

In remembrance: George Harrison



The Beatle-fame guitarist and composer, Sir George Harrison died on November 29 at Los Angeles after a long battle with cancer. The Liberation War generation of Bangladesh remembers this world-music pioneer with fondness and deep gratitude. He organized in 1971 "The Concert For Bangladesh", the first ever international musical gathering in Madison Square Garden in New York, to raise funds for the victims of the Liberation War and to raise the conscience of the world against the tyranny of the occupying Pakistani forces in Bangladesh. He was the man who first showed how music could be wed to a global charitable cause. We remember him as a humanist and a great friend of Bangladesh, and pray for his soul to be in eternal peace!

Professor Mominul Hoque
Grouse Drive, Elizabeth, USA

George Harrison has died quietly at the age of 58. We, the generation of 1971 still remember this great man for his contribution in "The Concert for Bangladesh".

The concert was organised in August 1, 1971 at New York Madison square garden to draw the attention of sufferings of our people during our war of liberation. Pandit Ravi Sankar was one of the organisers.

We pay our tributes to this great man. May God rest his soul in peace.

Shoureen, on e-mail

A friend of mine, James Rozario of Chicago, Illinois had the golden opportunity to wait on Eric Clapton's tables in Chicago back in 1991. He was one of the guitarists playing with George Harrison on 1971 Bangladeshi Concert. James personally thanked him for his contribution for our independence movement.

We pay tribute to the departed soul of George Harrison. It is unfortunate to see that Bangladesh government has never

recognised Harrison's works for Bangladesh during his lifetime. There are a few Bangladeshis ever heard about the George Harrison and his efforts to raise awareness of the plight of the Bangladeshi people. Our young generation will never know who George Harrison was and his contribution to Bangladesh Independence.

Instead, our media and education system feed our young minds with the notion that Golam Azam, Matur Rahman, Delawr Hossain Syedee and the newly installed "Islamic" government were the true defenders of our freedom and liberty.

George Harrison organised the Bangladesh Concert and sang one of his hits "Bangla Desh" in it. The concert and song had greatly helped in building awareness about Bangladeshi independence.

Udashi Bangali
Chicago, Illinois, USA

For the older generation, George Harrison's connection to Bangladesh needs little introduction. Today, as the world mourns his passing, we can recall that Wednesday, on August 1, 1971, when Harrison "held the first of two benefit concerts to raise money for the refugees of East Pakistan later Bangladesh.

This concert was to become a model for future rock charity events." Today the benefit gig is an established part of the musical calendar with organisations like Amnesty calling on bands and singers to help raise funds and awareness of important issues.

Some though, remain suspicious of the record industry's involvement - arguing the publicity surrounding a benefit concert is often used as a means of reviving a musicians flagging career.

But the fact remains that managed correctly it is one of the most powerful ways of getting a message across."

Farooque
USA



Save Gulshan Lake

We have read with great concern and disappointment the news "DCC deals double blow to Gulshan Lake" (November 26).

We also completely endorse the view presented in of the news "DCC approves work order to fill up Gulshan Banani Lake at 2 points" (October 1).

Gulshan was created as a residential area. As per agreement made with the allottees the character of the residential area cannot be altered. It is really very unfortunate that DCC is going to start construction of two road bridges (being unable to construct a road) over Gulshan Banani Lake across road 11 of Banani with Road 41 of Gulshan and Road 18 of Banani with road 59 of Gulshan.

This is unauthorised encroachment on the lake and as such illegal.

This is also against the Prime Minister's directive. It is to be noted that these two proposed road bridges will definitely pollute the lakes and there will have serious adverse effect.

The roads of Gulshan are narrow. In about 30/40 per cent of the plots 6-storey apartment houses have been built and a sizeable width of the road is occupied by parking of vehicles and ramps.

So a terrible traffic hazard will be created in the quiet locality.

It is stated in the *Daily Star* news that DC wants to ease the traffic congestion in Kamal Ataturk road.

15/20 storied commercial buildings have been constructed on the Kamal Ataturk Avenue but there is no parking space for any of the buildings in the ground floor although there was provision for the same in the approved plan of the building. 50 per cent width of the road are occupied by parking of vehicles and sometimes it is more.

Moreover last year one lane of the road could not be made traffic worthy to save some trees in the pavement.

So many shops are allowed to operate by DCC although there is no parking space. Even footpaths are allowed to be occupied by some tyre shops.

So it appears that DCC in order to avoid traffic congestion in some roads want to create more traffic congestion in a bigger area.

This must be stopped at any rate.

