

POST '71 GENERATION

Desh-what does it mean for us?

**DURDANA GHAS**  
**W**HEN we, the after the '71 generation, were born in this country we were given a gift. This is something most of us are unaware of. Have we ever spent a moment to contemplate what gift we have been endowed with? The answer is 'no'. It is because we took it for granted. Yes, we took our independence for granted. We never think what would

ferences between a youth of 1971 and a youth of today? It is beyond us to feel the spirit of 1971 that turned an ordinary farmer or a student into a 'shongshoptok', a soldier who fights acknowledging the fact that death is perhaps inevitable. We did not see the Independence War. We read books and newspaper articles, watch movies and visit photography shows in our quest to understand what made people jump into the flame of war

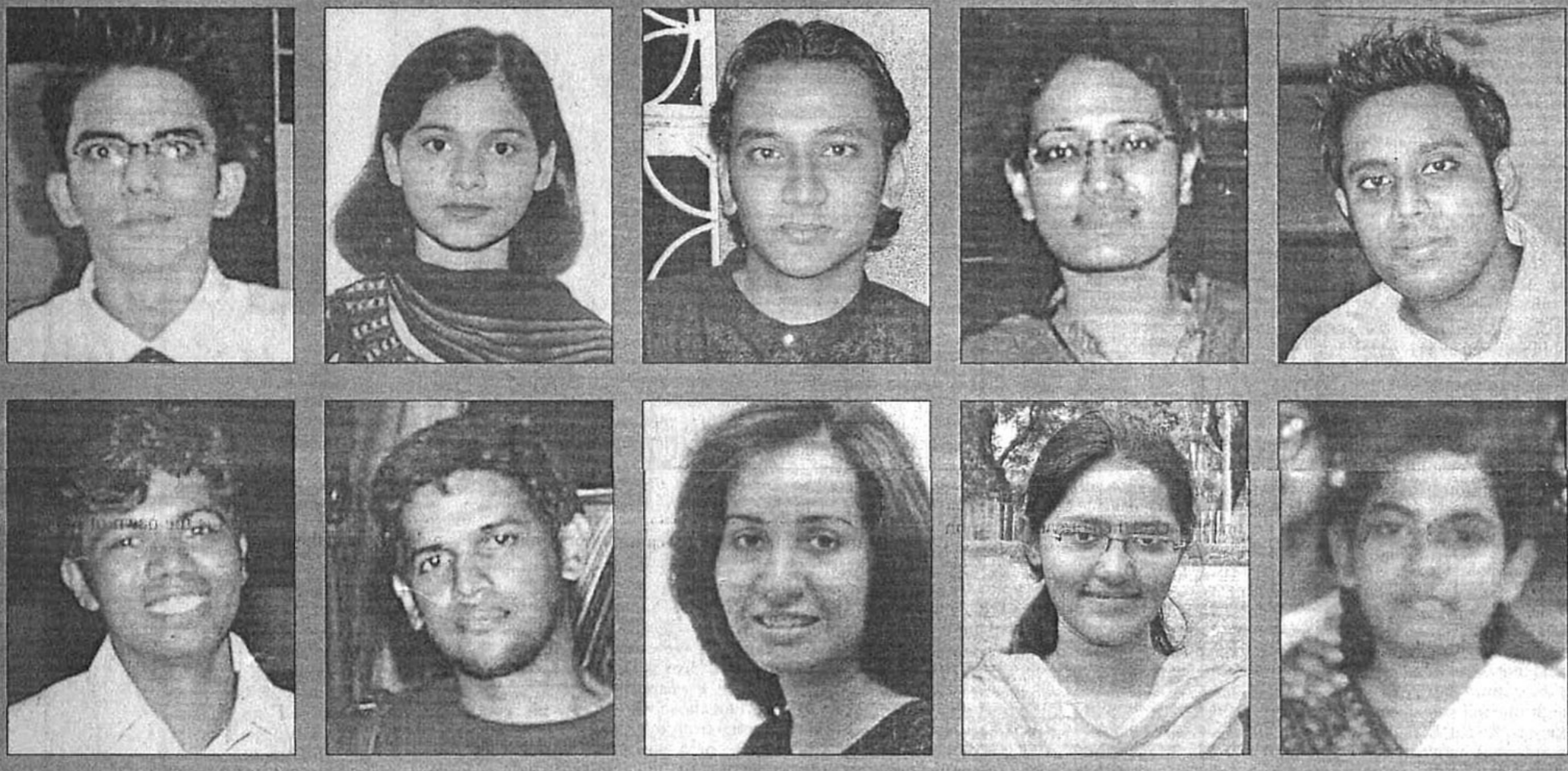
tion of history. Why does it change with the change of government? Why are Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and President Ziaur Rahman given the same weight? Why will we be deprived of our right to know the original history?" said Jhumi, working in a research cell. "When I walk on the street or go somewhere I notice a rundown building as the office of the freedom fighters' welfare trust. I know many educated

