

## Martyred Intellectuals' Day

*We should grasp its real significance*

**M**ORE than two hundred intellectuals were murdered a few days before our great Victory on 16th December 1971. Most of those who were killed were university teachers and well known professionals. These patriots were serving the people as best as they could.

The question we would like ask is, why? The answer is very simple. These intellectuals were murdered to cripple our nation building process. The murderers were well aware that their end was near. They knew that soon the Mukti Bahini would eliminate or capture them and that the emergence of an independent sovereign Bangladesh could no longer be prevented. Having realised that, the killers of Al Badr and Al Shams gangs and their Pakistani masters decided to eliminate those people who could play seminal roles in building the Sonar Bangla of our dreams.

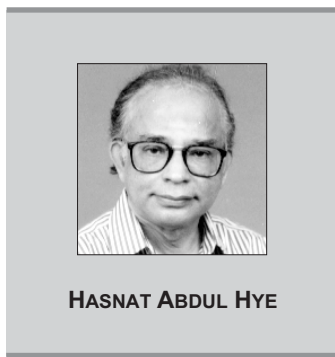
We must reflect a little about the particular viciousness of this act. First the timing. Just few days before the war is about to end, when the Pakistan army had already concluded that they could not win this war and were preparing to negotiate their surrender, these intellectuals were murdered. In most wars these types of murders of civilian do not occur. Once the outcome becomes clear the warring sides try to keep civilian deaths to the minimum, let alone go for executing some eminent citizens. In our case it happened. Why? Because our opponents -- the Pakistani forces and their local collaborators -- were not only interested in winning a war but also destroying us as a people. Realising that they could not achieve either they wanted to cripple our national reconstruction process. It was sheer hatred of us as a people, as a culture and as a civilisation that made the Al Shams and Al Badr gangsters and their Pakistani masters do what they did. It is this hatred of us as a people that makes the murders of intellectuals such a significant event in our national life.

The viciousness of the actions of our enemy appears to be lost on us. Our enemies realised the importance of intellectual wealth of a nation and also what impact it would have if it is destroyed. But we do not seem to have realised these long term consequences. It is regrettable that 30 years after independence we have not been able to produce intellectuals and professionals of international standards in sufficient numbers who could play an effective role in nation building. Our intellectuals today are divided, our doctors and engineers not given their previous status and business community greatly smeared by the default culture. In most fields professionalism has been replaced by cronyism.

Thirty years after having won our Liberation War, we are still at a rudimentary stage of nation building. Fundamental areas like quality education, dependable public health system, acceptable nutrition level for our kids and adequate jobs for our educated youth still remain largely unattained. It is possible that our subsequent failure at nation building is somehow linked to the planned massacre of our intellectuals. Such a link, if difficult to prove empirically, can nevertheless be established by the fact of subsequent events in our national life.

Today we remember those great patriots who were murdered in cold blood by heinous killers just a few days before the war was about to end. We recall their supreme sacrifice with a tremendous sense of indebtedness. We pay homage to their love for our country, for our people, for our Liberation War, for which they had to die. While we mourn we also rejoice that such souls existed who could put the country and its people above self-interest. Bangladesh must realise the true worth of its intellectuals and create an appropriate environment for their advancement. Without intellectual excellence we can never hope to attain our potential.

## When enough is enough



HASNAT ABDUL HYE

**T**HERE is sweet anticipation in the air mingled with hope. It is rumoured that the government is going to place a bill in the next session of the Jatiya Sangshad banning hartal and student politics. To a public harried and harassed by bouts of hartal in the past and dismayed by the excesses of student politics over a long period the news in the grapevine must be music to the ear. They will be holding their breath in hope and expectation till the news becomes a reality. To many incredulous minds it may even be too good to be true.

Very few will disagree that hartal and student politics have become *beta noir* in the national life because of their immediate and long term consequences. Their benefits have been so few, ephemeral and spurious that their pernicious characters never fail to overwhelm them comprehensively. Being unmitigated disasters their ban is not only called for but is also well past the time. Though belated, drastic action within the ambit of law against the twin blights can save the nation from further attrition liable to be suffered collectively. This will be such a popular move that excepting those who harbour narrow and short-term interests, all will welcome it with great enthusiasm and grateful hearts. This assertion can be confirmed if a referendum is held on the issues but that may not be neces-

sary. The popular verdict is so obvious that it can be taken for granted. Hartal and student politics are both throwbacks to a time when the sub-continent was smarting under foreign yoke and people were struggling to throw it off. At that juncture of history hartal was one of the potent instruments of protest reflecting the broad based and massive ire of the people. Politicized students served as the foot soldiers in that struggle. Both played their historic role and were part of the liberation canon. In the maelstrom of the struggle for

