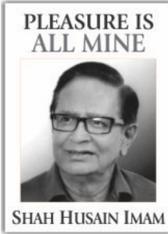


Kim Jong-un's methods in his madness



SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

PLEASURE IS ALL MINE
former British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's policy of appeasement to Hitler couldn't stop the Second

World War from happening. This infamous reference point is raked up by the free rein the North Korea's predictably unpredictable leader Kim Jong-un has had, according to some analysts. Whether this is a bad or good analogy only time will reveal; and we needn't wait too long to find that out.

The second risk factor in the current scenario emanates from this: At the height of Cold War and nuclear arms race between the US and the former Soviet Union, the fear of mutually assured self-destruction kept them at bay from nuclear misadventure. Even the first use option was considered fraught with lethal dangers for the country entertaining such an idea.

Such an equilibrium is no longer there, so that the US, the most powerful nation in the world, is having to call the North Korean strongman "an existential threat."

Experts believe that North Korea has achieved miniaturised versions of nuclear weapons to fit into an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM). It may have attained deliverability of nuclear payload.

Currently, they have been launching missiles from a lofty angle (one such having fallen 120 miles off Japan's northernmost island of Hokkaido); but should they launch an ICBM from a flatter trajectory it could go the intercontinental distance.

Of course, the US is capable of

protecting South Korea and Japan. One of the retired US generals participating in a Fox TV programme recently however said as for ICBMs that might be directed towards the US, they were 50 percent prepared for such an eventuality. According to the retired general, the US defence system has yet to be perfected. Whether such a view is shared by the top US defence experts begs question.

In the meanwhile, Pyongyang is contemplating to attack the US south Pacific strategic island base Guam.

China and Russia have signed up to the UN sanctions which the American optimists believe will deliver a "gut punch" to Pyongyang. Tillerson, the US secretary of state on the sidelines of the ASEAN summit, offered scaling down of special strategic exercises among the US, South Korea and Japan to draw North Korea to talks.

Pyongyang will have nothing of it, ratcheting up bellicosity instead, vowing "thousand-fold revenge on the US."

Trump's resolve to meet the threat with "fire and fury" though typical of him makes one wonder whether it is a reactive outburst or he is proactively committing the US to war.

For all we know, US planes are flying around North Korea. Japan is shedding its traditional pacific policy to develop and use an offensive capability. Among its options is dismantling the bases from which North Korea launches its missiles. But Pyongyang is known to be able to launch missiles from submarines also.

Trump earlier on had said, "China can stop this nonsense." China has gone as far as supporting the UN's fresh dose of sanctions on Pyongyang despite the latter being critically dependent on imports from Beijing. Yet, an underlying commonality of views exists between them vis-à-vis the US' role in Asia.



Pyongyang has unveiled plans to fire four missiles into the sea off Guam following Trump's "fire and fury" remark. In response Guam's governor has issued a warning to North Korea.

PHOTO: AFP

Cast aside the political and diplomatic niceties among the major players and try to pinpoint the underlying tendencies and motivations centring on the so-called "new normal".

What does China want? It appears China may have aimed at either US pullout from Asia or curtailment of its activities in the continental Asia.

Hawks in the Chinese Communist Party reportedly say, "You cannot have two kings in one kingdom."

China's One Belt, One Road infrastructural super connectivity project is dovetailed to that idea.

That's why some strategic thinkers take the view that the current India-China relationship has seen a collateral spike in conflicts in parts of South Asia.

Some Chinese academics and historians are inclined to lay a historical claim to Japan and two Koreas as their natural spheres of influence.

The benefits of détente and breakup of Iron Curtain created a balance of power that helped holding the world order together. But the misadventures in the Middle East,

divisiveness in Europe and the advent of Trump presidency have rocked the appellation of equilibrium.

For Bangladesh's part, she can and should stay clear of big power rivalries and play a conscientious role in world affairs.

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Ask first, walk later



NAVEED MAHBUB

HUMOROUSLY YOURS
AFTER taking the vitals of my mother, the nurse at this hospital in Bangkok, Thailand asks me in a soothing melody: "Yoll mathall blood pleshull high flom walkeeng to this loom?"

