces of track records by non-Congress governments may well resonate with Narendra Modi: Signing of the Chittagong Hill Tracts peace accord on December 2, 1997 and the Ganges Water Treaty on

union government led by Dr Manmohan Singh which put Indo-Bangla relations firmly on a growth trajectory in 2010 and 2011. Besides, the Land Boundary Agreement (LBA) with border protocol, there was a composite agreement on cooperation in a wide range of fields. It was felt that Hasina had gone the extra mile at some political risk with important water sharing issues

The costs of delay incurred through lost productivity and livelihoods coupled with water scarcity and ecological hazards are horrific. On the important issue of basin-wide management of river resources, there are two opinions. According to one school of thought we must do it sub-regionally among India, Bangladesh and Nepal. The other

update chief to the Ganges water treaty. It was supposed to have been reviewed every five years but this has gone completely by default ever since 1997. The time for a renewal of the treaty is approaching so that a stock-taking of its implementation or gaps is due. Although the agreement lacked a guarantee clause, it contained a wish that it would be followed in crafting accords for sharing waters of other common rivers. There is a need for perfecting the 'model.'

Trade is another persistent issue with India. The annual trade surplus is heavily weighted towards India by USD 5 billion. Bangladesh's export is above USD 500 million. Several non-tariff barriers continue to impede export of our RMG and pharmaceutical products. BSTI's quality certificate for export remains unresolved.

"Even if physical connectivity is there, difficult customs rules and other non-tariff barriers will create complications," says an expert.

One particularly sensitive issue is this: As long as Bangladeshis get killed at the border by BSF personnel, people here cannot be faulted for thinking that the lives of Bangladeshis are undervalued on the other side!

A final point, Indian President Pranab Mukherjee is reportedly inviting chief ministers of five northeast Indian states plus Mamata Banerjee over to a dinner in Rashtrapati Bhavan where our Prime Minister is billeted. This gesture could just help Mamata Banerjee to be taken on board for a Teesta resolution.

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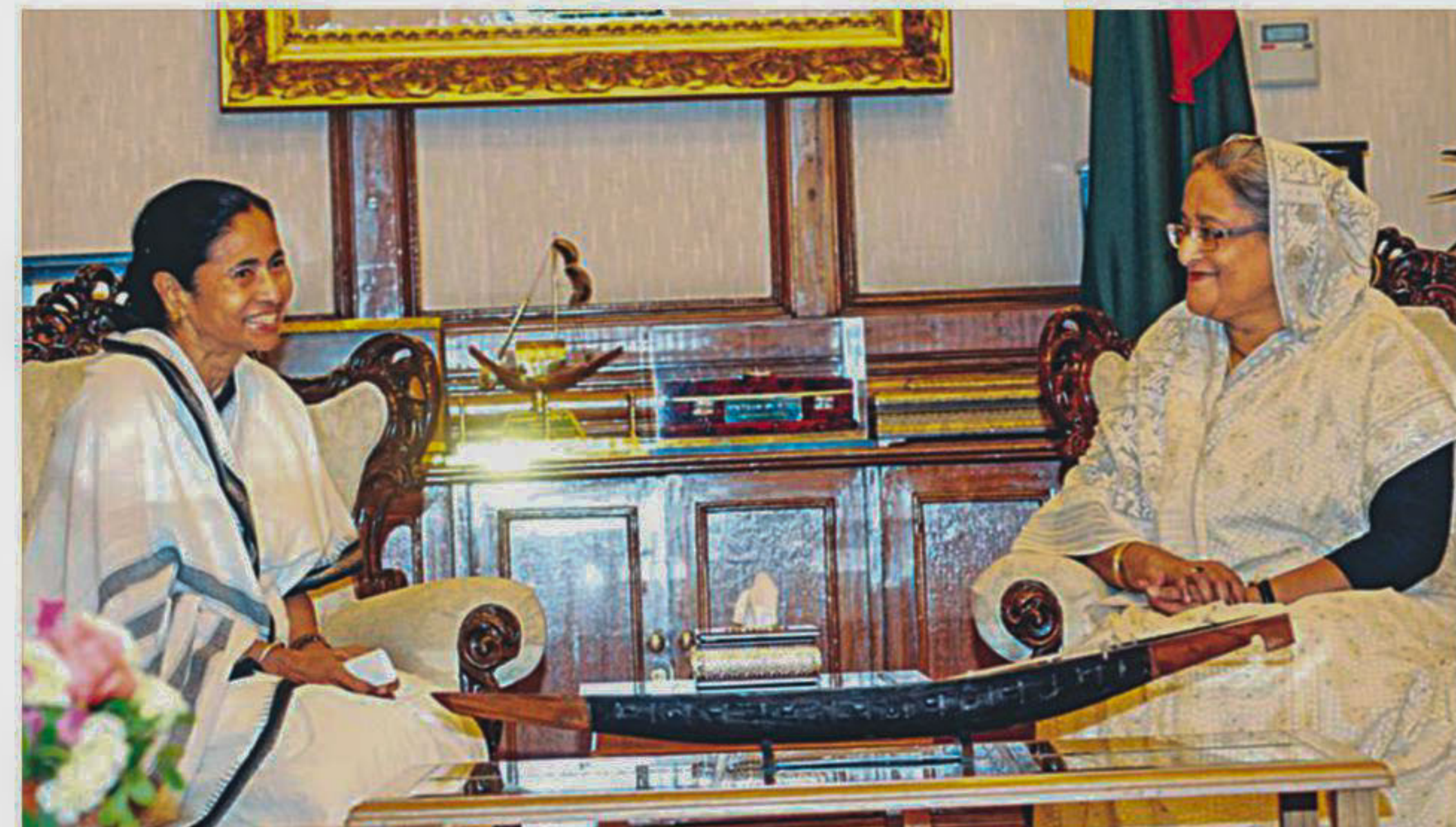
Upbeat as we may be about 33 deals and MoUs to be signed between the two countries during the PM's visit, we cannot allow our focus to be diffused on Teesta water sharing deal.