ing history and myth alike. All this is part of the folklore of nationalism. In an independent country hartal and students in politics is anathema to nation building. They became antiquated because with the change of rulers from foreign and neo-colonial to national the context changed calling for a modified text of politics that delineates the rules for institutions and groups of people. Politics in a democracy, however imperfect, follows a different set of rules from those of a struggle for independence. Hartal and student

opposition to the possibility of abolition of hartal and student politics has to be seen in this perspective. Commenting in a recently published article she tried to justify hartal as an appropriate instrument to corner the government. Besides being a cynical statement, it is also far from the truth. She should know it better than the lay public that besides being pinprick hartals do not render a government helpless. No length of hartal brought down a government in the past and it is not capable of

of government and faced prolonged periods of hartal called intermittently by the opposition. It is now time to call quits. No die hard champion of hartal should have any illusion that public have any sympathy for hartal. In fact they are fed up with it and screaming "enough is enough". If they close down their shops and do not bring their vehicles out on street it is because of fear and not moral support. Accumulated fear has now given birth to hatred and discontent. When a law is passed banishing this nightmare it will touch a rich vein of

ity and even serious commitment. With frequent strikes and lawlessness raising their ugly heads from time to time pursuit of knowledge and scholarship becomes an inevitable casualty. Generations of students have thus suffered and continue to chafe under the oppressive burden of student politics. Compared to the insidious effects of student politics there is hardly any good out of it that is worth mentioning. It is, therefore, a phenomenon whose abolition and disappearance from the campuses will not be lamented or missed. But here again, the stand taken by the leader of the opposition has been surprisingly negative. Supporting student politics as a legitimate right of expressing political views she seems to have taken a seemingly righteous stand. This position is tenable if only student politics is delimited from the politics of political parties and is limited to academic discussion of issues. In Bangladesh this has hardly been the case and student cadres have been mostly used as muscle power by political parties. It is high time that this egregious trend is reversed and normalcy is brought back to campuses to the relief of guardians and in the greater interest of the nation.

The role of opposition is not to oppose every move of the government irrespective of merit. There has to be bipartisan agreement on matters of overriding national interest. Whatever may be the motive, the government's loud thinking about banning hartal and student politics touches a sensitive chord in the heart of the people. If and when these are translated into laws they will be instantly popular. The opposition can ignore the ground swell of public opinion only at their peril.

Hasnat Abdul Hye is a former secretary, novelist and economist.

## IN MY VIEW

**There has to be bipartisan agreement on matters of overriding national interest. Whatever may be the motive, the government's loud thinking about banning hartal and student politics touches a sensitive chord in the heart of the people. If and when these are translated into laws they will be instantly popular. The opposition can ignore the ground swell of public opinion only at their peril.**

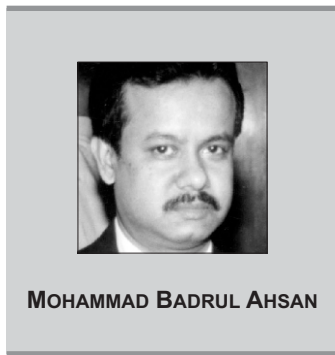
self-determination hartal and student politics became indistinguishable from other means and forces. It was a time when end justified the means, any means. But once independence from foreign rule was won both became oddities and appeared almost antiquated because the context had changed. Incongruous and out of sync, hartal and student politics were kept alive as part of the legacy of agitational politics. In the territory now constituting Bangladesh there was some justification for this holdover from the past before 1971 when a distant adversary was replaced by a nearer one. Whether for due recognition of mother language or for equal rights in other spheres Bengalis had to resort to mass movement using hartal and students' power during that period. Students played a glorious role in the war of independence, as did the people from all walks of life creat-

politics are outside the ambit of these rules because they are not legally binding and structured institutions in the polity. This is so because constitutional politics recognizes parties and not students' organizations as players in government and in opposition. Similarly, the laws of the land do not allow hartal as it infringes on the rights of individuals. When both spill over into violence and terror they become culpable for criminal prosecution. Though anachronistic and liable to descend into lawlessness, both hartal and student politics are surviving because political parties are weaned on them almost by force of habit and out of a perverse attitude to the opponents. It is not the positive aspect of hartal and student politics (which are difficult to discern) but their destabilizing impact that endear them to the politicians, particularly when they are in opposi-

