Dhaka Day by Day

Threading the Way to Independence

By Rahat Fahmida

"True! — Nervous — dreadfully nervous we were on the night of 29th August, 1971. The dead hour of the night, amidst the dreadful silence of the house, so strange a sound as that excited me to uncontrollable terror. Yet, I refrained and stood still. I scarcely breathed", said Saima Khan one of the four sisters of Bir Pratik Habibul Alam, as she and her sister Asma, talked to 'The Daily Star', about their motivation during the liberation war. During the daylight of the previous day many freedom fighters were arrested, including Professor Jahanara Imam's son, Rumi, and houses were raided of most of the suspects.

Saima's house was on Dilu Road, and during 1971, it was rather a mess for the freedom fighters of Sector 2, and a place for storing their arms. This was viciously tracked down by the Pakistan army.

Saima Khan and family.

Hence as soon as they were alerted of the raid, Saima's father was immediately sent to the next house for temporary shelter, as he might have been the first one in the house to be arrested. As Saima went on, "the night waned, and we worked hastily in silence to remove all evidence of my father and brother, as much as was possible. We did this so cleverly, and cunningly, that no human eye — not even the army's could have detected anything wrong. As two jeeps stopped by our house, we heard their army boots stamping down to our doorstep. Our hearts stopped beating for a few moments. We did not know what would happen next. They introduced themselves, with perfect suavity, as army officers do. Suspicions of foul play had been aroused, information had been lodged to them, and they were deputed to search the premises.

Within a short time they discovered our trench in the kitchen floor, where arms were hidden for the freedom fighters. Emptying it with mock laughter, left us untouched, for our pretence of unawareness and innocence. We made them believe that we had just arrived from Khulna that very day. This was possible only for our eldest sister, for whom it was true. And fortunately there were some extra tickets with us to help us escape from the grasp of the Pakistani army.

"The next morning, with the day break, my father and two of my sisters — Asma and Reshma left Dhaka. And my mother and I stayed on, praying for the best."

The experience of war, and especially trench warfare have entered deeply into the language, culture and imagery of the country. For the members of the Alam family this continues to be a part of their treasured memories, as Saima stated their work during the last week of July '71 and early days of August. "We had some experience of working in Dhaka city during the Liberation War of 1971. We were three sisters Asma, Reshma, and Saima. We worked alongside home other families involved in the liberation struggle in Dhaka section-2. For example : We stored sten-guns, hand granads, and handed them to the freedom fighters went out on action.

14th of August is the independence day of Pakistan. At that time Pakistan wanted to show that East Bengal was firmly in its grip. On the other hand the freedom fighters wanted to demonstrate their progress to the citizens of Dhaka. They had a plan of flying the flag of independent Bangladesh all over the city on the 14th of August.

"We were asked to make those flags by the freedom fighters of Sector 2, who included my brother, now Bir Pratik Habibul Alam, Shahadat Choudhury, Fateh Ali, Zia and Promukh. We sewed busily for a week starting from the 21st of July. And we managed 200 flags, though they were not all of the same size. We were worried that buying large amounts of green, red and yellow cloth from the market would attract suspicion, so we bought many ready-made green 'lungis'. Drawing the map of Bangladesh was not a problem since we were young and our school lessons were still fresh in our minds. Our older sister, Asma, was then a MSC student at Dhaka. Our flags showed the map of Bangladesh in a red circle against a green background. We started sewing by hand but then we moved on to sewing machines for a quicker work. Making so many flags was quite risky. My mother was worried that the left-over round pieces of the green cloth would be bound to raise suspicion of the Pakistan authorities, so she crocheted them into table-mats and handed them out among our relatives.

"On Pakistan's independence day, we flew our flags in many important places in the city, flying high in the sky under gas baloons. I don't remember all the places where my brother and his friends flew these flags, but Azimpur, Topkhana Road, and the Stadium remain clearly in my mind."

"The Pakistan army were infuriated to see the flags of independent Bangladesh flying aloft; and so they started shooting at the baloons to bring them down. But the freedom fighters had achieved their goal."

Men are not motivated by a clear view of their own interests; their minds are filled with the cloudy residues of discarded beliefs; their motives are not always clear even to themselves. And that is why we are in such a confused state today.