M Zaman
Road-25, Gulshan, Dhaka

Story time

According to *Sunday Telegraph* 'Britain has been asked to prepare military strikes against Somalia for the next phase of the global campaign against terrorism.' Also, Mr. Bush indicated last week that Somalia, Yemen and Sudan were likely to be the next targets of US bombing in the war on 'terrorism'. Some speculate Iraq would be the next.

This reminds me of a story which contains a fitting analogy for the Muslim countries.

There was a wicked wolf living in a forest not far from a lush valley where a flock of sheep used to graze. The wolf devised a brilliant plot how to feast on the flock without much effort.

So accordingly, on a sunny afternoon the wicked wolf came up to the flock sauntering casually. He mingled with the elders of the flock and told them: 'You see I am very hungry, but if you let me eat only one of you, just the weakest among you, I promise I will not harm any one else.'

The elders agreed. They thought by sacrificing a single defenceless one the rest of the community would live happily ever after.

But the next day the wolf showed up again with the same promise and ultimatum. The sheep again let him take the weakest one hoping the wolf would really leave them alone. But the evil wolf kept coming back. When finally the wolf came to the last surviving one, the frightened sheep pleaded to the wolf: 'Please do not eat me'.

The wolf asked in surprise: 'Why? The sheep answered 'Because I do not want to die'.

The wolf laughed and answered: 'You are already dead. You died the day I ate the first one.'

Shukla Mirza, on e-mail

Arrest of Shahriar Kabir

The way Shahriar Kabir was arrested at the ZIA and the way both the police and the government kept silent for twenty hours on the charges for which he was taken into custody was unfair and undemocratic. The government should have disclosed the reason within hours of his arrest.

Shahriar Kabir went to Kolkata to make a documentary film on the inhuman atrocities committed on the Bangladeshi Hindu community who took refuge in India. But what

did Mr Kabir do about the Awami godfathers and their associates who perpetrated untold and inhuman atrocities for five years during the Awami regime? It would have been much better had you made a documentary film on any of the four godfathers and their associates namely Joynal Hazari of Feni, Abu Taher of Laxmipur, Shamim Osman of Narayanganj and Abul Hasanat Abdullah of Barisal.

Unfortunately, you campaigned for Joynal Hazari in the last election. We would have been happy had you condemned India's BSF invasion of our territory, which was repulsed by our valiant BDR men. Unfortunately you did not utter a single word about the BSF invasion.

Iqbal Ahmed
Dhaka

It is simply unacceptable that a group of intellectuals are trying to create anarchy on the arrest of Shahriar Kabir, who is neither a "noted" nor a "famous" journalist as being described by some quarters. He is a full time activist of some organisations and only occasionally writes and that too on a particular subject.

I read in the newspaper before the last national elections that Mr Kabir went to Feni to campaign in favour of infamous terrorist Joynal Hazari and he was booed by the people there. There is nothing wrong to campaign for the Awami League but he chose to do it for a known terrorist! This shows the mentality and standard of Mr Kabir, whom some people are unnecessarily trying to make a "martyr". Law must follow its own course as Shahriar Kabir's activities are certainly controversial no matter how much a small group try to turn him into a "hero".

KZ Alam
Dhanmandi, Dhaka

Any government worth its name cannot and should not afford to ignore the acts of Shahriar Kabir, who clearly tried to whip up communal disharmony.

He is known to be closely linked with some communal organisations like "Bishwa Hindu Parishad" in India.

If being a freedom fighter is a criterion to be immune of many offenses, then the killers of "Bangabandhu" were well known freedom fighters having "Bir Uttam" gallantry awards!

Mr. Kabir cannot and should not escape the law.

Prof. Kamal Haider
Purana Paltan, Dhaka

"Top ten reasons..."

I had the chance of going through Omar Khasru's article 'Top ten reasons for Awami League election debacle (November 4) and I find the writer to have very little to convey rather than throwing some meaningless pompous words.

We come across a class of such people in our society who have very little respect for the Liberation War--the most glorious achievement of the Bengali nation so far. It appears that Omar Khasru's hatred towards the Awami League is deep-rooted and almost pathological. But AL is the party which led and won the war. No doubt Awami League committed many mistakes and blunders but in spite of everything it is a pro-people organisation. There are many people who did not actively participate in the Liberation War but preserve the glory and pride of it in the innermost corner of their heart. People like Omar Khasru seems to be devoid of any such feeling and thus is capable to attacking with such vengeance and sarcasm.

