

Celebrating DU centenary in my own way



Shahnoor Wahid is a senior journalist.

SHAHNOOR WAHID

WINTER always lingers delightfully on the Dhaka University campus. The fallen leaves of myriad colours underneath the tall trees create a surreal montage against the green grass. And the puff of air still carrying a little bit of chill has stories to tell—if you care to pause for a while and listen.

When I reached the Teacher-Student Centre (TSC) last Friday, it was already late in the afternoon. The setting sun painted the trees and buildings with a crimson tint of ethereal splendour. In fact, I came to the campus to feel the air, to smell the leaves, and to touch the grass to celebrate the centenary of Dhaka University in my own way.

As I stood in front of the TSC after decades, a flurry of wind came from nowhere and ruffled up the leaves of the trees around me. The trees, enjoying a lazy afternoon slumber, woke up and started to sway in excitement. I looked up. “Ah, my friends, so you recognised me after all these years!” I waved at the trees and shouted gleefully. “Yes, yes, we recognise you... it’s just like yesterday to us... you were so young and strong those days. But we can see you are frail now, slow in gait and struggling to breathe... your eyes have lost the sparkle... your skin is pale... what happened?” The trees sounded concerned. I smiled. “Oh, nothing; it is old age, my friends—an inevitability for staying around too long, perhaps. A predicament of sort of the human kind, you can say. You see, with age, you trees get beautiful, taller and stronger. But with us humans, it’s different. Old age robs us of our youthful

sprints; our eyesight begins to go and our dreams begin to get hazy. We start to go downhill with all sorts of ailments. All our beautiful memories also start to fade away. Anyway, I am happy to see you tree families looking healthy and enjoying the breeze.”

I waved goodbye to the tall trees of TSC



ILLUSTRATION:
BIPLOB CHAKROBORTY

and started to walk towards the Salimullah Muslim Hall (SM Hall), which used to be my hall. As I walked past the residence of the vice-chancellor, I heard some noise in the distance. I stopped on the track. That rumbling noise! What is it? Thousands of feet on the road—a hundred voices chanting slogans! Then I saw them. A big rally of students with placards in hands, coming towards where I was standing. I was transfixed. But the rally passed by

and went towards the TSC. Placards read “Down with the military rule,” “Must accept Six Points,” “We want democracy.” I followed the rally for a while, but it seemed no one noticed me. I turned back to go to the SM Hall, but saw another, even bigger rally coming towards me. I stood in one corner to allow it to pass. This time,

continued to act brutally on peaceful congregations. They mentioned the killing of a student named Asad in Mohammadpur by the police that very morning. I was more confused. Why are they talking about Asad, who was killed in police firing in 1969? Then I heard the whistles and the sound of boots running on the ground. Dozens of policemen came from all directions and started to beat up the students in the rally. Students tried to run towards safety, but many of them got arrested. To my utter surprise, this time also, no one paid any attention to me, even though I was standing out in the open. Soon, the sound of slogans became louder and louder throughout the campus in a maddening crescendo.

I tried to catch my breath and resumed walking towards Jagannath Hall. It was at this point that I heard the sound of gunfire. Deafening sound of incessant firing from heavy machine guns filled the air. I could hear the rumbling sound of heavy army trucks on the campus. Sound of blazing guns came from the teachers’ quarters. I ran towards Jagannath Hall, but could not go far. The hall was surrounded by army trucks and Pakistani soldiers were running through the floors, shooting at unarmed students in a devilish frenzy. I watched from behind a tree as they dragged the dead students out onto the ground and dumped them in a big ditch on the field. Lord Almighty! Whatever is happening? Where am I?

Like a flashback on celluloid, everything that happened on the campus went past my inner eye as I stood shivering under a tree. Uncontrollable rage overpowered my entire being, as I recalled how the Pakistanis killed our beloved professors, students and staff members on the campus. I tried to console myself saying that no nation that kills teachers can sustain and prosper.

It was almost midnight when I stood up from where I was sitting. I hailed a rickshaw and asked him to take me towards Birdem. The trees were fast asleep.

Adaptation strategies must be bottom-up



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POLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE
SALEEMUL HUQ

There are two major outcomes and messages on adaptation to climate change that have been mentioned in the recently published Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) of Working Group II (WG2) of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The first one says that the impacts of climate change are evident all around the world—in both poor countries and rich—necessitating a much enhanced investment in adaptation measures to be better prepared going forward.

The second message, which did not receive as much attention, was that of the hundreds of adaptation activities and investments that have been undertaken, a significant number either did not help or made things worse.

While there are many reasons for these past failures, a major reason is that almost

banks, bilateral donor agencies and even a number of countries have adopted. The main principles include: consulting local communities before designing the interventions to be funded; involving those communities in implementing the plans; and having the communities themselves monitor and assess the effectiveness of such investments.

However, merely signing a pledge is not enough, if the practice doesn’t change on the ground. Hence the annual Gobeshona conference on Locally Led Adaptation and Resilience has become a venue for monitoring and evaluating the performance of the financiers and agencies supporting adaptation around the world.

The Gobeshona conference on LLA and Resilience, which was held online for the first time in 2021, has now become a global event where the institutions who have signed the LLA principles will be invited each year to share what they are doing in practice, and particularly bring the local adapters from around the world to share their experiences. Before, the conference was held in person, in Bangladesh.

The second annual Gobeshona conference on LLA is also scheduled to

champions for COP26 and COP27 will be interviewed. We will share the messages from the local adapters with the high-level climate champions and ask them how they can ensure that these messages actually influence the global decisions that are going to be made at COP27.

This annual conference, hosted and organised by the International Centre for Climate Change and Development

(ICCCAD), is now aimed at becoming a standing item in terms of monitoring and evaluating the performance of the national and international agencies that are supporting adaptation activities around the world. It is expected to become as important an event as the UN climate summit. It will be able to track and monitor the actual implementations of LLA on the ground.



Local adaptation priorities, such as conserving and using crop biodiversity, can help manage climate change impacts in vulnerable countries around the world. SOURCE: IIED

all those investments for adaptation were done in a top-down way, where experts came up with the plans and the local communities, who were the supposed beneficiaries or even targets of this support, were merely made to implement what they were told to.

This was not only an extremely disempowering manner of dealing with the local communities, but also a mistake to ignore their own lived experiences and the experiential knowledge that they had on how best to adapt to the climate change hazards they had been facing.

This has led to a global movement to promote what is now called Locally Led Adaptation (LLA), and there are eight principles that over 50 global institutions, multilateral development

be held online, from March 27 to April 1, with a focus on connecting the local adapters to global decision-makers, keeping an eye on the upcoming 27th UN Climate Change Conference (Conference of Parties—COP27), set to be held in Egypt in November 2022.

The opening session on March 27 will be hosted by Bangladesh, and there are over 80 sessions already scheduled over the next six days. These sessions are set to be hosted and organised by different organisations and groups from around the world, and participants can join any sessions they wish to attend online—completely free of cost. Each session is aimed at finding a message for the upcoming COP27, and in the final session on April 1, the high-level climate

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