

# How Mascarenhas's report changed Bangladesh's Liberation War



ON this day 50 years ago (Sunday June 13, 1971), a report by Neville Anthony Mascarenhas, a Pakistani journalist, that appeared in the *Sunday Times* (London), shocked the world and made global leaders take notice of the Pakistan Army's genocide in Bangladesh.

Pakistan Army had launched the brutal Operation Searchlight in East Pakistan at Zero Hour on March 26, 1971, (though the killings had already started on the night of the 25th) in which hundreds of thousands of Bengalis were killed and thousands of women were raped. The initial resistance put up by the gallant Bangladeshis was crushed by the second of week of April. General Tikka Khan was boisterous about his achievements and wanted to showcase his success in suppressing the revolt. Pakistan Army took eight senior journalists of leading West Pakistani newspapers on a conducted tour to write cover-stories that would say that everything was normal in East Pakistan. Mascarenhas of *The Morning News*, Karachi, was one of them. He was born in a Goan Roman Catholic family in Belgaum (aka Belagavi) in Karnataka State of India in 1928. He had studied in Karachi where his family lived and was a Pakistani citizen since they had stayed in Pakistan after the partition. On April 14, 1971 the journalists were flown to Dhaka and were entertained with the best of everything. In turn they were expected to furnish a rosy picture of the outcome of "Operation Searchlight" and portray a decent image of the soldiers whose hands were coloured with the blood of Bangladeshis. Mascarenhas found the streets of Dhaka deserted, shops shattered, homes vacant and eerie silence everywhere he went. In Dhaka

University he saw heads of four students rotting in Iqbal Hall. Next day they were flown to the vibrant city of Comilla where he saw only soldiers in the ravaged town. In the circuitous that evening he heard thuds of rifle butts and screams of numerous men being bludgeoned to death. He was horrified when listening to Pakistani army officers discussing their kills proudly and justifying the sorting out of the unfaithful "bastards". They revealed a scheme of recasting East Pakistan as a colony of the Urdu speaking majority province. The journalists flew back to Karachi after spending 10 agonising days in atrophied East Pakistan. What Mascarenhas saw and heard in those 10 days had a lasting effect on his psyche and emotions. He was never the same person and went into a terrible state as he was traumatised after witnessing Pakistan Army's coldblooded carnage. Immediately upon returning to Karachi, he reported to his bosses that he was sick. Except him, the remaining seven journalists filed their reports garnished with engineered pictures of people welcoming Pakistani soldiers with waving national flags. Mascarenhas got upset further by reading their false stories. He knew that the Pakistani military junta wanted to whitewash the truth about the brutalities being committed in East Pakistan. But more agonising for him was that the Pakistani media was becoming an accomplice in this heinous crime against humanity. "I did not know what to do. I was torn between my duty towards humanity and supporting the false narrative of a military dictator," he told me in 1982. He could not tell the truth in Pakistan since the media was being censored. Moreover, he could have faced harsh punishment if he dared to say anything against the Pakistani Army. Even his wife and children could have been tortured. After thinking about it for 10 days, one day he saw "the light" and took a decision that changed the course of his life forever. He discussed with his wife Yuone who supported him and a plan was chalked-out. He told his bosses that his sister Ann who stayed in London

