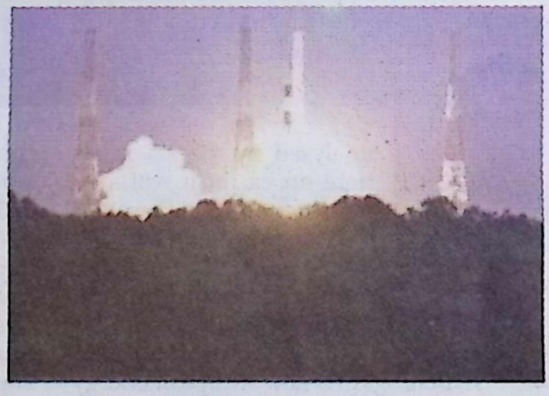
Japan and China have also plans to send manned missions to moon in 2020. If so, the year 2020 will be another significant year for Asia. By the way one thing is clear: Japan, China and India have already emerged as space powers besides their robust economy. These three giants are most likely to lead Asia as superpowers through the twenty first century.

'Chandrayaan' or 'Chandrajan' is a Bangla word with Sanskrit root which means 'moon vehicle'. The word has now been associated with the history of space exploration and will always give rise to a feeling of adventure and reverence in mind. It must make ecstatic the Bengali or Bangla-speaking communities around the globe. We need not feel envious of the spectacular achievement of India. Rather we should be inspired by its success and make our own attempts to overwhelm the gravitation of the globe to fly into the space on our own vessel.

The era of spacefaring knocks at the door when Bangladesh is slumbering. People of Bangladesh are not that much science-oriented, I should say. Some are even afraid of science as most of its theories are threatening for their religious beliefs. They tend to look back and never feel encouraged to take a bold step towards future with scientific and technological advancement. To them, afterlife is more important than the worldly life; illusion is truer than matter. They run after the invisible living in a visible world. Such a psychology is not conducive to scientific progress, after all.

Many people in Bangladesh still do not believe that men have set their foot on the moon. Some religious leaders rule out such facts as the propaganda of the western world. Some even go a step further. They say sky is the realm of God, so men must not disturb it. It is seen virtually as a sin to explore the sky -- trespassing on the territory of God defying divine laws. Such attitudes only hinder space exploration, drawing human minds back to stone age. They fear that space exploration will bring about disaster for the earth thanks to the curse of God.







The scientific community of Bangladesh have also failed to come forward with any plan for space exploration. They have remained happy onlookers of others' achievements. There has been no initiative from the government either. The political parties are engaged in endless wrangling while their election manifestoes do not include agenda regarding science. When they form government after elections they become busy with making a fortune through corrupt means. Popular interest is their second concern. And science and space is no concern at all. We regrettably lack people like A P J Abdul Kalam, a scientist-turned-president, who was instrumental in the moon exploration project of India, and Madhavan Nair, Chairman of the Indian Space Research Organisation, who played a key role in rocket design. When will we get that scientific vision and political wisdom that will lift us to the height of Heavens?

Nevertheless I am not hopeless. I believe one day Bangladesh will rise up from its backwardness and accept science in their life. Its inner darkness will be illuminated with the light of the sun. People will look at the sky not with spiritual timidity but with cosmic vision and gather courage to splash into it. A space mission from Bangladesh carrying a red-green flag will hit the moon land some day. The undaunted sons of the soil will explore the solar system and fly beyond. They will explore all stars in the Milky Way and then in other galaxies. It will be a Bengali or Bangladeshi who will lead in conquering the universe. No harm in dreaming!

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