The Baily Star

Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

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Inspiring Ekushey

A great national day and the greatest religious festival in the land have coincided for the first time in our lifetime - and perhaps for the last time too. The festivities will no doubt sweep over the sombre remembrances of the Shaheed Day. For the nation to keep in health and attain a meaningful life for its constituents Ekushey and the spirit of Ramadan must together act as the fountainhead of all the right thoughts and inspiration. Let our finer feelings emerging out of Ramadan's monthful of behavioural restraint and spiritual probity go to mingle with the sense of dedication to the cause that the Ekushey represents.

Ekushey is wholly an expression of a national aspiration for cultural self-determination. And it started as such and not at all on the narrow considerations of capitalising on linguistic injustice. But as it was wholesale injustice and discrimination and even racial hatred that were garbed in the rather innocuous call for one lingua franca for all of Pakistan, Urdu to wit, Ekushey rose to meet the challenge for what it was. And it became the mother to the Bengalee people's decades-long struggle for rights culminating inevitably in the war of liberation and resulting victory and national independence.

Yes, the political fruits of the Ekushey were reaped far more than these were ever expected to. What happened to what Ekushey set out to do in the first place and indeed its only issue? Literary and overall cultural development, the blooming of a thousand flowers bearing the stamp of the Bengalee genius, that is - which was all of the goal for the movement for cultural self-determination, was literally smothered by its political proliferations and their progressive success.

That the political success and the crowning one at that, namely, independence, did not hold for long on the right track and have constantly been corroded from within for more than two decades is mainly due to our miserable performance on the linguistic, literary and overall cultural front. Independence is a state of the mind that diminishes with the degeneration of the overall cultural content and situation of a mation: We are for years caught up in this infernal situation.

Let Ekushey, as ever, inspire us to get out of

Far from the Reality

The Prime Minister's keenly-awaited postelection remarks before the national and international press have unfortunately ended up adding to the controversy generated by the justheld polls rather than subtracting from it.

The BNP's perception of the low turn-out in the election may differ with that of the rest. That is quite understandable. One could even allow that the polls were necessitated to meet a constitutional or legal requirement. And that the party would try to latch on to the election results by way of claiming that these provided 'a mandate and legitimacy' for it to continue in office was not entirely unexpected as well. But to assert that the election was free and fair makes us wonder if we and the PM are talking about the same event.

This is indefensible in the face of the very one-sided and uncontested character of the polls followed by transparent reports of discrepancy between the voters' physical presence and the unusually large turn-out, repeat voting, stuffing of ballot papers, snatching of ballot boxes, absence of returning and asst. returning officers and suspension of elections at several polling stations.

The news that the Election Commission has retracted from its earlier stance of going into some such alleged irregularities on the plea that the existing law does not permit it to question 'any results of the parliamentary elections' casts a further shadow on the credibility and authenticity of the polls.

The election has been a moral disaster but the lessons it has thrown up in its trail can be utilised for rebuilding the chances of a fresh dialogue provided the BNP brings itself to making a realistic assessment of the poll outcome and the opposition comes forward out of a sense of contentment that its demand for a non-partisan conduct of elections stands vindicated. Confrontation will be self-defeating.

Field-day for Mugging

It was newsy yesterday on the mugging front. A middle-aged Babubazar shrimp trader Abdul Hannan was shot in his thigh and robbed off Tk nine lakh he had just drawn from a bank. What made his story sensational was not so much the huge amount of money he had to part with nor even the fact that he was way-laid in broad daylight but the crash platoon-like blitzkrieg befell him with a sufficient notice served on policemen who must have been somewhere around. The muggers had blasted a number of bombs at the intersection spewing smoke to hang a pall of semi-darkness which blinded the folks and scared them away as they plunged into action.

Although the incident took place in the afternoon, the Kotwali Police Station officials who reportedly had gone to the place of occurrence were yet to return, as late as 10 pm, so that no case was filed till then.