Ayesha Auhtar
Dhanmandi, Dhaka

Muslim cleansing
The indiscriminate killing of hundreds of Taliban soldiers under custody in the Majar-e-Sharif has divulged America's long drawn out mission to wipe out the Muslim community.

After the September 11 attack, America has formally declared its crusade against the Muslim world. The first phase of its planned cleansing has been implemented by killing hundreds of Taliban forces under custody by indiscriminate bombing on the plea of revolt by the captured soldiers. Such heinous human slaughter is a flagrant violation of human rights and International Law.

Intriguingly, the US has not yet been able to trace out the real criminals behind the terrorist attack. But mere suspect has tempted them to launch a full-scale war against a desperately poor and war ravaged people.

The very intention of the US aggression and its allies in Afghanistan have become crystal clear before the Muslims in particular across the globe and international communities at large. But the world conscience was silent Nobody opposed

the US policy of Muslim cleansing.

MA Binyameen
Tophkana Road, Dhaka

Our jute sector

A few days ago the Jute Minister Major (Retd) Hafizuddin Ahmed Bir Bikram was interviewed by ETV. There he stated that by June 2002, the government plans to export Tk 600 crores worth of Jute goods. But he forgot that he is the Minister of Jute and only thinks of running BJMC. Annual total raw jute and jute goods exports are close to Tk. 1300 crore. By talking this way he is giving wrong signals. As far as we all know the government is hell bent on privatising the public sector jute mills.

The sooner they do it the better as during last few years the government has pumped in over Tk. 500 crore to BJMC and still the mills under them are limping. Thanks to the uneven playing field nearly 70 per cent of the mills in the private sector are closed.

Abdul Mazid
Wari, Dhaka

Introducing the Kabuliwallah

The Kabuliwallah image was well drawn by Praful Bidwai, the noted Indian columnist (26 November). The history of Afghanistan, as a buffer state, and a gateway to the Indian subcontinent, is well known, along with travels along Khyber Pass, and the battles of Panipat.

The clean and sudden collapse of the Taliban regime was due to the relentless air superiority of the Americans, and the sustained carpet bombing, which must have cost a lot.

The quiet and elusive battles and skirmishes on the resettlement has now started, as analysed by Bidwai. A system, well tried in other parts of the world, under different local environments, may not work easily in Kabul, as per history and paperwork, as the hostile background, culturally and otherwise, is quite different and unique. The land or topography is inhospitable, and there is practically nothing to attract foreign invaders. That is why Afghanistan was used as a passage by the invading armies through the centuries.

Bidwai has hinted about the possible partition of Afghanistan (remember 1947), and that the collapse of Pakistan is not good, in the long run,

for India, as the in built danger is too close. Once the Yankees enter an area, it takes a long time for them to depart. This time the target is clear: grab the Saarc zone as a trading colony with a glorious market for one and a half billion consumers. The recent (unusual) visit of Benazir Bhutto to New Delhi looks pregnant with meaning. Are certain blueprint being prepared? Who are these vested groups? The regional members have to be alert for contingency awareness. The Kashmir issue needs to be solved now--it cannot be kept hanging, because the times have changed, and the status quo is not worth the trouble.

Anyway, signs of seminal changes might appear soon in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The disappearance of the Twin Towers in New York has changed the perception in all other parts of the world. The options in the regional capitals appear to be very limited, if at all.

A Husnain
Dhaka

HIV in Bangladesh

On December 1 there was a report in your daily about the situation of HIV and AIDS in Bangladesh. In this report the writer mentioned there is 182 "Full Blown" cases of AIDS. Which is completely wrong. So far 182 individuals (male: 147, female: 35) with HIV virus was detected in our country since 1989.

According to SEA regional Office publication (Beyond 2000: HIV/AIDS in Asia, Heidi Larson and JP Narain, page 9), WHO estimated that there are about 13000 individuals living with HIV/AIDS in Bangladesh. There are only 19 reported cases of AIDS so far in the country, and 14 deaths were recorded. Last year there is also one death due to suicide. Please correct the information or it will give rise to further confusion.

Dr. Kazi Mahboob Hassan
Lecturer, Department of Microbiology
Dhaka Medical College

HIV/AIDS globally

The human race all over the world is facing a big problem. The Immuno-deficiency Virus (HIV) which causes AIDS has brought about a global epidemic more extensive than was predicted even a decade ago. UNAIDS and WHO now estimate that the number of people living with HIV or AIDS at the end of the year

2000 stands at 36.1 million. In Bangladesh, the government statistics is 157 persons are infected by this virus, but WHO estimates that the number is about 20,000. In this situation, it is clear that we are facing a big threat. We should all know the detail of this disease. How does AIDS spread?

