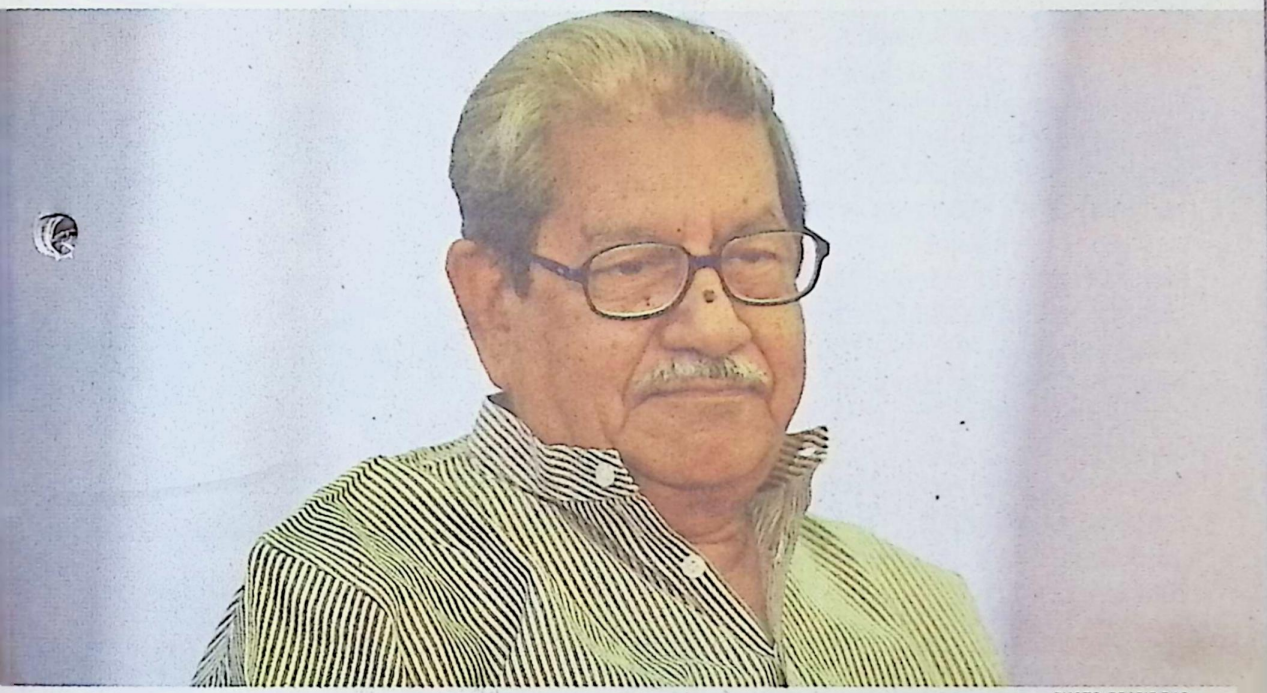
Think. But How?

Dr Anisuzzaman, Professor emeritus at the Department of Bangla at the University of Dhaka is a thinker-scholar who has participated in all progressive movements the country has witnessed— the Language Movement of 1952, the Mass Uprising of 1969, the War of Liberation of 1971 and the anti- autocracy movement of 1990. He has written prolifically on the war, national identity and religion, and cultural pluralism. On a recent May afternoon, Dr Anisuzzaman talks about how we are to think.



Dr Anisuzzaman PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

We must encourage free thinking; at least we must encourage each individual to think for himself. It is important for the development of the individual mind and the nation as a whole. Unless we think rationally, we won't be able to find solutions to problems that baffle us all. There are those in our society who still defend obscurantism and superstitions in the name of religion or ideology. We heard not too long ago that the portrait of a person convicted of crimes against humanity was seen on the moon. This is a classic example of rational and scientific thinking taking complete leave of us. In schools, in our families, at work and in social circles, we must let rational thought flourish. If you are seeking knowledge, you must ask questions. The constitution guarantees that right. It also limits us from hurting other people's beliefs and so on. We will abide by that and respect that. But we must stand our ground courageously when it comes to expressing ourselves freely. The youth must get organised and resist all attempts to divide people on the basis of religion, caste or ethnicity. The principles of equality of men and human dignity should guide us in everything we do. Democracy accommodates more than one point of view, and there'll always be clashes of ideas and opinions. But there are certain issues on which we must be united. It is difficult to achieve that given the conflicting process of political development. I cannot really say that you must do this or that. But this is a goal we must achieve at all costs. Or else, we cannot go forward. ■

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