On Sunday again, and in broad day-light an elderly cloth merchant was knifed, beaten up and then robbed of Tk 75 thousand - in presence of some policemen in front of the Gulistan cinema hall. In the evening some thugs stabbed Eid shopper Jamal near Karwanbazar and

snatched Tk 5,000 from him. Muggers get vigorously on the prowl prior to the Eid festival. We know that Dhaka Metropolitan police deployed special squads to keep vigil. One would be interested to know how many were apprehended under the action pro-

Thoughts on Shaheed Day

by Prof Roushan Ara Hoque

It is only after the election of

the fifth Jatiya Sangsad in

1991 that a democratic gov-

ernment has come to power.

unfortunately though, after

sharing of seats with the so

called anti-liberation forces.

Still the people felt happy to

give democracy a fair trial. Ac-

cording to the post-election

agreement between the parties

in power and opposition the

system of government has

been changed from Presiden-

tial to parliamentary democ-

racy. The only unanimous deci-

sion taken by this Sangsad, as

far as the record shows, was

regarding the enhancement of

salary and allowances of all the

members of parliament and

the right to import one luxury

car each without paying any tax

to the public exchequer. What

a decision indeed, in the con-

text of a poor country alike

discussion in the Parliament

on any other issues as, accord-

ing to the complaints of the

opposition, they were neither

given the floor nor the sound

of the mike to express their

views and on many occasions

they were either laughed at or

disturbed by creation of sound

on the tables; the indemnity

Act Repeal bill was also not al-

lowed to be placed before the

House thus the killers are

openly claiming credit of

killing the father of the nation

making a mockery of the duty

of the judiciary to punish the

tion of democracy is the right

to elect a govt. of people's

choice in a congenial atmo-

sphere which is only possible

in our country under a neutral

caretaker government as was

proved by the election of 1991.

Though that was an extra-or-

dinary process taken accord-

ing to the need of the day, but

as the system proved useful

this could have been made a

rule by bringing necessary

amendment to the constitution

as was desired by the opposi-

fion. But the Bill was not al-

lowed to be placed before the

Another fundamental condi-

murderers.

There has been no proper

WENTYFIRST February or Shaheed Day is the most significant day in the history of our Bengali nationhood. After 1952, we have been observing it as a Day of showing respect to the language martyrs who sacrificed their lives on that day to establish our right to speak in our mother tongue.

As time passed on, the Language Movement gained more and more momentum due to 'the repeated attempts by the then Government of Pakistan to repress and suppress it through violence. Then it no longer remained a movement for mother tongue only but a new inspiration of nationalism added to it. Thus, the demand for autonomy subsequently culminating in the demand for absolute freedom of cultivating our own language, literature. culture and heritage without any central control was the direct outcome of the police-firing on that day.

As years passed on more and more economic exploitation and political control of the then Pakistan Government inspired and united the entire nation to achieve not only the right to speak in mother tongue but to establish equal rights in all aspects of national life. The 21-point and the 6point programmes were the organised processes of those demands. The suppression of those legitimate demands through bullets resulted in the public movements of 1964. 1966 and 1969. The demand for provincial autonomy was most forcefully expressed through the 11-point programme and the whole country was united under the banner of Awami League, the overwhelming victory of the Awami League in the election of 1970 was the direct effect of the inspiration of nationalism created on the Shaheed Day.

The second phase of the effect of the Shaheed Day was the spirit of independence created by the denial of the then military ruler to form the central government on the basis of the result of 1970 election. The chimax of war was genecide begun on the night of 25th March 1971 by the Pakistan occupation forces. The spirit of nationalism and the determination to achieve independence inspired the whole nation to sacrifice. Thus the achievement of victory in that war was also an outcome of the spirit of the Shaheed

The third phase of the effect of the Shaheed Day began after the achievement of freedom. We all know that freedom is the price of eternal vigi-

lance. Freedom has blessed us Sangsad and on that issue the opposition resigned from the with sovereignty and democ-Sangsad. All attempts of set racy, to safeguard which we tlement failed due to egoistic should always remain alert. In stance of the leaders none of this Silver Jubilee year of our whom gave any importance to freedom; the Shaheed Day has the interest of the people and appeared to us with greater the future of the democratic significance. We should ponder process. Rather preparations and reflect in our mind how were taken by the government much we are enjoying the two in power to go for election basic gifts of freedom and how even with only one party and much more still remain to be some non-entity party candiachieved. Democracy or the dates on the ground of continpeople's right to elect their uing the constitutional proown government is the basic condition of democracy. Since The Ekushey Book Fair held 1975, democracy has been thwarted several times by the imposition of autocratic rules.

