

# Remembering 36th July!

The year 2024 shall forever remain etched in our hearts as a season of mixed emotions. On one hand, we look back at those tumultuous days with joy. On the other hand, we remain apprehensive about what lies ahead.

Representing the generation of the '90s, I saw two of the biggest political victories of the common people — the fall of the dictator in December 1990 and the July Uprising of 2024. I fondly recall the celebrations that followed the downfall of Ershad, and I remember the August afternoon that shook the foundations of the Hasina regime.

By 5 August, 2024, we and 160 million other people were glued to the TV sets. And as the morning rolled into the afternoon on that August day, we could not believe the events that were about to unfold. And they did! Sheikh Hasina had fled the country, and people were in tears of joy.

While the TVs were broadcasting ecstatic scenes from Ganabhaban, we headed to Shantinagar Square, marching with a jubilant crowd, savouring the new taste of freedom. We saw people at the neighbourhood's sweet shops sharing roshgollas with



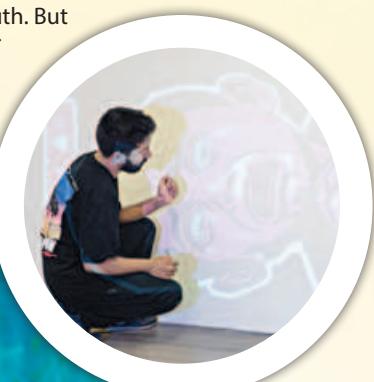
random strangers!

And even from a distance, we could hear the chants — slogans against the autocrat; the cries of triumph. The long-awaited moment had finally arrived.

We were greeted by known faces and we were

greeted by complete strangers: "Is it true?" they asked, but none waited for an answer.

After a session of screaming our hearts out, we decided to take a bird's-eye view. As we walked onto the overhead flyover, we saw graffiti drawn on the walls. People, in their



rage against the fascist regime, painted the walls in a riot of colours. And we witnessed a surreal scene. It seemed that the people below were dancing to the beat not of a drum, but swaying to the tide of hopes of a new tomorrow.

As the sun set in the west, we slowly walked back to our homes. Thousands of people, initially hesitant, were coming out of their homes. It seemed that the festivities would continue throughout the night. And they did!

There are no restart buttons in life. And as a nation, we are slowly coming to terms with that truth. But for

today, and for as long as I shall live, there will always be this 36th day of July. The day freedom came back to life.

**By Mannan Mashhur Zarif**  
**Photo: Shahrear Kabir Heemel**

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