

Forgive

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"Many countries fought wars and earned independence, but they were not divided after liberation," said Mian Golam Parwar, central working committee member of Jamaat.

Every nation has forgotten and forgiven bad deeds committed in the past, he said at a discussion on Victory Day arranged by the city Jamaat at Jatiya Press Club in the capital.

His comments come at a time when call for the war crimes trial is at its highest. Currently, five top Jamaat leaders including party chief Motiur Rahman Nizami, Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed and Nayeb-e-Ameer Delwar Hossain Sayeede are detained on war crimes charges.

On the trial, Golam Parwar said the government formed the "so-called war crimes tribunal" to erase Islam from the country, fearing the growing popularity of the Islamic and nationalist parties.

He claimed that Jamaat is the most patriotic party.

Referring to the ruling Awami League, he said, "You've a place to go. But we don't. We've India on three sides and Bay of Bengal on the other. We love this country because of that reality and also because of our Islamic ideals."

Nurul Islam Bulbul, acting secretary of Dhaka City Jamaat, said people will not accept any farcical war crimes trial. Because they know that the Jamaat leaders who are now detained safeguarded the country during the post-independent era.

Referring to the party's current situation, Central Working Committee Member Abdullah Mohammad Taher said, "Don't be afraid. There is always light at the end of the tunnel. We'll find our way again."

Other party leaders called on the government to work together with them to build a prosperous nation.

They urged the government to establish national unity and give the nation a real taste of liberation.

They warned that the government will not be able stay in power by torturing political opponents.

Toll booth

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handset to the cashier of the toll booth Nayan.

Identifying himself as lawmaker Nasrul Hamid, the man on the other side of the phone insulted Nayan and also threatened to sack him on the following day.

Nayan informed the matter to Nuruddin.

Hearing about the altercation, police went to the spot, Sakhawat Hossain, officer-in-charge of Dakkhin Keraniganj told The Daily Star. They left the area on assurance that both the sides would settle the matter.

At that stage, Nuruddin informed Shyampur police about the incident. They later detained Nayan and another staff Jahangir for misbehaving with the MP.

Around 11:00 pm, Keraniganj upazila Chairman Shahin Ahmed phoned Nuruddin and said, "You will suffer tomorrow morning the consequences of misbehaving with the MP."

Around 9:30am yesterday, over 300 supporters of the MP and upazila chairman gathered at the both ends of the bridge and set the toll booths afire.

They also looted about Tk 7 lakh from the booths and vandalised a police box during the attack, complained Nuruddin.

Contacted, Nasrul Hamid Bipu denied all the allegations brought against him.

The members of CNG-run three-wheeler owners' association yesterday protested charging extra toll by the lessee of the bridge, claimed the lawmaker. "As a representative of the people, I am against any harassment of people by the toll collectors."

Despite repeated efforts, The Daily Star last night could not reach the upazila chairman over the phone for his comments.

As of 12:30am today, police were yet to file any case in connection with the incident.

V-Day today

**FROM PAGE 1**  
It was the winter of ecstasy for the people of Bangladesh, for they had just succeeded in beating back an enemy which should have had no business running riot through their hearths and homes. All across the streets and alleys of this city was heard a continuum of Joi Bangla, the nationalistic slogan which had over the years turned into an articulation of the collective Bangalee demand for democratic rights.

The demand had, of course, changed course through the exigencies of the times -- from that of autonomy for a people long suppressed to that of freedom for a nation convinced that Bangladesh needed to be born if decency was to survive and thrive.

In the afternoon of December 16 four decades ago, it was freedom which stepped gingerly into our homes. Liberty, so long the stuff that dreams are made of, was suddenly and yet expectedly ours to savour.

The brave soldiers of the marauding Pakistan army, having put an end to the lives of three million Bangalees and dishonoured as many as two hundred thousand Bangalee women, had finally caved in.

Note that there were 93,000 of them, all men who had been taught to believe that the Bangalees did not matter, that indeed it was "East Pakistan" which had to be reclaimed, that nothing else was. The dramatic nature of the Bangalee victory was as compelling as it was inevitable, for just days before his men bit the dust, General Amir Abdullah Khan Niazi had served the eerie warning that Dhaka would be taken only over his dead body. But it was a living, breathing Niazi who had capitulated before the rolling bandwagon of the nationalistic Bangalee spirit.