charged with emotion. On the eve of her departure, the initial cautious optimism gave way to forward looking hopes and expectations about the outcome. A respect for sensibilities of a country with global acclaim for its prospects couldn't be lost on the neighboring host.

With a proposal or a feeler for a defence treaty in the air, hints of a delayed Teesta accord and a plethora of MoUs being in the works, a public or media discourse followed on the points at issue. This was featured by free, frank and candid expression of views and concerns both in Bangladesh and India leading to an informal exchange of opinions courtesy of media institutions of the two countries.

Thus, leaders of the two neighbouring countries have been made aware of public opinion on either side of the border as they approach their bilateral agendas, some with sub-regional and regional implications.

BJP leader Vajpayee and Janata Dal leader IK Gujral, two former prime ministers of India, were wedded to 'beneficial bilateralism'. Befriending neighbours came to be known as the Gujral doctrine. When Narendra Modi came to power, he would launch his 'neighbour first policy' by



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee meets Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Gono Bhaban during her Bangladesh trip in 2015.

SOURCE: BSS

December 12, 1996. Both came about during Hasina government's first tenure with non-Congress coalition governments in India.

It must be placed on record though that it was the Congress dominated

remaining unresolved, among others.

Upbeat as we may be about 33 deals and MoUs to be signed between the two countries during the PM's visit, we cannot allow our focus to be diffused on Teesta water sharing deal.

view is that the Brahmaputra basin may require a wider participation, inclusive of China. Lately, the former view is taking hold.

