

RISING STARS

Negative Vibes on Victory Day

by Ahsan S Kabir

I was born several years after the War, almost a year before Sheikh Mujib was killed, in a quiet place a way away from Bangladesh; so I wasn't surrounded by the violence, the bloodshed that had accompanied the country's birth and its leader's death. Perhaps I would have felt different had that not been the case.

Two countries arose from British India, and one of them was split in the middle into two regions. For twenty-four years the west tried to bleed the east of its resources, its culture, its pride. When the East Pakistanis would no longer stand to be trampled on, they took up arms and fought like hell for a short while; and eventually, with the help of neighbours, kicked the Pakistanis (for the former were now Bangladeshis) whimpering home. What an achievement! It ought to make us all proud of our history.

Yeah. Right. The reasoning for creating Bangladesh may have been sound at the time: to establish the rights, to prevent the repression of its people. It's become a cliché, now.

One would have some expectations, on hearing the pre-history of this country, the oh-so-glorious struggle of its people, that over the years Bangladesh would develop progressively; perhaps not into a Newly Industrialised Country just yet, but on the threshold

of rapid progress. One would think that values would uphold.

Instead: The situation is growing from bad to worse every day. Millions unemployed — someone tells me it may be as much as forty per cent. General deterioration of the social fabric, so that those who aren't official thieves are left to do their work on the streets. Everybody is so concerned with making as much profit with as little exertion as possible; there is no such thing as doing a good job for the money being paid. Corruption everywhere. Not only that, people block anyone else who has initiative and dares challenge the status quo.

The strictures of society are inhibiting, and here lies a danger. New ideas are unwelcome. A stagnant society will only lead to decay. Look around, and you will see the truth of that statement.

Look at the leaders we follow. I'd laugh if it weren't so sad. Listen to them talk of serving the nation, of upholding this and that, listen to them attack each other and feign innocence, listen to them feed you crap when they are obviously only self-serving.

Here's even a greater joke: the very people who were against the creation of Bangladesh are the ones in or

nearing power.

Perhaps this is the greatest crime, the hypocrisy that seems ingrained in the psyche. Politicians are only the most blatant example. No one is innocent.

It is amazing how much money a supposedly poor country such as Bangladesh professes to be can spend much on trivial and useless pomp. No one expects — or should expect — a country to go beyond its means in treating people well. The cost of building a fountain is equal to the sum of the annual salaries of two thousand average income Bangladeshis. In other words, six to ten thousand people could have been provided for with that money for a year; I wonder if hardly more than a hundred people gained from the construction of the fountain.

And then some time next year the country will beg for more money. The people have no shame.

Are there any excuses? The ones that exist are hardly strong. Excusing the people responsible for the situation of the country on grounds of humanity is stupid. The population didn't explode overnight; natural calamities could be dealt with methodically.

Foreign aid could have provided for much, in spite of the strings, the tendency to blame

others. Preferably "external forces" is merely a ploy to hide one's own inadequacies. My feeling is that these problems could have been dealt with as they arose, had anyone been troubled enough to put aside their own immediate interests and tried to work things out. They aren't.

Millions of people suffering or died for this? My mother tells me that life during the War was not unlike living in hell. Victory Day for her and many others meant the end of that hell. But then, what do you care? The formula has been driven into your head, that the War 2nd Victory Day are special. In truth, you aren't bothered. You should be, if you want to see any positive changes.

I (and anyone else who may have tried to give a damn about this God-forsaken country) can't do anything about any of this. I'm just some punk off the streets, with foreign ideas in his head; so, some will say, sit down and shut up! Who am I to say anything at all? No one will listen.

No one wants to because they are totally self-concerned and they don't want to see their reflection in the mirror, the mirror of truth.

Victory Day? A victory remains so when there is nothing to tarnish it. There is nothing now to celebrate, nothing to be proud of. I won't, and I'm not.



