

# The Good, the Bad and the Ugly



**HUMOROUSLY YOURS**  
**NAVEED MAHBUB**

wattage and luminance emitted puts Dhaka's lit up Golf Garden to shame. Representing the Stars and Stripes, the lights are a blinding red, white and blue. Add a high-powered spot light, the Knight Rider like red and blue lights flashing from the fenders like those from the vehicle of a Dhaka-ite VIP. And in the unlikely event of not noticing any of these, the belch like horn (the harbinger of a VIP in Bangladesh) sure will attract your attention.



I pull over on Interstate 80 East. The torture is slow, as the police officer is in no hurry to rush out of his vehicle to break the news to me as to what my offence is. He does my background check with his onboard computer(s) from my car's registration number. With a thousand antennas sticking out from all parts of his car making the formidable Ford Crown Victoria look like an oversized and ominous porcupine, I am sure, he already has data on where I used to have *shingara* in Plassey during my BUET days.

As I watch the cliff hanger through my rear-view mirror, with stereophonic effects added through both my side view mirrors ("Objects are much scarier than they already appear to be"), the officer slowly and dramatically, gets out of his car and walks towards the side of my door. The approaching gargantuan silhouette in front flood and disco lights is a scene not too dissimilar to that of Clint Eastwood in *The Good* (him), *the Bad* (me) and *the Ugly* (my fate)...

The Motorola walkie-talkie strapped to him is going nuts with radio chatter. He has one hand on his

standard issue gun in its holster. Protocol states that I remain in my driver's seat. Any unusual movement on my part and the gun will be out at *High Noon* speed.

He leans over on my door. "Sir, have you been drinking?"

I am conferred the Knighthood first before being sentenced. But that is how they address you. Despite his 6 foot 4 Mr Universe build and Frank Sinatra style booming rich baritone, he is calm, polite, matter of fact, professional and genuinely meaning that I am a "sir" as he is there to serve me, the taxpayer whose taxes go into his payroll to uphold and enforce the laws of the land. All this no matter what my nationality, race, religion or ethnicity...for I myself may be in any predicament requiring his assistance, though he may very well be in harm's way lest I am a drug dealer with a loaded gun.

disappears in the darkness of the car cab as the lights continue to flash.

After what seems an eternity, he comes back with his final verdict.

"Sir, I will have to give you a citation."

"Oh, thank you, thank you!" I didn't know cops confer military style commendations to drivers who are polite and who do not drink despite driving like a drunk! He hands me his 'citation', a piece of paper that I expected to read "For outstanding driving on a US highway without hitting a deer..." Instead, it has a dollar figure clearly stating "80 in a 65 zone".

Never knew a highway patrol cop would act as a dictionary to teach me another meaning of a word that could work both as a synonym AND an antonym.

As he starts to walk away, I blurt out "Thank you, sir!" In such a traumatic situation with a formidable AND *bideshi* combat ready, fully armed police officer in front of me in the dead of night on a desolate US freeway, I, a Bangladeshi who is otherwise a lion in front of a fellow Bangladeshi, is now the Indian Sub-Continent in front of the British in 1757. And hence, I thank him for being punished whereas an American would be yelling and then cussing under his own breath.

He doesn't look back, but he has one hell of a real-life Jerry Lewis movie to share with his colleagues over coffee and donuts—it's HIS first to be thanked for handing out a traffic violation.

My sleep is gone to the point of insomnia as I drive the next 450 miles to my final destination in New Jersey. I am wide awake as a Navy SEAL.

It is not just me, but just about every Bangladeshi in the US. It is almost unbelievable that the same us the Bangladeshis are such different animals on the streets in Bangladesh. For in the US, we not only obey all the laws of the land and especially the streets, but honk (an unthinkable insult) to other drivers at the sight of even the slightest deviation from any strict rule of the road. It is the same us, who carry used yucky candy wrappers in our pockets in Singapore till we find a trash can. It is the same us who address a police officer as "sir" who in our native