- Unprotected sexual intercourse.
- HIV infected blood, blood components, organs or tissues.
- By HIV infected women through her fetus to the new born.
- Use of unsterilised syringe, thread and surgical instruments with HIV/AIDS virus.
- Use of syringe and needle.
- Through unprotected sex, heterosexual or homosexuality.
- STD/sexual diseases like syphilis, gonorrhoea etc. help transmission of AIDS virus and the STD patients bear the increased risk of acquiring HIV/AIDS.

How AIDS do not spread
i) HIV is not transmitted through everyday person to person contact.
ii) Normal social contact or working with the AIDS patient.

- Through handshaking.
- Through food, water, urine, stool, cough and air.
- It does not spread through bites of mosquito, flies and insects.
- Sharing of same telephone, bathroom and swimming pools with the AIDS patients.

So, we should be sympathetic empathetic and cooperative to people living with HIV/AIDS.

Dr. Mustafa Abdur Rahim
Mirpur, Dhaka

Inducting cronies in administration

I am alarmed by your report regarding the new government's initiative to abolish the president's quota for appointment of 10 per cent of the secretaries on contract basis. Based on the evidence of past misuse of this presidential privilege, the right move would have been to abolish it altogether, implying that no such appointment on contractual basis be made. The purported move, on the contrary, is designed to expand the scope for such appointments. It appears from the news that the new government's appetite for distributing largesse has not been whet by creating 60 (sixty) posts of ministers, 6(six) whips and several similar positions.

They now wish to extend it to

permanent civil service, by appointing any number of secretaries on contract basis. There is simply no justification for the reported initiative. Bangladesh Civil Service has no dearth of talented officials.

The only problem is that due to some sub-standard recruitment in the past, and promotions on the basis of service-length based seniority, most of the outstanding officers are now languishing as deputy secretaries even after putting in 20-25 years of dedicated service.

Ibrahim Sattar
London, U.K

Politicisation of administration

The BNP-led government has given forced retirement to some public servants.

The reason is well-known: these public servants, inducted into public service through patronage system by Tofael Ahmed in 1973, organised revolt against the BNP-led government in 1996.

From a neutral perspective, this is really a timely intervention, as the present government does not want to see the repetition of 1996.

In view of the current agitation plan of the Awami League, the government does not have any other alternative but to oust these recalcitrant public servants out from the public service, which is, supposed to be politically neutral.

The ugliest form of politicisation of public service, which started during the reign of Bangabandhu, has taken a heavy toll on the efficiency, ethics and morale of public service.

It is public servants in developing countries who play the pioneering role in stimulating economic growth and development.

The BNP government's endeavour would be highly applauded by concerned citizens if it can clean up the garbage.

However, in doing so, the government must resist the temptation to repeat what the Awami League has done over the years.

Jubair Ahmad
Sharjah, UAE

'What about the Hindus?'

I could not help laughing after reading the letter from Mr. T Sengupta (November 30). He asked for some "solid evidences" regarding the minorities in India.

Mr. Sen, have you forgotten the Babri Mosque incident which killed at least 5000 Muslims only in Mumbai and adjacent areas (according to Indian media). In the near past, the demolition of a Catholic Church in Gujrat and "Sarna Mandir" crisis showed how helpless the minorities in India are. A BJP MP in Indian parliament called for snatching away the voting rights of the Muslims few months ago (source: *The Daily Star*).

We, the Muslims of Bangladesh protested the killing of civilians in WTC as well as in Iraq, Palestine, Kashmir, Bosnia and Afghanistan. Only we in Bangladesh protested when a Pakistani diplomat made irresponsible comments about our Liberation War. We sacrificed our lives for our mother tongue. Above all, we, the Muslims of Bangladesh fought for the freedom of our motherland.

But what about the Hindus of Bangladesh? I have a lot of Hindu friends who are not even interested about Afghanistan but they chanted slogans when ICC fined six Indian cricket players! They backed India after Roumari incident! Hindus never reacted when BSF killed thousands of Bangladeshi in the border in last three decades. Did they ever stage any protest rally against the activities of RAW in our country?

A proud Citizen, on e-mail

My attention has been drawn to Mr. Sengupta's letter on Indian Muslims. I highly disagree with him for following reasons: first of all Bangladesh's minority problem is purely political and not at all communal as the two communities lived in peace and harmony side by side all along. It is the defeated and rejected Awami Leagues creation to gain two immediate issues. To undermine the huge popularity of the present government and to save themselves from the people's wrath for their misdeeds, mismanage-

ment, killings, murders, looting, raping and unprecedented corruption during their last five years of misrule by putting the blame on BNP and allies.