Girls of Bharatshwart Homes do an exercise routine on Victory Day at the Dhaka Stadium

Bet you didn't know

Why Do Fish Hang Around Under Bridges Even Though They See Their Friends Getting Yanked Out of the Water With Barbed Hooks in Their Lips?

LETS be brutally honest: Fish are not rocket scientists. They don't know they're being fished," says Dr. Arthur Myrberg, Professor of Marine Science at the University of Miami.

Fish hang out at bridges because bridges provide good shade and darkness. A bridge

has lots of plankton hanging off it, perfect for snacking. Also, bridges usually span the narrowest portion of a bay or river, so there is a good current of water, making it easier for fish to swirl water through their gills.

When a fish sees another fish thrashing around wildly and then flying vertically out of the world, its pathetic little fish brain tells it that something dangerous may be happening, and it darts for cover.

But after about thirty seconds it calms down and resumes its

normal life, which is dedicated to mindless feeding and reproduction, sort of like the Why staff on a Friday night. A shark that has been hooked, reeled in, unhooked, and thrown back in the water may chomp down on a fishing line within a couple of hours. Fish are not totally lacking in memory, but they lack good judgment.

Why Is Coral Officially Considered An Animal Even Though It Obviously Isn't?

WHAT people don't realize about coral is that it's a nocturnal animal. So when you go snorkeling or scuba diving in the daytime, all you see is this hard, pitted, rocklike thing, or in the case of the soft corals, you see what appears to be a plant, with lots of branches and twiggly extensions. But if you dove at night, you'd see innumerable polyps erupting from the coral as they wake up and start eating. Wouldn't that be exciting!

STAR PROFILE



Photo: Bob Carlos Clarke

Name: Elton John

Real Name: Reginald Dwight
DOB: 25.3.46
Did you know that:
— His latest song "The Last Song" is based on a story between a boy who has AIDS and his father?
— He used to be George

Michael's teen idol and then became his close friend when the latter gained super star status of his own.

— He actually has given up his outrageous stage outfits for good?
— He went to music college at the age of 11 years?

Words' Worth

— by Faizun Kamal

"One picture is worth a thousand words" goes the timeworn maxim. "But," one writer tartly said, "It takes words to say that. We live by words: love, truth, beauty, God. We fight for words: freedom, country fame. Words bestow the priceless gift of articulation on our minds and hearts — from "mother" to "infinity". And the men who truly shape our destiny, the giants who teach us, inspire us, help us to fulfil our highest aspirations, lead us to deeds of immortality, are those who use words with clarity, passion and grandeur: Mohammed, Socrates, Zuther, Jesus, Churchill, Lincoln, Sheikh Mujib. I like big words that come tumbling out of the mouth — abracadabra, boogie-woogie... And I love softwords that practically flow when you say them — rendezvous, fluorescence, benevolence. Then there are words like — daffodil, and bougainvillea — that bloom when you say them. And there are words that sound exotic — Frangipani, Arabia, Bahamas. Then there are words that sound ugly and are ugly — carnage, haro-kiri, holocaust, massacre. There are words that you can almost taste — pickle, mustard, sweetmeat. But the very best words sound like what they mean. The most beautiful emotion in the word is love; a word that is too clipped for such a big emotion. But the French have a word that is lovely and words beautifully — amour.

QUIZ CLUB

Here are this week's quiz questions. Now don't forget — if you get all of 'em right you may win a very attractive prize! Participants must be below 21. We ate also happy to announce November 28th's Quiz Club winner. And the winner is Farhana Sultana Saleh. Congratulations Farhana! Please contact our office to know when you can collect your prize.

