

Freedom has its own strength. The achievements of an independent Bangladesh are many. The poverty level has plunged. We no longer have famines. In many social development indicators we have done better than neighbouring countries. Our success in women empowerment through microcredit has become a model for others.

We have produced a Nobel laureate, become a major garment exporting power and our young men and women have climbed the Everest. The contribution of Bangladesh Armed Forces and Bangladesh Police in United Nations Peace Support Operations has earned the world's respect.

Earlier this year, at the International Collegiate Programming Contest (ICPC) in Russia, students

CHIMES OF FREEDOM

With freedom comes responsibility

AMITAVA KAR

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from BUET beat top universities like Carnegie Mellon, Stanford, University of California at Berkeley and were ranked same as Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). In the arts and culture Bangladeshi talents are breaking new ground. We have learned to win against cricket powerhouses.

Bangladesh is now the fourth largest fish producing country in the world. Foreign remittance has emerged as one of the major pillars of the economy despite all the hurdles migrant workers face. Many rural women now use Skype to talk to their husbands who work overseas. These are no small feats.

The resilience of our people in dealing with

natural disasters inspire awe in the rest of the world. But man-made disasters plague our lives. Poor governance, corruption, extrajudicial killing, kidnapping and industrial accidents are shockingly rampant. The food we eat is adulterated with toxic chemicals. Quality of education at all levels is declining at an alarming rate. Universities are held hostage by political goons.

Everybody talks about reforms. But reforms must be carried out at the organisational level as well as the policy level. How is it that Biman, the national flag carrier keeps running at a loss? What does it take to fix it?

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There was a time when people regarded politics as a tool to craft a society free from discrimination of all forms. The language movement, Six-Point and Eleven-Point movement and the non-co-operation

movement that led to the War of Liberation are examples of that. Politics have taken a nose dive from that glorious past.

The dreams and revolutionary beliefs for which our forefathers fought are still at issue—the beliefs that man is born free and all men are created equal. We are the heirs of that revolution against tyranny and injustice.

The torch has been passed to a new generation of Bangladeshis—born in a free country, proud of an ancient heritage, set to conquer the world. Let us stand guard and be ready to pay any price, bear any burden and meet any hardship to assure the survival and the success of the liberty that was a gift to us from men and women who gave their lives and honour for it. Let all countries know that we intend to remain the master of our own house.

To those people in the huts in villages and slums in cities who are struggling to break the bonds of poverty and deprivation, let us pledge our best efforts to help them help themselves, not because we seek “sustainable development”, but because it is the

right thing to do. To them freedom will have meaning when they can make a decent living after toiling through day and night.

So let all sides begin anew—keeping in mind that civility is not a sign of weakness. Let both sides seek to invoke the best in us instead of the worst.

We do not have two futures but one. A future where the strong are just, the weak secure, and the peace and harmony preserved. We may not see this realised in our lifetime. But let us begin.

In our hands lies the success or failure of that endeavour. The freedom fighters who answered the call to duty dreamed that freedom would improve our lives and give us dignity. Now the trumpet summons us again—not a call to bear arms; but a call to bear the burden of a long struggle—a struggle against our common enemies: corruption, discrimination, poverty, disease, and violence.

The faith, the devotion and the energy, which we bring to this endeavour will light our country and all who serve it. United, there is little we cannot do. Split asunder, there is little we can do.



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