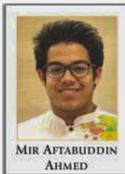
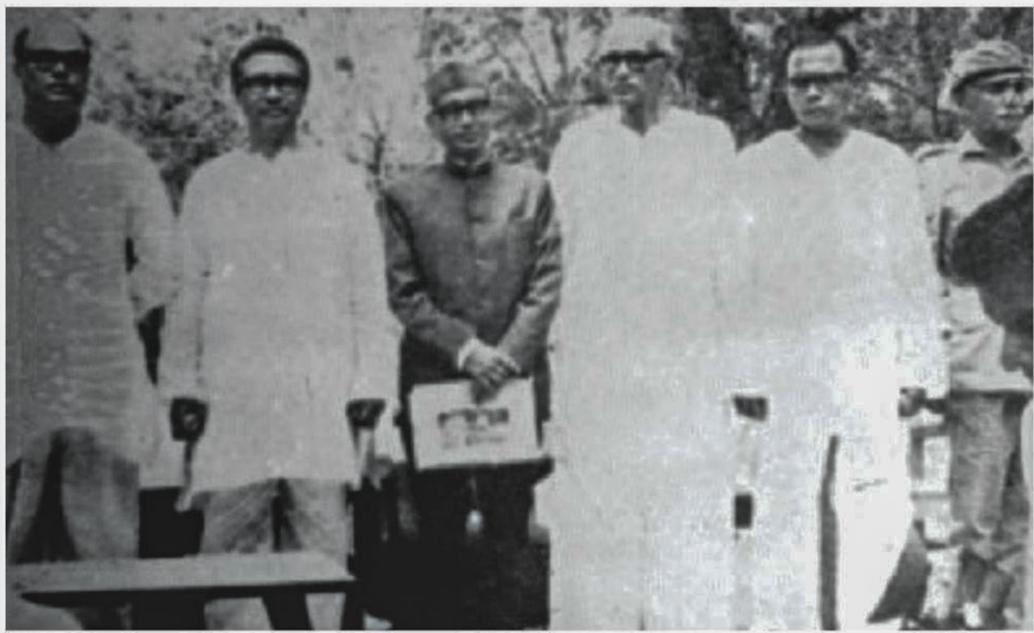


Lest we forget The legacy of Mujibnagar



AS Bangladesh marches towards a path of economic development, we humbly remember the extraordinary moments which redefined the course of this nation. One such crucial event was the oath-taking of the Provisional Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh on 17th April 1971. Often overlooked, Mujibnagar Day is the commemoration of a sovereign Bangladeshi political leadership. At the same time, it is also a celebration of certain key actors, who for various reasons, have been pushed to the fringes of our history books.

So, why is Mujibnagar Day significant? If one observes the dynamism that it brought to Bangladesh's struggle for self-determination, then it becomes quite evident as to why historians prioritise it as a turning point in our Liberation War. On 17th April, the Provisional Government of Bangladesh took oath in Mujibnagar, a town in today's Meherpur District. The provisional administration included the elected Bengali members of the national and provincial assemblies of Pakistan, and formed the Constituent Assembly of Bangladesh. Most significantly, the Constituent Assembly proclaimed that the Provisional Government had the obligation to "declare and constitute Bangladesh to be a sovereign Peoples' Republic and thereby confirm the declaration of independence already made by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman". Following this declaration, the Bangladesh Forces Command (BFC) was set up by the Mujibnagar Provincial Government on 11th July. The Mukti Bahini or the guerrilla freedom fighters, were brought under the purview of eleven geographical sectors across Bangladesh, and were led by eleven Sector Commanders.



Mujibnagar government leaders (L-R) Syed Nazrul Islam, Tajuddin Ahmad, Khondaker Mostaq Ahmad, Captain Mansur Ali, AHM Kamaruzzaman, General M.A.G Osmani.

The formation of the Mujibnagar Provincial Government and the subsequent development of the BFC and the eleven sectors, gave a much-needed institutional structure to the armed resistance, and allowed the new Cabinet of Bangladesh to direct the liberation struggle in an organised manner. The radio announcements by Awami League leader MA Hannan's and the erstwhile Major Ziaur Rahman's reading out the declaration of independence received traction across Bangladesh and various corners of the world, but their announcements still required an official stamp of authority. Question was, with Mujib in jail, who would perform the duty? As such, the formation of the Mujibnagar

Government and the subsequent declarations of the Constituent Assembly gave legal expression to the declaration of independence and established a diplomatic conduit to guide the war-efforts. From a slightly different angle, it is disappointing to observe that the actors who construed the ethos and spirit of the Mujibnagar Government are today treated as mere minuscule portions in contemporary Bangladeshi academia and history. While appointing *Bangabandhu* as the President of the Provincial Government ensured the continuity of the substantive manifestation of the liberation struggle, the importance of other Mujibnagar appointees cannot be underscored.