1. Name the persons who held the following posts in the first, provisional government of Bangladesh set-up at Mujibnagar in Kushtia: a) President; b) Acting President; c) Prime Minister; d) Home Minister; e) Foreign Minister; f) Relief and Rehabilitation.
2. When was the provisional government formally set-up?
3. Who was appointed as the Commander-in Chief of Bangladesh Liberation Forces of Mukti Bahini?
4. Which two officers served as the C-in-C's Chief of Staff and Deputy Chief of Staff?
5. How many sectors was the country divided into during the War of Liberation?
6. Three brigades of the Bangladesh Liberation Forces were formed during the war, named 'S' Force, 'Z' Force and 'K' Force. Which three officers commanded these brigades?
7. Which freedom-fighter was known as 'Tiger' and commanded his own force of 17,000 guerrillas during the War of Liberation?
8. Which unit of the Indian Army first took part in direct action alongside the Mukti Bahini? When and where did the action take place?
9. Who was the commander of the joint India-Bangladesh forces, who accepted the surrender of Pakistani troops on Dec. 16, 1971?
10. Who carried out the gruesome killings of Bengalee intellectuals at Rayer Bazaar, Mirpur etc. just prior to the liberation of Dhaka?

Answers to November 28th's Quiz Club:

1. Smt. Vijay Lakshmi Pandit.
2. Cherrapunji (Meghalaya)
3. Free Town
4. 1498
5. Victor Hugo
6. Bull Fighting Matador
7. Washington Iruing
8. Leva
9. Boxing
10. Lord Protector of England (1652-58)



Three Tales About Kiyai Sentar

EVERYONE knew Kiyai Sentar to be a religious scholar with amazing magical powers. People said that many robbers and thieves had been brought under control by his mystic powers. One day, a thief saw him returning home from a long journey. His cart was filled with sacks, boxes and all kinds of fruits. "He must be rich now," thought the thief. "And later on, tonight, he is sure to sleep soundly after tiring himself out like that."

That night the thief approached Kiyai Sentar's house. He peeped in from behind the wall to make sure that the people inside the house were asleep. Once he knew that Kiyai Sentar and his wife were sound asleep, he entered the house. He got in easily through the window.

Having got inside the house, the thief headed straight for the room in which he could see all the boxes. "Kiyai has just come home after trading trip," said the thief. "These boxes are sure to be full of money or jewelry," he thought.

So he took the largest box and headed off. "I'm a wealthy man now," thought the thief. "This box is so terribly heavy that there is sure to be a lot inside."

Back in his home, he opened the box carefully. In the darkness he slipped his hand into the box. What a shock he got! He started screaming. "Oh, oh, help me, help me, someone!" He was now sure that Kiyai Sentar really had great magical powers.

Hearing his screams, all the neighbours, came running. Some carried torches, staffs and swords. Kiyai Sentar also came. Realising that it was the thief who was screaming, Kiyai Sentar said, "This man has stolen that box from my house. Look, my name is there on the box. Poor fellow, he did not know it has long been used as a bee hive."

a fine moustache. A young man admiring it wanted to know how Kiyai Sentar had managed to grow a moustache as thick and fine as that.

Kiyai Sentar answered, "Really, you are not old enough yet to grow a moustache, son. But I have a special medicinal recipe from Mecca. Just before going to sleep, take a spoonful of honey and two cooked dates. Rub them on the skin between your upper lip and your nose. In just a short while you will have a fine, thick moustache."

The youth did what Kiyai Sentar had told him. Then he fell into a deep sleep, lulled by wonderful dreams. Just before dawn, he woke up. He felt that his moustache had really grown thick. When he looked in the mirror, he was stunned to find no moustache, but a swarm of ants pecking on his lip!

One day Kiyai Sentar was presented with a donkey by a friend. "This is not a bad don-

key, Kiyai Sentar. You can use him when you go on a trip," said his friend. Kiyai thanked his friend, and praised the glory of God.

The donkey was looked after with great care and affection. Nontheless, Kiyai Sentar was sad to realise that the donkey was actually lazy and slow. He did not see any point in looking after a lazy donkey.

