

2015 is going to be a milestone in world history

SHEIKH HASINA

As we are stepping into the New Year, we need to have an image of 2015 and also beyond. The future is not entirely unpredictable. The best way to predict our future is to create it ourselves.



PHOTO: MUNEM WASIF

Our world in 2015 and post-2015 will be what we now dream it to be. How it will look will depend largely on what our actions are now. Our actions should therefore reflect our words, and that is the only way we can predict and build a tangible future. Our vision for the world beyond 2015 should focus

on people -- on the aspirations and hopes of the people -- in a just and a fair world. This is largely steered by promoting a culture of peace, right to development, right for equal future, empowerment of people, particularly women and the underprivileged, access to education for all, health and greater economic opportunities -- thus ensuring a secular, progressive and democratic human society. Realising these visions depends on every human being of this world, public and government alike.

Poverty and ignorance are the greatest impediments to development and therefore eradication of poverty and access to education should remain at the very heart of contemporary development debate of the Post-2015 Development Agenda. With 60 million children still remaining outside schools, 75% of them girls, and 1.3 billion people still living in extreme poverty, we can never really attain sustainable development unless we address these issues.

The Government of Bangladesh has integrated the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) into the national five-year plans and also in our 'Vision-2021.' This people-centric vision aspires to transform Bangladesh into a knowledge-based, technology-driven Middle Income Country by 2021. We have already met or are on track to meet MDG-1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6. Poverty has been reduced from 57% in 1991 to below 25% today.

I also need to mention that although the MDGs have been the most successful global anti-poverty push in history, the progress is uneven and unequal within and among countries and regions. Over 1.3 billion people still live in utter poverty. As we reflect on the newer development challenges, poverty alleviation, therefore, should be the cornerstone of the Post-2015 Agenda.

Acknowledging the fact that girls' right to education is mandatory to combat different forms of discriminatory and harmful practices against them that are still prevalent in many societies in our world, every policy of the Government of Bangladesh is targeted towards removing obstacles to girls' education and empowerment. We made education free for our girls up to Grade Twelve and have plans to take it to graduate levels. Stipends and free meals for female students from poorer families have helped achieve gender parity in primary and secondary schools. In 2014, out of the 12.8 million stipend recipi-

ents, including from the Prime Minister's Education Trust Fund, 75% were girls. 60% positions in primary schools are reserved for female teachers. Non-formal education measures have enabled girls who have dropped out of school to continue education. Education receives the highest importance in our Women Development Policy that was formulated in 2011.

We have taken measures to set up six technical educational institutions only for girls. In addition to self-employment and skills training, collateral-free small loans are being offered to potential college-going women entrepreneurs. We have established in Chittagong the first Asian University for Women to promote higher education for girls from Asian countries. We have taken these measures keeping in mind our vision of the post-2015 world and our mission to play an active and equal role in the coming decade.

In Bangladesh, the percentage of women is rising fast in all professions, including politics, civil service, judiciary, armed forces, technical profession, aviation (pilots), sports including cricket, football and even mountaineering, as our girls have conquered Mount Everest. Bangladesh today is perhaps the only country in the world that has to its credit a female prime minister, female speaker of the parliament, female leader of the opposition and a female leader and deputy leader of the parliament. Many western societies may not be able to match this. Our female work-force has risen from 24% to 36% in the last three years, contributing to our 6.2% growth rate. Bangladesh is the second largest exporter of Ready Made Garments in the world and 90% of that entire global sector is laboured by our young energetic female workforce.

We learn from our past experiences and at times from mistakes. Our past makes us stronger. Let us keep in mind the lessons taught by our past and build our future based on what we have learned. Let us keep in mind that all that is ever important is the "now" in which we live in and all that is going to be important is the "tomorrow" that we leave for our children.

The writer is Honourable Prime Minister, People's Republic of Bangladesh.
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Back to the future

SHIFTING IMAGES



MILIA ALI

"YOU are only young once, but you can stay immature indefinitely," said Ogden Nash, the American poet whose droll and unconventional rhymes made him widely appreciated as a creator of humorous poetry. Recently, I recalled Nash's quote not because I relish light poetry but because of an interesting

encounter with a friend. I asked her how her three-year-old granddaughter was doing. Rather than answer my question, she whipped open her iPhone and showed me a series of photographs of the little one engaged in various activities. This in itself was fine since "online" photos are now substitutes for the albums of yore. But when she downloaded an app on her phone and started educating me on the milestones of a child's development, comparing these to her grandkids' phenomenal progress, it took me by surprise. I was looking forward to a heart to heart conversation on the shared experiences of grand parenting, not enhancing my child-rearing skills through an iPhone app!

