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(The Daily Star)

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Editor (Star Weekend)

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Published by the Editor from
Transcraft Ltd, 229, Tejgaon
Industrial Area, Dhaka on
behalf of Mediaworld Ltd., 52
Motijheel C.A., Dhaka-1000.

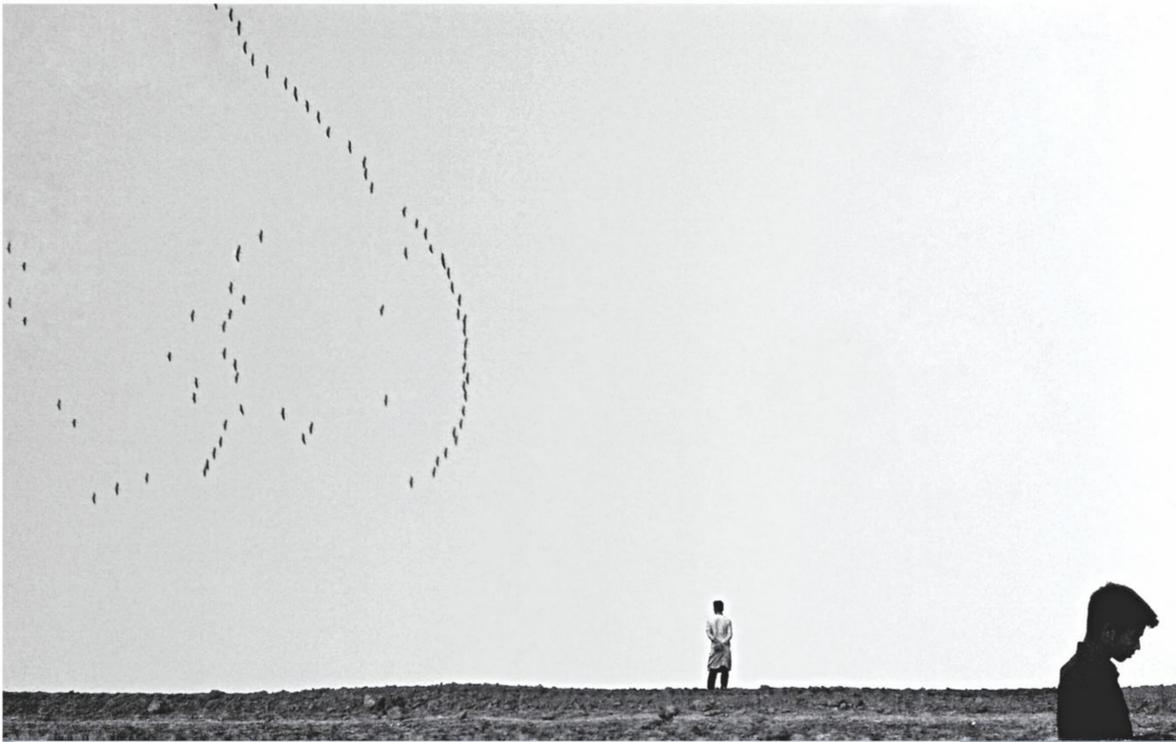


PHOTO: NAYEEM JABAZ

"Freeing yourself was one thing, claiming ownership of that freed self was another."
— Toni Morrison, *Beloved*

SNAPSHOT

MAILBOX

Please note we have a new email address:
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Stop historical distortion

This letter is in reference to the cover story on "Editing out 1971" published on December 15, 2017 in the *Star Weekend* magazine. It is indeed a timely and praiseworthy report. History is the mirror image of a nation, the reality of the past. It reminds us of the successes and failures of the past and helps us scale new heights. The Liberation War is our glory and the freedom fighters are our heroes. Alongside the freedom fighters, many foreign allies helped us during the war in 1971. As a whole, the history of the Liberation War is an asset of our country and it is not the specific claim of any particular political party. Distortion of history is a crime which can destroy the future progress of our country. We should stop distorting our history and properly honour our gallant heroes and their allied comrades.

Md. Zillur Rahaman
Bhola



PHOTO: KAZI TAHSSIN AGAZ APURBO

A contentious history

As a reader of the above-titled article in *Star Weekend* on December 15, 2017, it is disturbing that there is no authentic and factual history of our nation. A period of 46 years has gone by and we are yet to establish a non-debatable history, because of the change in regimes and party politics.

