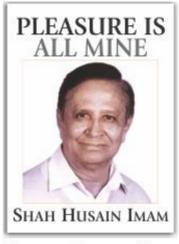


# Eyes on the British election



**PLEASURE IS ALL MINE**  
SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

LESS than a week is left to the snap election in the UK. The latest Gallup poll points to a neck-and-neck contest between the Conservative Prime Minister

Theresa May and her opposition Labour Party contender Jeremy Corbyn. Only last week pollsters had predicted a majority of 50 MPs for the incumbent prime minister in a best case scenario and that of two MPs in a worse turn of fortunes for her. A wafer-thin margin of victory by two MPs for May over Corbyn as a probability speaks of how close the race is getting.

About prophecies, let's be mindful of a caveat to their dependability. British people have learnt to question the integrity, accuracy and credibility of survey polls. They keep much less faith in Gallup polls these days following flawed predictions in two test cases: First, on the outcome of Brexit referendum; and secondly on the scale of David Cameron's decisive electoral victory. His win with absolute majority emboldened Cameron in the first place, to go for a referendum to silence the Eurosceptics, setting off chain effects in which Britain is reeling.

Nevertheless, a latest appraisal of the relative merit of their candidacies came through their participation separately in a one-and-a-half-hour-long question-answer session organised jointly by Sky News and Channel Four last Monday night. The leaders first answered questions from the audience and then journalist Jeremy Paxman



Close contenders.

reputed for his razor-sharp questions. In terms of performance and positioning on issues, Corbyn seemed to have an edge over Theresa May. Embarrassing questions about Conservative government's failures and the prime minister's frequent changing of mind stalked Theresa May. By contrast, even though Corbyn had a difficult patch facing up to questions on his anti-war and staunch leftist stances, he edged ahead with his alternative proposals for social transformation. Corbyn made it clear that he would implement Brexit but was against

setting targets for a reduction of migration. He appears to be progressive in other ways; on the question of rejecting war policy, Corbyn says western intervention has made countries devoid of government, a context that spikes terrorism which makes it unsafe for everybody. Going a step further, he said he was for eschewing conflicts in preference to discussions with such controversial groups like Hamas to solve problems with them. Many in Britain tend to believe that Theresa May personifies a 'hard Brexit' while Jeremy Corbyn represents 'soft

Brexit'. May has already warned of 'walking away from negotiations' if the divorce terms are stiff. In contrast, when Corbyn was asked if he conjured up a scenario in which Britain failed to strike an arrangement with the rest of the EU, he said, "There's going to be a deal." Here is point for deeper reflection. Since the gap is narrowing between the two contenders in opinion polls, it is being dubbed as a fairly open game now. Why did she call the unscheduled election "seeking a strong endorsement of her Brexit strategy?" It begs a question as to whether she will have a

strong enough mandate to negotiate with the EU. Her u-turn in social care for the 'silver brigade' (old people) has made a mockery of the conservative commitment to geriatric care. How many times has May changed her mind on the sensitive issue! The system ran like this: In principle, the state looked after old people. The silver brigade would pay up to 23,250 sterling pounds towards their own social care with the rest to be supplemented by the government. The Conservative manifesto proposed to raise the ceiling of beneficiary contribution to one hundred thousand sterling pounds. The amount will be realised after the death of the beneficiary by selling the assets of the deceased. To avoid homelessness, it is only after the death of both the spouses that the property will be disposed of. Yet the proposed raising of the ceiling angered the silver brigade. The government retracted, so any positive reform is being held up. Its withdrawal provoked a joke, rather banter: While after a party gets elected it is known to break a manifesto-related promise, the Conservative government has set an example of renegeing on it before being voted to power! Andrew Neil, Editor of *The Sunday Times* and a famous TV anchor was even more caustic. Referring to the Tory electoral slogan — Strong and Stable — he delivered this punchline: "You are Weak and Wobbling!"

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While after a party gets elected it is known to break a manifesto-related promise, the Conservative government has set an example of renegeing on it before being voted to power.

## Mashrafe's magic



MIR AFTABUDDIN AHMED

SITTING in an Afghan restaurant called Bamiyan Kabob in Toronto, I was chit-chatting with a couple of my teammates at the end of a long practice session a few days ago. Cricket runs in my family, and as such, I decided to be a part of a Toronto-based cricket team called Bangla Cricket Club - a scheme for me to run away from the academic stresses of being a student at the University of Toronto. While we were enjoying the Afghan delicacies, the manager of our team, Shams bhai, asked me a simple question. Why do Bangladeshis love Mashrafe Mortaza so much? It got me thinking, and if looked at from a broader perspective, the answers are intriguing. Let us first look at the statistics. Thirty-three years old, 230 wickets in 175 ODI matches, 42 wickets in 54 T20 Internationals and 78 wickets in 36 Test matches. Good, but not lethal numbers for someone who supposedly is Bangladesh's all-time leading bowler. And yet we love him more than the average Bangladeshi cricketer. Bangladesh has produced the likes of Shakib Al Hasan, Tamim Iqbal and Mushfiqur Rahim - all of whom are stardom material when it comes to the cricketing world. And yet we move past that, and find something unique to love about our Captain. The secret to the answer regarding why we love Mortaza so much, must be analysed by looking beyond the mere avenues of statistical analysis. He means more to us, because he gives more to us. He means more to the country, because he represents the very roots of this country. A hard-working professional, a patriotic citizen and a committed servant of the game - how can we not love him?

