



PHOTO: KAMOL DAS

"The ultimate test of a moral society is the kind of world that it leaves to its children."

– Dietrich Bonhoeffer, German pastor and human rights activist

SNAPSHOT

OPINION

Picture a scenario where Mustafizur Rahman, the mercurial new addition to the Bangladeshi cricket team, claims a hat-trick in the penultimate over of a game, bowling out the opposition with an awesome display of clever bowling. The aftermath of this will no doubt be an explosion of joy and nationalistic pride among the burgeoning 16 crore Bangladeshis home and abroad. It might not be unrealistic to expect a few celebratory rallies on the streets, though these have diminished with Bangladesh's growing stature in the game.

But picture, too, a certain political leader taking a walk along the side of the cricket field, waving to an already overjoyed crowd, comprised mostly of urban men and women. This individual may bask in the warm glow of a sporting victory and, in that euphoric state, we all come together as one nation under one cricket team (not before, of course, selectively leaving a few out subtly for not being 'Bengali' enough).

The following day, there may be an official announcement in a leading newspaper that could read as follows- 'In an effort to bring the country up to speed with the rest of the world, the state has decided to build a state-of-the-art airport in Munshiganj. The construction is to get under way soon and it will only take away a small pond called Arial Beel.' Still feeling giddy about ourselves and our patriotic vision to become a First World Country, we decide it is of course in the best interest of everyone in the country to build an airport in that exact location. Just as it is of course in the best interest of everyone that a special economic zone (SEZ) be built on the tea worker's farmlands in Habiganj. We may all (urban dwellers) sit down over some tea and biscuits and discuss that while there may be some opposition from the locals in these areas, they are mostly short-sighted and do not know what is best for them. And with that irrepresible vision of a utopian future, we tune into the next Australia vs Bangladesh match.

There needs to be a sustained discourse on what we say when we speak about Bangladeshi-nationalism. More importantly, if we speak about Bangladeshi-nationalism at all, or if it really is Bengali nationalism that leaves out the tribal population of the Chittagong Hill Tracts and the teaworkers' of Sylhet and Chittagong. When we utter the words, 'it will be beneficial for all of us' do we mean imagine the kind of democratic and secular state that we had intended to be,

THE BANGLADESH WE SPEAK OF, 45 YEARS ON

AHMAD IBRAHIM

PHOTO: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO



or do we think of one state under one monolithic religion?

Nationalism remains to this day, the one topic that cannot be touched. We still smart from the scars of our liberation and it is debatable whether we as a collective community can or should ever most past those wounds. But those painfully long nine-months in 1971 have since become a site for much distortion and much expediency. Who among us dares say no

to a new economic zone when its announcement is juxtaposed alongside the rhetoric of 1971, or the rhetoric of national greatness that our cricket team brings us? Would we still press on with the kinds of industrial projects that have been earmarked for specific minority-regions, had we been in full possession of all the facts, and the entire catalogue of misery that it would inflict on them? Do we not care because they're either poor,

or non-Muslim or non-Bengali, or is the fact simply that we are made to forget to ask questions, because once the image of a liberated Bangladesh is invoked, everything else fades to the background?

Perhaps next time we are caught up in the patriotism invoked by a cricket match, we will think twice before carrying it over into politics. Maybe, next time we might ask the question, whose Bangladesh are we proud of?

MAILBOX

thestarmagazine@gmail.com



PHOTO: COURTESY

Behind the Scenes

Fantaband, the first ever reality show in Bangladesh, with a view to discovering the country's first teen-pop band has managed to attract a lot of audiences, music enthusiasts and artists. Youngsters from different parts of the country have participated in the program to prove their genius in this form of western music. Forming teen music bands through such a live competition was also a unique idea. However, it is a reality in Bangladesh that many brilliant performers who perform brilliantly during the show cannot continue their career due to lack of proper opportunities. Organisers should keep in mind that revealing the band through a grand finale should not be the end. They should also provide adequate facilities to these young potential musicians so that they can continue their new career successfully.

Khurshid Alam
Gendaria, Dhaka

An Alluvial Soul

After reading the article titled "An Alluvial Soul" (published on February 15, 2015) I visited the splendid exhibition of Kalidas Karmakar. It was really a praiseworthy initiative by Bangladesh National Museum to showcase the works of such a brilliant artist. His works with unique media and revolutionary concept really blew my mind. It is assumed that abstract arts are difficult to understand for common people but Kalidas's abstract works explaining the human emotions, sufferings and the history of the struggling people of Bangladesh was really mind blowing. I would like to thank the Star Weekend for featuring such an awesome exhibition by this legendary artist.

Shanti Chakma
Shahbag, Dhaka

For the Right to Live with Hope and Dignity

The article titled 'For the Right to Live with Hope and Dignity' published last week (January 15, 2016) was an articulate and coherent written piece as the foundation named 'friendship' does quiet a unique humanitarian help to the poor 'char' people in the country. The foundation with its motto of serving the deprived and least privileged communities is an inspiration for many other individuals and NGOs that carry out the similar tasks throughout the country. Running floating hospitals in the remote areas for isolated, destitute people and ensuring quality education with the lesson to be ethical and helping them to get dignified lives like us are really worthy of immense accolade. As I read the quotes of Runa Khan in the article, it is quite evident that she is one of the best human beings and positive change-makers of Bangladesh. A personality like her is much needed in our country. A great appreciation goes out to her as she is the pioneer of a sustainable and impactful social movement which has changed the lives of millions. Thank you Star Weekend for writing on this one of a kind foundation.

Samiul Rajiul
North South University, Dhaka



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The opinions expressed in these letters do not necessarily represent the views of the Star Weekend.

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