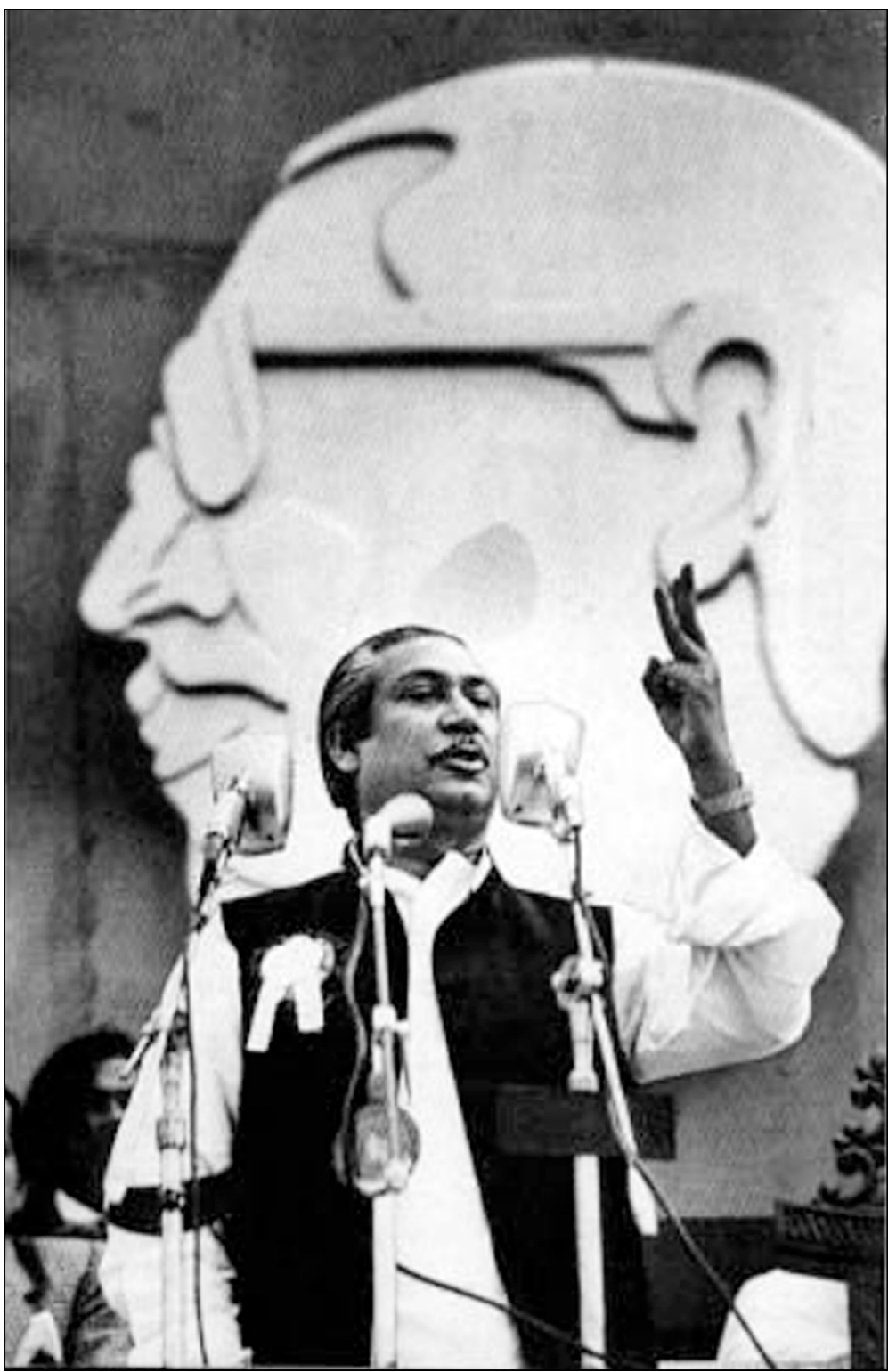


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.