I answer, subconsciously in a similar tune: "No. Her blood pressure is high from trying to communicate with everyone in this hospital in English!"

She smiles and politely nods in affirmative from obviously not getting the joke. In fact, during the last 15 minutes of our conversation with her, I notice that she nods at every question asked. Good, if it were another world, like, when asking for a thousand bucks. But these are vital questions at the pre-operative stage, though the same questions have been asked several times earlier and the answers obviously not shared with the various functionaries in the hospital.

"So, you want my mother to sign this form? But it's in Thai, is there an English version?" I ask.

She nods, "Yes."
"Ok, so, can we get that form?"
"Yes."
"Ok, great, can you get that for us?"
"Yes." She's still standing there. "English form? Yes, we no hab. Only Thai."

Urgh! I am about to ask, "Can you please check my blood pressure?" I refrain myself. Gotta keep it simple—verbs, adverbs, pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, abbreviations...OUT! Just nouns, nouns and nouns and perhaps a verb as an exception and as a last resort. No wonder I notice such a huge, separate department here called Hypertension...

If health tourism is a multimillion dollar industry in Thailand with millions invested in know-how, doctors, equipment, facilities, infrastructure, marketing and best in class hygiene, just invest 400 Baht per person and

have our "800 Taka English or Your Money Back" guys come and teach you a few tricks. At least our five-star hotels, I mean, hospitals in Dhaka can boast better language skills.

But the Thai staff is aware of their language limitations. As such, they are patient with the patient and with the patient's highly patient family members who may have heart attacks soon and become patients themselves. They give you all the time in the world to make sure

gives us plenty of time to digest all the information and formulate our own questions, only to throw the doctor into another trauma of formulating a new string of sentences to answer our questions.

What is more interesting is that the doctor spends a similar amount of protracted time in explaining the fully itemised costs of the procedure, and what may be needed should an additional procedure be needed while in surgery

follow the nurse in. It's my brother lying unconscious, eyes rolled up, with all the paraphernalia fully inserted during a colonoscopy procedure. The doctor points to the monitor, "There's a polyp in there. It's totally benign. If you give us permission we'll cut it off."

I would ask my brother. After all, it's his polyp. But I think he's a little busy right now. So, I give the permission and am about to

negotiable price tag. "Yes, yes, fine. Go ahead with the procedure." I say hurriedly.

"You have to go downstairs to the Accounts section and make the payment now. Ok?"
"Ok, ok!!" Jeez! !@#%&*!! I was about to say, "Did you want me bring you the receipt before you start the polyp cutting ceremony?"

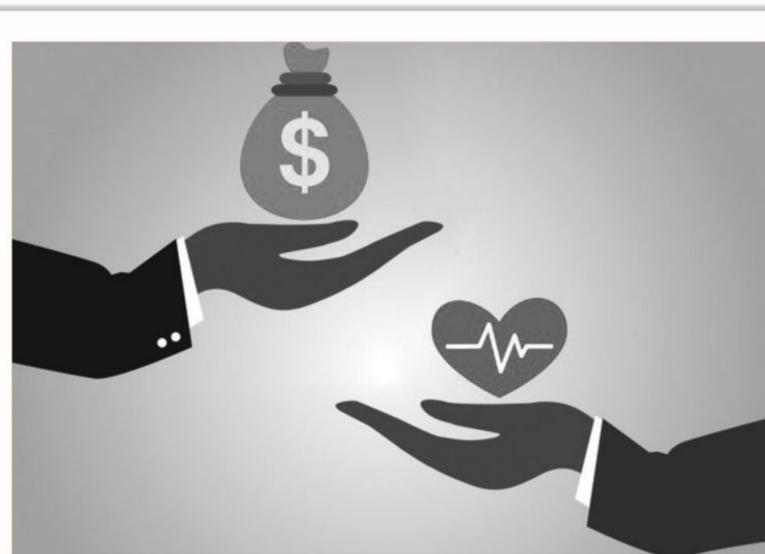
But I guess they have faith in the fact that I love my kid brother to the point that I wouldn't dare disobey them. Besides, they have a 5 feet 7 inch hostage lying there with a hose pipe shoved up his...