Forty years on, it is time to reflect on what was, perhaps on what should have been. On December 16, 1971, it was a cheerful rendering of "aaj srishiti shukher ullaash" wafting along, per courtesy of a newly reopened and rejuvenated Dhaka Radio. The joy of creation was all, as was the painful happiness of a return home. Abdul Jabbar, having with so many others kept the spirit of triumph alive in the months preceding the end of the war, now sang "hajar bochor pore abar eshechhi phire... Bangla'r buuke achhi darhiye".

In a few days, the Mujibnagar government would be coming home from exile. Within weeks, as time would tell us, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman -- father of the nation, liberator, our friend and our window to the world -- would be back in our midst. There would be a constitution within a year, with a general election to follow. The secular, sovereign Bangalee state, fashioned out of the crucible of a twilight struggle, would be on the road to a consolidation of life and liberty.

The rest is, surely, history. Forks in the road would take us down paths we did not need to take. And foul conspiracy would stand triumphant, through a wholesale murder of the men who had steered the nation to freedom. The brave soldiers who would not rest until liberty was at hand would disappear, one after the other, in the land they had caused to be born. These are realities that ought not to have been. This is history which fundamentally owes its reality to the elemental nature of those who have never tolerated the rise of truth.

Anti-history was around, right from the moment of our rebirth as a proud, free nation. Precious years were lost through democratic politics being pushed into exile and unconstitutional rule taking over. Bangabandhu enlightened us, even as the euphoria of freedom kept us in thrall, on how Bangladesh could graduate to being the Switzerland of the east. Those who came after him, in predatory fashion, simply jostled us back into the dark.

It was not, as Humayun Azad was to proclaim loudly,

the Bangladesh we had bargained for back in the terrifying as also terrific months of the war. Our collective imagination and objective reality, as we serenaded a liberated land, did not envision an ambience of untruth, a political canvas where coups d'etat and a rapid decline in values would undermine our ethos before a horrified world. Bloodletting had never been our prediction; and yet blood streamed into the lives of people who had not forgotten the blood shed by their compatriots in all the years leading up to the arrival of liberty. A free nation does not relish the spectacle of blood. And yet blood has flowed.

Forty years on, there is that compulsion in the heart, that tug at the soul, for new promises to be made in the interest of generations of Bangalees to be. Those promises come touched with necessary emotion. Now that we are forty, it is time to restore the ideals we have lost along the way.

Our democracy must be made stronger, through a strengthening of the institutions which underpin governance. Our political classes must inform themselves that politics is never combative or adversarial but is always cooperative; that parliament, being the fountainhead of freedom and justice, ought not to be spurned by those elected to be part of it.

Time for monkey

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his Pakistani handlers, was apparently found ambling around the desert region of Rahim Yar Khan on November 19.

Paramilitary troops manning a border post spotted the animal and sent him to Bahawalpur zoo in Pakistan's Punjab province. The case may be open and shut for the zoo, but his status is attracting a flurry of media attention.

"We were given him by the Rangers. They found him strolling near their post," the zoo's curator Irfan Farooqi told AFP by telephone.

He added: "We don't suspect the monkey has been deliberately sent to Pakistan. I don't think it is a trained spy. It is a common monkey."

The monkey is now locked up, joining half a dozen others, including another monkey that apparently strayed across the border from India a few months ago.

"India has a huge population of monkeys and often when they are hungry they head towards Pakistan," Farooqi said.

The zoo was established in 1942 during British colonial rule before the sub-continent was divided between India and Pakistan upon independence in 1947.

An animal rights group in India has reportedly written to Pakistan's ambassador to New Delhi asking that the monkey be released back into the wild. But Farooqi said the zoo had received no request.

The zoo official said there was no question of just releasing him because "monkeys are usually naughty and they can harm the civilian population".

"We got (another) one (from India) a few months ago and no one asked for its repatriation. We can release them only if we get orders from our bosses."

India and Pakistan resumed a tentative peace process this year, following a three-year hiatus over the 2008 attacks in Mumbai, blamed on Pakistanis.

The two countries have fought three wars since independence and relations remain mired in distrust.