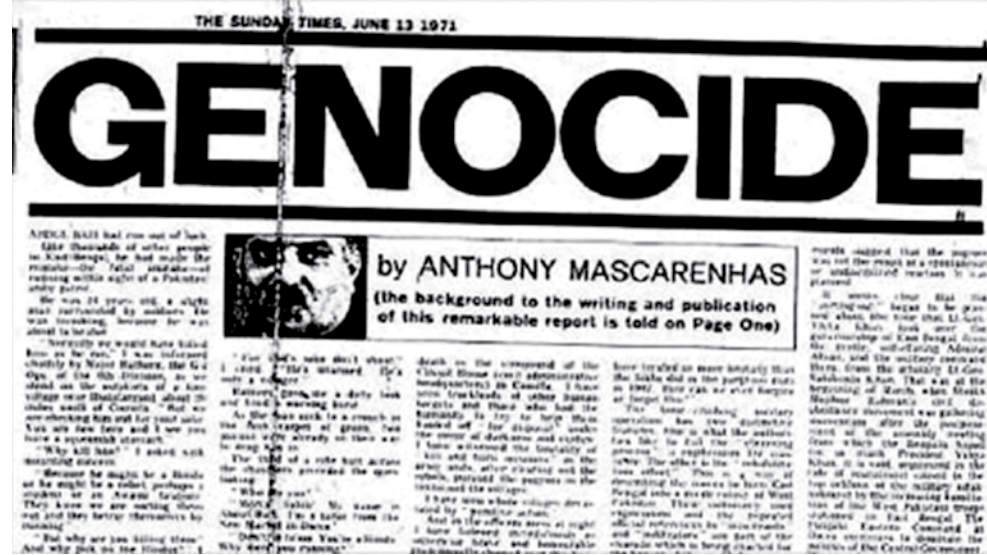
was critically ill. On May 18, 1971 he left for London and met Harold Evans, the editor of *Sunday Times* in Thompson House. Evans later wrote about the meeting, "the well-dressed Mascarenhas entered my camp office with profound melancholy." Evans believed that the Goan Christian was speaking the truth because his younger brother John was posted in the British High Commission in Islamabad who wrote to him about the gruesome acts of Pakistani soldiers in East Pakistan.

children to Europe. *Sunday Times* bore all the expenditure of their travel. From Karachi he sent a coded telegram to the *Sunday Times*, "Export formalities completed. Shipment begins Monday." He escorted them up to Karachi Airport as he could not fly with them to London due to the restrictions imposed on citizens by the Pakistan government for going abroad for more than once a year. After ensuring the safe arrival of his family members, Mascarenhas went to Peshawar and

The emotionally charged article written by Mascarenhas vividly portrayed the true picture of the most cruel genocide of Bangladeshis. It was the only eyewitness account of Pakistani Army's brutalities and that too being narrated by a Pakistani journalist. It proved to be the game-changer in the history of Bangladesh's Liberation war. The world was stunned. The Pakistani propaganda apparatus was thoroughly devastated. This single article completely tore-down the screens of silence throughout the capitals of the world. There were spontaneous outcries all over the world. Global media and world leaders could no longer remain mute spectators to the biggest man-made tragedy against humanity. Global public opinion turned in favour of Bangladesh. The Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi told Harold Evans, that Mascarenhas's article had shocked her so deeply that it set her "on a campaign of personal diplomacy in the European capitals and Moscow to prepare the ground for India's armed intervention."

Mascarenhas worked for *The Times* (London) for 14 years. He received numerous threats to his life as he was labelled as a traitor by the Pakistanis. He was granted Indian citizenship in 1976. His extended family stayed in Belgaum, where Indian Army's Infantry School Young Officers Wing was located. I was posted as an instructor in YO's Wing from January 1982 to June 1984. I met him several times during this period. Each time the topic of Pakistan Army's Genocide in Bangladesh came up to haunt us. Having witnessed similar brutalities myself during the 267 days of Liberation War, we wondered how the war criminals of such heinous genocide could be let off scot-free. I was shocked to read the news of his death in December 1986 at 58 years of age. He was a great soul who stood up for his principles against all odds.

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A *Sunday Times* article by reporter Anthony Mascarenhas exposed for the first time the scale of the Pakistani army's brutal campaign to suppress the independence struggle of East Pakistan in 1971.

Evans agreed to publish the report but wanted to evacuate his wife, daughter, and four sons from Pakistan before that. Mascarenhas sent a pre-decided coded telegram to his wife—"Ann's Operation successful". On getting the message Yeone started preparing to leave Pakistan forever. Mascarenhas returned to Pakistan to ensure the smooth departure of his wife and

from their slipped into Afghanistan on foot. He flew from Kabul and reached London on June 12, 1971 and Evans gave the green signal to publish his article.

