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Rubana Huq

In Transit: bad taste

March 26, 2011



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Sadly, media is depressing. Forty thousand feet above the ground, sipping an insipid orange juice from a five inch cup handed down by the stewardess bearing another five inch smile does not promise a great day. As it is pushing off for the airport at 5 in the morning is not the best moment either. Worst of all, skimming through an Indian newspaper that almost lists Bangladesh as a city with a pin code is not what one would enjoy at the crack of dawn.

I am looking at the 50 years celebration supplement of The Economic Times on board a flight to Delhi. The paper has identified 50 great moments of India. Amongst the 50, it has recorded India's 1991 budget, Right to Information, Maruti, Bajaj, The Bhopal Tragedy, India's IT, Indian writing in English, Sachin Tendulkar phenomenon, Bollywood, M. F. Husain and his loss of freedom, Emergency, the fall of the Babri Masjid, war with China, etc, etc.

The one that is stealing my breath away and is literally choking my soul is one of those 50 moments that The Economic Times dated 24th March 2011 has listed as India's pride.

This particular piece of Indian pride happens to be an article printed on page 13 of the paper and goes by the following title: 'Indo-Pak Conflict 1971: Bangladesh is born.'

On the right hand side, there's a text and picture box which also has an amazing lines listed: 17 Dec, 1971: India declared a ceasefire with Pakistan.

Equally amazing are the additional by-lines with a heading: War by the Book: "At the end of the conflict, India ended up with 93000 prisoners of war, reported to be the largest surrender since World War II.... The Indo-Pakistan conflict lasted for less than a fortnight, one of the shortest wars in the 20th century history."

The article has been written by one Mr. Vikram Doctor who has most certainly miraculously escaped the editorial scrutiny and is now the proud author of this piece.

With the Bangladesh-India relations peaking at this point of time, and with the mountains of accusation of selling our souls to this apparent gentle giant by our border, one look at this irresponsible article, once again, would mean serving the ball to the critical court of the opposing quarters and stirring up yet another storm in the waters.

The article starts off by eulogising Indira Gandhi for having achieved India's greatest military and strategic victory in the war of 1971. It also refers to her 325-seat landslide victory in the election, her triumph in the Green Revolution, her victory over the Supreme Court on issues of nationalisation of the banks and abolishment of princely purses and the

same article leads to the point where it rightfully refers to the ex-prime minister being critical about Pakistan's refusal to allow Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to become the PM despite having a landslide victory in the elections of Dec 1970.

The author then attributes the cause of war to General Tikka Khan's brutalities and cites a few supporters favouring self-rule for East Pakistan, amongst who the names of Dr. Henry Kissinger, the American diplomat Archer Blood are mentioned. Indira Gandhi, according to the article, following General Maneckshaw's advice, waited till winter for allowing "efficient ground operations", "sank the destroyer PNS Khyber and four other ships...sank PNS Ghazi while suffering only one serious loss" while "In Bangladesh with the local population almost entirely against them, the Pakistani army soon folded."

Thank you, The Economic Times, for at least acknowledging the consent of the "local population." With your kind recognition and endorsement, the entire history of the Independence of Bangladesh stands to be corrected.

March 19 was another blasphemy in action as well. With Bangladeshi supporters of the Pakistani team waving flags of Pakistan, the match ground looked as if it were wearing the pre-liberation "chand-Tara" look one more time.

With today's ET article, I feel violated. I urge ourselves to rise against any erroneous references to our history which is bathed in pride of the sacrifice of millions of muktijoddhas and their mothers and sisters.

I urge our young people not to wave another flag on our grounds ever again, not even in the excuse of sports.

This is March 26, 2011 – 40 years of Independence of Bangladesh.

[Rubana Huq](#) is Managing Director, Mohammadi Group and CEO TV Southasia.

This entry was posted on March 26, 2011 at 2:23 pm and is filed under [1971](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0](#) feed.

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3 Responses to " In Transit: bad taste "



1. Omar Farooque on March 28, 2011 at 11:10 am

We should have known better about Indian eagerness in supporting us against Pakistan in the Liberation war.

Do you think US soldiers went in Iraq to fight against Saddam's regime to free Iraqi people? Were they so much in love with the Iraqis?

Similarly, India were never in love with Bangladeshi people (not even now) during those days, they helped us only to suit their needs – that is defeat/divide Pakistan so that they can have a stronger hold in this sub-continent.

And how well they had succeeded...

There are pro-Indians in our population just because they hate Pakistan and while being pro-Indians they even let go of the interest of Bangladesh.

But we need neither Pro-Indians nor Anti-Pakistanis, but pro-Bangladeshis.

The info published in the ET is not by error, it is how they perceive it and it is how they have been perceiving it.

It was a war between India and Pakistan and Bangladesh was just a bi-product.

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o Somnath GuhaRoy on April 1, 2011 at 4:58 am

Some people will always find a reason to blame.

Suppose India had not acted to relieve the sufferings of the Bangladeshi people?

Blame India!

I remember that in 1971 there was huge pressure from Bangladesh to act, and we are still paying taxes due to that effort. However, BLAME INDIA!

Have you heard of The INTERNATIONAL BRIGADES – young and old men from US, CANADA, EUROPE, etc., who went individually to fight and die for liberal

causes in the Spanish Civil War? Have you heard of martyrs who died in the American Civil War to free slaves? Did these people have selfish motives? Did you hear of foreigners who died for Native Americans?

How is Bangladesh belittled if the Indian press recounts Indian efforts and history? If Bangladeshis praise Bangladeshi efforts, does it mean that Indians should take offence? Society starlets need some grist to fuel their write-ups, but the common people getting all hot at imagined slights is of no real use.

Why don't you mention anti-Indians and pro-Pakistanis?

It is ridiculous to state that liberal Bangladeshis who prefer liberal India to theocratic Pakistan do so because they are anti-Pakistan. It simply betrays your mindset which is not suitable for today's world.

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2. [Ishtiaque Kahn](#) on March 27, 2011 at 5:04 pm

Such despicable and distasteful piece of distorted information. It only shows that even after so many years, neither our Indian or Pakistani "brethren" are ready to give us due credit and acknowledgement of our glorious Liberation War. I really feel sorry for the people who are supporting them in any means and ways.

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