Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali Dhaka, Tuesday, March 26, 1996

On to a True Start

On this dawn ushering the silver jubilee year of our independence we first salute the indomitable spirit of our people that created this state. Twenty-five years after independence had consecrated our people's right to self-determination but we are still no better than roaming the wildernesses in search of a democracy answering to our very own needs. But, as infallibly and inevitably as nature's law, our people will overcome the present trials as they had done in 1971 and as recently as in 1990.

Bangladesh's journey towards national unity, socio-political fulfilment and economic justice was grievously hurt by the assassinations of August 15 and November 3, 1975. The resulting void was filled up by generals feeling up to the task and not called upon to do so by anyone. The following days — a long stretch of 15 years saw the eclipse of civil authority — which did not prove helpful to the building of a civil society that could set itself back on the right rails. Only in 1991, thanks to a revolutionary upheaval by our people, we started again to negotiate our path to democracy.

We are, out of touch with democracy for so many years, finding the path hard and treacherous. But one guarantee is there for overcoming the present impasse which is the universal agreement on the need for a caretaker government and on the redundancy of this parliament beyond paving the way for its dissolution and a new election by May participated by all parties. Our best guarantee against all national odds is our people. And they have already made their weight felt through selfdenial and sacrifice.

To make a true and resolute start for democracy at the end of the present impasse we must endeavour to abide by the spirit of the Liberation War and keep as close to the undying testament it left us — the Constitution of 1972. And as long as we nationally do not come back to championing the author of this state as well as its Constitution, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman being what George Washington is to the Americans — we start on something faredoomed.

We salute at this hour the martyred millions and all our tortured mothers and sisters, all freedom fighters and very specially India but for whose unqualified support the day of deliverance could become far more difficult.

We congratulate our nation and wish it godspeed. All of its constituents will sing from their hearts — sharthok janam amar jonmechii ei deshe - blessed I am to be born on this soil.

Not Unsolvable

For the city dwellers nothing is quite as irritable as a dried-up tap at home. And when it occasionally coughs up droplets of water tantalisingly an insult is added to the injury. This is a summertime tormentor, a seasonal reminder of things gone haywire with the WASA management and its network of water supply. Are these irreversible? Luckily, they all are not.

It seems that the media have so far rather myopically viewed WASA's supply capacity as half the daily requirement of water in the city. The other half of the truth is that WASA's system loss is a whopping 52 per cent. Even if the standard loss of 10-12 per cent were allowed for, we would still have had 40 per cent to meet the deficit of 50 per cent.

The breakdown of the figure is even more revealing. It is shocking to learn that WASA has the liability of 30,000 illegal connections to its discredit, so that the ratio between these and the authorised water connections is a little more than one is to five. And along a supply network of 1300 kilometres the leaks are so numerous that 22 per cent of the total water supply goes literally down the drain.

The World Bank's recipe is privatise and put the lid on waste and pilferage. The WASA employees who resist the idea tooth and nail would have had an impregnable defence against it if they had themselves succeeded in curbing the system loss.

WASA's lack of planning is evident when one finds out that it is only a few days back that water pumps in a number of areas were taken up maintenance work. These could be set right much earlier to obviate their non-operation at this time of severe water scarcity.

The authority has to step up the mobile supply in areas starving of water as a contingency measure.

1971 — A Tragedy and its Consequences

saw the blood of martyrs; never realized the sacrifice of so many young souls. My parenta taught me not to possess hatred for anyone — I followed their teaching obediently. But today, when I see the happenings around

me, Kashmir, Bosnia, Palestine, I start thinking about my past. I am against the brutality of man, against the selfishness of some unscrupulous souls who have made our future dusky. And whenever I think about these brutalities, a year blasted out before my eyes: the year very near to my heart, the year, of which I have heard many things but never tried to realize their significance, the year that has given me the chance to write what I am writing today. The year is 1971 was the fateful year