On June 13, 1971 the 9,047-word article of Mascarenhas appeared in a double-page centre spread of the *Sunday Times* under a one word heading: "Genocide". Evans attached an article under the title, "Stop the Killings".

# When entrepreneurship can be a public good



MY friend Fozul Kabir Khan's recent book, "Win: How Public Entrepreneurship Can Transform the Developing World", has brought back an issue critical to the development discourse in these

pandemic times. The preceding four decades has seen several discourse upheavals—the disintegration of the Soviet Union at the end of the 1980s and the ensuing shadow over the "socialist project", the false triumphalism of the "free market" paradigm a la Fukuyama's "End of History" of early 1990s, the rude awakening from the perils of unbridled "crony" capitalism a la the crash of 2008 and the most recent Covid-19 pandemic upending many established ideas of development, roles of the state and the market, and the intersectionality of growth, health and environment. The ideas of one master from the past—Joseph Schumpeter (1883-1950), fleeing finance minister of post WW1 German-Austria and later Harvard economics professor—merit new attention. Schumpeter is rightly remembered as pioneering the ideas of entrepreneurship and innovation as drivers of economic transformation. Since then, both of these central ideas have been narrowly appropriated by the high priests of private capital and their assorted knowledge partners for everything from economic transformation—Schumpeter's own original focus—to sustainable development and even the task of saving the planet. But is entrepreneurship and innovation only a matter of the "private sector"? And who indeed counts in the "private sector"? How well do politically-empowered business elites of today whose major entrepreneurial "skill" lie in gaming the policy world for private benefits conform to Schumpeter's ideal of the "entrepreneur"?

Fozul's book has done a service in shining a spotlight on the importance of the link between the idea of entrepreneurship and the idea of "public good". It is a link which has assumed all the more urgency in these pandemic times when vaccines have simultaneously highlighted the need for entrepreneurial innovation and for the fruits of this innovation to serve a greater public good. Howsoever market fundamentalists and their knowledge enablers may argue, investing such meanings into Schumpeter's conceptual breakthrough does not negate economic "science". It only re-affirms the true calling of economics as a social science, an identity re-discovery made all the more urgent by the existential nature of the pandemic impact. In the amoral world of crony capitalism, the "good entrepreneur" faces an uphill task vis-à-vis the crony-powerbroker nexus which straddles both the private sector and the state. The big message from Fozul's book is

that the "good entrepreneur" need not only be in the private sector. It can also be in the public domain. The book centres around the case of the Infrastructure Development Company Limited (IDCOL), a government-owned company established in 1997 which has been instrumental in bringing much of rural and remote Bangladesh within the ambit of electricity through innovative financing of the spread of solar home systems (SLH). Fozul Kabir Khan had first-hand insights as the first and longest-serving CEO (1998-2007) of IDCOL and is able to give an in-depth and authentic account of how a "public entrepreneur" came into being and was able to deliver a valuable and an innovative public good. The qualities of "good entrepreneurship" that he pinpoints are as relevant to the private entrepreneur as to the "public" entrepreneur—clarity and enforcement of regulatory frameworks, focus on and incentivising merit among staff, zero-

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tolerance for corruption, personal example-setting by top leadership, willingness to work with partners to achieve larger goals.

The obverse of his insights is that in the absence of these features, "public entrepreneurs" can be set up but are unlikely to deliver public good. Such examples unfortunately also abound. Just as in the case of the "good entrepreneur" in the private sector, it is the crony-powerbroker nexus and the culture of rule-breaking and conflicts of interest that flows from it that stands against entrepreneurship becoming a driver delivering public good. Yet, the IDCOL lesson has new resonance in these pandemic times. Public entrepreneurship is a transformational pathway that developing countries like Bangladesh should carefully consider with urgency. Preceding IDCOL, the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED), though a regular department rather than a publicly-owned company, established a commendable track record of public entrepreneurial skills under the dynamic leadership of the late QI Siddique, to achieve

the first connectivity revolution of Bangladesh a la the feeder roads that connected villages with towns and transformed Bangladesh into a connected national economy. The potential clearly is there but it will require decisive action from top leadership against the entrenched crony-powerbroker nexus that stands in the way of "good entrepreneurship" flourishing both in the private and public domains.