in Bangla Academy every year has direct solidarity with the Shaheed Day and the success of the Language Movement. It is the most desired meeting place of the readers writers. publishers and the lovers of mother tongue, arts, national culture and heritage. It is the most congenial venue for exchange of views and evaluating achievements as well as failures among them. All eagerly wait for this occasion, thousands of visitors assemble there to enrich their knowledge. But this year due to the expeditional type opening of the Book-Fair by the Prime Minister and the atrocious police action on some DU Halls the Fair has been transformed into a place of apprehended violence spoiling its sanctity and thereby destroying the original spirit of Shaheed Dibash. Every patriotic citizen was hurt at this show of disrespect to the dedication of the martyrs of that Day. On the eve of the Shaheed Day we feel really sad to think that the blood of the language martyrs seems to have sacrificed in vain, even if partially!

And just before this holy Shaheed Day the one-party election of Sangsad has been held as if putting the last nail on the coffin of democracy creating a unique record of mockery in the history of the parliamentary elections of all democratic countries of the world. Keeping the entire nation as hostage the gamble of so-called election was com pleted amidst serious violences. The unusually low turnout often has been shown as all time high resulting in the loss of credibility of the government as well as the very basis election.

On the eve of the the Shaheed Day of this Silver Jubilee. year of our victory of 1971, let us now take new pledges to revive the spirit of the Day to begin a new struggle against all these irregularities diminish us and to establish the envisaged proper democratic process in the country, so that the blood of the martyrs really does not go in vain.

The Spirit of February Twentyone

by Nuruddin Amjad

HIS is my humble offering in the commemoratton of February Twentyone — the day in 1952 we stood up for the recognition of Bengali as a

State Language. I love Bengali. It is my mother tongue. I speak Bengali. I write Bengali but I can express myself better in English than in Bengali.

This is admittedly unfortunate but not shameful, since it is not entirely my own fault. When I was born, the English ruled India. English was the official language then and my affectionate teachers worked hard at improving my proficiency in this foreign language for my own good. Englishknowing people had an edge over others in the job market in pre-independence India.

Contrary to our fond expectations, this job-related situation did not change significantly after Independence. Speeches and exhortations apart, all of my generation even if they now try to conduct their office work in Bengali continue to think in English and translate these thoughts into Bengali as fast as their nervous system would permit them. Naturally their written Bengali is belaboured and lacks the spontaneity which is the hall-mark of good business communication.

I personally am working hard to improve my written Bengali but I am old enough to admit that I shall never be able to beat my son at it. Educational standards being what they are, he has minimum exposure to any foreign language. I personally believe that the spirit of February Twentyone is not fully expressed in the ritual of placing floral wreathes at the Shaheed Minar and closing an English language office memorandum with a signature

in Bengali, at the bottom. I guess February 21 teaches us to think and speak out fearlessly. It teaches us that one man with courage can make a

majority. It teaches us that one has nothing to live for; unless one has something to die for. Bengali is dear to us but

Bangladesh is dearer. We must, if we want speedy economic development, place all our resources at the service of this very poor nation. To my way of thinking, lan-

 guage should be viewed only as one of the resources with which modern business, with its need for fast and accurate information, is conducted on a global scale. If English or Chinese helps us achieve our ends more efficiently we must not have any qualms about employing it in the nation's service.

Our state functions are already being conducted in Bengali. The national anthem is in Bengali. We have won the battle. We must no longer behave as frightened men unwilling to face the truth.

The spirit of February Twentyone whispers to us that we have nothing to fear but fear itself!

My vote — to whom?

Sir, If one faces bandits-onone side and ferocious animals on the other (for his possession of value to them), then with whom will he side to save himself? If none, then how will he survive!