was born in an indepen

dent country under the

sky of freedom. I never

for Pakistan when the demand for autonomy in the eastern half of the country culminated into a demand for independence. To suppress the rebellion, the military government of Pakistan unleashed its well equipped army on the unsuspecting civilian population of East Pakistan on the night of 25th March with unprecedented brutality. The world which has seen so many massacres, was not specially distressed by the massacres in East Pakistan. They were taking place in a land with an unfamiliar name, merely visited by tourists and little known to scholars, possessing very little political influence. Even those who knew Bangladesh — the Bengal nation, were not much the wiser. The very name East Pakistan suggested that it was nothing more than the poor step-child of Pakistan, a remote dependency or colony of the 'true' Pakistan, which could be found on the maps without any trouble at all on the west of India. East Pakistan was more difficult of find. But it had been placed 7th among the most populous nations of the world

with a population of 7 crore. When president Yahya Khan, the military dictator of Pakistan decided to massacre the Bengalis of East Pakistan for daring to demand regional autonomy the world's tragic ignorance about the country was a factor of inestimable value to him. Since there were comparatively few people who knew or cared about the peo-

Sameera, a Bangladeshi girl who was studying English literature at Karachi University in 1995. Her presentation created quite a sensation and opened up the eyes of a new generation of Pakistanis to the atrocities of the Army on the Bengalees. walls. An officer is seen jumptions went up in flames. Hining down from a tank turret to dus were massacred in examine them and as he Shakharipatti. The offices of marches up and down the line

The following is an excerpt from a research paper presented by Sayyeda Tun Noor

ple of East Pakistan, fewer still would care how many were massacred. No journalist would be permitted to see what he was doing. The massacre would take place quietly as though in some remote and unknown region like NWFP where no news trickles out. All the advantages were on his side. The US government and the Chinese government had been supporting him with armaments and advisors; he had unlimited fund at his disposal. a large army, a powerful propaganda machine and the active sympathy of some of the most influential men on earth. Dr Kissinger had only unstinted praise for him. President Nixon admired him and Chairman Mao Tse Tung gave him a medal. There seemed to be no reason why he should not succeed in massacring as many people as he wished. Thereafter the Bengalis would stop asking for regional autonomy and become the docile

slaves of his dictatorship. But it did not happen like that. The Bengalis fought back, journalists succeeded in enter ing the unknown country and thus making it known to the outside world, and the Indian army marched in to deliver the coup de' grace. This was the historical event of the first magnitude, for it demonstrated that determined men can always destroy a military dictatorship, the most corrupt and evil form of government ever instituted. It offered hope to a world which has lived too long under the threat of military despots and gave no comfort to the dictators. What happened in Bangladesh can happen elsewhere - both the

massacre and the retribution. By coincidence, a professor of engineering. Dr Md Naser living close to the dormitories had acquired a new video tape camera only a few days before. From a window overlooking Jagannath hall he was able to make a film of the attack on the hostels and the murders of the students, helped by the blinding searchlights playing on the walls. In the film students can be seen pouring out of the shattered hostels with their hands above their heads and being lined up against the

of students he appears to be holding a review. Then he steps aside, gives an order, and the long line of students falls to the ground. Then mysteriously, as though coming from nowhere, another line of students appears and they too are mown down. The film moves jerkily and the figures appear like shadows but nevertheless, the film records for posterity the first of the many massacres that took place in East Pakistan.

The attack on the student

hostels was part of a concerted plan to wipe out the intellectual gem of the country. But the military were not concerned with destroying only the intellectuals. As frantie Muslims they were determined to destroy the Hindu minority and all the other elements that might dispute their authority. As the night wore on, their intentions became clearer. The plan of op erations involved indiscriminate killing in order to inspire fear and terror, but it also involved carefully selected targets. The plan had been worked out over many weeks. and its original form offered a list of objectives to be pursued in a period of 48 hours. In fact, very few of these objectives were achieved, and eight months later military was still pursuing the same objectives.

While the attack on the dormitories was continuing. tanks, weapon carriers and soldiers were converging on other areas of the city. One of their targets was the barracks of East Pakistan Rifles, a constabulary force recruited from the local Bengali speaking population and therefore unlikely to join the forces with the Urdu speaking invaders. Just as the military received orders to kill everybody in the hostels, so it was ordered to destroy everyone in the barracks situated in the Pilkhana area. After a relatively long combat, a hundred were killed inside the barracks; those who surrendered were bayoneted to death. There was another mass grave. Two police stapro-Awami League newspapers like the People and the Ittefaq were set ablaze.