Asghar Gilani, a Pakistani wildlife department official, said the monkey's fate was "just a media attraction".

"Such incidents have happened in the past also but no demand for their return had been made."

Secret killing

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resorted to secret killings to suppress and oppress the opposition, he said while addressing a press briefing at his party's central office at Naya Paltan.

The BNP leader called upon the party's leaders and activists for retribution, saying, "the present government has to be prepared for retaliation for its every single move."

Criticising Home Minister Sahara Khatun for her remark that she came to know about the matter through newspapers, Mirza Alamgir said government's use of secret killings as a political move is panicking people.

Sutrapur thana Swechasebok Dal leader Masud Rana has been missing for 15-16 days while dead body of Jhikargachha BNP president Nazmul Islam has been recovered from Gazipur, he said, claiming that this shows the government's involvement in the matter.

The present government is not establishing the rule of law, instead they are implementing party rule so that none can protest their misdeeds, the BNP leader said.

"I have already said that the government is involved with all killings and disappearances. National and international human rights bodies also expressed concerns but the government did not give any attention," he said.

He also expressed solidarity towards hartal called by Jessore BNP for December 17 protesting the killing of Jhikargachha BNP president.

Nazmul's wife Sabira Sultana Munni said she and her youngest son started for their Dhanmondi house around 11:30 pm on Wednesday for a wedding party at Shetera Community Center at Mirpur-11. Nazmul was in another car all by himself.

"At 11:57 pm Nazmul called his friend TH Ayub over the phone, saying he was surrounded by some kidnapers near Mohammadpur Police Station. We could not reach him over the phone then," she said.

She alleged that police and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) did not respond to her plea for help.

AL men appointed

**FROM PAGE 1**  
said Zarina Rahman Khan, a professor at Dhaka University public administration department.

Instead of making the local government more powerful, the government is controlling it, she told The Daily Star.

Prof Badiul Alam Majumdar, secretary of Sujan, a civil society platform, said "Appointing administrator is not only the violation of constitution but also goes against a High Court decision."

He said the HC in a ruling in 1992 asked the government to hold elections to zila parishads. But no government paid heed to it.

During the autocratic rule of HM Ershad, lawmakers were appointed chairmen to zila parishads. With the fall of Ershad's regime, the chairmen, most of whom were MPs from his Jatiya Party, were removed and deputy commissioners were made ex-officio chairmen.

In 2000, the Awami League-led government repealed the Zila Parishad Act, 1988 and passed the current law with a provision for direct polls to zila parishads. But no elections to the parishads have been held so far, allowing bureaucrats to run them.

In its 2008 election manifesto, the party pledged that the district council will be strengthened through decentralisation of power. "The district council will be transformed into centres for implementing programmes on education and health and all other development plans and programmes and for maintenance of law of order," it said.

All 5 acquitted

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was killed in July 2006 and the trial started after framing of charges in January this year.

Following eleven months of proceedings, a Dhaka court yesterday delivered its verdict acquitting the accused of the charges.

Expressing dissatisfaction over the judgement, ASM Asif, brother-in-law of Sabbir and also the complainant, told The Daily Star that Bashundhara Group had threatened the eyewitnesses not to appear before the court.

Getting the certified copy of the verdict, he would appeal before the higher court.

There were 35 witnesses in the case. Of them, Sadia Akhter alias Ratri and Papiya Gayen, both sex workers, were present during the murder of Sabbir.

In their statements given to a magistrate on April 17, 2007, the two narrated how the killing took place at the Gulshan residence of Shafiq Sobhan Sanvir on July 5, 2006.

The tribunal repeatedly summoned Sadia and

Papiya to appear before it for giving statements and even issued arrest warrants for them.

The prosecution and police hardly took any effective initiative to produce the eyewitnesses during the trial. They informed the court that they could not find the duo.

Judge Mohammad Motaah Hossain of the Speedy Trial Tribunal-4 yesterday delivered the verdict saying the prosecution had failed to prove the charges against the accused.

The court would have even accepted as evidence the recorded statements of witnesses who were unavailable during the trial, he said.

