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# 26 March unfulfilled dreams

Independence Day, one of the most shining moments of our history, was the final step towards the way to liberation which began to grow up in the Bengali nationhood from the colonial days of British rule. On March 26 the nation observed its 35th Independence Day with due respect to the freedom fighters and all other valiant sons and daughters of the soil.

But after 35 years of liberation war we, the new generation, find nothing in accord with our freedom fighters' dreams. The whole Bangladesh is, in fact, in the circle of anarchy. Corruption is in the vein of society and as a result, we have been identified the most corrupt country in the world. Our people consider poverty as their fate but our political leaders have no headache about this, as they are almost mad to capture power.

The black magic of fundamentalism and religious bigotry has grasped our country. Our journalists, prominent teachers, novelists, poets, scientists and all other free-thinkers are the target of the anti-liberation forces. It is now clear that the Jamaat-e-Islami is planning to have another 14 December by killing our intellectuals. We must resist them.

**Golam Rosul Maruf**  
University of Dhaka

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As expatriate Bangladeshis we are now able to watch the live celebrations of our Independence Day on the various Bangla TV

channels that are now available to us. Remembering this day in 1971 when we had very limited access to the news and depended on whatever scant news we could catch off the airwaves or by word of mouth, I feel very proud to step back and observe what a long way we have come since then. On these channels I have enjoyed watching some eminent personalities providing their viewpoints and perspectives on our great Liberation War.

Along with the availability of newspapers like The Daily Star in electronic form we are able to not just read today's headlines but also what was stated a year ago.

This year The Daily Star wrote - "The nation yesterday celebrated the 36th Independence Day, recalling the supreme sacrifice of millions who laid down their lives to free the motherland from the clutches of Pakistani occupation forces."

Last year (2005) it was: "The nation celebrates today the 35th Independence Day and National Day to pay tributes to the three million martyrs, who sacrificed their lives for independence, with fresh pledge to build a happy and prosperous society to materialise their dream."

Please note that the number of martyrs has changed from "three million" to "millions". In an article in your 2006 Independence Day special issue the author writes, "More than a million innocent civilians were killed." May be it just happened to be the way the writer put his words

on paper or may be this was intentional - Is there a trend to downsize the number of martyrs? Of course the exact number of martyrs will never be accurately established but at the end of 1971 the generally accepted number was 3 million. May be the actual number was higher or may be it was lower. Out of respect for our fallen sisters and brothers, let us stick to one number for all times.

Last year (27 March 2006) you reported: "The government will erect monuments for the seven Birsreshthas and construct commemorative school and college buildings in their home areas to pay homage to the country's highest gallantry awardees." More than 35 years have gone by since they made their supreme sacrifice - but it is never too late to honour them. A year has gone by since your report - do you have an update on the progress of these projects?

To end, I wish to express my deepest gratitude to your paper for keeping us, expatriates, well informed through your use of the electronic media.

**Dibosh Rajani**  
USA

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I wonder what exactly the government is trying to achieve by leaving out Bangabandhu's name from its "special publication" on Independence Day. Denying Bangabandhu his rightful place as the unchallenged leader of the Bengalis during

our struggle for independence only damages the credibility of the said publication. Failing to mention him at all reduces it to a joke!

In an even more shameful attempt to avoid recognising his contribution to the birth of our nation, this government neatly edits out the reference to Bangabandhu in the late president Ziaur Rahman's Independence Declaration when it is re-played on such occasions. The people of our country know on whose behalf that declaration was made, and cutting out a few words isn't about to change that!

The government would not lose out in any way by recognising Bangabandhu's contribution to the creation of Bangladesh. As a matter of fact, only by giving Bangabandhu his due can this government hope to attain just recognition for the contribution of the late president Zia, both to our liberation struggle and to our nation as its leader. But this government makes it difficult to accept the latter by refusing to do the former. After all, no one would wish to read a book on India's struggle for independence if it didn't mention Mahatma Gandhi, or one on the great- est batsmen to play cricket if it didn't feature Don Bradman!

**Shameran Abed**  
London

## Indo-Bangla relations

I am an Indian and a regular reader of your paper. I appreciate your neutral and non-partisan reporting, especially on South Asian issues. I would like to put forward my views on one of the major topics in discussion both in Bangladeshi and Pakistani newspapers. The issue is "Why is India not large hearted to give concessions to its smaller neighbours?"

Well, we Indians realise our size (geographical, economic and military) compared to most of our neighbours. We would like to have very good relations with all our neighbours, but one should remember that the relations whether personal, domestic or international are reciprocal. If I know my neighbour wants to pluck my flowers, or send his cows to my garden or capture my land, or break my house, will I be generous to him to share my meal with him? Think about it.

