

The portrait partisans

When the Awami League passed a bill to make it mandatory to display the portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman many citizens did not agree to the enactment of the new law. Most Bangladeshi respect Bangabandhu as a great patriot and accept him with all his virtues and vices. But the majority was not willing to consider him as the Father of the Nation. In fact the way the Liberation War proceeded without the presence of Bangabandhu, we can say that a new country called Bangladesh which was born through a bloody war in 1971 did not need a Father of the Nation. We will respect our leaders but we shall not worship them. That is the essence of freedom.

Therefore the law repealing the hanging of the portrait of Bangabandhu is accepted and welcome. The Prime Minister has rightly said the people do not want to be burdened with the law to hang a particular picture in the government offices.

However saying the above I would like to draw attention to the new proposal of the PM wherein she proposed to pass a new law which shall make it mandatory to display two pictures, one of Bangabandhu and the other of Ziaur Rahman.

As a free citizen of a free country I do not think the proposal is justifiable. No one disputes Zia's contribution in the Liberation War and his contribution in nation building after 1975 episode, but to make a law to display his picture is a bit of excess and similar to what Awami League did earlier. While we had been considering one picture as burden, is it not a fact that two pictures would be double burden? Is not the nation already overburdened with enough and unnecessary loads created by our political leaders? We definitely need a break.

Nurul Basher
Khilgaon, Dhaka

The nation has been beset with the politics of portrait. After 31 years of independence, we are looking back to seek our identity. Sheikh Mujib's leadership before independence was unquestionable. But as a chief administrator he failed miserably. However, we respect Sheikh Mujib from the core of our heart for his contribution regarding our independence.



Portrait of controversy

Ziaur Rahman was a valiant freedom fighter and created a new political stream in our politics. Both of them played their part from their respective positions. History will give due honour to these two national leaders. It cannot be determined by political process. Neither Mujib nor Zia should be confined to the frame of photogra-

phy. The issue of portrait is therefore unnecessary. There are more important issues to handle than this one.

Parvez Ahmed
SCPSAC, Savar

The Law for mandatory display of the portrait of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman has been scrapped. We should take lesson from this that whatever goes up without public support must come down eventually.

The new proposal being aired by some in BNP circle that all government, public offices and educational institutes should display the portraits of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Ziaur Rahman, the President and the Prime Minister is preposterous. The wall will look like a picture gallery.

A new law should be enacted that only Sheikh Mujib's picture would be mandatory minus his epithet of the "Father of the Nation." Beside his portrait, any one of the following may be chosen:

Ziaur Rahman, Fazlul Huq, Suhrawardy and the incumbent President.

That should satisfy all.

Iskander Meah

Dhaka

I agree with Nafees K's idea but don't like the idea of removing Bangabandhu's portrait. He is the Father of the Nation whether we like him or not.

The government could do many constructive things instead of provoking the Opposition. By scrapping portrait law the government has foolishly given the opportunity to the Opposition to resort to agitation.

Waheed Nabi

Sheffield, England

"Should our sons come back?"

This is in reply to Mr Mahmud and Cryptic Fate's letters.

Mr Mahmud, I was trying to be derogatory towards those who stayed back and especially the ones in the white-collar professions. I think they are selfish people, one of the less welcome traits that America instils in you. For your information I am back over three years now but I visit US twice a year.

Cryptic Fate, I honestly hadn't thought of you when I wrote that letter. But now that I think about it, you are just the kind of person I was addressing. I completely agree with you that there are many Bangladeshis who are far better off staying in the US and more power to them. I am not asking for the mass return of B.Com pass cab drivers or the waiters in the *deshi* restaurants.

You however, are the very epitome of the kind of person I want back home. Your family is superbly established in Bangladesh, you

the Jews were systematically persecuted, killed or forcibly converted to Christianity by the Christian zealots all over the Europe for centuries, the Muslims gave them shelter. To destroy this goodwill and amity the Christian crooks of the West, England and France as the spearhead hatched some brilliant plan.

They set up the Jewish State of Israel in the heart of Palestine displacing the predominantly Muslim local residents.

If England and France were so benevolent then they could offer their own land instead. Now we can see how the spiral of violence is engulfing the Middle East. (How I wish to go back to those peaceful days!)

There are more such examples of Western obsession of ruling the world by either annihilating others or by planting seeds of animosity to facilitate reaching their evil goal; but I think only two examples will suffice for the time being. No wonder that Karen Armstrong observed "it was not Islam but the Christian West which found it impossible to coexist

no magnanimity in forgiving the War Criminals. May I point out that had the War Criminals brought to justice or even a sincere effort made, the face of Bangladesh would have worn a different look and surely a better one.

I am proud of our unique struggle for Independence which I have seen from very close quarters. Not only that I lost a brother who by all counts was a valuable asset to this country and a champion of Bengali nationalism. It is time for us to turn our heritage into a total economic emancipation or else history shall not forgive us and sure to make a mockery of all that is or was glorious.

As for the observations made by Pushpa Jabin, I say thank you. I am however somewhat confused when she says that our Independence Day celebration should be "of our unique heritage, Multiculturalism and identity". I believe we should make it a celebration of our determination to wipe out abject poverty, ethnic discord, discrimination against women, downright demeaning and irresponsible behaviour of our political hierarchy. We indeed may have a high profile of cultural and historical heritage but trust me, these are now being dealt with by some partisan or selected defenders and peddlers of our cultural heritage.

Thus I for one would like to spend the day meditating and thinking of how best we can march forward.

Shamsher Chowdhury
Dhaka

Distortion of history is the name of the game

Khaleda Zia in a recent address to the freedom fighters stated that the Bengali nation went for the Liberation War in 1971 at the call of Major Zia on March 26, 1971. Has she totally lost touch with reality not to mention history? Can the distortion of history based on party politics in Bangladesh go so far?

If anyone really bothers to listen to Ziaur Rahman's declaration on that day again, he will hear that he states quite clearly that he, Zia, is declaring the independence of Bangladesh on behalf of the nation's supreme leader, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Zia when he was alive never claimed to be on the same pedestal in the nation's historic independence struggle as Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib.

Khaleda Zia's insistence that Zia should be placed on the same level as Mujib really points to the bankruptcy of ideas of party politics in Bangladesh and also a thinly disguised attempt to detract from other

far more important matters (namely law and order situation and the economy) where her government has shown little to no progress in the past few months.

Zia does not belong in the same place in the nation's independence struggle as Mujib, but at the rate our Prime Minister is going, this second Khaleda Zia administration may well replace Mujib's post-independence government (1972-75) as the most inept one in the nation's history.

All house owners pay municipal corporation taxes, which covers

Bangladesh. Our policymakers are more interested in suppliers credit than private foreign investment due to the question of commission/personal gain.

I have tried once in 1998, when Bangladesh Government was trying to attract foreign investment. I, along with an US investor, sent a power plant proposal (BOO basis and rate \$0.03815/unit) based on coal from Barapakuria and imported from Indonesia, including some down-

refuse, which they do not do at present. In Gulshan area they used to have cement enclosures at the end of roads and at market places, but as these were not cleaned the residents complained of the stench. DCC demolished those and not replaced those with anything. So people started throwing their garbage on the roadside and into open drains.

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