Sanvir, a son of Bashundhara Group Chairman Ahmed Sobhan Shah Alam, is the prime accused in the case while Nure Alam and Humayun Kabir, security guards of Sabbir's house, and Khairul Hassan Ujjal and Shamsuddin Ahmed, bodyguards of Sanvir, were also implicated in the killing.

Khairul and Shamsuddin were present in the court as

Toxic liquor tragedy

Toll rises to 143 in India

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi**

The death toll for consuming contaminated liquor rises to 143 since yesterday in Paschim Banga in India.

Most of the deceased were poor labourers and rickshaw pullers.

The toll may rise further as over 100 victims are battling for life in hospitals, official sources in Kolkata said yesterday.

The victims in Sangrampur and adjoining villages of South 24 Parganas district fell ill after consuming the spurious liquor from several illegal bootleggers on Tuesday night.

Preliminary investigations suggest the liquor was laced with methyl alcohol, which led to respiratory and cardiac failure.

Sri Lankan Navy arrests 5 Indian fishermen

**PTI, Rameswaram**

In the second such incident in over two weeks, five fishermen were taken into custody by Sri Lankan naval force personnel when they were fishing near Katchatheevu yesterday.

Fisheries department officials said the Sri Lankan navy chased fishermen who had put to sea in 711 boats and rounded up three boats. However, fishermen in two boats managed to escape but five fishermen in the third boat were taken into custody. The navy also seized their boat and took the fishermen to Sri Lanka, officials said.

Senior Vice Chairman Tarique Rahman, Sanvir, former BNP lawmaker Kazi Saleemul Haque Kamal and three others for their involvement in the bribery. The trial in the case was stayed following a High Court order.

Yesterday, the prosecution produced 30 out of the 35 prosecution witnesses during the proceedings. Of them, only the complainant and the victim's parents told the court that the accused, including Sanvir, had killed Sabbir. The 27 others said nothing against the accused and that they had not seen the incident.

On May 12, 2008, Mohammad Arman Ali, assistant superintendent of police of CID, pressed charges against Sanvir and the four others for committing the offence.

Later, the case was transferred to two more sessions judges' courts but following a stay order from the higher court, the trial could not be started.

The case was then shifted to the tribunal on March 7 last year.

BNP leader killed after abduction

**FROM PAGE 1**  
her youngest son started for their Dhanmondi house around 11:30 pm on Wednesday for a wedding party at Shetera Community Center at Mirpur-11. Nazmul was in another car all by himself.

"At 11:57 pm Nazmul called his friend TH Ayub over the phone, saying he was surrounded by some kidnapers near Mohammadpur Police Station. We could not reach him over the phone then," she said.

She alleged that police and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) did not respond to her plea for help.

"After we came to know that Nazmul was in trouble, we sought help from the law enforcers throughout the night, but nobody helped. Even the on duty personnel at Rab-2 and Rab Headquarters said they could do nothing before 9:00am tomorrow [yesterday]."

However, Officer-in-charge of Mohammadpur Police Station Mahmudul

Islam refuted the allegation and said they recorded a general diary in connection with the abduction early yesterday. He added that they also immediately sent the message to the control room.

Contacted, Commander M Sohail, director of Rab legal and media wing, also termed the allegation baseless. He said the Rab HQ closes at 5:00pm, so there is nobody to take any call.

However, Munni said they could not get Nazmul over the phone throughout the night. Finally they reached his phone around 6:45am yesterday when someone identifying himself as a pedestrian said he found the phone by the body.

The body was sent to Gazipur Sadar Hospital for an autopsy.

Asked about the suspects, Munni said she would not name anyone at this stage. "But I'll say that his huge popularity in the area caused concerns for local BNP and Awami

League leaders."

She added that one Kamal, who became very close to Nazmul around three years ago, had recently been behaving mysteriously.

"Kamal accompanied my husband to the wedding but left half an hour before us."

Kamal identified himself as an AL leader from Gopalganj, she said, adding that Kamal did not contact them since the incident, which is "unusual".

Nazmul was an export-import and transport trader. His eldest son Sadman Alvi Rifat, a class nine student, said his father used to come home late at night and slept in the morning when they left for school. By the time they returned from school, Nazmul was gone out.

The last time he met his father was at a wedding party at the MP Hostel on December 12, he said, adding that he often missed his father.