That day the newsmen were ordered to leave and taken under armed guard to the airport where they were searched, their notebooks and films confiscated.

Bhutto heaved a sigh of relief: "By the grace of God, Pakistan has at last been saved."

The Genocide Begins

The massacre began at ex-

actly 11:25 in the evening of March 25, 1971. Four US built M-24 tanks, followed by a platoon of Punjabi and Baluchi soldiers, rolled up in front of the two student dormitories of the university and shelled them at a range of fifty yards. The tanks had not made much noise as they advanced along the metal road from the cantonment, and the soldiers marching behind them were under order to keep silent. The few passers by were not particularly surprised to see the tanks moving through the centre of the city; there had been strange and erratic troop movements throughout the previous week. The soldiers crouched behind the tanks, as though they feared heavy gun fire from the windows and roofs on the dormitories. Many of the students were already in others were working late, while still others were discussing the political situation which had been growing increasingly tense during the last few days. They knew thattrouble was brewing, but not even the most imaginative could have guessed that it would take the form of attack on the dormitories and the butchering of students follow the general massacre in Dhaka. On the dark and sultry night the last thing to occur to them was that they were in danger. The two hostels were known as Iqbal Hall and Jagannath Hall. The shelling which lasted for five minutes killed about thirty students including one young artist who was painting at his easel and whose body was later found sprawled

With CTBT and chemical

weapons should be added

landmines. I am mindful

though — total peace will al

ways remain a dream, but

dreams are the stuff that make

us human beings. Peace and

permanent peace is the privi-

lege of the dead. But always

dreamt of peace and could not

understand, why should I

sense some error all the

while? Or the great Tartar

poet Mussa Djalil, awaiting

remember Ilya Ehrenburg, "

across his blood soaked canvas. A few students succeeded in reaching the flat roofs and were able to fire at the tanks and the advancing Punjabis and Baluchis with old fashioned. bolt-action rifles before the search lights sprang up and they were picked off one by one by sharp shooters. Then the soldiers, shouting loudly, broke into the halls, shooting at random and ordering the students to come out with their hands above their heads. Those who did not come out fast enough were shot or bayoneted. Once outside the building, the students were lined up against the walls and mown down with machine guns fired from tanks and armoured cars, which had now come up so that the officers could observe the scene. Students who remained alive were then bayoneted to death. Within a quarter of an hour 109 students were dead. The bodies of the Muslim students were dragged up to the roof of the Iqbal Hall, where they were left to the vultures. The bodies of the Hindu students were heaped together like faggots and later in the night, six students, who had been spared, were ordered to dig a grave for them. After they had dug the grave. they were shot. The order given to the army was to shoot everybody in the two dormitories. Thus it happened that janitors, servants, sweepers and resident professors were also killed. Madhu, who was the owner of the university canteen was killed and so were his wife, son and his two daughters. A death list of the professors living in the neighbourhood of the university had

also been drawn up and raiding

parties were sent out. Some of

these professors lived in an

apartment building known as

House No 34. In apartment 'D'

lived Prof Maniruzzaman, the

head of the Department of

Statistics. The professor to-

getner with his son, his

brother, who was an advocate

in the East Pakistan High

Court, and a nephew who hap-

pened to be spending the

night in the apartment, were

dragged out, lined up against

the wall of the first floor foyer.

death by Hitler's executioners

and shot down with machine gun fire. The professor, however, was still alive when the soldiers left and his wife dragged her wounded husband back into the apartment. Three hours later the soldiers returned under orders to remove the bodies and bury them. They found Prof Zaman in the bedroom, dragged him down the stairs, propped him up against the wall and shot him through the head. It transpired later that the man on the death list was not the professor but his namesake in the department of Bengali.

