

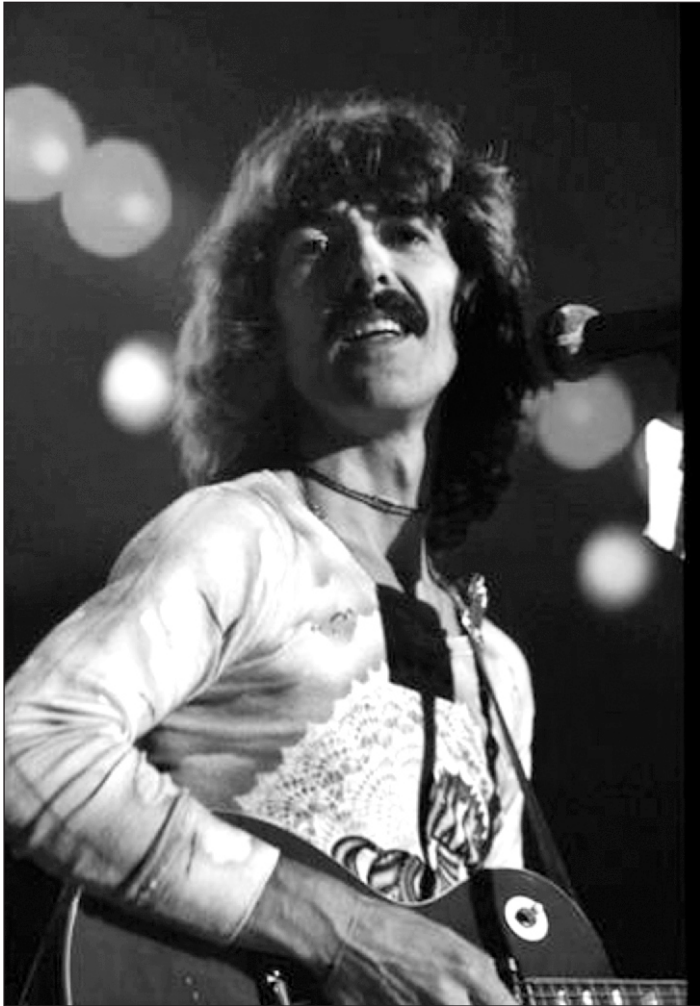
Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

# What we *must* know

For the last few days I was watching with interest an ad on Bangladeshi channels paying tribute to George Harrison, one of the Beatle members who led the concert for Bangladesh at the Grand Central Park in New York in July 1971 during the Liberation War of Bangladesh. When I watch this ad I get nostalgic. Many great artists like Bob Dylan, Ringo Starr, Eric Clapton, Allah Rakha (tabla), took part in this grand concert. Tribute should be paid to Guru Ravi Shankar for organising this concert.

There are many great people in India and other parts of the world who had upheld the right cause of struggle of the people of Bangladesh. Sadly enough, after the changeover in August 1975 many documents of glorious contribution by great personalities have been suppressed or destroyed.

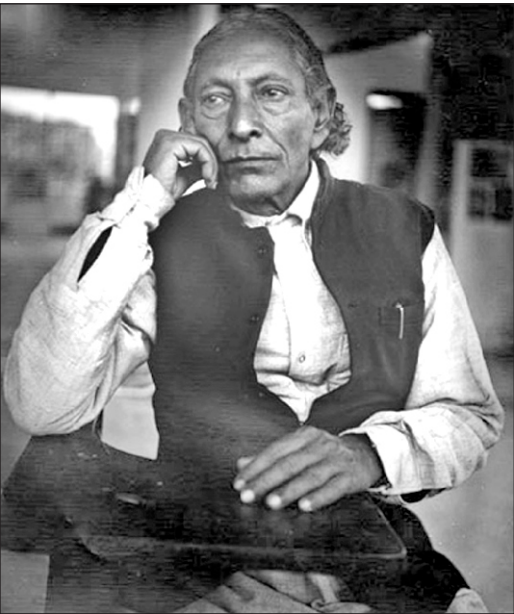
In 1971, I was a 30 year old young man and history unfolded in front of my eyes. No one can bluff me. In the last 35 years I have gone through many historical books of facts in foreign libraries in Dhaka as well as abroad. Everywhere I find the name of none but only one person-- Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as the creator of Bangladesh.