Birth of a NATION

The genocide that was unleashed upon the peace loving Bengalis initiated on the darkest hours of the night of 25th March 1971 by the Pakistani forces ultimately ended up in the glorious emergence of the independent Bangladesh. It was the leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman that united the spirit of the Bengalis into a cemented whole to go fighting against the Pakistani forces with whatever they had at their disposal. It was the unconditional love for the land empowered by the vigour and patriotism of their leader Bangabandhu that engineered the nation to fight for establishing their national self esteem that eventually found its reward the victory at the cost of three millions lives to steer the land to the dawn of freedom and independence in 1971. The killing of the innocents at random

that night prompted the movement for its independence from the cruel clutches of the Pakistani forces under the glorious and dynamic leadership of Bangabandhu. People heard the roaring words from their leader "In every village, every neighbourhood, set up Sangram Parishad under the leadership of Awami league. And be prepared with whatever you have. Remember: Having mastered the lesson of sacrifice, we shall give more blood. God willing, we shall free the people of this land. The struggle this time is struggle for emancipation. The struggle this time is a struggle for independence." Today, on the eve of celebrating the Independence Day if anyone happens to be self complacent, he will surely make a blunder since this independence did cost us three million lives. It was the end of a collective obsession; it was the

end of a consistent suppression and violation of the human rights in the country by the dark forces that do not conform to the norms of humanity. And the sadder part of the story is that there had been the opposing forces from among us in the country in that period of time and the saddest is that they still remain in the society in an ever-expanding proportion posing danger to the nation. In upholding the spirit of this sacred saga we've to make some soul searching. We all should reassess our state of mind and shuffle things to set them on the correct path with a higher sense of a national esteem. Today, I urge all the politicians, the civil society and others to uphold the Holy Spirit of our independence. Rafiqul Islam Rime Agrabad, Chittagong

Thoughts on March 26

Alienated from the roots?



I was watching Channel -i news where they were showing a special report on the negligence shown by the English medium schools regarding national interests & history of our liberation. I was quite perplexed & frustrated to discover that the young kids who were questioned by the reporter had no idea about the day of our independence! One girl said she knows the day & just as I was about to give a satisfying smile, I heard her saying our independence day is 16 December! So much for a shock! If the fellow readers think that this is not a serious issue, then let me tell you that without knowing the proper history of our liberation war, without knowing about the sacrifices that the people made during the war, a person cannot have 'true patriotism' for our country. The English medium schools do not hesitate to include loads of books that cover the histories and wars of the European coun-

tries but pay no attention to include a single book dedicated to the history of our liberation war. Then of course you can argue about how many books we actually have portraying the true history of the liberation war. The report showed young kids from renowned English medium schools & if this is the state of the renowned schools, then it is easily understandable what can be the state of the not-so-renowned schools. I myself completed my primary & secondary education in renowned English medium schools but as far as I remember we were taught about the history of our independence & liberation war at a very early age, both in school & at home. Though I admit I still do not know as much as I should, I think the situation is getting increasingly worse. The implications of this growing problem can be far-reaching & devastating, to say the least. If the young generation

cannot identify & isolate the people who were actually against our liberation war (the so-called Rajakars & Al-Badr) & comprehend & be aware of their unscrupulous actions, then it is possible that we will bring them in power & we are already seeing some of them as our MPs & Ministers! In fact most of them are leading a life of blissful peace & tranquillity while a lot of the freedom fighters & families affected by the Rajakars are being ignored & neglected! Being exposed to fabricated information or no information at all about them will only cause greater damage to our country. Samiu Al Ahmed Tabib Dhanmondi, Dhaka

to programmes highlighting the emergence of the Independence Day. I am not aware of any other country in the world where national independence is written and rewritten, I do not know, who is gaining and who is losing. The people, who played the pivotal role in achieving our independence, are demonised. According to our constitution everything is subservient to the people. Therefore, in the name of the people, let us agree to one history of independence- not adulterated, not partisan and not self-defeating. Can we do it? I think we can. By the way, I am not offering any negative view on our TV channels. They have their freedom of opinion, and with due respect to them, I have submitted my opinion. A Probashi Bangladeshi, On e-mail

Lost spirit?

