

# If not Myanmar's, whose responsibility is it?

PLEASURE IS ALL MINE



SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

**A**UNG San Suu Kyi's opting out of the UN General Assembly session is a reflection of the same hiding syndrome that made the Rakhine state out

of bounds for UN staff, aid agencies and the media for a long while. Then they gave a conducted tour of the burning villages claiming they were set ablaze, not in pursuit of a scorched earth policy but by the departing Rohingya Muslims. Warped logic!

Suu Kyi's wilful absence from an annual UN appearance was prompted by diffidence to face hard truths as well as measure up to accountability standards even in a diplomatic world.

It is as a hostage to the Myanmar military who had suppressed and bulldozed her electoral victory in 1990 that she garnered world's sympathies, especially those of the powerful west. She won the Nobel Prize for Peace, was freed from jail and headed an elected civilian government based on power sharing with the military. All that was handled with a delicate touch by outsiders lest an embryo of a democracy were unceremoniously killed off.

They were generous. Sanctions were lifted from the country; Myanmar was declared open to business and investments poured in.

But the cycle seems to have been reversed at least in perception. On the eve of the UNSC meet on the deteriorating Rohingya scenario, Devjyot Ghoshal wrote from New York for Quartz India, "A strong censure from the UNSC—which includes the US and UK, both of which have historically backed Suu Kyi—is not enough to pressure the Myanmar government to stop the brutality, the Council can potentially consider imposing sanctions, including travel bans, and asset freezes." Again Aung San Suu Kyi is held hostage to the military but this time her conscience is being bartered away to an unprincipled narrative.

The country's establishment,



Seen from across the Naf River, smoke billows as Rohingya villages burn in Maungdaw in Rakhine State.

PHOTO: OSAMA RAHMAN

especially the military and a strong Buddhist lobby worked behind the shield of her reverential image to deliver a pernicious stroke of ethnic cleansing à la Yugoslavia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. It is believed that she is on the same page as the army commanders and the Rakhine Buddhists, insofar as considering all Rohingya Muslims as combatants goes.

It defies belief how a "ramshackle" Rohingya Salvation Army, as a foreign media person has described it, can offer challenges of insurgency or terrorism to a well organised and fully equipped Myanmar security force. The August raid triggered a series of reprisals that to observers have not only been disproportionate but directed against

innocent civilians as well. Besides, the Myanmar atrocities have been well-documented since 1990 through 2012 to 2017, if not earlier.

In contrast, Kochin and Karen fighters had taken up arms against the government forces. Altogether, eight ethnic entities have been party to a National Ceasefire Agreement. Since the Rohingya Muslims are not one of the 135 ethnic communities recognised by the Myanmar government, the Rohingya Salvation Army's ceasefire offer has been met with a prompt disapproval from the Myanmar authorities.

How are Aung San Suu Kyi, the Myanmar military and the Rakhine Buddhists so brazen—faced in their

omissions and commissions?

China, India and Russia can wield a moral influence on Myanmar. Allowing for their quest for geopolitical or economic power equations, can't they be stirred to have empathy for those poor, scarred, hapless children, widowed women and traumatised old men who appear live on TV screens 24/7?

For our part, we shoulder a humanitarian responsibility of an enormous scale with a great strain endured on our economy and environment. Along with providing food, shelter, sanitation, security to the refugees, the able bodied need to be employed gainfully in their habitats. It is good to know that their

biometric data are being collected with ID cards being issued to the refugees and their particulars kept handy.

The United Nations called for massive amounts of assistance to be delivered in the areas the refugees are sheltered. As the UN Observer in Cox's Bazar has pointed out, "We are dealing with emergencies within an emergency" so coordination is key.

Let me suggest that we create a pool of expertise drawing on the experiences of Lebanon, Jordan, Iran, and perhaps Turkey, countries that have had to contend with huge numbers of refugees on their soil.

Shah Husain Imam is a commentator on current affairs and former Associate Editor, *The Daily Star*. Email: shahhusainimam@gmail.com

## LEST WE FORGET

# An industrialist with an artist's soul

FIDA M KAMAL

**S**O many small incidents rush into my mind when I remember Nitun Da. I first met Nitun Kundu in the latter part of 1970, when we were colleagues at Bitopi Advertising. From the beginning he stood out because of his affectionate, caring nature. He had an inner strength which was his driving force.

He often talked about his humble origins. He had an overpowering desire to be a successful man. He came to Dhaka in pursuit of his passion to become a painter. To pay for his day-to-day expenses, he worked as a commercial painter of cinema billboards. He completed his graduation from the then Art College (now the Institute of Fine Arts of the Dhaka University), securing first position in this class. He often lamented the fact that he could not become a teacher at the Art College, despite his academic accomplishment. He so much wanted to be a teacher in his alma mater. It

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Nitun Kundu

was one dream which remained unfulfilled.