Professor Govinda Chandra Dev, the head of the Department of Philosophy, was an elderly bachelor who never took any part in politics. He iked to look after poor students whom he housed and fed, and he delighted in leading them in discussions on religion and philosophy. The soldiers broke into the house. killed the students and then marched the professor into a nearby field and shot him. His crime was that he was a professor and Hindu. Altogether eleven professors and lecturers were killed. There was method in their violence; very soon it became clear that there were about a dozen men on the university staff working with military officials.

The Massacres

For nine months East Pakistan, one of the most densely populated regions on earth, was given over to a massacre on a scale unprecedented in recent history. Only the Japanese massacres in China during the '30s and the German massacres in Russia during the '40s could compare with it. It was a " methodical deliberate and calculated massacre, and it failed only because the perpetrators made a series of obvious mistakes." If they had not made these mistakes, they might very well have succeeded in their aims. Massacres take place only when men want them to happen, give the orders, and feel sufficiently secure to carry out their plans with impunity. They are prepared, planned in detail, and carried out according to the logistic programmes. The word massacre is not used. It is most customary to use the word 'destroy' The orders came from Islamabad, the seat of government of West Pakistan. The genocide

And Simplify Me When I am Dead

The freedom we achieved 25 years now is a story of human sacrifice, collective and individual, and a saga of human valour, displayed in its best and most.

UT O Sarah! If the dead can come back to this earth and flit unseen around those they loved, I shall always be near you; in the garish day and in the darkest night - amidst your happiest scenes and gloomiest hours - always, always; and if there be a soft breeze upon your cheek, it shall be my breath; or the cool air fans your temple, it shall be my spirit passing by. Sarah, do not mourn me dead; think I am gone and wait for thee, for we shall meet again.'

One major Sullivan Ballou scribbled the words to his wife Sarah, the night before his death in the battle of Bull Run in the American Civil War, 1861.

It will be difficult to assuage the anguish and outrage of the parents of those 16 innocent children at Dunblane; as it will be impossible to fill in the void, the nullity and the irreparable loss suffered by Fauzia, the lady wife of Lt. Col. Mohammad Hossain, who met his premature death in a landmine blast in Georgia while serving for keeping peace in the troubled land as member of United Nations Observer Mission, in Georgia (UNIMIG). Both Siad Gamsa Khurdia and Shevernadze, former and present head of state, will pause for a moment to pay respect to a soldier from far away Bengal, the country of Royal Bengal tiger. a country whose citizens never accepted silently a foreign or alien rule. In disgust the British had to shift its capital from Calcutta to Delhi to secure their hold in Omphalos of the Empire. The Georgians would now erect a plaque in memory of the dead on the border of Afkhazia.

For Bangladesh, which is

observing the silver jubilee of its independence. Dunblane and Georgia, both come to relief as a reminder that to achieve anything worthwhile the a priori condition is sacrifice. It is apt and poignant because the country we are proud of required the supreme sacrifice of millions of freedom-loving martyrs to establish the rights of people, to

It is ironic that mankind with all the leavening of civilisation, is but a hairbreadth away from the primordial animal instinct; otherwise how can one account for the smothering of 16 flowers with the brutal gunshots of a psychic loner? But the children's sacrifice will not go in vain. In ancient times human sacrifices were common to satiate the greed and avarice of supernatural elements! But this was all in the minds of men - a kind of collective self-protective instinct real or imaginary. Both John Major and Tony Blair rushed to Dunblane to face the challenge of civilisation. A society must feel secure and stable to allow the people of the community to live in peace which in effect is progress moral and spiritual. Dublane will remain an eternal sentry in the conscience of mankind all over the world to help the proper growth and development of civilisation in relative peace, liberty and freedom. One wishes to believe that mankind has advanced from a condition of primitiveness and barbarianism. As someone said, 'Progress is a synthesis of the

structure the road to liberty.

ENCHIRIDION

Waliur Rahman

past and a prophecy of the future'. The message was writ large on every face, big or small, in the Dunblane Cathedral, the words of Antigone, 'Many a wonder lives and moves, but the wonder of all is man'. But the piece de resistance is to be seen in the city of God. Stunned, though, Major and Blair could not have been far from the thoughts of St Augustine, "The marvellous power by which seed is produced, and which seems to be as it were inwrought and inwoven in the human body?" ... Are we any different from Homer's cyclops' or Thucydide's pirates?