A R Choudhry Uttara, Dhaka

Sir, I had an opportunity to read the article "It's Divine to be Late" written by Chintito which was published in your paper on January 30, '96. The writer has rightly pointed out the facts in our country. But he did not suggest any remedy to

Even some high officials of at the mercy of these officers.

country, it cannot expect any

M Ali

Arms recovery versus

armed battle

Sir, Every citizen of this country knows that army has been deployed all over the country to recover illegal arms and punish their belongers. I think it is an honest and necessary step of the government. But some incidents raise suspicions among the conscious citizens. One of such incidents is the January 4 gun-fight on the Dhaka University campus between rival political activists - the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) and the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL). They traded about a hundred gunshots in front of the police. A week before this, a police-student gun-battle also took place on the campus. Aren't these incidents contradictory to the arms recovery initiative of the

government? Md Firoj Alam Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Hall

Dhaka University

Significance of Eid

by Abu Imran

T is said that the month long fasting brings in two rewards - (1) the attainment of piety, which if carried over the next eleven months in its real spirit, then peace and violence-free society may be guaranteed: and (2) Eid, i.e. happiness, on the day following the day on which Shawal (Arabic calendar month) moon is sighted after which the faithful are not required to observe obligatory fasting for the next eleven

How far and to what degree

months.

the piety is practised by the Muslim community as a whole is a million dollar question since even during the Ramzan (the month for fasting) many people do not fast. Those who do, among them, many don't really fulfil its demands-i.e. they only keep themselves hungry from dawn to dusk but don't leave their bad habits nor do even good things which are the prime objectives of fasting. It is aimed at attaining piety through month-long training of restraints and following strictly the do's and don'ts. As a soldier achieves perfection through undergoing rigorous training, so does a Muslime If faulty training or obtaining it lousily does not help in mundane affairs, then how one can expect attaining higher form of piety through faulty fasting? It is said, one who has not abhored his evils during fasting. such fastings are not acceptable to Allah. Therefore to meet the obligation of fasting one has to observe it in a manner and design as directed by Allah and His Prophet (PBUH) so that real benefit for self and society could be obtained.

Whatever may be the out come of (1) above (piety-peace etc.), at least (2) i.e. Eid or happiness on Eid day is generously observed by almost all the community members sometimes ignoring the fact that in Islam a festivity is supposed to be observed with reservation unlike the practice in other communities. Eid day should rather be observed as thanks giving, of course with restrictive festivity. It, therefore, starts with community prayer in fields, mostly, and mosques too where there is no arrangement for prayer in the field or if the weather is inclement. People go there in festive mood in good or at least clean clothes using perfumes

A question may arise as to

how the poor can also share the happiness the rich do. It is possible because Islam has an in-built system which, if followed properly there would be no scope for one in the whole world to be poor or at least remain unfed, unclad or un-sheltered. It has made obligatory on Muslim (rich) to pay zakat (poor tax @ 2.5% on his savings once in a year) which is distributed amongst the needy and for furtherance of the cause of Islam. History has rich record to prove that when this system was in vogue, the rich used to roam in the streets of Madina Sharif to find poors to give their Zakat to them so as to absolve himself of the responsibility imposed on him by Allah. But they hardly found one. However, in Islamic state, rich people don't have to worry because it is the responsibility of the state to collect and distribute the Za-

cat money.

A relevant story even in these days was hard sometime back. It went like this: "In one of the gulf states, a Shaikh caught hold of a Muslim from Bangladesh and wanted to give him some zakat money. The Bangladeshi Muslim said that he was not that poor to receive such money. Then the Shaikh forced him to take the money saying that had he not been a miskeen (poorest of the poor) then why had he come to his (Shaikh's) country, and hence he could take the money since such money could be enjoyed by the way-farers, miskeens etc." This could be a story wrong or right but is surely indicative of a system that is quite capable of wiping out poverty not by option but by compulsion. Besides zakat, prior to Eid. Muslims of means are required to pay "Fitr" a kind of dole on his and his family's/dependents' behalf @ little less than 2 kg or 3 kg (here scholars differ with regard to quantity) of the main cereal one takes. This time,

the concerned committee has declared around Taka 23/- per person to be paid to poors as

the amount of "Fitr". The other arrangement is that one can't be considered as true Muslim if he eats to his fill while his neighbour sleeps hungry. Under this arrangement, neighbours have not to be differentiated. He could be any body, a Muslim, a relation or even a non-Muslim since food is the basic need of human being and even of animals.

With all the above arrangements, the poor are supposed to get modest amount of food or money to share happiness with others on this day.