It is now the duty of the new generation to dig out the real facts and rewrite the history of Bangladesh in its true perspective I congratulate and thank

the new generation for paying tribute to George Harrison. Carry on young men!  
**Ziauddin Ahmed**  
*One e-mail*

# Bande Ali Mia



in villages), students used to get one book per subject for the whole year. School textbooks are produced with some of the lowest quality papers, with boring black-n-white graphics. Getting new books, after waiting for one full torturous year, used to be the most exciting thing for me, mainly because of new graphics and pictures. The first thing I used to do after getting new books, is to go page by page of all my books and look at all the new pictures and photos. I always had, and still have, a weakness for colour, pictures and graphics. Most of the drawings in those books were done by Hashem Khan. Those poems that didn't have nice drawings (even if they were very good poems) were no good for me. I found them boring! Amongst my favourite poems were: Pallikabi Jashimuddin's Mamar Bari, Nazrul's Khokar Shad, Forrukh Ahmed's Brishtir Chora (Brishti elo kaash bonay), Tagore's Chuti (Aaj amader chuti o bhai) and Amader Choto Nodi (Amader choto nodi chole ), Rukonuzzaman Khan's Hashi (Hasthe naki jaane na kew, ke boleche bhai), Nobokrishno Bhattacharye's Kajer Lok (Moumachi moumachi, kotha jao nachi nachi) and one other poem (I forgot both the title and the writer's name). I just remember one line, "shada bok chok chok ure jai dakiya". At the back of our village house there was a small jungle and in the evenings hundreds of storks would come to spend the night there. In my mind I could easily connect the picture that came with the poem and the jungle at the back of our house. It was like "seeing", not "reading", that poem in real life! It was beautiful. But my most favourite was always Bande Ali Mia's Amader Gram.

According to the two sources that I have found, Bande Ali Mia's date of birth is 17 January 1906. But there seems to be some inconsistencies regarding his date of death. One source says 27 June 1979, another says 1982. Hopefully our readers can help me out with this date. Also, is there any museum, library or monument in Dhaka in the memory of Poet Bande Ali Mia?

**Azad Miah**  
*Oldham, UK*

# Women's empowerment in Pakistan

The Awami National Party (ANP) President Asfandiyar Wali Khan, a feudal lord, is the second biggest hurdle after the Jamaat-e-Islami, in the empowerment of Pakistani women. Not only he, all the feudal lords are creating difficulties in the way of Pakistani women's success and liberty. They keep women in veils, just like Taliban had done in Afghanistan. They even don't allow girls to go to school, so forget about college!

On January 10, the Awami National Party (ANP) stopped women from casting their votes for Bajaur Agency elections.

So if we need educated, secular and liberal Pakistan, we have to get rid of this kind of conservative leaders.

**Abeer Khan**  
*West Palm Beach, Florida*



## Muslim countries

For centuries the Muslim countries have been constantly fighting amongst themselves. The fight has either been for classification between "Shia" and "Sunni" or for leadership in their communities. The raging competition between the Muslim countries with the tendency to excel over each other has led to the downfall of Muslims. It is a matter of deep regret that the Muslim population is quite large, yet they are so vulnerable to the hands of oppression. The Muslim countries are frequently attacked by the tyrannical powers but nothing can be done to save them.

The whole world is sitting with bags of popcorns in their hands while the Muslim countries are getting doomed. The root of all problems is the lack of unity among the Muslims. They are only good at is shouting at the top of their voice.

Muslims all over the world should think about the issue.

**Naome Syed**  
*Mohammadpur, Dhaka*

## Good decision, belatedly though

As a foreigner living in Dhaka, I believe stepping down, as chief adviser to the caretaker government, is a good thing that President Iajuddin has done. While we foreigners often do not understand everything that is happening here, we are still able to acknowledge blatant errors in judgment when they present themselves, such as not listening to other advisers and excluding them from the electoral and political process. It is unfortunate that the government's actions so far have precipitated such a crisis and that the president was unable to listen to the voice of reason, bringing things to the state they are in now.

We join the people of Bangladesh in hoping that now that he has stepped down, the political crisis will be over.

