

IN MEMORIAM

Nurul Islam Anu as I knew him

SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

MUNSHIGANJ High School, Haraganga College playground, and Idrakpur Fort are where we would rendezvous in the mid-fifties—Nurul Islam Anu; my elder brother Shah Ali Imam, a freedom fighter; and myself. Anu Bhai and my elder brother were in Class X and I was in Class VII. Although they were three years senior to me and had more or less a common school routine that was at variance with mine, we would meet after school hours, usually on the Haraganga College playground.

One of my first recollections of Anu Bhai, who passed away on October 18, was of a rather lanky adolescent with one foot on a number-five football and another raring to kick it. As if frozen in that motion, he yelled to me with a mischievous grin in his face almost reading my mind that I wanted to have a go at it: "Well, this is an oversized football for you, so you better wait for your turn"—a slap on the wrist of a junior trying to punch over his weight.

The second indelible impres-



Nurul Islam Anu

sion etched on my mind was an instruction in history received from him. We would be awed by the aura of Idrakpur Fort, a riverfront fort situated in Munshiganj, tracing its origin to the Mughal era. This was built in 1660 AD during the rule of Mir Jumla intended to protect the empire from the Mogh and Portuguese intruders.

The other relics of our collective heritage in Munshiganj and Bikrampur areas would fire our imagination of the past. Of the three of us, Nurul Islam Anu would take to them—having had seeds implanted in him of a

robust sense of history. This would then mingle with a thirst for historical learning into its deeper layers. Thus, we saw him going on to obtain a first class in history from Dhaka University. He also had a stint as a teacher in the department of history prior to taking the superior services examinations. He became a member of the erstwhile CSP of the 1963 batch.

Fast forward, we see him as secretary to Prime Minister Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the father of the nation. It was an auspicious, challenging and eventful phase in the life of a state born out of countless sacrifices in blood, martyrdom and tears. With Bangabandhu at the helm, reconstruction of a war-ravaged country gathered pace and momentum. The Bangladesh Bank Annual Report 1974 bore that out.

After a stint as secretary to Bangabandhu, Nurul Islam Anu was posted as economic minister in the Bangladesh Embassy in Washington. He subsequently resigned his post and entered into business after

Bangabandhu's assassination during which most members of the leader's family were killed. Anu Bhai decided not to come back, staying for a long time in the United States. He became president of the Awami League USA branch. During his student days, he had belonged to Chhatra League.

Eventually the pull of his land of birth was to prove strong enough for him to live in Bangladesh for the last two decades. After having been associated with renowned business houses, including a stint as editor/publisher of a Bangla daily, he settled in Bank Asia as a high functionary and member of the decision-making board.

He contributed articles for *The Daily Star*, especially to some of its anniversary supplements. He shared with me a number of times a simple dream he nursed which never came to fruition: Writing in a Bangla newspaper under the column name "Anu Kobiraj".

He was a workaholic. Occasionally, when I would visit his office I could see files virtually piled up to his neck. And, as

he signed them out at a furious pace to meet deadlines, he would be ceaselessly talking either person-to-person or on the intercom to clarify a point or two. And even attend to a guest. In one word, he was an epitome of multi-tasking!

He was helpful and compassionate to people in need. Quietly altruistic, a good Samaritan to many, he, with his wide contacts, would solve problems of people in difficulty.

In these days of short attention spans both when it comes to listening and talking, he has always been a patient listener and a communicative talker. Above all, he was a good conversationalist.

It is said, having received an inkling of a plan that officials of the occupation force in the then East Pakistan were going to call senior Bangladeshi officials to a meeting to kill them, Nurul Islam Anu transmitted the information to the Bengali officialdom. This warded off the danger to their lives.

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Not Egg-xactly Egg-static



NAVEED MAHBUB

OCTOBER 11 is World Obesity Day. October 13 is World Egg Day. October 14 is Global Hand Washing Day (makes sense, gotta wash the hands after handling eggs—there's salmonella). October 16 is World Food Day. At this rate, I would expect October 17 to be World Diarrhea Day...

I have religiously been sticking to all these days—in reverse order. Food, lots of food, then wash my hands to get the food off and to make them clean so as to have eggs, lots of eggs, resulting becoming a bit overweight. Not sure why the doc needs an hour of tests and calculations to determine my BMI (body mass index) and to conclude I'm overweight. I can say the same thing, i.e. that I'm overweight, in 10 seconds by simply looking at myself in the mirror. But I am clever when it comes to looking slim as I'm either in black or I walk around with those who are physically more endowed than myself.

But I am an exception to the rule that we, as a nation, are generally slim. Maybe that's why Bangladesh is down a notch in the World Hunger Index—was 90, now 88. That means we are less hungry, thanks to soaring food prices.