It only happened a week ago on what was just a regular day for Aboni, Aroni, Joyeeta and me. Tired from the schoolwork, we were returning home. Deciding to stop for a drink in the Baily Road's we were pondering where to go when something caught our attention. A poster, vividly red and black one, advertising a disco night. THE BIGGEST HIP HOP INDIAN NIGHT! R U READY FOR THE 26TH MARCH Disc-o-mix? We all stood stony-faced, it was as if no words were needed to comment on this as we wordlessly entered the fast food shop sporting the poster. I never felt my blood boiling any hotter than it did right at that moment. We all demanded the manager to get the poster out at any cost, but they wouldn't give it to us. After an hour of reasoning, threatening and coaxing, we were able to get the poster out. Even as we had the poster we knew this was not going to end there. And then we four started our own little war, protesting against a threat to our own existence. Now, the ones who're reading this might think "What's a stupid disco night on Independence Day to all the other million problems we're having?" I wouldn't blame them. For

it's the truth. But then again, my question to them would be, when our country is dying right in front of our eyes, is there really nothing we can do? Are we that ungrateful and selfish? Are we that weak? I don't think so. Because 35 years ago this same country and its people stood up in an unbelievable war for independence. And that is the same exact day as today. 26th March. We stood up, we united, and we won. I know we couldn't hold on to our independence, but that was our own fault and we cannot just let our country and our existence die for that. Three million people died one day so that we could have independence, so that we could breathe in the air of an independent country. Can we even imagine how huge a debt that is? Yet today, at this period, every moment we're disgracing the sacrifice that was made by countless martyrs. So today would be a good day to start. Thirty-five years ago, our ancestors sacrificed their lives against a threat to their existence. The same threat is rising now, only in the changed form of outer aggression. So today would be a good day to stop that. I have faith in my country and its people. United, I think anything is possible. We knew that the protest of four 15 year olds wouldn't make much of

a difference, but we still tried, for we believe in our culture and in our heritage. Independence Day is a day we're supposed to be discovering our heritage and respecting it and taking new pledges, not go dancing to the songs that aren't even near our culture. So we protest. And we're asking you to do the same. Mayesha Tasnim Priya On e-mail 'Kleptocracy and patriotism' The comments by Mr. M Haque (DS March 27) under the above caption were misconstrued and off based. My article "Kleptocracy and patriotism" (DS March 20) was not about corruption per se, it was about the corrupt politicians. The examples of Indonesia and Japan were cited to make the point that corrupt officials often work to achieve more growth to deflect their kitschy behaviour to steal more. Mr. Haque deliberately obscured this imperative point for his negative emotion possibly invoked by my call for banning of all foreign travel visas to the corrupt and the money launderers. What I sidetracked though, is asking the Bangladesh government to cancel passports of all corrupt politicians and public

officials (retired or active). Somehow, I knew that will not happen. That triggered my instinct to urge all foreign embassies to discontinue issuing visas to the corrupt and the money launderers. According to the definition I quoted, corrupt politicians and terrorists are certainly less than patriots, and I stand by it. Mr. Haque's other comment about the World Bank, IMF and my belief on what Mr. Alawi of Iraq or Mr. Ramsfeld of the US has said or did not say is capriciously off track. Abdullah A. Dewan On e-mail Tax evasion From The Daily Star of Friday, 24 March, 2006, we have been informed that the National Board of Revenue (NBR) targets 200 big businessmen for Tax Evasion as NBR found that Directors of different companies had evaded income tax by hiding the particulars of their lifestyle as required by the NBR. NBR will never succeed in this kind of operations because there cannot be two lawsone for the high government officials and the other for top businessmen. Many government officers pay more than their salary in house rent. NBR should investigate all such cases. The corrupt govern-

ment officials are doing the greatest damage to society. Mustafa Kamal Mansoor SulakBahar, Panchlaish, Chittagong Family background in public service Refer to 'Bureaucracy: Points to ponder' by Kazi S M Khasrul Alam Quddusi published in DS on 23 January in which he made a recommendation for the recruitment of candidates to public service as well as other responsible jobs. He wrote, "Phenomena such as family background, track record of behaviour pattern, moral character, innate propensity etc might be given due importance along with the academic excellence and psychological aptitude." I beg to disagree because in modern times things like family background are not taken into serious consideration anywhere in the world. Roney On e-mail