As said, the day starts with

offering thanks-giving prayer

in the field. Prayer is followed

by "khutba" (sermon) where the Imam (one who leads the prayer) after praising the Lord, gives valuable speech reminding people of their obligation to the Creator and the creation and wishes peace and happiness for the brothers the world over. People assemble in loyous mood and after prayer is over they embrace each other and exchange greetings and return home and share special dishes with family members. friends and neighbours. The day itself takes a festive look. Eid therefore brings happiness after month-long restraint of food, feast and even other permitted things. As Eid, is observed within the limits prescribed, so normally untoward incidents are not noticed which in other communities on festive days become a commonplace as observed from media. But, regrettingly, incidents of minor nature take place sometimes because of cross culture effects and for not following the do's and don'ts of Islam. For this, how ever, neither Eid nor Islam is responsible but it is the person who violates the codes is responsible.

On the whole, Eld day is the day of happiness and one wishes such day to be every day so that life becomes comfortable and worth living meaning fully since Eid day helps Muslims to forget and forgive bitterness and be

WORSHIP IN ISLAM Ramadan Perspective

by Akhter-ul-Alam

N Islam worship or praver is not only a silent mediation. It is also not an apathy or something like escapist tendency for silence and solitary seclusion. The term "Ibadat' itself is indicative of service. The fasting of Ramadan is one of the glaring example of such worship.

Worship is nothing but a process to achieve or reach the ultimate goal, This goal is to live in peace and harmony and to work in an atmosphere of friendly co-existence and co-operation. This harmony is needed (a) within oneself i.e. within his heart and mind; (b) between his body and soul, i.e. within his very existence; (c) within first circle of environment i.e. family and social life; (d) within wider circle of his environment ke. in his national and regional life; and (e) within international perspec-

The five pillars of Islam the Kalima, the Salat, the Siam, the Jakat and Hai — are the five stages of religious service. All these stages are prescribed for a person to per form his 'ibadat' : to render service to keep the balance of peace and harmony of this physical and spiritual existence of one to all in this worldly life.

It is wellknown that in the struggle for life, the victorious man could achieve worldly wealth and prosperity. Such successful man could easily deny the role of soul in the human existence. He could also easily ignore the spiritual side of human nature. He may not have the idea about the deplorable conditions of have nots. Fasting of Ramadan teaches this person such a lesson, so that he could feel the closeness with the whole human race. On the other hand, a person may have to fast for want of food. He may think that he is alone in the world suffering such agony of fasting. The Ramadan shows him that he is not alone. The entire society share with him inspite of their affluence or richness. This situation creates a harmony among the haves and have-nots: one for all and all for one.

Ramadan is indeed a special kind of Ibadat or worship by which the uncontrolled physical passion and unclean soul of a person could easily be controlled, rectified, cleaned and purified. "Ibadat" has two phases: (i) service towards God and (ii) service towards creatures. The first is a due obligation to the Supreme Creator; and the second is the duty also no less than an obligation towards the fellow creatures. in Islam, this two-fold dues and duties are termed as "Hooqullah" and "Hoqqul-Ibad."

By uttering a Kalima, a per-

son becomes a believer of the

existence of the soul and as such existence of a Supreme Creator. By establishing Salat regularly he could be deeply devoted to the Creator of his soul. By declaring the Kalima and by performing the regular Salat along with observing the fasting of Ramadan, a person could easily establish his power over his mind, over his own-self, over his physical elements of his body and ultimately over the inborn passions of his nature. As such he could understand easily that apart from performing the duties towards the Creator, he has also responsibilities towards his fellow creatures. If he is capable upto the mark, he could easily understand that the Zakat is also obligatory for him; he will have to spend a certain portion of his wealth towards the welfare and wellbeing of the needy and deprived persons of the society By this way a person could

also purify his wealth and earnings through Zakat.

According to the teachings of the Quran and the Sunnah (tradition) of the Prophet (SM) the able and the wealthy believer has to visit the Kaba -the perennial goal once in a life time, uttering loyalty towards God. This Kaba is a place for assembling. (Quran 2; 125). There he has to perform the Towaf and Savee and after daylong standing at Arafat, he has to sacrifice a living animal according to the traditions stretching from Prophet Ibrahim (a) down to Prophet Mohammad (SM). The person concerned knows it already that "It is not their meat/Nor their blood, that reaches/Allah; it is your peity/That reaches

With this, the journey of life of a believer becomes complete. It reaches the ultimate goal and makes a person complete — full human being.