and on. Now we take it for granted and everyone seems to be happy about it! Why will the government allow black money? Is there any precedence of this kind of bizarre law in any country? What kind of law is this?" "I think we have freedom of speech but it does not have any desired effect. We have become individualistic. Many of us want to go abroad. I feel we should do something for the poor instead of going abroad but I do not know what to do."

this generation one group is politically involved, the second group, mostly from rich section, does not give a damn about desh or independence, they just want a secure and happy life in this country and have no idea about Bangladesh and the third group is genuinely concerned about the current events but are incapable of bringing any change. I belong to the third group. We think about the country but we are not organised. We do analyse but end up without any

groups between BNP and Awami League but we hardly see any change within these groups. They have their own reserved space and are deliberately separated from the mainstream. "Now we see that *rajakars* are bestowed with the posts of ministers and the freedom fighters are languishing in oblivion with amputated limbs. Can you tell me what message these facts give us?" asked Karim. "I do not think our generation thinks about independence at all. There is brain drain, insecurity, no economic development, and political instability in the country. We could not honour people like Dr Yunus. Educated people like Saifur Rahman are after him. Why would anyone want to live here where respectable persons are not given due respects? I would rather be a second class citizen in a developed country," said Junaid, a BBA student of North South University. "Nowadays people feel embarrassed if they are asked to talk about independence. The reason is the rise of the anti-liberation force. There is a group of youth from the rich section of the society; all they want is the latest mp3 player, AC room, chat room and ice cream parlours. They have no idea about independence. Their desh is Gulshan, Banani, Uttara and Dhanmondi. This lack of knowledge leads to young people painting Pakistani flags on their faces and flaunting posters that read 'Marry me Afridi' during cricket matches," said Farzana Yasmeen, a student of Dhaka University (DU). "Independence was vital for us. But now it is politicised. In our school text books the words 'Pakistan army' was scantily used and it was replaced by the word 'invading force' as if writing 'Pakistan army' is a taboo," said Mamun, a student of Economics of DU. "Mainstream youth may support different political parties but they are not divided. But we cannot do anything significant for the country due to lack of guidance," said Shahid, a student of

Computer Science in Dhaka University. "Sometimes the sense of insecurity is frustrating. Intellectuals like Dr. Zafar Iqbal and Prof. Abul Barkat get death threats. Police beat up a diabetic woman because she was caught in the middle of a fray. Police has so much power they can do whatever they like. But why will it happen in an independent country?" said Fairuz, who works for an NGO. "We support our country in cricket matches but how many times did we try to feel the spirit of independence? I watched a movie Mukti Gan as a part of my studies. I was moved and struck. Although there were no fighting scenes I realised the reality of the war through the slogans and the scenes of the refugee camps. I felt the spirit of '71 with a cultural group roaming in different parts of the country. After watching it I felt that many of us do not feel about the war the way we should feel," said Sabrina F Ahmed, a student of film studies at Independent University Bangladesh. "It is true that now we do not have the spirit of '71 but I think if the situation demands we can strike back again like that. I do not know how it is possible for some people not to think about the country. You are living in a land and you are not thinking about her. Everyone should work for the country according to his/her ability. To me, this is patriotism. If you are a filmmaker then making a good film is working for the country, if you are a reporter then writing a good report is working for your country, if you are a doctor then treating the poor is working for your country. You know it best when you are shirking responsibilities and that is unpatriotic. Is it so important to go abroad because it offers you a lavish life and security? I would rather stay in a government hospital working 20 hours a day. It is demanding but I am satisfied," said Farzana Islam, an intern doctor of Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital.