**Suom Ynona,** *On e-mail*

## Youth and the past

I would like to draw your attention to a write up by Nazim Farhan Chowdury in Point Counterpoint section of your daily of January 13, 07. I would congratulate Farhan for his piece. I am really impressed by his youthful exuberance. I only have problems digesting a couple of his sentences like "We have been shackled by the past and are not building bridges to the future" or "No disrespect meant but has their 'sell by' date not passed? Are we not now victim of stale thinking? Are we not held ransom to the experiences that they have lived through?" Unfortunately, I belong to the generation that Farhan has taken to task in his piece and, therefore, the following reaction.

I am afraid many of today's youth unfortu-

nately consider the connection with the past as 'shackle' forgetting the fact that it is exceedingly important to build bridges with the past just as well as it is necessary to build bridges with the future. Come to think of it, if we did not have that bridge we'd have been lost in an unending chasm and our present would have remained ever so elusive. Some of the people of my generation have indeed sacrificed their past so that the generation of Farhan could have a world from where they could launch themselves to a future. And what a glorious past indeed. These are the people who were associated with a nation that sacrificed its brave sons for the sake of their language. A sacrifice that has been recognised by the world and has been entered into the almanac as a significant day. We belong to a nation that fought for autonomy leading up to a war that liberated our country. If my memory serves me right we are one of the 5/6 nations in the world to have an official document called the "declaration of independence" and that was written by those that Farhan is so wary about. Such are the glories that one can not lose sight of. Perhaps we overlay these than we should. But there are valid reasons for it. The people of Bangladesh, irrespective of caste; creed or vocation fought a war to achieve 'certain something'. These had to do with politics, economy and; more importantly; culture. Yes, the all pervasive culture that includes history; religion; language; food; rituals; societal belief system and of course performing arts. With the advent of Bangladesh, as time passed, we saw that each of the values and ideals that the fore-runners of the independence movement stood for was to make way for whatever we fought against. Secularism had to make way for religious bigotry; Bangla culture replaced by a cocktail of unknown non-culture, language and the spirit of it that we revered so dearly was mutilated, the polity was beaten around by people with dictatorial ambitions. So we were pushed back to square one. Every time we thought of starting afresh we were intimidated by regressive schemes that made us revisit our history and refer back in time. I don't think that we can start anew before sorting out these issues. We have to go back to our roots and peruse the basis of our nationhood to take a stride towards the future. This does not make thoughts 'stale or undesirable'. These exercises are absolutely necessary. No new leadership should ever consider ditching its founding fathers and their knowledge of the people and the country. This would mean defeating the cause of our 'being'. Let the "generation 71" come forward and help rediscover what made us tick in '71, meet the people beyond the confines of our capital, understand and speak their language and take over. Wishing all the best to Farhan and his generation.

**Aly Zaker,** *On e-mail*

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# We'll fight for our Bangladesh!

That's what I said to my mother when she was crying over the current state of her beloved Bangladesh. She has been worried, stressed and lately crying while hearing news about what is going on in Bangladesh and watching the only Bangla channel we get here in Ottawa. She keeps on crying and shaking her head saying, "This is not what we fought for, this is not the desh we hoped for we wanted a Bangladesh where democratic process will flourish and where all its citizens regardless of religion, sex and age can live and work with dignity! We wanted to have a caring, tolerant and respectful society where we all can enjoy our rich culture and heritage in peace."

I have heard that the people of Bangladesh were found to be the happiest people on earth by a study - yet they are subjected to such violence and indignity! Even though I was born in Canada I am fortunate to have lived in Dhaka for four years when my parents were there. I love Bangladesh, its people and music. Now I am sixteen and living here in Canada again, but I miss the beautiful Bangladesh.

My question is, with all its good talented people what is holding Bangladesh from becoming the Bangladesh all the people want it to be? Why don't we all try again the way my parents' generation fought for our freedom. I promise to do my part.

I can't bear our motherland crying in despair!

**Saber Rashed Nawaz**  
*Ottawa, Canada*

## Is education immaterial?

For every job and profession including that of a cleaner/gardener etc academic qualification bar is there. But in this country alone to be the Head Of the Government, Minister and a Member of Parliament (Law Maker) educational qualification is no bar. When education is of no significance for such responsible positions, then why do we have all these institutions including the universities? All these should be closed down forthwith.