The incident prompted me to reflect on Nash's witty observation -- since it seems to apply to people of my generation. If we look around we will notice that most of us baby boomers are trying hard to look and act young -- as if growing old is a social malaise that must be avoided like the plague. With a callous disregard for our expanding girths and proliferating wrinkles, we choose to wear ludicrously flashy clothes, quaint Barbie doll make up and indulge in adolescent behaviour. We try desperately to compete with the youth by playing video games, advertising our fast lifestyles on Facebook and participating in tech savvy conversations on twitter (using acronyms like lol, nbd or omg).

It's quite natural for us to have the urge to appear and feel young and be part of the technological progress. The problem arises when we look at our "botoxed" or heavily made up faces in the mirror and lose our centre of gravity. After all, wrinkles carry the weight of wisdom acquired through the years and age gives us a sense of identity by grounding us to our roots. If we discard everything that reminds us of time and tradition and idolise everything youthful and new, we might be in danger of losing our cultural continuity. Also, by emulating the actions and behaviour of the young and transposing them into our lives, we fail to act as role models whom they can follow.

I don't wish to create the impression that I am resistant to new ideas and lifestyles. Change is an ineluctable part of human history -- it is also what makes us evolve. However, a healthy and prosperous society can only evolve when lessons from the past are intertwined with youthful creativity. In some cases, it may be advantageous to perpetuate our traditional ways. For example, sharing the beauty of a Tagore melody or the intense passion of a Neruda poem with close friends in an intimate environment can be emotionally and spiritually uplifting. As much as I like chatting with friends on the Internet, nothing can substitute the joy of an endearing familiar voice or the warmth of a loving hug. And these are things that I would like my children to enjoy rather than encourage their detached habits of listening to music on their earphones or limiting their interactions to Facebook.

Having said that, one cannot deny that technology has made life so much easier for all of us. I shudder to think of all my missed appointments and lost opportunities had there been no cell phone. Also, I doubt that I could have been in constant touch with those I love without the email. But, I do believe that the young can learn a lot by being connected to the real world rather than relying solely on their technical devices. Our generation can demonstrate the importance of the "human touch" through our actions.

One may argue that the tussle between changing norms and preserving customs is not new. However, a healthy and prosperous society can only evolve when there is a fine balance between tradition and innovation. In our efforts to keep up with the technological leaps made in the last two decades, let us not move too far away from our historical context. Let's accept that our greying hair and the lines and folds on our faces tell their own story of victory, defeat, pain and pleasure. And since we have lived through these experiences and not learned about them from phone applications, we can be effective simply by being who we are -- if not, we may fail to pass on the wisdom we have accumulated through the years.

The writer is a renowned Rabindra Sangeet exponent and a former employee of the World Bank. E-mail: shiftingimages@gmail.com

Chief Justice Muhammad Habibur Rahman: As I knew him

HARUN UR RASHID

IF Justice Muhammad Habibur Rahman Rahman were alive today, he would have never approved the title "Chief Justice" before his name in the heading of this article because he was a modest person and always shunned titles and accolades. He just wanted to be known as Muhammad Habibur Rahman without any titles.

He was a professor, barrister, judge, philosopher-thinker, poet, prolific writer of about 90 books on law, language, literature, Rabindranath Tagore, anthropology, and translator of the holy Q'uran -- all rolled into one.

Justice Rahman's goals were to serve his country, to serve his people by uncovering the truth, and to tell the people about the importance of values of equality, liberty, participatory democracy and social inclusion.

When he passed away, the condolences and tributes that poured in from legions of people and politicians, irrespective of party, illustrated that he was a real inspiration through the force of his convictions and his ideals.

After completing BA Honours from Rajshahi College, he took admission in Dhaka University and completed his Masters (1951) in history securing first class. He also obtained LLB from Dhaka University.

He was elected as a vice president of the Salimullah Muslim Hall in 1951. He played a key role in the 1952 Language Movement, and he together with another student first came out openly on the street and defied the Section 144 imposed on February 21, 1952, by the Pakistani rulers. He was arrested on that day along with many others from a procession.

Since Justice Rahman had first-hand knowledge about what happened on February 21, 1952, he felt very strongly about the importance of mother tongue in the life of everyone, and wrote a book titled *Speaks for All Languages*, which was a ground-breaking and seminal work that has contributed to the understanding of the importance of all

mother languages

He appeared at the Central Superior Service examination and was successful but, because of the adverse police report, he could not join either the civil service (CSP) or foreign service (PFS). To embarrass the government he thought of an innovative protest by selling cigarettes at the gate of the Dhaka University. Since he was a tall person, no one could miss him.

Soon, to avoid such a protest by a brilliant student, the government offered him a schol-



Muhammad Habibur Rahman

arship to Oxford University. He graduated in modern history in 1958 and got Masters in 1962 from Oxford University. Since he had given a bond to Rajshahi University, he had to teach history there for five years after his return from England.