land call him a derogatory *thola*. It is the same us who thank for receiving an apt punishment without angrily protesting or even heaping threats by announcing who are fathers are (in the US, some actually don't know their dads). It is the same us who will never dare to flip the middle finger to the strict laws set in place to keep average citizens safe on the roads. It is the same us, who make sure our driver's licenses are legit, our vehicles are fit, the registration and insurance is up to date. It is the same us who instead of having our fathers call their DIG buddies to get the penalty waived and the citation issuing cops doing their duties to be transferred off to Khagrachari, address them (the cops) by "sir" and "thank you". It is the same us who pay the fine on time and vow to never hit the road without a good night's rest. It is the same us who have the fear of God put into us for not wanting to see another squad car with flashing lights in our rear-view mirrors. It is the same us who are traumatised from losing two points on our hard (and legitimately) earned driver's licenses, knowing that those two points come with the slap of a significant rise in the premium of our auto insurance policies, the same us who at home joke at the prospect of even having insurance policies knowing that they themselves are a joke that would make every conceivable excuse not to pay in the event of a no-fault accident. It is the same us who learn their lessons well.

But is it the same us behaving so uncharacteristically civilised because we are in such an advance, law abiding and developed country? Not really, the same us are such gentlemen even when we are in the embassy of this law-abiding country in Dhaka. For have you seen us Bangladeshis at foreign consulates lining up for visas? Why, we are at our best behaviour, speaking in whispers, thanking the barking G4S guard (a *deshi* upgraded through association) and speaking squeamishly when being interviewed by the visa officer.

Aha, so the "phoren" touch is needed for the indisciplined us to be the goody two shoes us, eh? Again, a no! For when our cars drive 5 kms above the stated speed limit with speed detecting radars displaying

the speed of our vehicles in Dhaka Cantonment, the *deshi* military police pulls us over and just like the Ohio State Police officer, politely states our offences and issues us a violation ticket. Before the same us can drop the name of a brigadier general, the same MP pulls over a Toyota Land Cruiser, an olive green one with a covered lone star (yes, I see this with my very own eyes). It is the same us, who then drop the idea of dropping the name of 1 star general and follow through with paying our fines at the designated office because even the uniformed driver of the 4 by 4 of another 1 star general is not spared.

It is akin to racism to assume a race cannot change as we, being a *Bangalee*, brush every issue aside as unchangeable citing the one reason—being a *Bangalee*. Yet the same *Bangalee* in America, or the American Embassy in Dhaka or even the very *deshi* Cantonment in is a totally different animal with full adherence to the rules.

Yes, we are indisciplined and will break the rules the first chance we get, but those who are around us to govern and to uphold the rules, can keep us in the leash. It has NOTHING to do with which country we are in, but rather the ENTITIES that stick to their guns, no pun intended, when it comes to ENFORCING the rules with zero compromise.

Well, the last few days of us losing several children under tragic circumstances of being squished by a pair of Formula One racing buses or being dumped into a pond while bleeding only so as not to be stuck in traffic, is surely avoidable and never to be repeated, if those who are there to ENFORCE the rules really DO enforce without fail and without fear or favour, keeping in mind that THEY are *The Good*, to hold *the Bad* accountable so as to avoid *the Ugly*. Otherwise, remember, those who are entrusted to the task, also have children and God Forbid, there is such a thing as karma.

