

Thoughts on the Independence Day



As Bangladesh turns thirty-six--an age that denotes maturity of a human being --we need to reassess our achievements and failures. We can take some solace from the achievements, whereas the failures should urge us to act with renewed vigour.

It is unfortunate that every year we go through a set of rituals: giving the same old speeches; singing the songs and reciting poems and remain forgetful about the country for the rest of the year. In other words, we tend to cram the spirit of patriotism into the routine activities of a single day. This has become part of our collective psyche--a mindset that seems to give priority to emotion over action.

As regards the history of the War of Independence, we need to record the facts from an unbiased stance. Otherwise the posterity will not be able to learn about their past and will remain oblivious of the achievement of the freedom fighters who laid down their lives for an independent country.

Zabed Wali
Pahartali, Chittagong

Good move

The government has made some praiseworthy moves to eliminate all kinds of weaknesses and flaws in the parliamentary election. The idea is to remove confusion from the public mind. Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed has said that the government is formulating a legal framework so that honest and dedicated people can come to the forefront of politics in the changed scenario.

We the general citizens are hopeful that we will be in a position to lead a corruption-free, peaceful life!

A citizen
On e-mail

Give them due credit

Talk of towns in India nowadays is around the cricket World Cup. One says: "You know, India have lost". Then quickly adds: "But you know, Pakistan have also lost". But none talks about the brilliance shown by Bangladesh in cricket.

Dr. Abdul Ruff Colachal

JNU, New Delhi

Remembering Waheedul Haque

I am not an adult, nor am I an engineer, singer or some great writer. I am just that young and carefree teenager who would sit beside the great and good shadow of Waheed Chacha and listen to the words of his wisdom, his sagacity. You might be wondering why I am calling Waheedul Haque Wahid Chacha. It's just that I never got used to calling him by any other name and I don't want to. I didn't meet him in any professional meetings or any villages which he used to visit. I got to know him through the frequent visits that he made to our home. My father had known him for about 25 years and I not even half of that. So, my interactions with him were not that frequent. However, I was a budding teenager with growing pains. So, my thoughts were somehow in one way or another centered upon my own existence. But then and again I would listen to his imperceptible word and blithe voice. I would become a little child sitting by his knees listening to his tales. Quite a few years passed in this manner till our peace and tranquility was shattered by that fateful January night in 2007 when I heard my father say that Wahid Chacha was sick. I wasn't worried that much because I had an indissoluble belief that Wahid Chacha would jump out of his sickbed as fast as one can say 'I am well.' Sadly that did not happen. With his condition still bad, I went to visit him. Believe me, I still had faith in the credibility of his cure. For Wahid

Chacha was a person with such willpower that if there was a Hercules of such a power then he would have knelt before Wahid Chacha. But then I should have known that he was a man with an immortal mind yet a mortal body. I still vividly remember the night my sister told me that he was dead. It was in 27 January. I had asked why my sister was sad. Then, she told me the terrible news. I was shocked at the news. I was numbed with an awful pain in my heart. But, somehow I controlled myself and spent the rest of the night in a painful silence. The next day I went to his funeral to the place where he had made his dream a reality -- Chhayanaut. When I went in, I saw his coffin surrounded by flowers and a green and red cloth, I felt that I had left the urban world of Dhanmondi # 15/A and had entered another world devoid of any sound. With a tearful face, I was led upstairs by another friend of mine. I looked down at the coffin from up. I saw his face. It didn't even seem like he was dead. It just felt like he was peacefully asleep. That made me sadder still. However, I was able to calm down a little bit when I was led to breakfast in a restaurant by my cousin. A few days later, I attended a function to remember Wahid Chacha. At the end, I heard his voice for the last time in my life in an interview. I became that child once again. I listened to his tales. I cried once again.

Weeks have passed since Chacha's death. Yet, I have not been able to remove that glued picture from my memory which was of his final peace at his death-bed. I am still a teenager who is at the prime of his life. That teenager, who still laughs, jokes, studies not-that-much, bunks classes and still remains the same. But, in the nooks and crannies of my life some things happen which leads to memories of Wahid Chacha. They make me laugh, make me cry and sometimes make me look at the sky and silently remember him.

Tabeen
Dhaka

Power shortage

There have been many news items in The Daily Star regarding the chronic power shortage in Bangladesh. Before the peak summer season, the country is experiencing about 1500 MW of power shortage resulting in immense sufferings of the public and loss of industrial and agricultural production. It is well known that construction of additional power plants is time consuming and expensive. If a contract is signed today for a 250 MW power plant, it will take at least two years to

build it, if not more.