Mujib was, in no uncertain terms, the architect of Bangladesh, whose vision, guidance and struggles had manifested into his unique stature as *Bangabandhu*. And his deputies and close confidantes played important roles in his absence, to help Bengalis realise the dream of an independent Bangladesh. This country rightly considers Mujib as its chief architect, but homage is also owed to Syed Nazrul Islam, Tajuddin Ahmed, Mansur Ali and AHM Qamaruzzaman amongst others as its builders. Bangladesh indeed had one architect, but the building blocks of this nation were laid brick by brick, day by day, and moment by moment, by the courage and wisdom showcased by the Mujibnagar Government.

The two influential Awami League statesmen Tajuddin Ahmad, Bangladesh's first Prime Minister, and Acting President Syed Nazrul Islam, led the political struggle in the nine-month long period. Whether it be coordinating with Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi or getting weapons to the Mukti Bahini, Tajuddin and Nazrul were at the forefront of war organisation efforts. There remain other figures who this nation has seemingly forgotten. MAG Osmani, the highly respected military officer, served as the Commander-in-Chief of the Mukti Bahini. The likes of General Zia and KM Shafiqullah operated under his command. Today, Osmani's name is barely mentioned whilst celebrating our independence struggle. Abdus Samad Azad, Justice Abu Sayeed Chowdhury, Humayun Rashid Chowdhury, Yusuf Ali and others, all part of the Mujibnagar framework, played prominent diplomatic and bureaucratic roles to acquire independence for Bangladesh. Should we not commemorate these figures?

As we look back on 17th April 1971, we honour the constitutional successes and the pride in establishing self-governance after 24 years of economic, political and cultural subjugation by the West Pakistan establishment. At the same time, we should celebrate the lives of the iconic Mujibnagar figures, without whose leadership and bravery, it may very well have been difficult for Bangladesh to achieve what was certainly a miraculous victory. Bangladeshis develop their perception of history based on their implicit and explicit support for their respective political parties. As such, our national leadership would do well to highlight the influence and contributions of the iconic Mujibnagar leaders, without whom the history of this country would be unequivocally incomplete.

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The Lady of Justice

MEER AHSAN HABIB

MY rudimentary knowledge on ancient history dates back to 1997 when having no other choice, I got enrolled in the history department of a public university. My first year there started with ancient history and at one point our course teacher mentioned Themis. Her description was pretty interesting as she was depicted as a symbol of women's empowerment and their capacity to judge better than men. I forgot about Themis shortly after I completed my first year. After all, who cares to remember what you have read when you get passing grade in an academic exam?

I am quite sure that Themis was little known in Bangladesh until Hefajat's demands to remove the newly installed statue of justice from the Supreme Court of Bangladesh surfaced. To my understanding, the statue is not exactly her. Rather the sculptor drew inspiration from her and decided to give her a local image by adorning her with a sari.

A blindfolded lady holding a set of scales is very common in representing justice. It is still unclear who first gave birth of this idea of Goddess of Justice which dates back to ancient times. The ancient Egyptians referred to her as Ma'at - a concept of justice, moral, law and order etc. She used to carry a sword and a feather in her hair but she had no scales. She assisted Osiris in the judgment of the dead by weighing their hearts. The modern world might have adopted the word Magistrate (Latin magistratus) from Ma'at. The ancient Greeks knew her as Themis, who was said to maintain the communal affairs of humans, the assembly (legislature) in particular. She was capable to foresee the future that made her one of the Oracles of Delphi, which ultimately established her as the goddess of divine justice. It is pertinent to mention that in classical representations, Themis was never blindfolded (she could foresee and did not need to be blindfolded). She did not carry a sword either as she represented common consent, not coercion. Originally, it was the Roman Goddess of Justice,

popularly known as Justitia, who was portrayed as blindfolded and balancing scales in one hand and a sword in the other. Sometimes she was portrayed holding a fasces (a bundle of rods around an axe blade) symbolising judicial authority in one hand, and flames symbolising truth in the other. In ancient Rome a Lictor (an officer with magistracy power) used to carry fasces. It had no use other than as a symbol of authority.

Over the course of time, scales and swords came to be closely associated with Justice. Scales

innocence or guilt without bias or prejudice. Today, the blindfolded lady is accepted as a symbol of impartiality in the judicial system of many countries around the world. Interested readers can have a look at <http://mdean.tripod.com/justice.html> to see images, statues and sculptures of justice in her various forms.