Him." (Quran 22:37).

Historically and spiritually this journey started in the month of Ramadan when the Quran was revealed to the Prophet (SM)

This Quranic message teaches a person how to perform his service, which is called 'Ibadat' and which is the true sense of worship. It starts with a mental proclamation "Kalima" with personal and mental vow "Salat' and with personal, mental and physical

performance of the 'Syam' (of

The Quran says: "Ramadan is the (month) in which was sent down/The Quran, as a guide/To mankind also clear (sign) For guidance and judgement/(Between right and wrong)/So every one of you/Who is present (at his home) during month/Should spend in Fast-

ing. (2: 185)

OPINION

Dr B Choudhury's Press Briefing

Dr T Hossain

Detail descriptions of Thursday's election have come out in the national dailies. These give a clear picture of how if was conducted for the 6th Parliament. Not fair anyway. The reports of foreign correspondents were also found unfavourable. The only briefing expressing satisfaction was that of Prof B Choudhury however, in total contrast to newspaper and other reports It supported his party's success. He is an authority of the party. He has a non-controver sial reputation, there and his statement carries personal weight. It reflected a sense of relief in conduction of the election. But against the descriptions in national press. his briefing rather put his personal reputation at stake This

is my concern. The remark of Prof Montastr Mam in the Janakanth

of the 17th February made me sad. He said, the number of respectable persons are depleting in the country. This is a blow to Dr Choudhury's res pectable image. It hurts me. wish, this responsibility could better be discharged by the Minister in charge of information

The election has not solved the national problem at all The controversy is rather leading the country from frying pan to fire as evidenced by the reaction reflected in the newspaper reports. No well wisher of the country will be happy if an agreeable solution is not reached by consensus

Indulgence in further violence will hurt the Nation. More innocent people will suffer in the process. A satisfactory solution is the |most arrentined to the hour

Prof B Choudhury possesses a pleasant personality to act as a buffer in the midst of hot controversy. Under the cir cumstances, if a prejudice is impressed upon the admirers of Prof Choudhury, it will be unfortunate. Of course, he did say before the election that this is not the end of the election; there will be more elections in future. There was a ray of hope in that statement It was assumed that this Parliament will pass necessary law to arrange an all party election in near future. In this respect. I do hope Prot B Choudhury's statement should not disappoint his non-political well wishers. But, if morning shows the

day, the shape of things being thought to come does not offer any optimism. So, very cautious statements are expected from we some like the Choudhury

War of words

Sir, Our opposition at times say things which are highly ominous, but curiously enough, neither the state nor the law enforcing agencies have taken any cognizance of the same. The leader of the opposition once said, she will not allow BNP government to rest in peace even for a day. And in fact, she most diligently pursued that. Being the daughter of the worthy son of the soil, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, she could not have taken the liberty to utter such

words. But it was not objected to. She also said that after the en masse resignation of MPs she could bring the country to a stand-still but she did not do that. This was a dangerous utterance. If any one else would have said that surely he would have been brought to book. Because of being in the opposition, she perhaps thought that she was above the law. . .

There were many more utterances which were ridiculous too. But the leniency shown to her has thus gradually emboldened her to be more desperate and she has taken so much courage that on national issues like settling the current political impasse she adopted to begotish, would not sit across the negotiation table unless her unusual and unconstitutional demand is accepted by government prior to consultation. She didn't even join the Election Com-

mission conference discussion. The government might have ignored all these pertinent question, but people will judge the performance of every one while exercising their voting right as to in whose hands the best interest of the country its well-being, integrity and sovereignty — will be safe.

Azizul Qadir 5, Malibag, Dhaka

To be late

those.

the government failed to show up at the Secretariat when it was visited to see the attendance. So, it seems that we are If this is the condition of a

development in any sector. This loss can be termed as "time economy". Since we cannot value our time, we will not be able to improve our lot. Therefore, we request our valued officers to ponder seriously over it and act accord-