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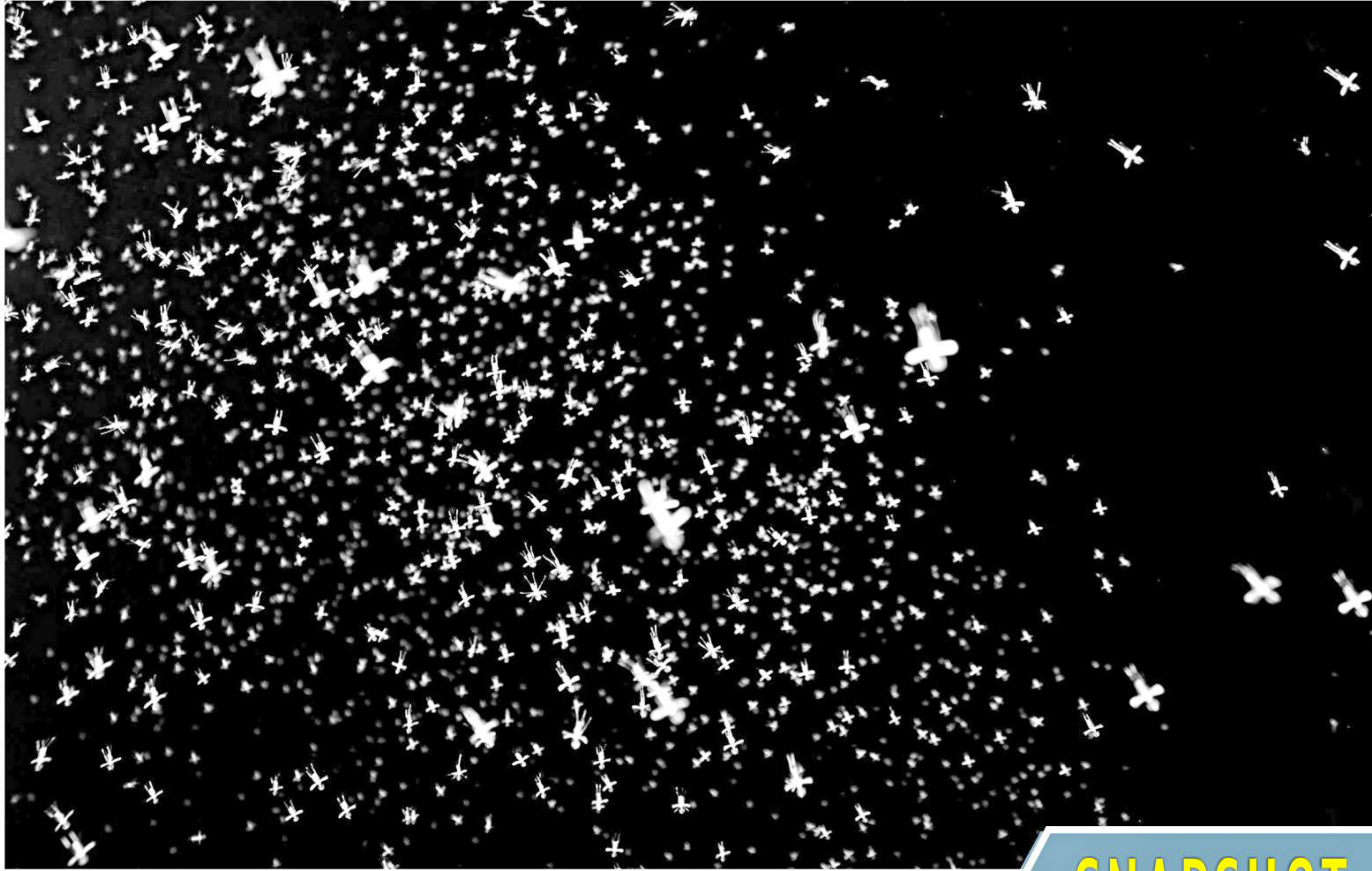
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The Cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be. - COSMOS, CARL SAGAN

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A healthy democracy is much needed

The first question that comes to our mind when we talk about the upcoming parliamentary elections is "How healthy is the democracy that prevails in our country right now?"

The existence of a healthy democracy also depends on how efficiently electoral activities are carried out. In our country, to say the least, this still remains an illusion because there is no level playing field. It is really disturbing to see that many opposition activists are being clamped down on by law enforcers on the basis of so-called criminal and political cases. So, the question arises—"Does this depict a level playing field and congenial environment for holding the forthcoming parliamentary election?"

We expect from the ruling party that democracy be established through holding a free, fair and credible election in peaceful manner and bring much needed faith in our democratic system for citizens. We think this is the best opportunity for the partisan government to bring the much needed faith of people in our democracy system.

Abul Khaer
Govt. Saadat College, Tangail

The great minds we lost

Every year on December 14, we remember martyred intellectuals with due solemnity, who lost their lives in 1971 at the hands of the Pakistani military and their local collaborators. They were picked up from their homes in the dark of night, blindfolded, tortured, and shot or hacked to death. Many of those martyrs remain traceless even today, and their families, waiting for excruciatingly long years, have given up hope of ever seeing them again.

Intellectuals through the ages have been prone to slaughter and torture at the hands of rulers. Our intellectuals in 1971 were no exception. The Pakistan junta erased the brightest minds whose significant presence could well have culminated in Bangladesh and its nationalism into great prosperity.

While we commemorate the loss of the brightest intelligentsia, let us resolve that never again shall we allow evil forces to take root and that the free, broad nature of the people of this land not be lost.

Nuzhat Rifa Ehsan
Baridhara, Dhaka

Myanmar's double standards on the safe return of Rohingyas

Since the Rohingya crisis began in Myanmar's Rakhine State, Bangladesh has engaged constructively with the government of Myanmar and the international community in order for Rohingya refugees to be able to safely and voluntarily return to their places of origin or choice in Myanmar. The UNHCR urged Myanmar to exert all efforts to create conditions for safe return of Rohingyas, appreciating the commitment of Bangladesh to protect the refugees' right to a safe, voluntary, and dignified return.

The steps initiated by Myanmar seems to be a double standard. The formalities of repatriation were completed by Bangladesh on November 15, 2018 but none of the Rohingya refugees agreed to return

to their country considering it unsafe. Myanmar showed they were doing everything as agreed but have only made temporary camps instead of permanent homes for the Rohingyas.

An investigation report recently released by Reuters states that the military junta is torturing the existing Rohingyas who are presently staying in different camps in Myanmar. The Myanmar government's remarks and Reuters report confirm the double standards of the Myanmar government. The international bodies should take necessary steps for the safe return of Rohingyas.

Md. Zillur Rahaman
Lalmohan, Bhola