Narendra Modi's government, however, has to do a correctional

REMEMBRANCE

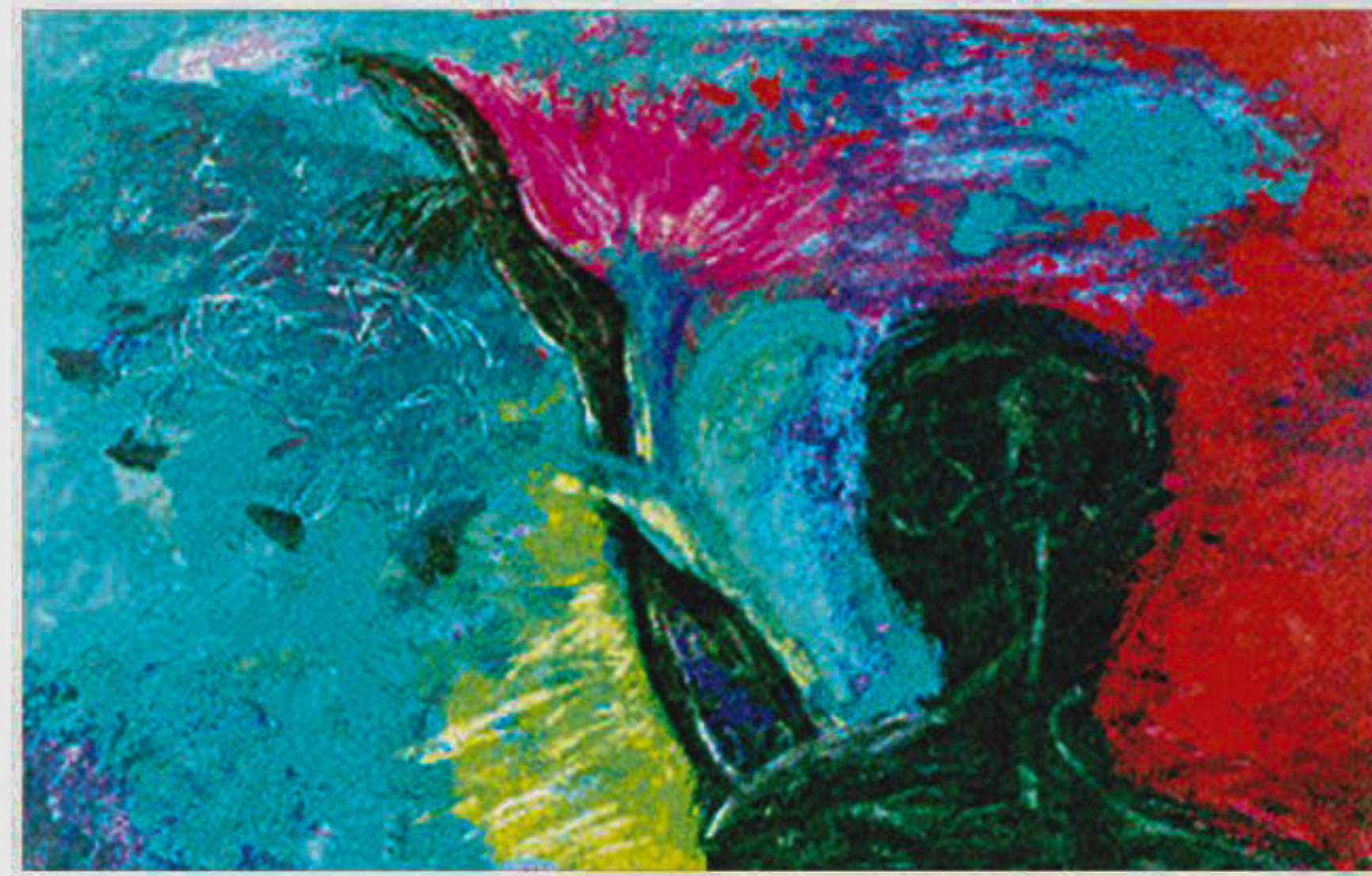
My friend, the knight and the seeker

REHNUMA KARIM

IN our lives, if we are fortunate enough, we are blessed with the presence of souls who touch our hearts through their unique gift of gentle wisdom and insights into life. It was a privilege to have found such a special soul in my life among one of my friends whom I met during the final year of my university days. I came to know Shafat when he was first recruited in AIESEC Bangladesh. Although he was majoring in BBA at North South University he was passionate about any subject that dealt with human psychology. Shafat enjoyed reading books on the mind, mysticism, and human behaviour. He also had great affection for animals and had all kinds of pets - birds, snakes, monkeys and dogs. But, my friend and my brother, Qazi Shafat Ahmed, who was only 38 years old, departed early. If you had met him for the first time you would find him to be a handsome young man with lively eyes and a warm smile that instantaneously put you at ease. His gentle, calm nature would reassure you while his subtle sense of humour would never fail to make you chuckle. Yet his carefree appearance masked his wisdom and mental strength that defined his true being.

He was a seeker who would restlessly search for the fountain of wisdom in people and places around him. He told me the story of the time when he attended the Lalon Fair for seven days in Kushtia but was disappointed to see the authenticity of Lalon's mysticism compromised. But his trip concluded by meeting an interesting person at a local drug store. When Shafat went there to buy medicine he joined in on a conversation with the locals on the

meaning of life. Just then, a man with piercing eyes walked out from the doctor's office towards him and said, "You seem to be quite young to be interested in understanding the true meaning of life...but you do seem to have some authority on the subject my friend." At the end of the conversation the man looked into Shafat's eyes and said mysteriously: "You will be rising again from your own destruction." He was struck with these departing words and later told me how it all made sense



when he first learned that he had a rare type of cancer that would put a timer on his life. An awakening of his soul took place at this stage where, instead of being afraid of death, he was ready to embrace it with style and courage. Probably this belief prompted him to choose a phoenix rising from the fire as a background picture for his Facebook profile. The phoenix undoubtedly was the true representation of Shafat's rebirth into the world of higher consciousness which so many fail to