The present government has shown courage and taken a bold decision to shut down all shopping malls after 7:00. They are also thinking about investing in hydro-electric power plants in Bhutan and Nepal and import power from those countries. The result of this decision has been immediate, but importing power from Bhutan and Nepal is at least five

Years away. In this respect I have a suggestion for the Energy Ministry. Why not ask all government, semi-government and private concerns to replace their conventional light bulbs with Compact Fluorescent Bulbs (CFB)? The initial cost of a CFB is higher than a conventional bulb but a CFB lasts ten times longer and uses 20 watts to produce the same light as a 75 watts conventional bulb. If 2 million conventional bulbs can be replaced within six months, the net effect will be that of adding a 110 MW power plant to the national grid.

Other benefits will be:

- Reduced power bill for consumers.
- Less heat will be generated inside a room using CFBs since 80% of the energy used by a conventional bulb is wasted as heat.
- Payback time for CFB is less than one year.

Bangladesh can gain a lot by switching to CFBs and banning the use of conventional light bulbs.

Siraj Haque

Houston, Texas

USA

Unsporting behaviour

While we are in a state of euphoria at the splendid and well deserved victory of the Tigers against India, we have to take serious note of the unsporting behaviour of some Indian players during the match.

The Bangladesh team displayed superb cricket. The Tigers excelled in all areas, be it in fielding, bowling or batting. Their temperament was superbly sporting. They never went overboard, remained calm and committed to their task. The red and green Tigers showed their true grit but no arrogance.

I would have been happy if I could say the same for the Indian side.

This squad included top names in international cricket. They are rich, constantly visible in the media, played umpteen international games including Test matches, previous World Cups, one day matches and what not! If cricket is really a gentleman's game who would be better qualified but them to display the same in and outside the playground?

The Indian captain did not show the courtesy to congratulate the two

not-out players at the end of the game and in the post-match interview only blamed the failure of Indian batting line, without a single word of praise for the Tigers.

AKM Shamsuddin

Sonargaon Road

Dhaka

Iraq situation

World-wide protest is going on to end the Iraq war. All US allies, except the UK, have been pulling off their troops from Iraq. It clearly implies that it is an unjust war. They are killing civilians including children and women in Iraq and raping the girls and women. In this situation President Bush is sending more troops to the war-ravaged country. That's indeed regrettable.

Saif Tinku

On e-mail

Observe "Genocide Day" on 5 May

The history of Bangladesh has been made by the brave people who sacrificed their lives in 1971. The genocide at BSMC North Bengal Sugar Mills Ltd. at Gopalpur in Natore district is one of the thousands "My Lai Massacres" in Bangladesh. My eldest brother Shaheed Lieutenant Md. Anwarul Azim who was a Mother Language fighter, along with one hundred people including labourers, officers, guests and others, was killed brutally by the Pakistan Army on 5 May on the staircases of the ghat of the pond on the mills premises.

Their holy dead bodies were not found and this pond is now called "Shaheed Sagar" by the people.

I, on behalf of the Shaheed families of this genocide, urge upon the present caretaker government to observe this historic Genocide Day on 5 May every year nationally as this day will be observed on this famous mills premises.

Would our government and the higher authorities concerned look into the matter?

Mohammad Anwarul Quadir

Advocate and Journalist

Chakdev, Naogaon

Caretaker government

Our political leaders are steeped in various kinds of malpractice. They do not show the right path to the nation. The caretaker government is now taking some courageous steps to root out corruption. We very much appreciate the government's efforts.

Md Anwar Hossain

Bakergonj, Barisal

An appeal

The present caretaker government has taken many reformative steps. Steps for reconstitution of EC, ACC, depoliticisation of administration are the most important issues that have already been addressed. A long awaited step has been taken to separate the Judiciary from the Executive. In this context, I would like to point out an important area to be addressed to save the young generation from learning distorted history (from school textbooks).

So, my request to the present interim government is: please take the initiative to set things right and let our kids learn the right history.

Nasinuzzaman

Crescent Road

Dhaka

Shadhinota Podok

The Shadhinota Podok for this year has been awarded to the Bangladesh Army. It is a surprise that the Army, which was not only born out of our liberation war but participated valiantly in the liberation struggle, has been given this award after long 36 years.

I congratulate the Army not only for being awarded the Shadhinota Podok but also for bringing laurel to the nation as 'Peacekeepers' of the world.

Akku Chowdhury

Dhaka

Tata deal

Numerous studies showed that this deal would not be beneficial to Bangladesh. It will only deplete us of our natural resources. The most

Deaths in Iraq

Four years after the illegal US-UK-Australian invasion of Iraq, how many Iraqis have died in the post-invasion brutalities?

Post-invasion occupied Iraqi deaths (avoidable deaths, deaths that did not have to happen) now total one million as of March 2007 as estimated from data from the top US medical epidemiology group in the World's top Public Health School (the Bloomberg School of Public Health) published and peer-reviewed in the top UK medical journal The Lancet and endorsed by 27 Australian medical experts.