The history of a nation must be conclusive and consist of actual facts and events through which a nation gets its birth. It must not be changed due to party politics or at the whims of different regimes. A nation is of the people, not of any political party. Party politics and feuds have been the cause of producing an inconsistent and distorted history from time to time. If this

continues, our progeny will not know the authentic history of their nation. This will be a great setback to projecting the history of our nation to the outside world. The writer very aptly quoted the famous saying—"A nation which does not know what it was yesterday does not know where it is today".
Mashudul Haque
Central Road, Dhaka

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

ECOLOGY

Nestled in a dingy alleyway at Dinanath Sen Road of Gandaria is a rich bit of history that dates back 103 years. The structure towers over passers-by, facade weather-beaten and yellowed walls bearing the imprint of old age. You enter into a courtyard partially shaded by tin roofs supported by metal planks. The courtyard is deserted on a wintry Friday morning, and yet, the air is static with cacophony. Sadhana's factory premises are buzzing with the frenetic energy of two dozen monkeys at least.

That is the last thing that the average city-dweller would expect to find at Sadhana Aushadhalaya. Jogesh Chandra Ghosh, martyred Ayurveda physician and philanthropist, founded Sadhana Aushadhalaya in 1914. Ghosh, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Chemistry and a member of the American Chemical Society, wanted to popularise the use of affordable, herbal medicine amongst the poorer strata of the population. Come rain, hail or the ubiquitous hartal devoted customers come seeking immediate attention from the in-house *kobiraj* (ayurvedic practitioner).

But the Sadhana factory is a herbal medicine manufacturer by day and safe haven for the local monkeys around the



PHOTO: SOHAG MOHAJON

PRIMATES OF OLD DHAKA
OUR NEGLECTED HERITAGE

MITHI CHOWDHURY

clock. "I've seen monkeys at Sadhana since the day I began working here. When they cause disturbances in the neighbourhood, people point fingers, saying 'Sadhana's monkeys' are to blame," says Bhabatush Dey, who has served as the security guard of Sadhana for 17 years. A graveyard stands next door to the factory, providing lush greenery and ample room for the monkeys to run amok. It's not just open space that lure these monkeys to the Sadhana vicinity—it's the promise of food. Bhabatush Dey personally ensures that 10 kilograms of raw lentils are provided for the monkeys every morning at roughly 7 am. This tradition was started by the late Ghosh himself, who would lovingly feed the monkeys

every day. Ghosh was shot to death in 1971 by the Pakistan Army for sheltering Bengali Hindu families in Sadhana's factory during the East Pakistan genocide of 1964. Following his death, the factory was shut down for almost a year until Ghosh's son, Dr Naresh Chandra Ghosh, revived Sadhana Aushadhalaya. Since then, his family has carried on this practice and they have yet to miss a day. "When the factory was shut down, there was no one to look after the monkeys. They had to scavenge for survival. But now, they expect food every morning and convene in the courtyard ahead of time," explains Bhabatush Dey.

The monkeys climb the gate and planks, racing in pursuit of what must be a ball of yarn invisible to my naked eye. They zoom past in every direction, frolicking in the open space. All it takes is

a whiff of dry bun and a banana to stop these hooligans in their tracks and furtively make their way toward me, eyes keenly observing the bun in question. Wait too long, and they'll snatch the food from an unsuspecting visitor's hand like a hawk. A dearth of natural food sources around Sadhana entails a dependency on food provided by visitors—the only curb against habitual thievery from neighbouring residences. Concrete buildings mushrooming in every nook and cranny to shelter the ever-increasing human population have fast diminished the number of these primates. The monkeys use overhanging electrical wires to cross busy roads, often being electrocuted. Throw hunger and disease into the mix, and we're looking at an endangered species teetering on the precipice of extinction. Even 14 years ago, these monkeys could be found across 11

areas in Dhaka; currently, their settlements are limited to four areas only, including Old Dhaka localities, such as Tanti Bazar, Shankhari Bazar, Gandaria, Nawab Street of Wari, Banagram, Bangshal road, Jonson road, Tipu Sultan road, Meshundi at Narinda and Farashganj, among others.

Inconsistency in food supply prompts the monkeys to invade residential buildings, where they enter homes through unmonitored gates or open windows. "In their quest for food, the monkeys often vandalise households. They break into fridges, destroy plants, and steal clothes from rooms and rooftops. The other day, a troop of monkeys from Sadhana ransacked my tea stall and stole a dozen bananas," chuckles Anwar, who owns a small tea store in front of Sadhana Aushadhalaya. Personal grievances aside, Anwar enjoys having the monkeys around, adding, "Residents get frustrated with the monkeys' disturbance but I don't want them removed from the area. They've been a part of Puran Dhaka for generations, since my father and grandfather's time. They're a part of our heritage."

The monkeys frequent rooftops in tribes of 10 to 12 at a time, slouching,

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বিশ্ব বলেছিলো- পদ্মা সেতু 'সম্ভব না' একজন প্রধানমন্ত্রী আর ১৬ কোটি বাঙালি বলেছিলাম- 'কেন না!'

BSRM
building a safer nation