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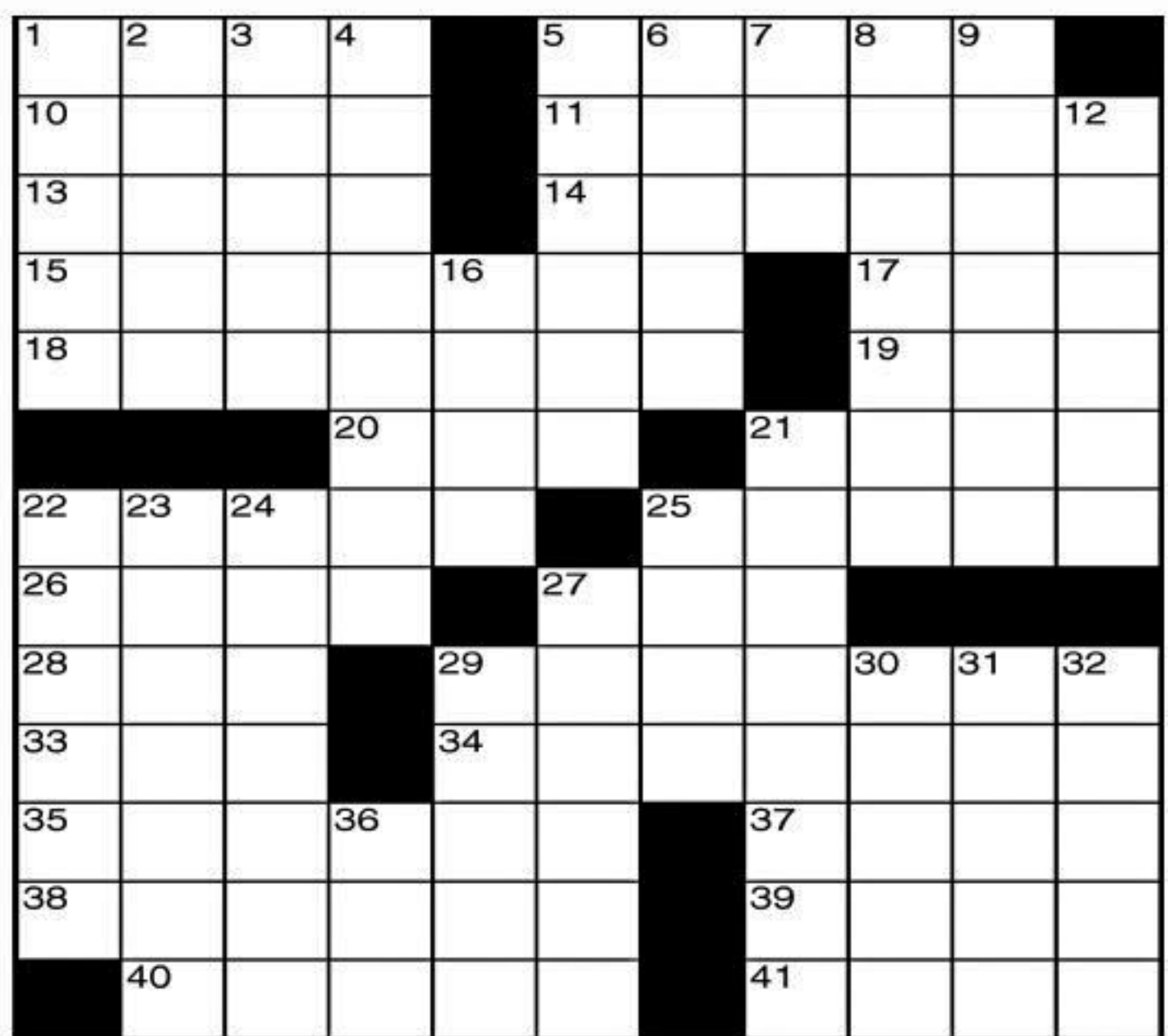
## CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

### ACROSS

- 1 Writer Oz
- 5 Criminal outing
- 10 Director Wert-muller
- 11 Lucky charm
- 13 Prayer finish
- 14 Bach composition
- 15 Enters, as data
- 17 "My country - of thee"
- 18 Top-of-wall trim
- 19 "- a deal!"
- 20 First numero
- 21 Lawn tunneler
- 22 Make amends
- 25 Seminar group
- 26 Quite uncommon
- 27 Holbrook of "The Firm"
- 28 Lumber-jack's tool
- 29 "Lord of the Flies" author
- 33 Sizeable
- 34 Weapons collection
- 35 Flyer of myth
- 37 Doll cry
- 38 Rams' mates
- 40 Winter footwear
- 41 Cincinnati team

### DOWN

- 1 Wake-up sound
- 2 Retro copier
- 3 Ryan of "Paper Moon"
- 4 Saharan hill
- 5 Dealer's workplace
- 6 In the middle of
- 7 Bit or wordplay
- 8 Great joy
- 9 Give an alias
- 12 Fez feature
- 16 Trig function
- 21 Ocean motion causes it
- 22 Middle East language
- 23 Haired car
- 24 Pizza herb
- 25 Buddies
- 27 Race runners
- 29 Lean
- 30 Quite impressed
- 31 Identified
- 32 Pane material
- 36 Carnical city



### YESTERDAY'S ANSWER



## Congratulations on your appointment as National Professor



Professor Dr. Jamilur Reza Choudhury  
Vice-Chancellor, University of Asia Pacific