Towards that Shining City on the Hill . . .

SYED BADRUL AHSAN

We are today at the crossroads of history. We are poised to make new history, or repeat the old one. The future of Bangladesh, all too often weighed down by the burdens and sins of the past, could for once move on into new beginnings. Or there could well be more of what we have observed thus far in our endless striving for democracy. And unending has been our collective agony for all the good we have not been able to come by in all these years since freedom came to this land on a December afternoon long ago. We are, as we keep reminding ourselves, a proud nation free of the political fetters that kept us in a straitjacket in the Pakistan years. And yet the economic emancipation that must necessarily accompany political liberty has not happened.

It is a lopsided society we have built for ourselves, one that thrives in the interest of the robber barons in our midst. Through the decades that have gone by since we drove the murderous men from the mountains out of our lives, we have dreamed of building the edifice of an egalitarian society, a pattern of social relationships where all citizens being equal will be privy to all the rights that define life and all its finer details. We have faltered and stumbled along the way. We have made mistakes. Our leaders have erred in judgement. There have been men who have stormed to power through gore and murder and plain lies. Our nationalism has been tampered with; our constitution has been mauled and mutilated many times over. Thieves have seized the state, time after time. The perfidy and villainy of the mediocre pretending to be politicians have left us



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