

SPECIAL FEATURE

Flags through the ages

How did this one piece of coloured fabric come to mean so much to us? A look into the history of

In February 15 of 1969, the Pakistani army shot and killed Sergeant Zahurul Haq - one of the accused of the Agartala Conspiracy Case - in the army barracks. It became clear to the protesters that a war was looming.

Following the unjust killing of Sergeant Zahurul Haq, the first armed force was formed and consisted of many student leaders who were getting ready for the war of independence. It was named the 'February 15 Bahini.' They sat down in room #108 of Sergeant Zahurul Haq Hall (erstwhile Iqbal Hall) of the University of Dhaka to design a flag for the force.

With the help of February 15 Bahini and the painting of Shibnarayan Sharma, the proud red and green came into being with a golden map of Bangladesh (the then East Pakistan) in the heart of the red circle.

That was history in the making and independence was inevitable.



How did this one piece of coloured fabric come to mean so much to us? A look into the history of flags may give us some answers.

The ancestor of the modern flag goes back to the Iron Age. It is called a standard or a vexilloid, which is a metal or wooden pole with carvings on top. The word 'vexilloid' comes from the Latin word meaning 'guide.' Ancient groups of people would stick a metal pole to the ground marking their territory and would also identify themselves using the carvings on it.

The oldest example of a vexilloid is from 2400 BC. It was found in Shahdad, Iran and is now kept in the National Museum of Iran. The Shahdad Standard is a squared bronze piece, mounted on a 128-centimeter metal axle on which the flag can turn.

The carving on the Shahdad Standard is of a Shahbaz (royal falcon), a fabled bird and god of Iran. There is also an emblem on the flag depicting a rain goddess and an

irrigation method of Shahdad. The first cloth flags are argued to have come from China some 5000 years ago following the development of sericulture. It made possible the production of light, large and colourful flags for using outdoors. They were used as a means of identification and signalling.

When warriors charged into battle in full armour, it was impossible to know who was an enemy and who was an ally. So, the Chinese warlocks would carry a flag into war, making it easy for the allies to protect them.

However, the disadvantages of a flag were far outnumbered by the advantages in conveying important messages. So the flags extended beyond military use in China and became common in temples and religious processions.

The Chinese fabric flags came to the Arab world, through their use in wars and then to Europe through the Mediterranean trade. The Romans used two kinds of flags,

one with the image of the goddess of victory painted on it, and the other, the 'flamma', with red streamers attached to the spear. There was another flag called the 'labarum', the Christian version of the Roman flags, and it displayed the portrait of the Roman emperor and his family.

During the middle ages, the Arabs used different colours in the flags representing different dynasties. As one dynasty followed another, contrasting colours were used to mark their predecessors. The Arabian use of flags gave basis to the political identity of flags.

However, flags did not carry the sense of unity until the sixteenth century. Before, flags were limited to the use and representation of monarchs and battle troops. The common people, lacking a flag of their own, were somewhat presented by their church banners and guild flags. There was a sharp contrast between the flags of the noblemen and the people.

The noble flags were elaborately designed with emblems of armorial bearings and pictures of royalty while the common people had simpler bi-colour or tri-colour flags with the latter becoming the popular design for the modern flag.

Since flags of the common people were usually church banners, crosses became a common theme of many European flags including the English flag with the red cross of St. George and the French flag with the cross of St. Denis.

Our flag rose as we rose in triumph in 1971 and it is flying today as our symbol of honour and our beacon of hope.

By Afsin Ahmed
Photo: Collected



THANK GOD IT'S FRIDAY

BY TANZIRAL DILSHAD
DITAN

WINTER SHOWCASE

Date: 18-19 December

Time: 10am to 10pm

Venue: Amari, 47, Road 41, Gulshan

UC Events, for the fourth time this year, brings forth another exclusive fashion extravaganza with the newest Wedding and Winter Collection of kameez, casuals, heavy wear, jewellery, abaya, hijab, mehendi and many more under one roof!

The organisers are known to have arranged some of the grandest and best exhibitions in Dhaka and with the latest one being staged at the beautiful and spacious Grand Ballroom of Amari, they have hit another milestone!

This exhibition is an 'Invite-Only for Participants.'

SNV YOUNG FILMMAKERS SHORT FILM SCREENING

Date: 19 December, 2015

Time: 2.30pm

Venue: Independent University, Bangladesh

Netherlands Development Organization (SNV) hosted a filmmaking competition "Young Filmmakers in Development sector" in September 2015, where students were given the opportunity to attend a four day training session.

The best nine concept notes were selected and documentaries shot according to those concepts on 1 October, 2015. Giving out awards is the second phase of the program, which is going to be held in the auditorium of Independent University, Bangladesh.

All short films will be screening officially and a panel of judge will independently score the merit and winning team(s) will receive awards and Tk50,000.

Tickets will be available online and some access points. No tickets will be sold at the venue. Please register at: <https://goo.gl/aOPELI>



NO ONE HOME

Date: Until 09 January, 2016

Time: 12 to 8pm

Venue: Bengal Art Lounge, Bengal Art Lounge, 60 Gulshan Avenue, Circle 1, Dhaka 1212

Bengal Art Lounge cordially invites you to visit 'NO ONE HOME' - an exhibition of installations, videos and drawings by Tayeba Begum Lipi. "No One Home" deals with womanhood, transition and ultimately mortality -- issues that Tayeba Begum Lipi continues to explore in her characteristically candid endeavour.

REVAMPED

Date: 15 December, 2015

Time: 7pm

Venue: Venue Spaghetti Jazz, Rob Bhobon, Plot 3 (5th Floor), Gulshan 2

Sygmaz, Zafreen and Shabana Ali cordially invites you to showcase their 2015 Ottoman Jewels alongside exquisite handmade saris and beautiful accessories for home décor.

There will be a fashion show choreographed by Shahrukh Amin. Drinks and refreshments will be served.