'Preserve history of liberation war'

Speaker Shaikh Razzaque Ali Sunday underscored the need for preserving the history of the liberation war and the people's movement for democracy for the future generation, reports BSS.

He said, the history behind these histories of movements depicting the participation of the people irrespective of their opinion and political affiliation should also be preserved.

He said we have established the structure of democracy, all parliamentary committees have been formed and the government has been made answerable to the people through the sovereign parliament."

But democracy would still remain outside the structure if the people did not notice the practice of democracy. He said, " to establish democracy, we must speak in the language of democracy and have patience."

He said, all disputes should be settled in the Sangsad and congratulated Justice Kemaluddin Hossain for his recent remarks in this regard.

Shaikh Razzaque Ali was speaking at the inaugural of a fortnight-long photo exhibition "Dhaka 1948-71" at Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy in Dhaka in celebration of the Victory Day.

About 300 photographs depicting the liberation struggle and the mass movement for realisation of people's rights and democracy from 1948 to 1971 were put on display at the academy galleries.

Jointly organised by the Shilpakala Academy and the Dhaka City Museum, the inaugural function was also addressed by the President of the museum, Prof. Nazrul Islam, and the Director General of Shilpakala Academy, Kamal Lohani.

Shaikh Razzaque Ali said, the future generation should know the economic, political and historical background of the freedom movements.

He said, they should also know those who were active in politics during 1948 - 1971 period and that inspite of their differences in opinion and mode of action, the nation could be united in 1971 for the war of liberation.

He said, as in 1971 the nation could again be united in 1991 for establishment of democracy through the 12th Amendment of the constitution.

Mostafiz back home

Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman returned home (Sunday) attending he 6th OIC summit in the Senegalese capital Dakar which concluded Thursday, reports UNB.

Mostafiz was one of the entourage members of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, who led the country's delegation to the 4-day conference.

Begum Zia earlier returned home on Thursday from Dakar.

Hafiz New Director of BPDB Public Relations

Khondker Hafizur Rahman has taken over as Director, Public Relations of Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB), reports BSS.

Rahman joined the erstwhile EPWAPDA as Information Officer in 1967 and served in different capacities.

Rahman replaced AKM Samsuddin Ahmed who went on retirement last month.

Slum dwellers demand rehabilitation in city

Bangladesh Bastuhara Jana Kalyan Samity has called for rehabilitating the slum and shanty dwellers in the capital and other cities and towns to enable them contribute to the national development, reports UNB.

In a statement on the eve of the 20th anniversary of the Victory Day today (Monday) Chief Patron of the Samity Amanullah Khan exhorted the people and the freedom fighters to build a society free for exploitation and discrimination.

He urged them to uphold the same spirit of sacrifice which earned a sovereign and independent Bangladesh where they would see their hopes and asptrations fulfilled.

It is unfortunate that very little has been done to improve the lot of the socially deprived who took an active part in the liberation war, he observed.

Khan appealed to the government and the opposition to reach a national consensus to resolve the country's chronic problems and thereby earn the goodwill of the deprived, exploited and suppressed multitudes who are still groaning under the yoke of poverty, disease and hunger.

He said determined political leadership from both the ruling party and the opposition can overcome many intractable ills afflicting the socio-economic life of the teeming millions.

Bangladesh team off to India for dialogue

A five-member Bangladesh team left Dhaka Sunday morning for India to participate in a four-day South Asian dialogue among leaders of public opinion, scholars and members of different professions, reports BSS.

According to a press release the meeting began in New Delhi Sunday.

The participants from Bangladesh are : former Foreign Minister Dr Kamal Hossain, former Planning Minister Dr Fasihuddin Mahtab, former Adviser for Planning Prof Rehman Sobhan, former Foreign Secretary and Foreign Affairs Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed and Associate Professor in the International Relations Department of the Dhaka University Dr Meghna Guha Thakurta.

The participants will discuss how to improve the climate and environment for promoting regional cooperation.

The preparatory meeting to plan the conference and to draw up the agenda was held in Lahore in September last, the press release said.

Obituary

Mr Abdur Rouf Bhuiyan, Mutwalli of Beraid Bhuiyan Para Jamey Masjid died on December 10 at Beraid in Dhaka. He was 82.