If any of India's neighbours want to be what Canada is to US, then they should also develop peaceful relationship. I am sure we Indians will walk those two steps more to make a wonderful relation. One cannot crib and shout to make this relation happen. Times are changing and so should relations.

**Biswajeet Mahapatra**

On e-mail

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A number of writers in your daily have expressed their disappointment on the outcome of Khaleda Zia's India tour. Bangladesh has so far done well without India. Does Bangladesh need India?

The writers seem to suggest that it is best for Bangladesh to pursue their policy of leaning towards China.

**A South Asian**

On e-mail



PHOTO: AFP

## Congratulations to our cricketers

Congratulations to our cricketers who have accomplished a wonderful feat by handing a 4-0 series defeat to the once mighty East African cricketing nation Kenya against whom Bangladesh never had such a stunning success. It may be the case that Kenya's poor performance was due to their not having enough exposure to international cricket, as they are not yet a Test playing nation.

It is important to mention that in cricket the frontline batsmen are considered to be the anchors. And their performance decides the fate of the game. However, in case of our players it is just the reverse. Our batsmen's continued poor performance must be corrected. If we always leave the game on the shoulders of our middle order batsmen, then we shall never be able to achieve the desired results. Hence, it is the prime job of our coach to train our batsmen in that manner and to do so the coach has to build-up their skills, confidence level, stamina, poise etc, so that the middle order batsmen do not have to share the burden to take the score to a respect-

able level. As for our bowlers, we must at least groom more than one bowler who'll be considered a real paceman. Therefore it is my humble appeal to our great coach Mr. Whatmore to take these things into serious consideration and act accordingly. Because our players will soon be facing the most dreaded cricketers of the world, the Australians, and we have to do our homework properly.

**Humayun Hyder**  
Zigatola, Dhaka

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Mohammad Ashraf is the wonder boy of Bangladesh cricket. There is no doubt that he is extremely talented. And, he has also proved his class by playing some extra ordinary innings against the world class teams like Australia, Sri Lanka and India. But it's very disappointing for everyone who supports Bangladesh cricket that this wonder boy is wasting his talent. He is not consistent at all, and consistency is the hallmark of a great player.

He has played some good knocks against Sri Lanka and also scored a century, but against Kenya, in the ODI series

his highest score was 18!

It's also very sad that a player of his class has such poor average!

He played 31 Tests, and batted in 61 innings but only scored 1443 runs at an average of 24.87! Highest Score: 158\* (not out) against India.

He is a world class batsman but his average is below 25! All the great players maintain a healthy average, at least above 40.

And, if you take a look at his ODI average, you'll be shocked!

In 66 ODIs he batted in 63 innings, and scored 1204 runs at an average of 19.73! Highest score: 100 against Australia

Below 20! What will you say now?

I don't believe that Ashraf isn't a good batsman. I have also confidence that he can do a lot better. But, I'm very much frustrated about his average, I'm sorry to say. Our coach should look into the matter.

**Khan Mohammad Ibn Sina**  
Bottala Bazar, Bottala, Tangail

On e-mail

### Dead and injured workers

We are deeply shocked at the loss of the lives of workers at KTS Garments in Chittagong due to the negligence of its management towards workplace safety measures. We believe that the highest priority should be given to saving the lives of the workers in the factories. We want more cautious and integrated plans and measures from the factory owners to ensure workplace safety for the garment workers, particularly for female ones. In the name of security of the factory, the inhuman practice of locking workers or blocking exits should immediately come to an end. We are demanding that the BGMEA be strict about the safety compliance to save our garments workers and the industry. All the authorities concerned, including the government, should be strict about compliance with safety measures.

Around a million of the RMG workers find their livelihoods in the garments factories. The workers call upon all concerned national and global actors to ensure that the employment and livelihood of the workers in this sector is retained. The repeated accidents occurring in the sector due to the negligence of the factory management is seen by the workers as a two-fold threat; firstly, it is fatal to the workers safety. Secondly, these accidents tarnish the image of the sector to the global community and impose a risk on livelihood of the workers. As a result, the workers call upon the national and global actors to impose strict monitoring along with required support to ensure that the workplace security improves and Bangladesh RMG sector survives the negative image put forward by some of its factory owners.

We don't want any factory to close down and put the livelihoods of the workers at risk, nor do we want any factory to put down the agenda of workers' safety and put their lives at risk. We would highly appreciate if you express your solidarity with the workers' call.

**AKM Mustaque Ali**  
On e-mail

**Tipaimukh dam**

The effects of withdrawal of river water upstream in India over the last 50 years has resulted in drying up of the Surma river in winter at about the point of its branching off from the Barak river and also all along down the river due to silt deposits caused by slowing current of water. Tipaimukh shall store more water in India supposedly for production of electricity and Bangladesh shall be deprived to that extent. On the other hand, the river cannot accommodate a bigger volume of water in monsoon due to siltation and heavy flood shall be the result.