doing so in future. But it can hurt people immensely. Hartal is anti-people and is an unpopular action because of the hardships and inconveniences inflicted in a wanton manner. Hartal also violates the fundamental rights of people to go to work to earn their livelihood. It is against the national interest because valuable man hours are lost affecting GNP. Finally, hartal is an illegitimate instrument of protest being beyond the pale of law. Given all these obvious pernicious attributes and illegal implications it is unbelievable that the leader of the opposition should try to defend hartal publicly. The opposition may argue that by supporting hartal they are merely going for tit for tat. If that is the case, then they should realize that by that criterion the score is already even. Between 1991 and 2001 both the parties have been in the driving seat

popular feelings. If the opposition joins the government in this hugely popular move they will redeem themselves in the public eye. Failure to do so will not only mean that they will be left by the wayside but also incurring public wrath. It will be a great pity if this rare opportunity is lost through misperception about hartal and obstinacy. Student politics may be a different kettle of fish but it has the same deleterious effects as hartal and perhaps in a more lasting sense. Student politics has long degenerated into violence and terror vitiating the educational atmosphere in campuses. Very often the nexus between student politics and national politics aggravates law and order situation beyond campus. Teachers, wittingly or unwittingly, align themselves with particular groups of students and thereby compromise their academic neutral-

## All night long



MOHAMMAD BADRUL AHASAN

**W**HETHER you are a party-pooper or a party animal watch it next time you go to a party. Men and women stream in and out, walking in grassy lawns or spacious hall rooms like zombies in the night of the living deads. They talk, whisper, giggle, gesticulate, and mingle in ersatz etiquette, their struggle to have a good time writ large on the face. They come to eat, drink and be merry in a crowd, because it is so lonely when they are alone.

Parties are the opposite of solitude, a game of life that is played by many hands. People wear their best dress, put on their best smile and behave themselves for a good impression. The powerful comes, the famous comes, and so come the rich, the ferocious, and the fashionable. Parties are for people who have surplus time, energy and money to explore and understand the deficiencies of life.

Parties are an affliction of the privileged that is seeded in the surplus value of labour. People who earn more than they work, in other words people whose wages are higher than their marginal productivity engage themselves in this phenomenon of leisure. They

come to toast and boast and play guest and host, their minds inebriated with the anticipation of uninhibited pleasure.

Although everyone comes to a party to have good times, the style differs from person to person. Some come to enjoy the company, some the food and drinks, others to build contacts and discuss business deals, yet there are some who come to seek opportunities. People often pay to get invited to these parties; they buy tickets or make donations or pay membership fees. Parties bring people together as

One of the reasons why the Beatles broke up their band is said to be the same void. They say George Harrison was disenchanted with the popularity of the Beatles as he realized that it was stupid to go through all that hassle, "only to end up as performing fleas." He even went further to say, "It doesn't matter whether you are the king of a country or...a fabulous Beatle! It's what is inside that counts."

It is the fear of facing what is inside that drives people to parties most of the time. One can get

and astute, return home fazed and frumpy when it is over. Parties have a life cycle like everything else. They start with mostly silence, then become noisy and taper off to silence again. The music goes low, dance slows down, gaits wobble, postures reel, and words muddle. Scattered napkins, empty glasses, strewn chairs, and dimming eyes mark the conclusion of the grandstand. From loneliness they come, and to loneliness they return.

There are people who want to go to parties every day, the party animals, the rhapsodic dynamites

with each turning.

There is something like the aftermath of a disaster about the end of a party. It leaves a long trail of wastes in the wake of a ceremony of association, the resonance of ecstasy throbbing in the remembrance of silence. As the party mongers leave one by one, the grassy lawn or the hall room turns into a desolate place. And they go back home with a sense of terrible mischief, all their furs drained by fatigue, the soul having its back against the wall in its bid to escape boredom.

and others are ecstatic, the vast majority swimming in the mixed waters of mood swing. The partygoers are people who constantly work hard to keep a balance in that mix without realizing that they don't manage the mix so much as it manages them. Elvis Presley died at the age of 42; an overweight and paranoid drug abuser who was found dead in the bathroom of his gaudy mansion in Memphis. Marilyn Monroe died on barbiturate, and the lead singer of the rock group Nirvana hanged himself by the belt of his own trousers in a bizarre act of mixing drugs with death wish.

Words of caution for the party lovers. The mind can burn out as fast, if not faster, as the body. If you want to burn the calories of mind, look for alternatives. How about reading every now and then, or thinking, or simply having conversations with friends and relatives? How about watching a little TV or going out for a walk? Try to see if you can contain yourself within yourself.