বাস্থ্য অফস্থিৎ ড়ভ ড়ং ংরসবং?

Most Americans say that their founding fathers fought a War of Independence against Britain because they thought, "taxation without representation is tyranny." This is absolutely incorrect. The Stamp Duty of 1765, to defray some costs that Britain incurred to protect America from the French incursion, was never collected and later revoked and all 13 colonies had their own elected local legislatures with the British Parliament only playing a supervisory role. It may be recalled when on April 12, 1770, the British Parliament repealed the Stamp Duty because of opposition from the colonists, some Americans, who called themselves Sons of Liberty, were not happy. In most leading urban areas of America, obscure political hacks such as Sam Adams of Boston had achieved public renown and personal success for the first time in their lives by denouncing

the threat of British tyranny from the moment of the Stamp Act. No new dish of outrage from Britain meant lean days or bad home cooking. As time passed, the stature of politicians whose popularity depended upon British tyranny diminished progressively. They despaired for their future. Their influence faded inexorably. Then in 1773, the Parliament passed a law with American implications. In the course of regulating the affairs of the East India Company, the House of Commons legislated some provisions that would make British tea, legitimately imported, cheaper and therefore competitive with that smuggled into the colonies from Holland. It lowered the duties on British tea. So-called patriots like Sam Adams interpreted cheap tea as the means of seducing the Sons of Liberty into subjugation. According to them, the House of Commons had paused

for three years "not to repent their evil deeds, but rather to collect themselves, and devise some measures more effectual. The plan of oppression is renewed." Adams and his followers decided to "venture upon a desperate remedy" to prevent the tea from being landed. On December 16, 1773, one hundred and fifty Sons of Liberty disguised as native Indians boarded three ships in Boston harbour and "in a very little time," according to Sam Adams, "every one of the teas was immersed in the bay, without the least injury to private property." Of course, the East India Company regarded their tea as private property of some value. In fact, by their accounting, 10,000 pound worth of private property had been wantonly and publicly destroyed, leading to a chain of events which ultimately triggered a full scale war. However, if Britain had ignored Sam Adams and his antics and did not declare

martial law in Boston, Sam Adams and his followers would have again lost their standing and like Canada, America would have evolved peacefully as an independent nation within the Commonwealth. The 18th century political opportunists like Sam Adams and his group of Sons of Liberty, US President George W. Bush and his neo-conservative underlings seem to be using spreading democracy in Iraq as a thinly disguised quest to promote their own careers. Having been elected in a dubious 2000 presidential race by disenfranchising thousands of African-American voters and by the intervention of partisan Supreme Court judges, Mr. Bush needed some spectacular show of force to project his image as a saviour of democracy. To achieve this, he is using the military intervention in Iraq first to dismantle Iraq's nonexistent weapons of mass destruction

and when weapons could not be found, he has expanded his justification for military intervention as a gesture to bring democracy in Iraq. According to Bush's ambassador to Iraq Zalmi Khalilzad, the Americans might have opened "a Pandora's box in Iraq." The Sunni insurgents are attacking the Shi'ite majority who have won the election. The once-dominant Sunnis resent their loss of power and now dominant Shi'ite majority fear that any concession may lead to renewed Sunni domination and the Kurds are looking for an opportunity to secede from Iraq. Instead of bringing democracy, Bush might have brought anarchy in Iraq. The American forces have become bystanders incapable of stemming the sectarian bloodletting. Mahmood Elahi Ottawa, Canada