To understand Mashrafe Mortaza, we must try and understand the Bangladeshi mindset regarding issues beyond cricket. Bangladesh is a middle-income country of diligent individuals fighting it out every day to make a living. For whatever reason, Mashrafe has been able to resonate with this very characteristic of the Bangladeshi thought-process. He represents not just the best in us, but the practicalities of life that we face every day. Everyday hurdles are a common feature of the Bangladeshi lifestyle and Mashrafe's are no different. Throughout his career, our

especially given he or she is approaching the natural age of retirement. Yet Mashrafe has faced these issues since 2005. And every time he has fallen, he finds a way to rise back up. That is what Bangladeshis love about him - his fight, his guile, his resilience. He is unique in that aspect and for that this country owes him its gratitude. Of course, circumstances also illuminate our national captain. The likes of Akram Khan, Khaled Mahmud, Khaled Masud and Habibur Bashar did indeed have the love and affection of

in the world. His individual performances have been outshined in this period by his leadership qualities. Again, Mashrafe is no master tactician like Sourav Ganguly, neither does he have the enthusing abilities of an Imran Khan. He is much simpler than that. Much more normal. And it is in this normalcy, and in the normalcy of the passion exuberated by a middle-class man from Narail, where our national team and indeed the countrymen see its finest leader. And it is this leader who has held and nurtured a combination of youth and experience, and strongly

people. It creates a sense of community. From the *rickshawala* working every day to earn a daily living to feed his children, to the rich businessman creating jobs for thousands, people of all social ladders feel united under the roof of sport. And when we have a Captain like Mashrafe Mortaza leading the nation in global tournaments, we feel a sense of pride unlike anything else. When Mortaza invokes the spirit of 1971 in his post-match press conferences, we get goosebumps. When Mortaza loudly and proudly sings the national anthem prior to the start of international matches, the country sings with him in reverence and patriotism. When Mortaza charges in to bowl with a fragile knee, the country remains motivated. Yes, we can, it says. It is because Mortaza reminds us of who we are as a people. From the *rickshawala* to the businessman, stands by him. And as long as he remains the braveheart that he is, Bangladesh will unequivocally stand by its captain.

It is in this normalcy of the passion exuberated by a middle-class man from Narail, where our national team and indeed the countrymen see its finest leader. It is this leader who has strongly supported the successful national team structure that we have today.



Mashrafe Mortaza

national team Captain has had to face tumultuous injury concerns threatening the only thing he lives and breathes for. His doctors till today remain wary about giving a 100 percent green signal to him, to play a full tournament. Sources suggest that Mashrafe's post-playing days will see severe problems for his already fragile knees. Under normal circumstances, a sportsman would retire to take care of himself,

our country when they captained Bangladesh, but success was hard to come by. Mashrafe Mortaza now leads a team of star-studded individuals, and has gone into the Champions Trophy with what is probably Bangladesh's finest international squad in its cricketing history. Under Mashrafe's captaincy, Bangladesh has gone from being a mediocre ODI side to one which can challenge and defeat the best

supported, if not created, the successful national team structure that we have today. Bangladesh is today a country which is fighting its way to the top of the socio-economic food chain. Yet amidst this, we face severe social problems of radicalism, political discord, corruption and instability. In such a scenario of discomfort and concerns, cricket brings joy to the faces of its citizens. It unites

Bangladesh went into the ICC Champions Trophy 2017 against tough opponents. In 2006, West Indian legend Brian Lara claimed that Bangladesh was not ready to participate in the Champions Trophy. Lara was probably right. But today we are ready. We are ready with a Captain who will lead from the front - unafraid, undeterred and solely determined for Bangladesh's success. And his team will follow suit. While reality suggests that he is coming to the end of his international career, Mashrafe Mortaza will go down in history as Bangladesh's greatest and, dare I say, its most loved skipper. An icon, a hero, an inspiration - the country wishes him and the national team the best of luck in its endeavours in England and in the years to come.

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**QUOTABLE Quote**

**ARUNDHATI ROY**  
Indian author

*Pity the nation that has to silence its writers for speaking their minds.*

**CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH**

**ACROSS**

- 1 Big apartments
- 6 Bit of lightning
- 11 Wading bird
- 12 Ham's device
- 13 Hikers' snacks
- 15 Part of a match
- 16 Chest muscle
- 17 Ran into
- 18 Kind of pool
- 20 Kicked off
- 23 Very serious
- 27 TV's Trebek
- 28 Inlet
- 29 Multiplied by
- 31 Like some athletes' wrists
- 32 Thread holder
- 34 Poem of praise
- 37 Crew tool

**DOWN**

- 1 Tripod trio
- 2 Storybook monster
- 3 Greek group
- 4 Kayo count
- 5 Visit briefly
- 6 Bowl
- 7 Research site
- 8 First person
- 9 Royal address
- 10 Party thrower
- 14 Went first
- 18 Government income
- 19 From the area
- 20 Diamond club
- 21 Bulldog backer
- 22 Opal or onyx
- 24 Jazz style
- 25 Second person
- 26 Blushing
- 30 Setting items
- 31 Bullfight star
- 33 Solid wood
- 34 Sanction
- 35 Noted surrealist
- 36 Composer Satie
- 38 Zesty flavor
- 39 2012 Best Picture
- 40 Not new
- 42 Ripen
- 43 Scrooge cry

**BEETLE BAILEY** BY MORT WALKER

**BABY BLUES** BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

**YESTERDAY'S ANSWER**

N	O	R	M	A	S	T
R	E	E	E	A	S	T
O	B	E	S	E	C	E
A	U	D	I	T	S	A
C	L	A	N	H	A	T
H	A	Y	D	E	C	A
P	O	I	N	T	S	L
L	O	U	N	G	E	S
A	N	T	R	E	T	R
M	I	L	E	S	G	O
S	T	E	W	S	E	N