An instance in point is the devastating flood of 2004, which overflowed the dyke on the riverbank as well as the Sylhet-Zakiganj road. India is now building a high dyke on their side of the riverbank, high enough not to disturb them. But this will cause heavy devastation for us in future.

In view of the above, I, as a resident of Zakiganj upazila, would appeal to the government to raise the issue with its Indian counterpart and settle it immediately.

**Altair Ahmed Choudhury**  
Dhaka

### Exemplary punishment

Exemplary punishment should be meted out to the terrorists who have done great damage to the country. The government doesn't have any other option.

**Korak Sen**

On e-mail

### Mahmood Elahi's article

Apropos of Mr. Elahi's assertion that India cannot match US-China economic relations. Probably he is forgetting a few home truths. The first point is that the US under Nixon agreed to open up its markets completely to China in the 70's. Something that was denied to India till about two years ago. The second point is almost everybody is aware of the fact that due to the inherent trade anomalies of the past, a lot of Indian companies had set up shops across the world in order to beat the US Quota systems which denied India more direct access to its markets. Mr Elahi talks of direct imports by the US totalling USD 18.8 billion.

Well, Mr Elahi, if you were to total the imports by the US from Indian companies based outside India, the figure would be grossly misrepresented, just ask the garment communities based in Dubai and Dhaka and you would get a fair picture of what I am talking about. Thirdly, both the US and India do not put software and services under the purview of Import/Export. So add another USD 20.0 billion or there-

abouts.

The fourth aspect is rather curious. Mr Elahi is of the view that Indo-US bilateral trade has been "hamstrung" by India's crumbling infrastructure, red tape and corrupt bureaucracy! Well Mr Elahi, bilateral trade is well bilateral and not a one-way street. Maybe you would do better to look up the top US based companies who for years have bemoaned the US export control laws (read RED TAPE) which prevented companies from exporting anything more powerful than desktop computers to India. Coming to the point of corruption, please do read up the corruption index as published and see for yourself that while Indians are corrupt, they are not as corrupt as you would make them out to be, especially considering the fact that the Indians actually did better than the Chinese on this scale.

And coming to crumbling infrastructure, Mr Elahi, please do come to India and see for yourself the same. We have, like China gone about expanding in a frenzied pace. Today we are adding approximately 2 million subscribers a month in the Telecom sector. Our total sub base is very close to the 100 million mark and by 2010 we should be able to overtake China on this score. Not to mention that we have ordered more aircraft from both Boeing and Airbus than any other country in 2005 and have the fastest civil aviation growth in the world.

And finally Mr Elahi, praising the rise of China does not mean denigrating India. We are not in competition with them but rather we are building up our country so that our people can get more opportunities and improve their quality of life. I find it curious that throughout the piece you feel that putting India down on all fronts is credible rationale for your statements. Maybe it is time you got your facts in order.

**Arijit**  
On e-mail

### Death of rivers

Rivers contribute towards the development of trade and commerce, transportation, agriculture and so on. In Bangladesh, we had a nice heritage of rivers. But the situation is different now. Most of our rivers are dying.

This is a very bad sign for a country dependent on agriculture. We have to address the issue in right earnest.

**Kazi Abubakar Siddique**  
Lalmatia, Dhaka

### Vanishing sportsman!

I am a Bangladeshi national living here in Melbourne for the last three years. I took so much pride to be a Bangladeshi and worked my way out here in Melbourne. I am working as a sales manager in a steel company here. Our shooters who participated in the 18th Commonwealth Games brought us nothing but shame. The person who ran away from the Bangladeshi team and only Allah knows where he is now, gave the Bangladeshis like us who worked so hard to be in the position wherever we are, a bad name. The Australian people use to know the Bangladeshis as very hard working and reliable men, but now the situation may change.

Why do the sports authorities fail to prevent this kind of vanishing into thin air that blurs our image abroad?

**Iftikhar Hassan**

Melbourne, Australia

### Corruption award

It is a very big question to the new generation now-days, are our politicians well-meaning? Which mentor is here to inspire us? Unpatriotic people are doing politics in our country. Leaders are pretending they have love for the country. They are in politics only to earn money and fulfil their selfish goals.

If corruption-monitoring organizations look into the lifestyles and wealth possessed by our politicians, do you know what will happen? It will open the Pandora's box. Politicians in the ruling party seem to be above the law!

Our main problems are crime, corruption and political violence. Recently, Rab has controlled crime to some extent. What about corruption and politics-related crimes? Bangladesh is receiving the dubious award of the most corrupt country in the world for the last few years. The ACC is doing nothing to change the situation for the better. So we may get the award once more!

**H Rahman**  
Dhaka



PHOTO: AFP