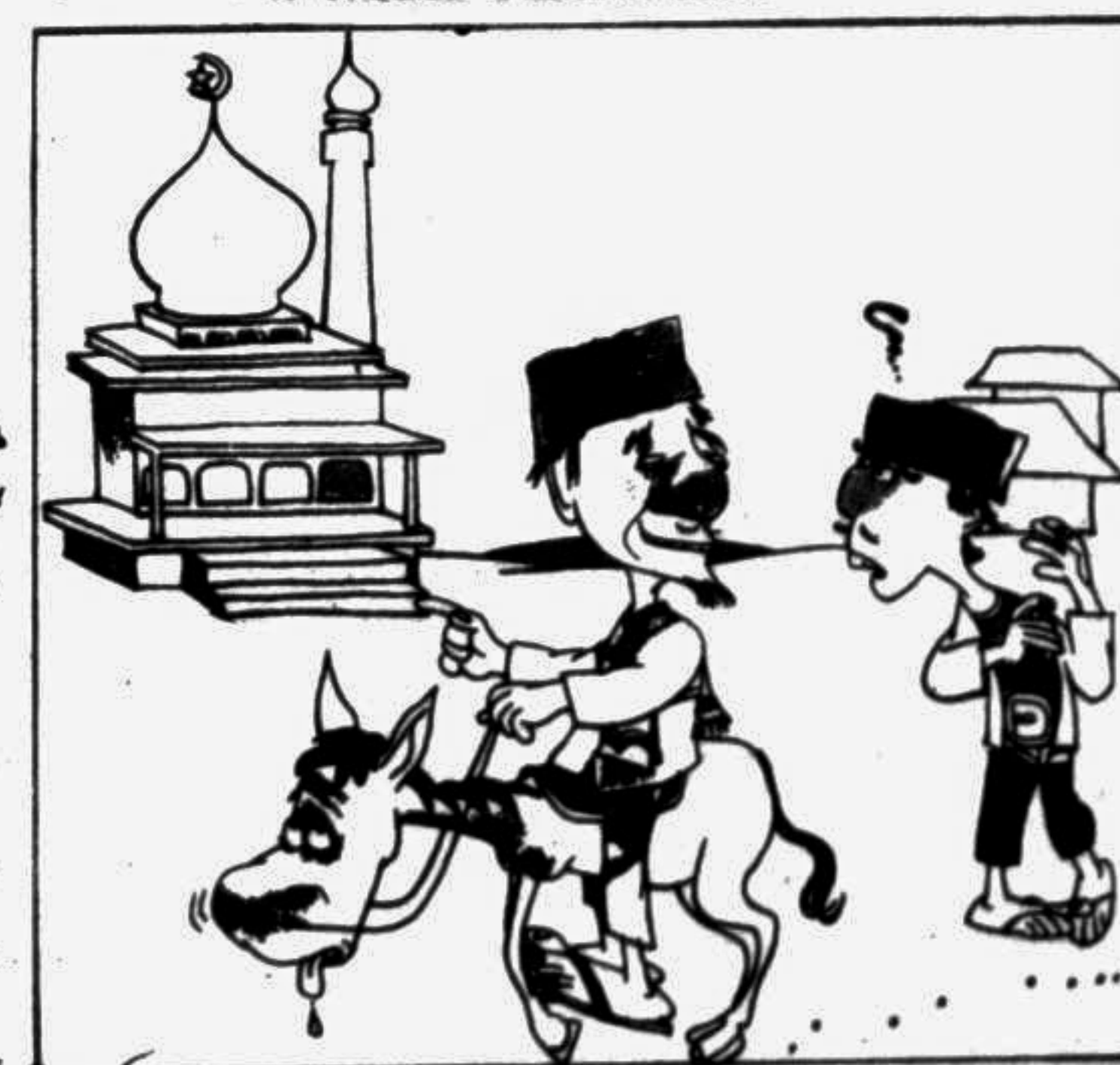
One day he set off with his donkey. An acquaintance saw him and asked, "Hey, Kiyai Sentar, where are you off to? You don't usually go out with the donkey like this in the hot midday sun."

"I am going to Friday prayers in the mosque over there," answered Kiyai Sentar.

"But today is still Thursday," said his friend, surprised.