The point of talking about this history is not to justify whether the statue at the Supreme Court premises should be removed or not, but to put it

judiciary and denouncing its action. The statue was not installed overnight, nor was it done without proper judgment and approval. In a bizarre incident in 2008, Achin Pakhi, a sculpture representing Lalon and his work was demolished. The same year Balaka - a symbol of our national airlines was badly vandalised. It is still unknown whether we have been able to bring the wrongdoers to book. In addition to such impunity, the Supreme Court's final judgment on Fatwa (fatwa legal only in "religious matters" but cannot be used to punish anyone and violate or affect the rights or reputation or dignity of any person covered by the law of the land) might have angered a section who were waiting for an opportune moment to hit back.

Worshipping an idol is considered a sin in Islam. There is no doubt about it. But displaying a symbol is not as long as nobody is praying to it. We need to understand the difference between an idol (accepted by a religion - Hinduism for instance) and a sculpture (and similar art work). A sculpture as an art work may take inspiration from elements around it. In the first place it is a reflection of thoughts of the artist involved. Sometimes such works cross boundaries and become universal. The sculpture at the Supreme Court premise does not represent any idol. Rather, it is an inspiration and solidarity with the world in its respect for truth and justice. Being a Bangladeshi citizen, I feel that sculptures, arts and installations have been an integral part of our society and culture. It would not be unjust to say that our long struggle for independence has been influenced to a great extent by these. Some more sculptures like Aparajeo Bangla, Swaparjito Swadhinota, Swadhinata Sangram and Raju Bhashkarja are located at a close distance to the Supreme Court. These directly represent our glorious histories of 1952, 1971 and 1990. Can anyone ensure their preservation?

Finally, I don't regret I studied history - it is something everyone should know and cherish impartially, without prejudice.

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represented impartiality and the sword symbolised power. In many inscriptions and art installations of the 16th century, justice was often portrayed blindfolded. The origins of the blindfold are unclear, but it might have been added to portray the law as being objective in determining

in a global context. According to the reinstated Constitution of 1972, we take pride in presenting ourselves as a secular country. And it is perhaps not a good omen that a particular organisation (not a political party) which never had representation in any public institution is pointing its finger to the

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There are two types of people who will tell you that you cannot make a difference in this world: those who are afraid to try and those who are afraid you will succeed.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 TV and
- 6 Space visitor
- 11 Split
- 12 Audacity
- 13 More than plump
- 14 In the buff
- 15 Sounded hoarse
- 17 Volcanic output
- 19 Movies, in slang
- 20 Yoga need
- 23 "Moonglow" author
- 25 Grow dim
- 26 Clock parts
- 28 Goals
- 29 Procrastinator's words
- 30 Method: Abbr.
- 31 Stick out
- 32 Day pts.
- 33 "You fell for it!"
- 35 1970s TV cop
- 38 Pound part
- 41 Steaming
- 42 Birch's cousin
- 43 More original
- 44 Surgery tool

DOWN

- 1 NFL player
- 2 Vault part
- 3 Some serves
- 4 Butte's kin
- 5 Ace
- 6 Building wing
- 7 Main role
- 8 Tick off
- 9 Raiser of Cain
- 10 Composer Rorem
- 16 Pesto ingredient
- 17 High points
- 18 Like new pennies
- 20 They make light work
- 21 Venomous snake
- 22 Lab work
- 24 Tour carrier
- 25 Diet no-no
- 27 Ember
- 31 Wild card, often
- 33 Airport area
- 34 Islan dance
- 35 Family
- 36 Vein makeup
- 37 Mouth mover
- 39 Horseshoe shape
- 40 Blunder

BEETLE BAILEY

WHY IS SARGE ALLOWED TO KEEP A DOG IN THE BARRACKS? HE REQUESTED IT AND IT WAS APPROVED.

WELL, I THINK IT WAS A STUPID DECISION!

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

ABATE STOW
RELAY BURMA
MALLE ARIEL
IDOL ICEAGE
NEW ARK DAI
GAMBLERS
REAL UNDO
RAMBLERS
FOX LAS MET
OBERON TOGA
RANING SONAR
AMONG OPINE
YANK PECOS

BABY BLUES

ARE YOU OPEN? NO, I LEFT DAD'S HAMMER OUT HERE YESTERDAY, AND NOW I CAN'T FIND IT.

I DON'T KNOW HOW I'M GOING TO TELL HIM. MAYBE I CAN HELP.

DAD! HAMMIE LOST YOUR HAMMER!!

THANKS SO MUCH. MY PLEASURE.