So, one thing is evident. Healthcare in our part of the world is like a prepaid mobile phone SIM card—pay first, walk (after being made healthy) later. A far cry from Uncle Sam's land where there is the Emergency Medical and Treatment Labor Act (EMTALA), mandating hospitals, both public and private, to treat first, ask questions later during an emergency visit in a system where even one single suture for a tiny laceration costs thousands of dollars. Of course, this paves the path for the clever (Bangladeshi) with the prior knowledge of him needing an immediate quadruple bypass surgery, to walk into the emergency room of a US hospital with severe chest pain that "started all of a sudden", only for the hospital to determine "a surprising" four blockages that require an immediate surgery!

Set aside the clever. As for the affluent Bangladeshis, they flock to the pricier and prepaid Singapore, paying premium to relieve themselves of the language stress faced in Thailand. And if you are in a life-threatening emergency, you'd better be able to charter a plane, prepaid.

Oh by the way, today's column is about the healthcare of the affluent, the wannabe affluent, the struggling-to-be-affluent and for the clever. As for the rest, i.e. the majority, may the Lord have Mercy on us...

Naveed Mahbub is an engineer at Ford & Qualcomm USA and CEO of IBM & Nokia Siemens Networks Bangladesh turned comedian (by choice), the host of ATN Bangla's The Naveed Mahbub Show and ABC Radio's Good Morning Bangladesh, the founder of Naveed's Comedy Club. E-mail: Naveed@NaveedMahbub.com



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BOTH patient and staff agree to say "yes" in unison AND with full comprehension (hopefully). What is even better is that the doctors spend an equal amount of time explaining the medical conditions, the procedures, the risks and the benefits. It's a good thing that even these highly qualified professionals struggle with the universal language, though to a much less extent. That

and that the full amount needs to be paid up front for the optional procedure, to be fully refunded should that additional procedure be needed. I'm impressed—this is the first time I'm seeing a white-apron-wearing accountant.

I am instantly transformed back to Dhaka where I'm summoned into the operating room. Surprised that I should be entering a sterile environment in my street clothes, I

quickly leave the room lest I spread more germs into the sterile environment.

"It will be Taka 18,000. Is that ok?" The doctor tells me.

I draw a blank for a second. "That's 18,000 Taka extra to cut off the polyp. Ok?" He adds.

I surely wasn't going to be my typical anal retentive self on haggling with a non-

QUOTABLE Quote

SHIRIN EBADI
Iranian lawyer, human rights activist and Nobel Peace Prize laureate

If you can't eliminate injustice, at least tell everyone about it.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Pack down
- 5 Formal headwear
- 11 Bassoon's kin
- 12 Colorful bird
- 13 Arm bone
- 14 Gasp for breath
- 15 Old auto
- 16 Airport area
- 17 Pottery coat
- 19 Hotel feature
- 22 Louvre locale
- 24 Bar seat
- 26 Final, e.g.
- 27 Not fooled by
- 28 London newspaper
- 30 Crop killer
- 31 Twisty letter

DOWN

- 1 See the sights
- 2 Skilled
- 3 Stationery letters
- 4 Soup sphere
- 5 Yellow gem
- 6 Makes addresses
- 7 Freshener scent
- 8 Blazing
- 9 Heady drink
- 10 Senator Cruz
- 16 Burner output
- 18 Green hue
- 19 Prenatal pictures
- 20 Chef's collection
- 21 Loads
- 22 Rose of baseball
- 23 Line of symmetry
- 25 Of two minds
- 29 General greeting
- 30 Hounds' quarry
- 33 Chess wins
- 34 Young horse
- 36 Composer Satie
- 37 Composer Waller
- 38 Costa del --
- 39 Epoch's kin
- 40 Complete
- 41 Drink from a bag

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

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

BEETLE BAILEY by Mort Walker

BABY BLUES by Kirkman & Scott