Qul khwani

The qul khwani of Mosammat Kaniz Fatema Khanam, mother of eminent film director Ehteshamur Rahman and Mustafizur Rahman, will be held at House No 4, Road No 9, Gulshan (1) today after Asr prayers, family sources said, reports BSS.

Relations and admirers have been requested to attend the qul.

Mosammat Kaniz Fatema Khanam, the eldest daughter of late Shefaul Mulk Hakim Habibur Rahman Khan Akhunjadah, died of old age complications at the age of 85 years at her son's Gulshan residence, the sources said.

TV Monday

5.00	Opening announcement, Al Quran, programme summary
5.10	News in Bangla
5.20	Reading from the Geeta
5.30	Special programme for children
6.25	Dripta Chetona
7.00	Angikar
7.30	Abbhudoy
8.00	News in Bangla
8.40	Special drama
10.00	News in English
10.30	Subarna Prahar
11.30	Khabar/The news
11.40	Tuesday's programme summary
11.45	Closing

Weather

Night temperature may fall

Weather is likely to remain mainly dry across the country during the next 24 hours till 6 pm Monday, reports UNB.

Met office says sky however, may remain partly cloudy over Chittagong and Dhaka divisions and the regions of Barisal, Patuakhali and Khulna.

Night temperature may fall by1-2 degree Celsius over Rajshahi division and the regions of Kushtia and Jessore and remain nearly unchanged elsewhere over the country.

Sunday's maximum temperature in Dhaka was 26.7 degree Celsius and the minimum 15.4 degrees. Country's lowest temperature 11 degrees was recorded at Dinajpur.

Percentage of humidity was 80 in the morning and 62 in the evening.

Sun sets today (Monday) at 5: 14 pm and rises tomorrow (Tuesday) at 6:35 am.

On this day of triumph we remember with pride the valiant warriors and share the joy of glory with the nation

Bangladesh Steamer Agents Association
Khulna

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৩১শে ডিসেম্বরের মধ্যে একটি পলিসি নিন একটি মাত্র প্রিমিয়াম দিয়ে লাভ করুন পুরো বছরের বোনাস !

জীবন বীমা কর্পোরেশনের পলিসিতে আপনার আর্থিক নিরাপত্তার সাথে সাথে অধিক মুনাফারও ব্যবস্থা রয়েছে ।

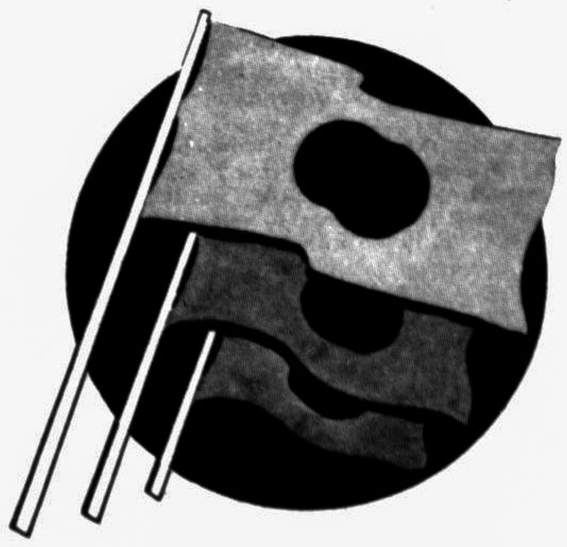
শিক্ষা ও বিবাহ বীমা
শিশু-নিরাপত্তা বীমা
পেনশন বীমা
৩-কিস্তি বীমা
থ্রুপ মেয়াদী বীমা
প্রভৃতির মত
অনেক আকর্ষণীয় বীমা পলিসি দিচ্ছে জীবন বীমা কর্পোরেশন

আপনার চাহিদা অনুযায়ী যে কোন একটি বেছে নিন

বিস্তারিত তথ্যের জন্যে আপনার বীমা প্রতিনিধি বা আপনার নিকটস্থ আমাদের যে কোনো অফিসের সাথে যোগাযোগ করুন

জীবন বীমা কর্পোরেশন
একমাত্র রাষ্ট্রীয় জীবন বীমা প্রতিষ্ঠান

We salute the brave sons of the soil who made the supreme sacrifice to free the country on this day and share the joy of freedom with the nation



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