The freedom we achieved 25 years now is a story of human' sacrifice, collective and individual, and a saga of human valour, displayed in its best and most. Bengalis stood up against military oppression and bureaucratic malfeasance and alien values. It was only natural, therefore, that Bangladesh in early '80s made no mistake in signing the covenant with the United Nations to help the world body to keep the peace and maintain international peace and security. It was a natural and spontaneous recognition of the fact that Bangladesh soldiers will travel all over the world, in the deep jungles of Africa and the craggy mountains of Georgia, the multi-ethnic melting pot of Bosnia-Herzegovina, or the Voodoo-Kingdom of Haiti, to prevent exactly what happened in this dear land of ours. It is a pity that today we do not have a Wilfred Owen or a Sigfried Sassoon to write the lores of the lost and the gone, the ballads on the braves or minstrels

of an unknown soldier. The world has very little to tell Fauzia: the brave soldier of peace was killed in the mountains of Georgia and I know, of course, no fault lies at my door, that he did not come back from the war (war of peace). I can only call her attention to the soldier's dream I dreamt kind Jesus fouled the Big Gun gears, and caused a permanent stoppage in all blots; and buckled with a smile mausers and colts; and rusted every bayonet with his tears." But please, please, hold your tears and tell your son here and one to be, that tears are welling up in all mankind to rust not only the bayonets, but also the weapons of mass-destruction, landmine being the most lethal. Tears of Jesus will mingle with that of human

kind to inspire us all to banish

wars of all kinds. Madame Al

bright's crusade against land-

mine gives us hope of a sort

'In love with life am I, and life goes surging past. I know I soon must die .. These verses are my last ... ' We are proud of our army,

our valiant soldiers of peace. On this day, the anniversary of our glorious war of liberation. should not we remember the famous combat of the thirty in 1351 — the combat between Robert de Beaumanoir on the French side and Branborough, the Anglo-Briton Party. Bleeding and exhausted. Beaumanoir begged for a drink, eliciting the century's most memorable reply, "Drink thy blood, Beaumanoir, and thy thirst shall

Sure enough, the thirst of our sacred soil is quenched, full and square with the blood of million martyrs, some

Lt. Col. Mohammad Hossain those millions would be remembered in verse, perhaps in epic, a painting, a tapestry or memorial stones resembling those of verdun, La Somme or Nettuno or Monte Cassino. We need to pluck our courage — to pluck the Golden Bough! But we are yet miles away from Lake Nemi. The divided soul (of Bangladesh) needs to be borne on the swell of the wind, to the sound of the church bells, sweet and solemn they chime ... Remember me when I am

known, others unknown. With

and simplify me when I am

CORRIGENDUM

The headline of the second post-editorial article published yesterday should read as "Is the Judiciary Guardian of the Legislature or the Constitution?"

Dhaka Day by Day Fairy-tale News

by Aasha Mehreen Amin Dhaka is becoming one of the most unpredictable of cities, not to mention the most dangerous. You just never know when someone will throw a petrol bomb from the top of a building or when you will be smothered in the middle of an angry mob or be teargassed to tears. Funnily enough, while the whole city is aflame with violence of some kind or the other, our dear beloved Bangladesh Television

... THE COUNTRY

WAS PEACEFUL

TODAY

has managed to retain its mask of complete complacency. Like the deluded teacher Pangloss in Voltaire's Candide, BTV news tries to show that Bangladesh is in a state of being in the "best of all possible worlds". If February's

elections have been termed 'farcical' by the Opposition and even some of the most relied upon loreign news agencies, BTV news can only be described as fantastical. On Sunday, for example, while the city was tense with numerous incidences of violence, the news boasted that

Dhaka had be come normalised, people were coming out to work and everything was just wonderful. In reality bombs were being exploded in Mohakhali, dozens of people were hurt in clashes and bomb blasts in Mirpur and Jatrabari, a Mukto Mancho (Free Stage) was destroyed by police triggering further violence and the city's Mayor was leading a sit in in front of the Secretariat. None of this was in the news.

