

BANGABANDHU'S BIRTH ANNIVERSARY

Basically a people's man

ZAHID HOSSAIN

TODAY is March 17, the 87th birthday of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the nation should be ashamed of the unpardonable failure of not being able to finish the trial processes of the killers of the father of the nation even after the lapse of 32 years since his gruesome killing.

This is very unfortunate for the nation that the man who materialised a thousand years' dream of the Bengalee nation for a homeland through a long and arduous struggle without bothering about jail and torture, had to die along with most of his family members at the hands of some disgruntled Bengali army officers. Even the trial processes of the killers could not be completed because of some well known political reasons.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was the supreme leader, the patriot, the founder and above all, the greatest of all Bengalees of all times. This is one great leader who needs no introduction. Despite being the undisputed leader of the nation, he was basically a people's man. His unprecedented popularity had never tainted his pure love for the ordinary men and women, who make up the majority of the population. He was the creation of the people and he never had forgotten the real source of his strength: people's love. The pull of people's love was so strong that he continued to live in his Road 32 Dhanmondi house which was poorly protected even after he became the country's President.

Even though his decision to stay in that house had proved fatal, he would not have changed his mind had he been alive even this day. His love for the people was like water for fish. He could not have lived a life of his choice without being close to the people -- away from them inside a heavily guarded fortress. His unmatched concern for his people had made him as great a leader as he was.

As in other fields of political art and culture, Bangabandhu was equally brilliant as a parliamentarian. The role he played in the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan as well as in the National Assembly amply demonstrated his skillfulness and efficiency as a parliamentarian. As a parliamentarian he never failed to raise his voice to highlight the problems and sufferings of the downtrodden people particularly of the oppressed and subjugated people of the then East Pakistan. The major issues of his concern in the parliamentary debates were Bangla as one of the state languages of Pakistan, provincial autonomy, joint electorate, safety and preventive detention acts, freedom of press and freedom of expression, right to form political parties and trade unions, separation of judiciary from the executive and parity in services and in all matters between the two parts of Pakistan.

In a country like Pakistan where martial law administrators generally

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had have the major say in its socio-political matters, it was Bangabandhu who showed the guts to declare in the Constituent Assembly on February 17, 1956 that martial law or emergency could be declared only with the approval of the national assembly. It was again he who pleaded for two capitals for a country like Pakistan one at Karachi and the other at Dhaka.

Bangabandhu in his discussion on the draft constitution in the Constituent Assembly on February 6, 1956 demanded to separate judiciary from the executive. He emphatically pointed out that this would ensure justice. While pleading the case for separating judiciary from the executive within a period of two years, he said, "If any government cannot separate judiciary from the executive within two years, such a government must immediately resign. People will have no confidence in that government, because it is not an efficient government."

However, as for a new born country like Bangladesh, it would have been difficult for any leader to carry on his shoulder the unfulfilled aspirations of its people accumulated over so many years. Never having exercised effective state power,

Bangabandhu was expected to learn the rules of governance from its practice. He had to secure recognition for such a decolonised state that emerged out of the break up of a sovereign state. He had to rebuild an economy immobilised not just by war, but by its delinking from institutions at the centre which had for 24 years run its finances, central banking, planning and foreign affairs.

The country had to cope with the overnight withdrawal of Pakistani businessmen who had dominated private industry, commerce, banking, insurance, inland waterways, shipping, foreign and regional trade. It faced an economy physically dislocated by war with 10 million refugees seeking immediate rehabilitation. With its communication network destroyed, bridges and infrastructure damaged, power system down, ports blocked by sunken wrecks, all foreign trade disrupted, factories closed, inventories low and disruption in the planting of two successive crops, the country needed a strong guiding force and an instant rehabilitation strategy.

Therefore, the first task of Bangabandhu's government was to lay the foundations of a modern state and establish its authority over the

land. In order to reactivate the economy, the government had not only to physically rehabilitate the economy till the entrepreneurial vacuum left by the departing Pakistanis were filled but at the same time had to feed and recuperate the dislocated population.

Given the circumstances of its birth, the record of the post liberation government of Sheikh Mujib was of quality by any standard. Within a year the government had secured diplomatic recognition from all countries of the world except China and Saudi Arabia who remained specially committed to Pakistan. Within two years after liberation Bangladesh had become a member of the United Nations and had been recognised by Pakistan. In February 1974 on the occasion of the first summit of Islamic countries Bangabandhu, who had just over two years ago been on trial for treason to Pakistan, was being presented arms by contingents of the Pakistan army at Lahore Airport with the Bangladesh national anthem being played by the army band.

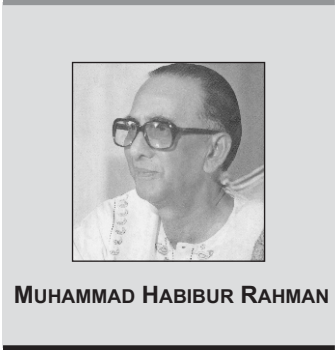
Within a period of two years the government of Sheikh Mujib had laid the foundation of a central government which had the basis of a national administration, build up a foreign ministry, laid the foundation of the armed forces, established a central banking system, founded a planning commission which could publish the first five-year plan within two years and framed a democratic constitution on the basis of which election could be held in March, 1973.