"Yes, that's right. But this donkey is so slow, you wouldn't believe it. If I set off now, I am sure I will just make it to the mosque by midday tomorrow. This way, I won't be late," Kiyai Sentar replied.

A Tale from Laughing Together — A Unesco Publication



JOKES

Customer: I'll have the steak and kiddy pie, please.
Waiter: You mean the steak and kidney pie, sir?
Customer: That's what I said, diddle I?
Did you hear about the

champion mouse-catching cat? He eats lots of cheese, then waits for the mice with baited

breath.
What do you call a Red Indian wearing earmuffs?
Anything at all — he won't be able to hear you.
Way did the bald man buy another wig? He thought the

change of air would do him good.
Why couldn't the bike stand up?
Because it was tired.

What's worse than being with a fool? Fooling with a bee.
What's green and good at sums? A gooseberry with a pocket calculator.

A Day In The Life of A Super hero

By Sagheer Bin Faiz

FEARSOME Shabs woke up (yes, super heroes do sleep!) He walked drowsily towards the bathroom, bumped into the door which he realized was closed. He walked in unscrewed his toothpaste cap, took out his toothbrush, spread the toothpaste out on the brush (I can hear you saying "When's he going to do some thing heroic?" Be patient!) He brushed his teeth and flossed then, smiled back at the mirror, then stepped in to the shower, turned in on and suddenly realized he'd stepped into the shower with his clothes on! Well, after all that had been sorted out, FS came out, fully bathed and refreshed and walked into his fully equipped state of the art gym. After doing 2000 pushups ("Ah! you say "Now that's heroic", and doing various things with the rest of his gym equipment, he took another shower. (Don't ask.) He sat down to a scrumptious breakfast of 20 roast lambs (or is it lamb roasts?) and then his pager beeped. There was a fire at a nearby hotel and 30 people were stranded on the 30th floor.

local beach. "Oh boy!" he exclaimed gleefully "Sun, fun and babes!" And off he went...

The shark wasn't as easy a customer to deal with as FS had expected and after 20 minutes of strenuous fighting in which FS lost 20 gallons of blood, he snapped 20 of the bones that made up the shark's vertebra and emerged the victor.

Then, as his injuries were being tended to by masterful medics FS suddenly stared at a young man, suntanning himself on the beach, with a very muscular build, huge biceps, huge chest (but not as huge as FS). It was PP Big his archrival and the last time the two had had a flight PP had busted FS. The memory of that defeat still smarted and Shabs stood up, throwing babes and medics all around and roared; spraying spittle all around.

"PP!" And PP got up and scampered, zooming off in to the horizon, FS following him.

We rejoin them on a mountain side road. PP was zooming into the horizon in a Porsche, followed by FS in a Lada. FS roared ominously.

We rejoin them in the vast American prairies. PP was zooming off into the horizon on a stallion that he'd stolen

from the Lone Ranger, followed by FS on a horse that he'd stolen from Zorro. FS roared -- (HERE WE GO AGAIN!)

We rejoin them in the Sahara Desert. PP was zooming off into the horizon on a camel, followed by FS, riding on another camel.

You know what FS did, yes, he roared!
Finally, on Mt Everest FS was holding PP by the scruff of his neck.

"Revenge is sweet!" he yelled "PP, remember back in high school when you always wanted me to drop you home! Well here's your drop!"

And he let go of PP who fell some 20000 ft before being splattered all over the place. His remains can still be found pasted on the wall of the Eiffel Tower (Geographically inaccurate, but who cares?)

FS came back home, a tired Superhero. On the way home, he passed by the burning hotel, where his friend Super Judes was doing a splendid job and he yelled.

"Way to go, Super Judes!" He went back home, plopped down on his head and fell asleep.

I think that's quite enough in one day, don't you, even for a Superherol

Picture Quiz

Here is another picture quiz for you to solve. Who are the three men in the picture? When and where was this picture taken? What was the occasion? And here's some good news? If you get all of them right you may win a prize! The answer to the last picture quiz is the Buddhist temple of Paharpur in Rajshahi.