These horrendous outcomes indicate gross violation by the US Alliance of the Geneva Convention (notably Articles 38, 55 and 56), UN Genocide Convention (specifically Article 2) as well as of the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Rights of the Child Convention.

We are inescapably obliged to inform everyone about the loss of human lives in Iraq due to abuse of power.

Dr Gideon Polyá

Melbourne, Australia



increased manifolds in this small bamboo structured once-semi-weekly Kutubdanga market place. People bring eggs, chicken, pulses, fruits or vegetables, paddy to trade against other daily essentials here. After around 60 years, many bamboo structures have changed to concrete. Sanitary hardware to construction material is available today. This remote bazaar, nearby national highway is three kilometers away, upazila and district towns are three to five times of that distance, provides jobs and livelihood to many poor villagers.

People here also have been fighting hard to change their lives. What they have done or achieved today is only due to their individual effort and endeavour to survive.

Like me, many were hoping that if this small bazaar can be connected with the national highway an opportunity to market local produces or making bigger trading effort would be possible, which could change the future of the few hundred thousand population of the area. A small feeder road under construction for over the last ten years is yet to reach the bazaar. Yet that did not stop the locals, their struggle for sustenance went on. Today a small generator is available to supply electricity to the shops.

But surprisingly enough, a few weeks back the local TNO and a magistrate came to the bazaar only to order a demolition of the whole bazaar as it is on Khas land. People simply obliged, breaking by their own hands their hard earned wealth, sinking all hopes.

One can understand the ongoing eviction or demolition of illegal structures in many places. But this one is in a remote corner which is the source of livelihood to local people. I fail to understand what benefits the government has derived from demolishing it. The government could have formally allocated the space to continue with the only little economic activity that is present here.

This bazaar is under Chirirbandar upazila that produces the fine and aromatic rice Katharibhog.

Since rescinding the decision is not going to bring back the demolished wealth, recurrence of such incidents should be stopped.

MM Haque

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

Control emotions

As India lost their last match against Sri Lanka, Bangladesh still stood a chance to play in the next round of the World Cup. In the first match the Tigers displayed awesome prowess and literally outplayed India in all the departments. Then hundreds of students came out on the streets in midnight. Jubilant ...chanting, singing...next day the chief adviser congratulated the Tigers, and many dailies wrote"now the dream is to play in the semifinals". Just in the next match, the Tigers turned into a pet animal. Lost to Sri Lanka by 200 runs almost!

Now we should remember that our team is playing ODIs for quite some time. We came out on the streets back in 1999 when the Tigers beat Pakistan in a World Cup match for the first time. So defeating India in 2007 is nothing so extraordinary. At the same time we must analyse as to how our instant celebration affects the teams' performance. After their victory in

the ICC Trophy in 1997 the players were given a grand reception, awarded with money, land and what not. Their performance went on a free fall. After a lot of harsh criticism they produced a little in 1999. Again we went mad and wild in celebration. Again their performance slid to deck. This is common for we the supporters and our players. There is nothing to argue...as the same thing happened this time. Just in the second match The Tigers were not seen in the shape they were just a day earlier. They lost all their concentration, commitment, everything.

We supporters must learn from this ups and downs. We go to the World Cup once in four years. If we think this is the time then we must try to go as far as possible...not just second round. But that should be with good professional cricket, not just luck. Winning a match is not everything...it is just a start. But our jubilation sends a message to the team that we have won everything. Don't think I am too harsh. Just think ...the Tigers are highly paid for everything in a country where more than 3 crore people live under poverty line. So why shouldn't they perform? If they have done it, they have just done their duties, we should not lose control over our emotions.

MD Bashar Farhad

Mirpur, Dhaka

Some suggestions

The government should take the following steps

1. The flow of economic activities should not be slowed because of insecurity. The government should make an infrastructure of anti-corruption drive, so that future governments could not change that unfairly. Small, medium and heavy industries should get enough support from national and international investors.

2. Skilled manpower should be developed for exporting like India and other neighbours.

3. Black or white money should come back to our country as much as we can afford. India's policy about black money could be followed here, even if some compromise about corruption is needed. If the patient dies, saving his eyes may not be pragmatic. That doesn't mean that the big corrupts will go unhurt. But the outcome is important.

4. The tourism industry can make money if the law and order situation is stabilised. Foreign currency will come from tourism, garments, and exporting skilled labour.

Dr Mohammad Azizul Karim

Australia



Bangladesh is a country of scenic beauty. We have many beautiful places that are neglected by us. Tourism is now a priority sector in many countries. Even some countries which are not that developed are promoting their tourism sector. They realise that if they make their country safe for the tourists, then the country will be benefited in many ways. If we look at Malaysia, we will see that they have taken many steps to promote their tourism business. It is regrettable that our policymakers are still in the dark. How long will we depend on only the RMG sector?

Mohammad Anisur Rahman

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Chittagong