have happened if we had been born before 1971 and had had to go through the tribulations of war. We never think how people sacrificed their lives for their motherland so that we can breathe freely in an independent country. Have we ever thought for a moment the dif-

defying life. In our pursuit to understand the perception of desh (country), independence, patriotism and politics among today's youth we spoke to some of them. "One thing that hurts me most is the deliberate distort-

people who do not know the difference between March 26 and December 16. Isn't it a shame for all?" said Yamin Tauseef Jahangir, a student of EastWest University. "Why is our country regarded as the most corrupt one? And it is going on and on

"Only one exceptional person I can mention is Dr Muhammad Yunus. He worked hard so that the effect reached the grassroots level. I think he has succeeded and in doing so has given us a message," he said. "There are three groups in

solution," said Muhaimin Karim, a BBA student of Jahangirnagar University. "I think it was a mistake to forgive the *rajakars*. It gave them a good base and now they are so strong that other groups need their support in winning polls. We see politicians change

the university are M. Akkas Ali, Madhusudhan Barman, M. Nurul Haque, Gazi Wahiduzzaman, M Hasan Ali and Giasuddin.

Aminul Islam is Myensing Correspondent, The Daily Star.

MARTYRS OF BAU

Never their glory can fade

**AMINUL ISLAM**  
**T**WO memorial structures have been constructed on the campus of Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU) to keep the memories of the martyrs of 1971 alive. The memorials titled "Bijoy '71" and "Muktijuddha Smriti Stambha" are very artistically designed. A total of 19 people including a teacher, students and employees of BAU sacrificed their lives for the country's independence. "Bijoy '71", a sculpture with a combination of three figures, has a beautiful design. The white sculpture was built by eminent sculptor Shyamol Chowdhury depicting the all-out participation of the people of all walks of life in our liberation war. The three figures include a woman, a student and a farmer. Construction of the 36-foot high sculpture at a cost of Tk. 24 lakh was completed in 2004. Late Vice-Chancellor of BAU Prof. Dr. Muhammed Hussain laid the foundation stone of the sculpture in 1998. The student in action with a rifle represents the active par-

ticipation of the students in the liberation war to inspire the nation to take a united stand against the occupation army and their local collaborators. It is known to all that students played a very vital role in all democratic movements that eventually led to the independence of the country from foreign domination. The image of the woman symbolizes women's struggle in our liberation war. During the war, womenfolk of the country played a significant role, participating in the war with the men and assisting the freedom fighters in various ways. The icon of a farmer created in the sculpture shows the participation of the common people to drive away the occupation forces from our motherland. The other memorial "Muktijuddha Smriti Stambha" was established soon after independence. The names of the 19 martyrs of BAU are inscribed on the memorial with their identities and the dates on which they embraced martyrdom. The Liberation martyrs of BAU are ABM Ashrafal Haque Bhuiyan, a professor of BAU; the martyred students are M. Jamal Hossain, Abdul Matin Khondaker Tipu, both second

year students and Monirul Islam Akanda, a third year student of Fisheries Faculty; ANM Nazmul Ahsan, a 5th semester student and Kazi Akhter Kasem, a student of 6th semester of Agri-Engineering Faculty; Khorshid Alam Shiblee, a 4th semester student and Habibur Rahman, a first year student of Agriculture Faculty; Ibrahim Mustafa Kamal, Kazi M. Monjur Hossain, and Abul Kasem, all

first year students of Veterinary Faculty; M. Shamsul Haque Talukder, a 4th year student and Md. Tahsin Ali, a third year student of Agri-Economics Faculty. Four Residential Halls out of

eleven for BAU students were named after the BAU martyrs. These are Ashrafal Haque Hall, Shaheed Nazmul Ahsan Hall, Jamal Hossain Hall and Shamsul Haque Hall. The martyred employees of

the university are M. Akkas Ali, Madhusudhan Barman, M. Nurul Haque, Gazi Wahiduzzaman, M Hasan Ali and Giasuddin.

Aminul Islam is Myensing Correspondent, The Daily Star.



PHOTO: AMINUL ISLAM