Like in Ray Bradbury's movie Fahrenheit 451 the screen showed only what Big Brother

(or should we say, Big Sister) wanted us to see. After boasting about the efficiency of the army in rounding up miscreants and restoring order, footage of people in trains; buses or the street, etc. were shown demonstrating that everyone was going on with their business without any hindrance "So many tons of rice had been brought in from the ports, so many lakhs

of taka had been transacted in the banks, so vehicles many were on the streets' depicting a picture of great prosperity and peace, was the main theme.

If that was not

enough the news covered all the little meetings of BNP party members and ministers and their appeal to bring peace in the country. Michhils processions of 'people' protesting all the violence and disruption caused by the opposition were also shown. What happened to the opposition's michhils. their statements and activities? What happened to all those incidents of violence,

killings, bomb ings etc? According to BTV they just did not

Well if BTV wants to drown in a fake make believe world, it is most welcome to do so. But honestly, to assume that we are such fools as to take any of such news seriously, is surely an insult to any person with even half a brain. To those of you who have patiently waited to see some kind of credibility in BTV news and have been sorely disappointed - one word of advice: Don't fret, just switch off the tube and order for cable.

"Can Statesmanship

Sir, I have read with great interest the illuminating article under the above heading in your issue of March 12.

It is not often these days that one comes across well balanced opinion on the present day political, social and economic crisis that our motherland is going through due to lack of statesmanship on the part of leadership of this country. The solution Mr Rehman Sobhan has suggested, to my mind, is the only way to come out of this impasse, created by the leadership in position and in opposition. During the last few days thanks to the open ended 'peaceful' non-cooperation movement, I have been travelling in rickshaws and often entering into thought-provoking discussion on the present day impasse with the rickshaw pullers. Very interesting to note that all of them, irrespective of their political leaning, agree on one respect that the problem is man made and that it is only taking the country to-

To come out of this situa-Triumph Over Folly?" tion honourably, Mr Rehman Sobhan's opinion seems, to me, to be the only one which may save the prestige of the top leaders as well as that of the entire nation.

I would however like to add only one point which Mr Sobhan perhaps has missed out in the first part of his article. to mention that the fundamental rights of the people guaranteed by the constitution have been grossly violated in attempting to enforce the strike in support of "peaceful" non cooperation movement by threats and coercion?

Nevertheless, I congratulate Mr Rehman Sobhan on his frank opinion. I only hope that the leadership take the opinion of this eminent person who was closely associated with the freedom movement of 1971 and in formulating the economic policy of Bangladesh at its nascent stage.

I also take this opportunity of referring to the editorial captioned "Presidents Speech". Here I see another illuminating opinion on ti-

subject that is disturbing the minds of the entire people. The politicians, all of them without any exception, must leave aside everything and concentrated on solving the problem within the framework of the sacred Constitution of Bangladesh. The framers of the constitution made this a rigid one with the aim that this constitution cannot be tampered Does he seems to have omitted . with by any one party at will but unfortunately a situation has been created which the framers of the constitution did not foresee.

> It is sad that apparently it seems that many including the learned people did not bother in the past to seriously think of the Constitutional provisions and its inviolability as one would gather from the day to day conversations. Unfortunately, even the most knowledgeable people, the members of legal profession and, the mediamen also cannot be excluded; they also, it seems, did not bother about the constitution before.

The other day, I had to visit a leading hotel of the city which gave the most dismal look, never seen before. I saw a

large garment's factory, which used to be throbbing till late in the night, giving a deadly look even during the period of so called relaxation for the garment industry. It is no use allowing so called relaxation to a sector of industry when the banking, the transport, the port etc are not allowed to function. The present political impasse is ruining the country and taking it at least 50 years back if not more.

Against this background however, I see a little hope. Perhaps never before during the last twentyfive years the people have discussed the constitution so much and felt the necessity of looking at the Constitution with seriousness. A few weeks ago I went to the New Market book shops to buy a new up dated copy of the Constitution. I was asked to come back a few days later as all the copies, the book sellers told me,w ere sold out. People are becoming conscious of the importance of the constitution. Here is the hope.

P G Muhammad . New Eskaton, Dhaka