One immediate focus of decisive action should, no, must be the revival of the public sector entity which has a strong and credible track record of vaccine production, namely the Institute of Public Health (IPH). This was an indispensable support institution for the expanded EPI programme which was instrumental in bringing down child mortality. While we scramble to procure vaccines against Covid-19, building a national capacity for such production has to be a priority. It will be a pity here if policy thinking prioritises only private sector capacity for such national production. The goal is not just about national production but its link to public good. Private companies may very well enter into such vaccine production. But the state's focus must equally be on building a parallel public sector capacity especially because in IPH it already has a history to fast-track an initiative. The budget has kept a block amount of Tk 10,000 crores for Covid response. I call upon the finance minister to allocate an appropriate amount from this block allocation to jump-start the new journey of IPH as a public entrepreneur. If the finance minister makes an explicit and specific declaration to this effect at his closing speech at the approval of the proposed budget at the end of the month, it will signal the government's seriousness on its vaccination strategy and strike a big blow for "good entrepreneurship".

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Cover of the book, 'Win: How Public Entrepreneurship Can Transform the Developing World', written by Fozul Kabir Khan.

QUOTABLE Quote: Those who can make you believe absurdities can make you commit atrocities. VOLTAIRE French writer (1694—1778)

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH: ACROSS 1 Unhearing, 5 No longer bright, 10 Pakistan language, 11 Sights, 13 Brazenness, 14 Surname in punk rock, 15 Futile, 17 Brewed beverage, 18 Allows, 19 Tire track, 20 Hosp. parts, 21 Lincoln's bill, 22 Western resort lake, 25 Hoodwinked, 26 Infamous czar. DOWN 1 Up to, briefly, 28 Light brown, 29 Pitchers, informally, 33 Pot cover, 34 Easy dance, 35 Go by, 37 Cape Cod catch, 38 More alluring, 39 German river, 40 Title papers, 41 Quick look, 1 River blocker, 8 Selfish doings, 9 Catherine of "Indochine", 12 Did an usher's work, 16 The Emerald Isle, 21 Period, 22 Boxers seek them, 23 Made use (of), 24 Stone Age tool, 25 Dreadful, 27 Radio knobs, 29 Cheated, in slang, 30 Piano piece, 31 Zellweger of "Judy", 32 Fire starter, 36 Bakery buy.

YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS: M A S T E R S C A R, A L C O V E R S O R S, P L O W E D R A T A, L O N E R V E N O M, E Y E D D E S I R E, V I R O N A I D, C O N F E E L, A L F R E D L A P D, S C O U R M I C R O, T A R S C A P R I S, O N C E O N S I D E, R O E S W E E D E D.

BEETLE BAILEY BY MORT WALKER: HELP! HMM...LASSIE WOULD PROBABLY RUN AND GET A ROPE BUT WHERE'S A ROPE? ...OR MAYBE SHE'D GET SOMEONE TO HELP BUT WHO'S AVAILABLE? USUALLY, I FIND IF I JUST SIT AND THINK ABOUT IT, THE PROBLEM RESOLVES ITSELF. BABY BLUES BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT: SEE, I MULTIPLIED ALL OF MY ANSWERS BY ZERO. WHY? DUH! BECAUSE THAT MAKES ALL THE ANSWERS ZERO, SO I'M NEVER WRONG! I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE MY GRADE! YOU'VE ALREADY SEEN IT!

WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR OPINION PIECES TO dsopinion@gmail.com.