During the time I was studying law in London, in the mid-seventies, about the time when Otobi was being set up in Dhaka, Nitun Da visited London. It was my privilege and pleasure to accompany him to the

many museums, art galleries and theatres in London.

In many ways Nitun Da was a Renaissance man. His talents were diversified and he distinguished himself in many fields. He designed and sculpted many monuments. He has produced many mementos and

souvenirs. Later he became a successful industrialist by dint of his merit, innovative mind and hard work.

With determination and hard work Nitun Da set up Otobi, initially as a very humble enterprise in 1975. From Sukrabad to Topkhana Road and then to Mirpur, Shyampur

and Gulshan where he set up branches of his company, I am witness to Nitun Da's unflagging devotion, superior intellect and unbounded creativity in the establishment of Otobi as a centre of excellence in modern living. Otobi grew over the years under his passionate leadership. He was as caring towards Otobi as he was with his children Amity and Animesh.

The Bangla word for artist is *shilpi* and a closely related word is *shilpa* which means industry. Remarkably, Nitun Da combined the artist and the industrialist in him. And what a wonderful and amazing fusion it was!

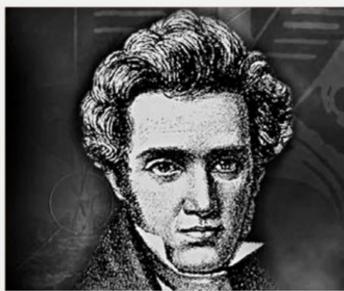
Those of us who had the privilege of working with him will always cherish the most loving memories of the man who is a truly self-made man. All his life he lived a life of unfeigned simplicity. His innate humility was impressive and very inspiring to all around him. He had a wonderful ability to rejoice at the

success of others in the profession. His overall humanity makes one feel that it was indeed an honour and a privilege to have known the man—a pleasure to treasure his memory. This thought makes me recall what I had read a long time ago: "If I have the privilege to meet you for a while, it will be to treasure a memory which will make me a little richer than I am." The enrichment is abundant. And the rewards are plentiful.

On his passing away on September 15, 2006, his colleagues and friends lost a very dear person, whom we all had learned to love and value; the world of fine arts and culture lost an icon; the industrial and entrepreneurial arena lost a fine industrialist and the country lost an eminent citizen. He has done us proud and we are all privileged to have known him, seen him work. What a difference he has made in our lives. May his soul blissfully rest in eternal peace.

Fida M Kamal is a former attorney general.

## QUOTABLE Quote



SØREN KIERKEGAARD

Danish philosopher, theologian, poet, and social critic

*Once you label me you negate me.*

## CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- |                             |                            |                    |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>ACROSS</b>               | 32 German article          | 6 Radius, for one  |
| 1 Like some chins           | 33 Diet no-no              | 7 Showy flower     |
| 6 Canaanite god             | 34 Scarlett's love         | 8 Blow away        |
| 10 Debussy work             | 36 Say "aye," say          | 9 Ran easily       |
| 11 Vodka cocktail           | 37 Like some online videos | 11 Sets            |
| 12 In check                 | 38 Music's Lena            | 15 Father's pride  |
| 13 Like draft beer          | 39 Perfect places          | 17 Strong-holds    |
| 14 Bring up                 | 40 Spanish hero            | 20 Place to park   |
| 15 Allergy sign             | 41 Smutty                  | 21 Enjoy Aspen     |
| 16 Screw up                 | 42 Year divisions          | 24 Operative       |
| 17 Gear tooth               |                            | 25 Clutter hater   |
| 18 Checkers side            |                            | 27 Aye opposer     |
| 19 Movie poster features    | <b>DOWN</b>                | 28 Spirited horses |
| 22 Pirate's take            | 1 Dinner wine              | 29 Belly feature   |
| 23 Related                  | 2 Sideways pass            | 30 Digression      |
| 26 Bikini wearers' markings | 3 Shipping ban             | 31 Pitched         |
| 29 D.C. baseballer          | 4 Dread                    | 35 Hit the runway  |
|                             | 5 Attempt                  | 36 Meadow rodent   |
|                             |                            | 38 Chop down       |

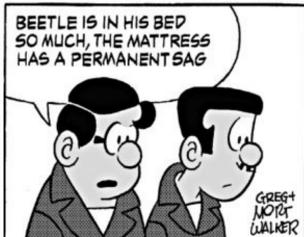


YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

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

## BEETLE BAILEY

by Mort Walker



## BABY BLUES

by Kirkman & Scott