We knew him as Shelley Bhai. As students junior to him, we tended to gravitate towards him because of his brilliance. He used to inspire us and encourage us to do right things. We admired him, respected him and loved him.

I have known him in different contexts and in different times. After Dhaka, in London, I suddenly met him at the Lincoln's Inn where he and I were enrolled to become barristers. He earned the professional degree of Barrister-at-Law in 1959.

Justice Habibur Rahman joined the Dhaka High Court Bar in 1964, where I met him again. We used to sit side by side at a long table and discuss many political and social issues. I could easily ascertain his thought-provoking ideas and thinking about the issues which impressed me deeply. During that time he wrote a very useful booklet on compulsory requisition of lands by the government, which became a hot topic in litigations at the High Court.

He served as a judge of the High Court Division from 1976 to 1985, Appellate Division of the Supreme Court during 1985-1995, and as chief justice of Bangladesh in 1995. He served as the chief adviser of the caretaker government in 1996 and effectively handled an attempt of a military coup during that time.

We lost contact for many years as we had moved into different paths of our careers. After retirement when I came to Dhaka, we again became close. He entrusted me to write book reviews on two of his books -- one on China and the other on the mother language. He often used to come to my place and whenever I invited him for a get-together he invariably attended.

Although his judicial career took him to the top, he remained extremely influential in society through his books, including six books of verses. He did not mince words and spoke candidly about the ills of society, and some of his remarks became "talk of the town" for many days.

Shelley Bhai, we will never forget you because you have been a source of inspiration to us to pursue knowledge and service to humanity. I join all members of his family in praying for eternal peace for him.

The writer is a former Bangladesh Ambassador to the UN, Geneva.

QUOTABLE Quote

We know what we are, but know not what we may be.

William Shakespeare

CROSSWORD by Thomas Joseph

- ACROSS**
- 1 Coyote cries
 - 6 He had gilt feelings
 - 11 Heap of fiction
 - 12 Ticket category
 - 13 "The Hobbit" hero
 - 14 Malia's sister
 - 15 Haddock's cousin
 - 16 Adm.'s underling
 - 18 Peculiarity
 - 19 Lay, later
 - 20 Writer Followit
 - 21 Annoy
 - 22 Annoy
 - 24 Picnic pests
 - 25 Most pucker-inducing
 - 27 Co-star of Haley and Bolger
 - 29 Greek vowels
 - 32 Tennis feat
 - 33 Game cube
 - 34 Second person
 - 35 Pussy foot
 - 36 Pen fill
 - 37 Petite
 - 38 Decree
 - 40 Article
- DOWN**
- 1 Wheel accessory
 - 2 Red-and-black bird
 - 3 Johnny Mathis hit
 - 4 Research spot
 - 5 Major upset, say
 - 6 Wall worker
 - 7 Lupino of films
 - 8 Kansas hit
 - 9 "King of the Trumpet"
 - 10 Library section
 - 17 Relate
 - 23 Sea dog
 - 24 African viper
 - 26 Sister of Orestes
 - 27 Jacket parts
 - 28 Maine park
 - 30 Get satisfaction for
 - 31 Folk's Pete
 - 33 Bubble-headed
 - 39 Cartoon frame
 - 41 Possessed

CRYPTOQUOTE

KI VI UXIPV SP IPH'D IUP UTW SD YHKKHX KQTP KI VI XSVQK SP DIGHIPH HCDH'D.

-- ZBIX BIDKIWHFDJW

Yesterday's CRYPTOQUOTE:
THE TASK OF THE LEADER IS TO GET HIS PEOPLE FROM WHERE THEY ARE TO WHERE THEY HAVE NOT BEEN.
-- HENRY KISSINGER

Yesterday's answer

B	A	T	H	S	C	A	R	E	S			
A	D	H	O	C	A	C	U	T	E			
T	O	R	S	O	T	R	E	A	T			
E	S	T	R	A	T	E						
P	O	E	T	R	A	T	E					
A	C	I	D	I	C	O	H	N	O			
T	H	R	E	E	H	E	A	R	T	S		
C	R	O	W	E	G	R	E	S				
H	E	N	P	R	O	E						
							D	U	S	T	U	P
C	A	B	I	N	I	N	A	P	T			
A	G	E	N	T	S	T	R	A	W			
B	O	N	E	S	M	O	T	T	O			

BEETLE BAILEY by Mort Walker

YOU'RE IMPLYING THAT I'M A FAILURE AS A SOLDIER, A GENERAL, A HUSBAND AND A GOLFER

WHAT'S LEFT?

I FORGOT YOUR STATUS AS A GARBAGE CAN EMPPLIER

HENRY by Don Trachte

MEATS

MEATS

MEATS

CANDY