

The Knock at the Door

We are a nation in a hurry. Our strengths and weaknesses are a matter of record offering a ready frame of reference to avoid the pitfalls, make up for the lost opportunities and forge ahead by building on our strong points.

Turbulence may have been our constant companion but through it all we have had the undimmed and prized glory of re-establishing democracy in the last half a decade or so.

As we rejoice in the twenty-fifth anniversary of Bangladesh's birth, our hearts are brimful with a solemn surge of sentiments in grateful acknowledgment of the services rendered by many in the making of our beloved, independent homeland.

In broad but clearly distinguishable terms, we have a two-some track-record. While we have an impressive record of fighting for democracy, on the flip-side we carry a stigma of failing to develop our economy.

Electronic Media Autonomy

The Radio, TV Autonomy Commission is at the final stages of preparing its report and it will be sometime before its full contents are made available for public scrutiny.

Then the constitution of a five-member national broadcasting commission which will be charged with monitoring radio and TV programmes on a weekly basis can be of consequence if it enjoys the power to take necessary measures to improve the quality of the same.

There is also a recommendation to pay and royalty incentives for the staff. We would suggest that the commission be mindful of the prospect for private TV channels to open in the near future.

Green Cities

The more roosting places a city provides for the bird the better its physical environment will be. This is an expert opinion, not a bird lover's propaganda campaign.

We understand the situation in Dhaka will not be any better, if not worse. Quite a number of birds and animals, due to their scavenging habits, restrict the growth of some harmful insects and keep the environment clean.

Therefore, the answer to our cities' environmental deterioration lies in creating small patches of artificial forests or parks. Those are likely to provide abode and sanctuaries for the species under threat of extinction.

The Present Image of Bangladesh

by Zillur Rahman Siddiqui

After the killing of Sheikh Mujib and the gruesome massacre of his family and some of his close relations, and after the incredible crime of providing legal protection to his killers and providing them safe sanctuary in our embassies abroad, we lost all self-respect and the world promptly withdrew its respect for us. We were pariahs in the comity of nations.

The outlook was good. The insurgents within the country were well under control, we got the membership both of the Commonwealth of Nations and the United Nations soon enough, and barring a few exceptions, we got the recognition of most countries.

Our image was totally tarnished the moment we lost our leader and with our leader our pride. After the killing of Sheikh Mujib and the gruesome massacre of his family and some of his close relations, and after the incredible crime of providing legal protection to his killers and providing them safe sanctuary in our embassies abroad, we lost all self-respect and the world promptly withdrew its respect for us.

Things remained pretty gloomy for us, politically speaking, for over twenty years after the fall of Mujib. Our constitution was either abrogated or mutilated and our political life brought to such a depth of degradation as to make democracy a meaningless term.

Late in 1990, a massive movement in which practically all our political parties joined hands, removed Ershad, the wily autocrat, from power. The combined will of the parties brought a caretaker government into power with a mandate to hold a parliamentary election and to facilitate a democratic change of power.

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While we could do this, we failed to do another thing more important in the final analysis than this: We could not institute a case against the killers of the father of the nation, Sheikh Mujib. The indemnity ordinance, later incorporated in the constitution, protecting the killers from legal action, stood on the way.

I mention the trial following the imprisonment of Ershad and the impending trial of the killers of Bangabandhu as these are vitally related to the issue of national image. A nation that condones crime and more, a nation that gives legal protection to killers, cannot claim to be a civilised nation.

Things have changed and are changing with a new government in office. It is generally believed that our image as a nation is improving but perhaps it is too early to make a claim which defies proof of a substantial kind.

And look at the ambivalence: on the one hand we tend to be the ultimate protector of religion through unsolicited admonitions — which in reality is conservatism at its height — and on the other, do not mind; rather welcome the worse-than-blue-film type Hindi movies, thanks to video cassette and cable TV. Such a duality is bound to exact a price.

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China continued to speak in terms of Pakistan. America said less about the integrity of Pakistan but more about the presence of Indian forces in Pakistan and later recognised Bangladesh when it found the Soviet Union having a field day there.

The countries which stood by Bhutto in bloc were those of West Asia. The Arab nations, which had received unstinted support from India, whether on the Suez or in their quarrel with Israel, told New Delhi plainly that they would not recognise Bangladesh before Pakistan did.

In fact, all through the struggle in Bangladesh, the Arab countries stood by Pakistan. Even when Mrs Gandhi wrote to request them to "leave its policy of aggression," they kept quiet. Muammar Gaddafi of Libya blamed India and said in a letter to her that "India was the one that decided to go to war."

However, as days went by, there was a change in Bhutto's attitude. He resiled from his earlier stand of "no recognition" to "recognition after meeting Mujib."

When Bhutto conveyed its assent, Bhutto sent a message that Mujib should himself go to Jakarta to meet him. On leaving this, Mujib recalled his representative, who had reached Jakarta by that time.

The Indonesian Government was so hurt by Rawalpindi's attitude that it recognised Bangladesh straightaway. The British Government too tried to mediate. Again Bhutto's demand was that he and Mujib should meet in some third country.

Recognising Challenges of the Time

by Nibratan Halder

The question we need to ask ourselves is: why have we failed to synthesise our religio-cultural practices and concepts while nations in the Far East have reconciled with those successfully?

During the 26 years since we decided to chart a course independent of the legacy of a freakish geographic entity called Pakistan, have we been able to establish — both in spirit and practice — the Bangladesh that we had defended so staunchly before?

Indeed, most of our political woes originate from this lack of national convergence. Our politics, murky as ever, cannot free itself from the prison of the past that ironically is a recent one and conveniently made to suspend in a limbo. Snapped from the best of Bangalee tradition and culture, the new interpretation of our identity had to rely heavily on distortion and even outright lies.

At least one thing emerged from the talks between the two — Mujib was released unconditionally (8 January 1972). He was requested to go to any Arab country and then fly to Dhaka or Delhi or wherever he pleased. But he preferred to go to London before he returned to Dhaka via New Delhi.

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To the Editor...

Power failure and sabotage

Sir, The country has plunged into darkness and as per usual the blame is made by the Prime Minister herself, normal supply of electricity is not possible till June or July next. How much loss the nation will have to bear during this long period of time? It's horrible! However, it is more unfortunate that instead of admitting her government's failures, since it assumed power, she is trying to convince the people that the dreadful power crisis is the result of sabotage and this has been committed by the BNP people.

Selection of players for ICC

Sir, In the recently concluded SAARC Cricket tournament, Bangladesh team was defeated by all the participating teams in a humiliating way. Particularly the performance of Golla, Anis and Moni were very disappointing. In contrast, the performance of some of the players of our A team now on a visit in Pakistan is very excellent. The batting of Sunam with an average of more than 50 against formidable bowling of Waker, Saclaen etc., the economical bowling of Zakir and Jam needs special mention.

Ecology

Sir, Recently, the State Minister for Information, Prof. Abu Sayeed while addressing an environmental seminar at the Goethe Institut urged upon everyone to build green belts across the country for maintaining ecological balance. He observed that due to environmental degradation the existence of the human civilisation is now under threat. The Minister emphasised on the need for creating mass awareness against pollution so that our future generation could grow up in a healthy environment.

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