find in one's lifetime. Shafat's path to transformation started to unfold with his father's passing. His father was his hero whose depth of knowledge and humility made him a larger-than-life figure. Often Shafat wondered how he could step into his father's shoes, something that sometimes made him weary and self-conscious. Like most of us he had his challenges and experienced contradictions of life that acted as a catalyst to transport him into the state

which was termed by one of his favourite Sufi poets, Hazrat Inayat Khan, as the "dark knight of the soul". This according to spiritual leaders and Sufis is a state where God starts to work on our souls to draw us closer to Him. Shafat loved quoting Hazrat Inayat Khan saying, "There can be no rebirth without a dark knight of the soul where we have to face a time of trials and affliction to free ourselves from the comforts of the world to become what God wanted us to be". This deeper

understanding made him a courageous warrior who fought cancer unflinchingly, wearing his scars from the battle as medals of honour. Never did he fear death and even when he was suffering from immense pain from chemotherapy and other treatments, he kept his head high and kept on smiling, giving strength to his loved ones.

My friend became an enlightened soul as his cancer became a ticking time bomb reminding him how precious life is. He embraced life to the fullest till the end as he became more alive appreciating and loving his friends, family, his one and only son and the world around him. He wanted to be a part of something that would be bigger than himself and that is why Shafat became one of the key driving forces to initiate the launch of our non-profit organisation, 'Heroes for All', in Bangladesh. He deeply believed in helping and empowering children and youth so that they could realise their potential and live purposeful lives. Shafat was the Vice President of Communication and despite the excruciating pain he was experiencing he would continue to set up appointments and meetings to get the organisation moving forward. Success to him was not measured by money, fame, status or title but through inner contentment and meaningful experiences. One of his passions was fishing. He would take trips to discover fishing spots and spend hours and days enjoying the experience where he found a certain calmness of mind and body. He loved cooking for his friends and family too. His warmth and hospitality touched my heart as he insisted to cook for me before I left for the US in February this year.

As Maya Angelou said, "I've learned

that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." Our friend Shafat was such a person who made us feel happy and valued and encouraged us to be curious about life through his quiet, inquisitive and loving presence. He arrived, he conquered and now he reached that state where he can never be forgotten. He taught us to value what is important and showed us how to be courageous in our most trying hours. He reflected on death in one of his posts: "Why can't death be a call for celebration with laughter and sweet remembrance of the departed? Why does it have to be a reason for mourning?...what I am saying may sound outrageous or even disturbing...but I cannot say it otherwise. I think the reason we have made death something to be just sad and scary is because we fail to see the significance of it or dare I say the beauty in it! We deny death...but it is all around us...an inevitable fact of life we are too scared to look at. Yet death makes the way for something new to emerge...it is a transition to something more divine. So why not welcome death instead of running away from it. When someone close to us dies surely we feel the pain of loss...but deep in our hearts we know we will be united again...As Rumi assures us 'Don't grieve, anything you lose comes back into another form'." Shafat was planning to speak publicly about his experience with cancer to give courage to others who are suffering. He saw the need to start these conversations that can help others to heal through sharing.

So dear friend, we will not grieve your departure, neither will we mourn. We will celebrate your life and remember to be positive, strong, and hopeful.

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A WORD A DAY



DISENTRAL
verb literary

To set someone free from enslavement

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 29 Swindlers
 - 30 Carry
 - 31 Fireplace bit
 - 32 Be off base, in a way
 - 34 Gander's mate
 - 37 Michigan city
 - 38 TV's De-Generes
 - 39 Parking penalties
 - 40 Lyric poems
 - 41 Droops
- DOWN**
- 1 Asian temple
 - 2 Concord
 - 3 Soda fountain treats
 - 4 Entreaty
 - 5 Greek X
 - 6 Stimpy's pal
 - 7 Fit for farming
 - 8 Be boisterous
 - 9 Knock off work
 - 11 Turn down
 - 15 Backfire
 - 19 Track part
 - 20 Pro vote
 - 22 Cooking mint
 - 23 Pop's wife
 - 24 Leave the band, perhaps
 - 25 In phone limbo
 - 26 Crew activity
 - 27 Makes amends
 - 28 Tuna sandwiches
 - 29 Hamster holder
 - 30 Shire of "Rocky"
 - 33 Murders, slangily
 - 35 Catch sight of
 - 36 USN rank



YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

TIDE SHAFET
AMEND PAULA
MASSE ASSAM
EGO SAT SUP
RETAIL TINA
SOBRIQUET
BEAUT
GOESSOUTH
BONY ENSUED
LAS ASSLEI
AWARD EVADE
SOLID TENET
SLEDS TEDS

BEETLE BAILEY

BY MORT WALKER



11-21

BABY BLUES

BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT



11-21