That is how the majority of world's population handle themselves, because they cannot afford club memberships or cover charges. If you cannot live without it, then treat it as an addiction like alcoholism and other things. Don't get me wrong, because I don't mean to say that parties are bad so long as you know how to keep the mingling part separate from its madness. Only way you can do it best is to face yourself first before going out to face the world.

Mohammad Badrul Ahsan is a banker.

## CROSS TALK

**Words of caution for the party lovers. The mind can burn out as fast, if not faster, as the body. If you want to burn the calories of mind, look for alternatives. How about reading every now and then, or thinking, or simply having conversations with friends and relatives? How about watching a little TV or going out for a walk? Try to see if you can contain yourself within yourself... That is how the majority of world's population handle themselves, because they cannot afford club memberships or cover charges.**

much as these also separate them from one another. Business deals, marriages, friendships and many other dimensions of human relationships are ruined in the excitement of these parties.

There is, however, a downside to these parties. Familiarity breeds contempt, and the faces become monotonous from frequent encounters. Topics for discussion run out of stock and conversations degenerate into politics and slander. People who come to escape from the drudgeries of the world slowly enter the mundane trip. The lonely-hearts trade places, until one's void fills up another.

invited to state dinners or official parties and that has nothing to do with escape from the self. But other times people go to parties, because they want to concentrate on the external rather than the internal, because they don't want to sit face to face with the homunculus, which wrangles inside each of them.

Watch it next time you go to a party, how men and women drift in the ambience of their own void, how they mingle in seclusion and are secluded in their mingling. They drink, they delude, disagree, defy and diminish, the sprightly people, who enter the party agile

of good times, who cannot think of entertaining themselves by any other means. There are those who are victims of party culture, who are duty bound to attend parties for business or official reasons. Then there are the hunters, who primarily treat parties as pick-up points where they come looking for new relationships the same way a prospector's nose brings him to gold. Then there are the claustrophobes who come to parties for fresh air because home is a place where they feel bored and stuffy. Thus a party is like a piece of diamond, which glints different lights for different people

So the vicious cycle works for the soul that also works for the body. From ashes to ashes, the futility of life is psychosomatic as the mind finds its limits within the limits of the body. The partygoer suffers from the frustration of inadequacy, which means he never knows how to do enough to exceed the gripping reality of his own shortcomings. He realizes that he is no more than a prisoner of his own body components, the hormones and the genes, which construct the programme of his instincts that controls the weather of his spirit.

Thus some men are depressive

## OPINION

## Kettle of fish

BILLY I AHMED

**T**HIS refers to the write-up of Mr. Sanjoy Banerjee "At least say 'yes' for the minority"

At the very outset of my opinion, I am equally exasperated with the atrocities committed to our Hindu community, which tantamount to Child Abuse and Human Rights and has nothing to do with religion, and express my protesting sympathy.

The Daily Star has courageously published treatise regarding this axiomatic issue. Since then the editorial page is full of letters written by the readers of which nine out of ten denouncing this horrendous eerie, even Mr. Sanjoy, has stoically expressed his feelings in the letters to the editor. Perhaps, had I been on the other side of the fence like him I would have done the same. Unfortunately, his recent write-up "At least say 'yes' for the minority" published on November 16, 2001 is not gullible.

My first question will be, dose Mr. Sanjoy knows the definition of

"Waz-Mafil", "Khutbah", and the sanctity of "Jummah" prayers. Would he be kind enough to mention the names of the mosques and places of "Waz Mafil" where division between Hindus and Muslims are preached? Is this a hearsay or an incongruous statement?

I would like to quote some excerpt from the book Principles of Islam by Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, (pages 124, 125 & 126) published by Goodwords Books, New Delhi, India, the writer has to his credit of writing substantial number of Islamic books: "The Qu'ran says: And God calls to the home of peace. This is the message of Islam to mankind. It means 'Build a world of peace on earth so that you may be granted a world of peace in your eternal life in the Hereafter.' Now what are the basic elements of building of a culture of peace, according to Islam to be brief, these are three - compassion, forgiveness and respect for all. (I will now quote only the third principle, which is related to the subject being discussed) "Respect for all -- there is a very interesting story, recorded

by al-Bukhari in this regard. The Prophet of Islam once saw a funeral procession passing by the street in Madina. The Prophet was seated at that time. On seeing the funeral the Prophet stood up in respect. At this one of his companions said, 'O Prophet, it was the funeral of a Jew (not a Muslim)'. The Prophet replied, 'Was he not a human being?' What it meant was that every human being is worthy of respect. There may be differences among people regarding religion and culture, but everyone has to respect the other. For, according to Islam, all men and woman are blood brothers and blood sisters. And all are creatures of one and the same God. The three principles are the basic pillars to form a peaceful society. Wherever these three values are to be found the result no doubt will be a society of peace and harmony. The above references are enough to show that Islam is a culture of peace. It is true that some Muslims are engaged in violence in the name of Islam. But you will have to see Muslims in the light of Islam and not vice versa."