Mr. Sengupta must realise that the present world is a very small one and we are so interrelated that, if anything happens in one corner of the world, it influences and affects almost the entire world in one way or the other. We have witnessed so many Muslim massacres in India for the last 50 years and thousands of Muslims had been killed. The Babri mosque, Govandy (near Bombay) and Surat incidents are still very fresh in our memories where Indian security force also joined in killings of innocent Muslims in hundreds. We do not want to mention the communal politics of BJP, Rashtriya Shevak Sangha, Shiv Sena and other highly communal forces in India.

Lastly, Indian Muslims are Indian by heart and soul because that is their country but many Bangladeshi Hindus's allegiance to Bangladesh are questionable as it was evident from one speech from Shiekh Hasina, the then prime minister of Bangladesh where she told the Hindu community in New York (probably in 1998/99) that "please do not put your legs on two boats, one in India and the other in Bangladesh rather put your both legs in one country, preferably Bangladesh. Of course, there are exceptions.

Nasir, on e-mail

I read Mr Ray's letter "What about the Indian Muslims?" (30.11.2001). First of all, I would like to clarify that there should not be any links between the persecutions of minority in India and Bangladesh. Just because the Indian Muslims are oppressed in their land does not and cannot justify any such incident in Bangladesh. If any Muslim does injustice towards a non-Muslim, s/he would be a worse example of her/his faith. It should be borne in mind that the very raison d'etre of Islam is the establishment of justice and elimination of injustice.

As regards the recent minority oppression in Bangladesh as it has been seen in media coverage, I don't think that it has any relationship with the change in political power in the country. Despite all my sympathy for those oppressed Hindu people in Bangladesh, I regret to say that I am little convinced by the information Mr Ray has served in his letter. Most of the data he gave are based on inordinately loose assumption e.g. 'from 20,000-100,000 left Bangladesh during the past 6 weeks'; and in Pakistan less than 5 per cent from 30-40 percent, etc., which shows that he did not take the required care when collecting the information and such 'lack of care' definitely questions the authenticity of the information concerned. Even if his data are near accuracy, I want to draw his attention to the downtrodden situation of Muslims in India.

I to ask him how many Muslim civil servants are there in India and what is the percentage of Hindu civil servants in Bangladesh? What is the literacy rate of Indian Muslims and what is the literacy rate of Hindus in Bangladesh? In fact, the discrepancy in employment in India has caused the ire of the Muslim population in that country which is detrimental to progress of the country itself. I hope the Indian ruling coterie would realise this soon and take proper measures to promote the literacy of Muslim population in India by way of providing them with legitimate encouragement.

I want to remind Mr Ray that big numerical size does not carry much influence in the present world; and what matters is the qualitative influence that the Muslims in India lack. I personally find it imprecise to generalise the situation of Indian Muslims on the basis of the economic condition of one single person i.e. Mr Premj, even if it is true that he is the richest person in India as Mr Ray claimed. Mr Ray himself admitted though indirectly that there exists 'communal' violence in India, which has continued for a long time, and it proves that the government there is not earnest to solve the problem. I express my thanks to Mr Ray as he invited to visit India to see the situation there. I most heartily accept his generous invitation and will try to visit the country and if possible

will have a look at the rubble of Babri Masjid, which may give me fairly a good impression about the communal relation in that country and the share of Govt in it.

Mr Ray has made another unfair generalisation and said, 'I feel sorry for the minorities in Bangladesh, as most majority Muslim population do not want them. . . . ' That such statement does not have even the furthest relation with truth will be admitted by any sensible person who is aware of the communal relationship in Bangladesh.

In my opinion the reason why the Hindu people of Bangladesh migrate to India and why the Muslims of India do not do the same has little relation with communal violence. The influx of people from Bangladesh to India is a sort of economic migration and a matter of family ties to a great extent. That the Muslims of India do not migrate from India to Bangladesh is also economic as the former is economically more stable than the latter. Moreover there are very few family ties between the Muslims of India and those of Bangladesh, which is not the case with the Hindus in Bangladesh. And maybe, despite every thing, the Muslims of India consider it their own land and hence are more patriotic than the Hindus who leave Bangladesh for India. I feel sorry to say that still some Hindu people are there who live and earn in Bangladesh but buy land and other properties in India, which is unfortunate for the country. I have written this letter simply to bring some facts to light and express my views about the write-up of Mr Ray and not to hurt the feelings of our Hindu brothers and sisters.

Mahmud,
Leicester, UK

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