It is incomprehensible that people holding important positions do not have academic qualification. How come? No wonder the nation is in such a mess today. Education makes a man perfect and no one can deny the role of education in our life. There may also be an exception once in a while when education becomes meaningless. The example is in front of the nation.

But today's political chaos is also a blessing in disguise for the nation. This has exposed many faces and unknown drawbacks of our politics and governance of the country.

Even a petty criminal cannot escape the rule of law. How come for violating the constitution without any consensus there is no accountability? So without reforms in all spheres of the Administration and Judiciary the country will simply be destroyed. Our future generations will be nowhere.

Hence I suggest as initial reform one has to have minimum academic qualifications (agreed upon by the parties) for holding an important position.

**Yamin Zakaria**  
*West Monipur Para, Mirpur, Dhaka*

## Mass arrests

Such a drastic step by our government is nothing new. However, the authorities concerned should feel at least a pang of

guilt when they witness the widespread sorrow & hardship they are causing amongst the families of the hundreds of innocent arrestees. Most of them are guilty of only one crime: being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Stooping to such a meaningless method of extracting trouble-makers is really a shame. It just highlights the extent to which our security forces are incapable of handling a crisis. Once again it is the poor and the underprivileged that have to bear the brunt of a pointless scheme. Criticism of mass arrests have been made by bodies of lawyers and human rights' organizations, but is that sufficient to convince the authorities of the inhumanity of their act?

When will our government learn to be ashamed of creating unnecessary complexities for us?

**Fahima Bintee Jamal,** *Kazipara, Mirpur*

## Thoughts on politics

I am not a political critique but a conscious citizen of the country. I have rather some simple thoughts that I would like to share with you.

Can't we think of the President of the Peoples Republic and Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the Parliament being elected by the people for a duration of 3 or 4 years? Political party leaders and persons with direct involvement in national politics must be ineligible for these posts. This may benefit the nation in the following ways:

- Undoubtedly there are people in this country who possess immense leadership quality but will never be welcomed by political parties to work for the nation.
- This will open up the opportunity for hidden talents and patriots of the nation to come up to lead the nation.
- The Speaker would run the parliament in an impartial manner.
- The Speaker would not do injustice to any

I couldn't agree more with Mr. Nazim Farhan Chowdhury regarding the representation of those under 40 (calling themselves generation 71) in the caretaker government. In fact I will go further, as I have always suggested in my articles, this generation should take up the leadership in as many sectors as possible. The time has come now for them to be directly involved in politics and as a show of force should prepare themselves to be the candidates for the next parliamentary election.

Enough is enough with the old and stale ideas which have failed the nation. Let us give opportunity to the new generation and let them prove themselves their capability to build a better Bangladesh.

I have faith in them and believe they will do a better job than us.

**Akku Chowdhury**  
*Banani, Dhaka*

## 'Delayed but necessary measure'

The briefing of AL on the resignation of the president, Professor Iajuddin from the post of chief adviser drew my attention. Regarding this resignation the AL commented, "Delayed but necessary measure" which was published in DS on 12/01/07. This statement seemed quite indistinct and my point is how could it be an essential step and whether it will solve the constitutional crisis. According to the constitution, the election should be held within 90 days, which is not happening due to the political turmoil.

It is not clear whether the politicians want an election. They should come forward to steer the country out of the present crisis.

**Md. Badiuzzaman,** *Dhaka*

## Ineffectual democracy

Our political leaders cannot sustain democracy in Bangladesh. They have no respect for democratic principles. They exercise it but don't really embrace it and that is the problem that has to be addressed. Politicians are steeped in corruption, ineffectiveness, animosity, violence, and authoritarian behaviour. They will have to remake themselves thoroughly and dedicate themselves to rebuilding public confidence in the political system. Resolving the political chaos will be no easy task. Lack of industrialisation, poor infrastructures, and untapped human resources will continue to challenge Bangladesh in its quest for economic well-being. Poverty and disasters will continue to test the moral and political fibre of the nation. There are no shortcuts out of the environmental and economic troubles of Bangladesh. We need to obtain significant outside support to remain afloat in this highly competitive modern world.