From the above excerpt, it is seen that Islam do not preach division, but compassion, forgiveness and respect for all, therefore the statement of Mr. Sanjoy is not convincing. Nothing is sustainable without proof and vague statements invites animadversion. I would request the writer to read the two Letters to Editor, "Violation of minority rights" and "What about the Indian Muslims?" published on 28 November, which will simply perplex him.

Secondly, it is mentioned that embarrassing question was asked in the BCS viva voce, to a Hindu candidate. Can he please recall during whose governance this question was asked? Is he aware that Muslims in the United States are asked much more embarrassing questions after the Twin Tower incident?

Thirdly, the prescription of three options for the youths that is quoted is nothing but a case of hallucination. The statement that Hindus and minority group cannot utter a single word for the fear of further torture and unlawful action them is not true. If that were true, then how could the print media

come up with series of takes of atrocities until or unless the Hindus spoke without fear? They also got whole hearted support from the Muslims through their letters and the gathering of 122 intellectual condemning the atrocities and urging the government to take to task those riot-mongers, the fundamentalist and the communal elements responsible for this dastardly act. To escape teasing and disrespect, many married Hindu women do not wear vermilion and conch-bangles on their head and hands, as is their ritual. This too is a preposterous statement. Especially in the urban society some may consider it a fad not to follow these rituals and has no relation with teasing or disrespect, whereas it is a common sight in the rural areas to see the Hindu women following the said ritual.

May, I ask Mr. Sanjoy, why is he incorrigible to ask the government to admit to say, "Yes"? Isn't the government taking action by even removing the SP for his alleged failure to contain and prevent the atrocities? Also, a Division Bench of the High Court

on 27 November 2001 issued a rule nisi on the government to investigate into the incidents of attack on religious minorities as reported by Ain-O-Shalish Kedra (ASK) and to submit a report by January 15.

Further, according to Mr. Sanjoy, perhaps Mr. Mohammad Ali Jinnah (Please try to spell the names of leaders correctly) had sown the seed of communal riots; this too is a debatable issue as there is different school of thoughts. And as a matter of fact before catching the bull by the horn, one should go to the root; the venom of communalism was spewed during the British rule by dividing the Hindus and Muslims, when earthen pitchers were categorized as Hindu water and Muslim water.

I would further like to quote excerpt from the eminent Indian columnist Mr. Kuldip Nayar's article "History a la Joshi", courtesy The Daily Star of 01 December 2001: "For the first time in the last 40 years, where the International Trade Fair at Delhi became an annual factor, handicrafts by Muslims and Sikhs have been

displayed at a section called 'Minority Handicrafts'. Handicrafts are either good or bad, they are not tagged as minority." Can anyone recall that there are any such incidences of division in Bangladesh?

The write-up of Mr. Sanjoy appears to be a mish-mash and deviating from the nub of the subject and trying to shore up supports of resident and expatriate readers by tainting the image of Bangladesh as a communal country, which it is not true. Bangladesh still enjoys the respect of being a secular country. We are pledge bound to uphold the prestige of our motherland and any difference is our own internal affair.

I have given more than sufficient logic and reference that on which it was founded, because our mind is perfectly still and ceases to make images which are but prejudice, distortion or pre-conception, thus the torture has no link with the use of religion or religious sentiments, it is an ominous thinking.

However, such bludgeoning atrocities committed to the Hindu community, which needs no further aver is a deplorable kettle of fish and is highly condemnable enmasse.

When writing on nambly-pambly issues one requires substantial authentic information and knowledge and research on the subject, being sketchy befuddles the readers.

Let us now in a constructive manner and in ranks and file extend our hands to the government and work unitedly by burying the communal hatchet if only to build confidence amongst our revere Hindu elders and young. Let them not suffer from any sort of xenophobia, let not our religious minorities feel greenhorns or hobos, we are all one, i.e., Bangladeshi and we have equal Human Rights and enjoy freedom of speech and press to express ourselves in the print media as long as it does not spark religious ill feelings.

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