But not all are not hungry. Thus, as the World Egg Day prompts the "Tk 3 per egg" event in Farmgate—a location chosen for its name 'Farm'gate since it is related to "farm" eggs—thousands scramble to the area, thus giving a whole new meaning to the term "scrambled eggs". The area becomes an ocean of humanity, with Khamar Bari becoming the "Anda'man" Islands. The egg-static mass throngs to Khamar Bari, only to be eventually greeted by *lathir bari*. A few walk away with cartons of eggs like "The

PROJECT SYNDICATE

The economic case for China's Belt and Road



SHANG-JIN WEI

SINCE 2013, China has been pursuing its "Belt and Road" initiative, which aims to develop physical infrastructure and policy linkages connecting more than 60 countries

across Asia, Europe, and Africa. Critics worry that China may be so focused on expanding its geopolitical influence, in order to compete with the likes of the United States and Japan, that it may pursue projects that make little economic sense. But, if a few conditions are met, the economic case for the initiative is strong.

As a recent Asian Development Bank report confirms, many Belt and Road countries are in urgent need of large-scale infrastructure investment—precisely the type of investment that China has pledged. Some, such as Bangladesh and Kyrgyzstan, lack reliable electricity supplies, which is impeding the development of their manufacturing sectors and stifling their ability to export. Others, like Indonesia, do not have enough ports for internal economic integration or international trade.

The Belt and Road initiative promises to help countries overcome these constraints, by providing external funding for ports, roads, schools, hospitals, and power plants and grids. In this sense, the initiative could function much like America's post-1945 Marshall Plan, which is universally lauded for its contribution to the reconstruction and economic recovery of war-ravaged Europe.

Of course, external funding alone is not sufficient for success. Recipient countries must also undertake key reforms that increase policy transparency and predictability, thereby reducing investment risk. Indeed, implementation of complementary reforms will be a key determinant of the economic returns on Belt and Road investments.

For China, the Belt and Road investments are economically appealing, particularly when private Chinese firms

take the lead in carrying them out. In 2013, when China first proposed the Belt and Road initiative, the country was sitting on USD 4 trillion in foreign-exchange reserves, which were earning a very low dollar return (less than 1 percent a year). In terms of China's own currency, the returns were negative, given the expected appreciation of the renminbi against the US dollar at the time.

In this sense, Belt and Road investments are not particularly costly for China, particularly when their far-reaching potential benefits are taken into account.

quality of firms' business decisions. In particular, because efficiency is not the primary consideration, Chinese state-owned enterprises (SOEs) might pursue low-return projects. That is why China's SOE-reform process must be watched carefully. Nonetheless, while the Belt and Road initiative is clearly driven partly by strategic objectives, a cost-benefit analysis shows that the economic case is also very strong—so strong, in fact, that one might ask why China didn't undertake it sooner.

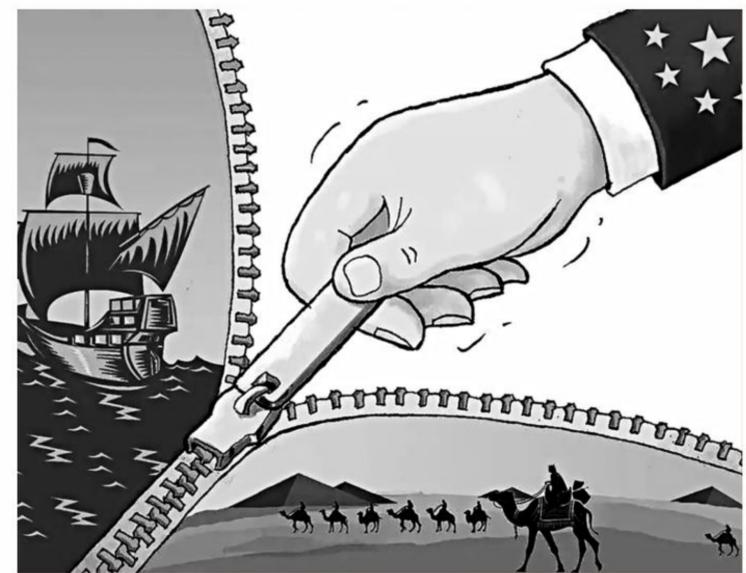
Even the United States and other

will ease logistical bottlenecks, reducing the costs of production inputs. The result will be higher productivity and faster global growth.

If Belt and Road projects are held to high environmental and social standards, significant progress can also be made on global challenges such as climate change and inequality. The more countries choose to participate in these projects, the better the chance of achieving these standards, and the greater the global social returns will be.

In an era when some of the world's

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China's trade-to-GDP ratio exceeds 40 percent—substantially higher than that of the US—owing partly to underdeveloped infrastructure and inadequate economic diversification among China's trading partners. By addressing these weaknesses, China's Belt and Road investments can lead to a substantial increase in participant countries' and China's own trade volumes, benefiting firms and workers substantially.