**Enamul Haque,** *Silver Spring, MD, USA*

## An opportunity for reform

Declaration of emergency and subsequent appointment of a respected economist as the new caretaker chief have given the nation a window of opportunity to implement urgent constitutional, judicial and electoral reforms. Instead of hastily trying to pave the way for parliamentary elections, the caretaker government should immediately start taking some concrete steps such as separating the judiciary from the executive branch, empowering the fledgling independent Anti-Corruption Commission and constituting meaningful electoral reforms that will allow only capable and honest people to contest in local government and national polls. Despite their differences, one interest has always been common among the major political parties - never to make any reforms in these areas as that would have put a stop to the plundering of the nation by the members of these parties and their cronies. The time has come for putting an end to this systematic practice of taking turn in looting the country for five years in a row in the name of parliamentary mandate and democracy. The caretaker government should immediately take steps to start the process of investigating the source of wealth of political leaders; former members of parliament and all such persons and if they are found guilty start judicial proceedings against them. Until there are some exemplary punishments inflicted on many of these criminals masquerading as leaders and politicians, it will be very hard for the new caretaker government to gain confidence of the common people.

Let it not be another five years of business as usual plundering by one of the major parties.

**Hasibul Haque,** *Virginia, USA*

## Hopes dashed

At last President Iajuddin Ahmed resigned from the job of CA on the night of Jan. 11. Later, he addressed the nation at around 11:30.

In his incomplete address, he condemned and ridiculed the role of politicians and sidetracked his most controversial and unconstitutional activities.

He had not performed his job in accordance with the constitution.

The state of emergency has been imposed in the country 16/17 years after military dictator Ershad's fall.

Prof. Iajuddin, who was an outstanding teacher of the highest institution, University of Dhaka, did not play an exemplary role to run the country as we all had expected.

Anyway, we appeal to the new caretaker government to hold a free and credible election.

**MAH Nazim**  
*University of Dhaka*



- parliament member.
- The parliament members would not be able to look for silly excuses to walk out of parliament.
- As the peoples' representative, the President would directly act as the chief of the caretaker government.
- The duration of the posts being less than the duration of the parliament, every parliament will get at least two presidents and speakers in its duration.

**Md. Akter Ali,** *On e-mail*

## State of emergency

After emergency, the country breathes freely. It is a big slap to the political parties. For the first time in last 10 years, 92 crore taka was exchanged in stock market on a single day(14/01/07). This certainly is reflecting what we want. For a crime free society, we general people welcome the law enforcers to establish their authority on it. We want our daily life to be peaceful. We are urging the CG to take strict action against the bank defaulters, godfathers (Prothom Alo-28/01/06) to prevent them from taking part in election. In this regard, the Election Commission(EC) can play a key role, otherwise it(EC) would be blamed.

We want the election to be free and fair and the government should do whatever it deems necessary to achieve this goal.

**Wislam,** *On e-mail*

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Finally, the "emergency" has temporarily rescued the nation. The turmoil has come to a halt and this is the time that our Thinkers', 'Well-wishers' and patriotic people should think as the situation prevailing in the country is conducive for that. We should not devise things for emergency management but should evolve something, which will lead us towards a permanent solution, and

the country will not again plunge into uncertainty. We have the experience of last 15 years of democracy and based on that we can take corrective measures including, if necessary, amending our constitution. This may take time but it is better to spend some time to get a better future than to hurry up and go back to square one. There are many imperatives like correction of voter list, voter ID card, transparent ballot box, appointment of neutral CEC etc. but these actions alone cannot solve the problem. We have to find out the root cause and eliminate it for a permanent solution of our problem. First of all, our experts in sociology or social sciences should find out whether democracy as practiced in the West can flourish in our society. Again, democracy is not the best way of governance but it is supposed to be better than the other systems known to the civilised world. Both Bush and Blair got a second term through democratic process though perhaps majority of the conscientious people did not like the Iraq policy followed by them. The US and UK are supposed to be the bastions of democracy. Should we put democracy in abeyance for sometime till the conditions for implementation of it are fulfilled? Or should we continue as it is and the society will adjust itself with the passage of time? These are the questions that our Pundits should answer and guide us. Just blaming the politicians, bureaucrats or for that matter the Mastans will not get us anywhere.

That reminds me of the younger days when my grandmother used to tell us that if you kill a monster, each drop of blood produces one monster bigger in size than the original one. So just by eliminating a few godfathers, the society is not going to be full of saints.

**Commadore AMA Alam (Retd.) BN**  
*New DOHS, Dhaka*