

INDEPENDENCE DAY SPECIAL

2016

DHAKA SATURDAY MARCH 26, 2016

EDITOR'S NOTE

WE commemorate March 26 with unalloyed joy and gratitude. A glorious day that marks the beginning of our independence from oppression, autocracy and racism. Today we also remember those who had to endure indescribable torture, mental anguish and brutal death to free the country of a sadistic occupying force. The horrific experience of the war as well as the incredible love for one's motherland has been the themes interwoven in fiction and nonfiction, poetry and prose, perhaps, in some way, providing catharsis to the millions of people who endured traumatic experiences during our Liberation War.

In this special Independence Day supplement, we have selected a handful of stories of 71 which, we believe, reflect the emotional upheaval of the people during -- and after -- those tumultuous months. They include translations of Bangla short stories and nonfiction, original fiction (including an excerpt from an unpublished novella) and poems. A majority of the prose is written by women, highlighting the oft-ignored stories of women's nuanced experiences of the war. There are stories of the systematic sexual violence that Biranganas endured and survived, the petrifying torture inflicted on freedom fighters and ordinary people, the steely determination of freedom fighters who set aside hunger, pain, even family in their steadfast mission to free their land and the ordeal of those that lived to tell the tale. There are narratives that question the meaning of 'honour' when hunger is at stake, highlight the constructed nature of ethnicity and communalism, and critiques the unquenchable thirst for blood, the hatred and the cruelty, of the Pakistani occupation forces.

The stories and poetry, written by well-known writers and poets, reflect the psychological trauma that our whole nation went through as well as the extent of the sacrifice that our people made so that today, on this beautiful March 26 morning, we can celebrate the day that our independence from a repressive state was declared and imbibed in every Bangladeshi's heart.

Mahfuz Anam
Editor and Publisher

WRITING THE WAR