This is not to suggest that such investments are risk-free for China. The economic returns will depend on the

countries may reap significant economic returns. A decade after the global financial crisis erupted, recovery remains weak and tentative in much of the world. Bold, large-scale infrastructure investments can provide much-needed short-run stimulus to global aggregate demand. The US, for one, is likely to see a surge in demand for its own exports, including cars, locomotives, planes, and high-end construction equipment, and financial, accounting, educational, and legal services. In the longer term, the new infrastructure

most influential countries are turning inward, talking about erecting trade barriers and constructing border walls, the world needs initiatives focused on building bridges and roads, both literal and figurative—initiatives like the Belt and Road strategy.

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Few, *The Proud, The Marines*”, clinging on to the eggs with an air of “take my pride, take my honour, but I ain't giving my eggs”.

But so what that we haven't been able to consume three taka-eggs? We have overcompensated by consuming goals from the three-some—India, Pakistan and Japan—in the Asia Cup Hockey games. For once, India and Pakistan hold hands in unison, each scoring seven goals against Bangladesh. Japan is kinder, scoring “only” three goals, as part of Japan-Bangladesh-Friendship and for Bangladesh being the junkyard of Japanese used autos. Maybe there could have been such a car or two on the field and our boys could have scored a bit better. After all, we show hockey stick prowess when it comes to breaking cars.

Sigh, lost respect. Speaking of which, as the day comes to an end last week, I realise that there actually is no respect left... for hartal. By the time I jot down the first item on my list of things to do on the “day off”, the hartal is over.

Dhaka is losing its charm further—losing out to two others in the list of unsafe cities. Yangon is above us. That we can tell, if we just look at Cox's Bazar. But Karachi? I guess, it's the champion because it's a place where one industry is booming with the most successful start-up by Dawood Ibrahim.

Like things can't get any worse. Many mourn the death of Hugh Hefner, the world's best biology teacher. The US reels over the tragedy of Las Vegas. Of course, Stephen Paddock, a mainstream white male, is labelled as mentally ill while ISIS claims that he had joined them not too long before his shooting spree. We can therefore deduce, GMAT style, that all those who sign up for ISIS, are mentally ill.

Looking at the past week, I'm not egg-xactly egg-static. But I hope none are thrown towards Blue Whale. Speaking of which, if I get one more message in my Facebook inbox about warnings on Blue Whale, I WILL harm myself! But on a serious note, I finally get around to bringing up the topic of Blue Whale to my internet savvy 12-year-old for a frank discussion. She answers seriously: “I've known about this [Blue Whale] for the last eight months. I truly AM worried—you are an emotional comedian and therefore MY fear is that YOU could fall victim to it...”

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QUOTABLE Quote

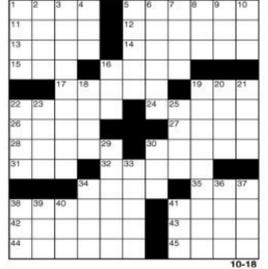


BOOKER T WASHINGTON AMERICAN EDUCATOR, AUTHOR AND ORATOR

No race can prosper till it learns that there is as much dignity in tilling a field as in writing a poem.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- | | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| ACROSS | 35 Weed whacker | 16 Danson of "The Good Place" |
| 1 Suit piece | 38 Long-winged seabird | 18 Showed sorrow |
| 5 Sound of delight | 41 Moves swiftly | 19 Loving display |
| 11 High point | 42 Set straight | 20 Aid in crime |
| 12 Atlas section | 43 Tilt section | 21 Cartoonist Kelly |
| 13 Pump or clog | 44 Comely | 22 Parcel of land |
| 14 Deemed a bomb | 45 Storybook monster | 23 Drink quickly |
| 15 Overly | | 25 Machu Picchu native |
| 16 Nervous signs | | 29 Hushed |
| 17 Fine-tune | | 30 Jazz horn |
| 19 Spotted | | 33 Laced with profanity |
| 22 Rued a workout | 1 Expansive | 34 Worry |
| 24 "The Lion King" hero | 2 Cave sound | 36 Phone button letters |
| 26 China flaw | 3 Inventing, say | 37 In—(really) |
| 27 Seasonal song | 4 Kickoff aid | 38 Catchy music |
| 28 Wee ones | 5 Old photo tint | 39 Stray |
| 30 "Ivanhoe" author | 6 Bad doctors | 40 Draw |
| 31 Meringue source | 7 Coffee dispensers | 41 Chaotic spot |
| 32 Violinist Stern | 8 Long time | |
| 34 Linen source | 9 Clumsy person | |
| | 10 Was in front | |



YESTERDAY'S ANSWER



BEETLE BAILEY by Mort Walker



BABY BLUES by Kirkman & Scott