However, things changed and very soon he realised that he was not being able to implement his plans, his ideas into reality. There were enemies within and without; the enemies created rift in the party. In the midst of nation-building efforts his idealism remained untarnished but the self-seeking enemies promoted and encouraged by those who never accepted the reality of a sovereign country for the Bengalees, hatched the murderous plot and assassinated him on the fateful night of August 15, 1975.

The story of a nation that began in his mind years ago remained unfulfilled. The political unrest and the artificial famine of 1974 created the ground for rebellious activities. Nonetheless the political legacy he nurtured will remain on the footprints of time. The country he created will be here forever.

Zahid Hossain is a political analyst.

Leading the way to global peace



IN the present-day-world are we coming together or falling apart? Are we living in a doomed world? In Hindu mythology the world is getting renewed every kalpa. . One kalpa means one whole day and night of Brahma amounting to 864, 0000,000 crores of our years.

In Christianity and Islam the world is impermanent. It will come to an end on the Last Day of Judgment. When that day will come? The churchmen of both the denominations describe the forebodings of that calamitous day. In the Bible it is said that no body knows about it. Neither the mother nor the son, only the father knows about it. In the Quran Muhammad (sm) was asked about the date and time of the coming of the Last Hour. He replied that he did not know and that its knowledge is only known to Allah. The Mullahs like the Christian preachers appear to know all about it.

The scientists have told us that the sun is dying. Our planet may have to die as a sati, like the pious Hindu widow. It appears we may be hastening to the end of our journey. Will we then stop working and enter into endless bahas, the religious polemics on peripheral matters .There is a saying ascribed to Muhammad (sm): When you do your work, think that you are immortal and death will never overcome you, and when you think of the Hereafter, you think that you may die any moment. A good motto of life, indeed!

In an increasingly interdependent and crowded world, continuous reliance on weapons of mass

destruction to enforce peace or inflict a regime change, coupled with widespread poverty appear to indicate that there is a tilt in the existing system that leans towards chaos.. The fall of the Berlin Wall quickened the dissolution of the Cold War, but failed to build any plan or order for a sustainable development of the whole world. A cooperative vision however badly we may need is eluding our grasp.

We need to be skeptic, cynic and believer at the same time and foster a healthy sense of curiosity and wonder ,and determination to achieve mastery over our human miseries . In last hundred years we suffered two world wars. The United Nations was formed and it was thought if the peoples of the world enjoy human rights so that they would not take up arms against each other.

Peace includes the absence of direct physical violence and war, and the limitation of structural violation of our existing institutions' processes that diminish our lives and degrade our natural environment. In the present-day interdependent world we are to identify common interest and work toward common security.

The rich people and the rich countries are responsible for the present environmental degradation. The Americans are very proud of their way of life. They say that the standard of life they are used to they shall never agree to change that. It has been said that if the whole world wants to achieve American way of life then we may require three more planets like the earth. The environmental anarchy is far more potent than religious fanaticism. It can hardly be averted without the cooperation of the big consumers . And the big consumers are the big powers, the most self centred.

The global peace is now threatened by the big powers. Had we been a big power, probably we would behaved like other big powers. The big powers hardly need any pretext or plea. These

days the terms of hostility or aggression are clothed with hypocritical peace mongering. You are either with me or you are not with me. And if you are not with me then you are the evil, and you are with the evil .

Now the need for survival, material well being and a meaningful life lived in freedom and with dignity is of primary importance. We need to foster core assumptions and beliefs upon

which our society is organised, and institutions that foster a pluralistic community. In the cultural field we are to foster world views, life styles and interactions rich in diversity, tolerance and cross-cultural understanding.

Will it be not just and proper to inflict on readers a few lines of mine:

The road map to peace should be like the road to chivalry Where the combatants did nobly forget their rivalry.

No one asserted his right on the basis of his might.

No one asked another to renounce his right

No one was worried of a loss of face

No one intended the other to disgrace

Where no one felt himself a loser,

And no one claimed himself to be winner.

Very exceptional? Exceptional, indeed!

Peace itself is exceptional, indeed!

If the road map to peace is just a mere bon mot

Then it would be a cul-de-sac, nowhere, nowhere to go.

Let us not be mug to think the

present state of things will continue. In last hundred years we have witnessed the rise and fall of fascism, nazism and communism. Near at home we have witnessed the demise of the British Indian Empire and firstly a partition of India, and then the partition of Pakistan. Who did imagine at the threshold or the middle of the twentieth century that there will be an independent and sovereign republic of Bangladesh on the north of the Bay of Bengal and south of the Himalayas.

Lord Tennyson said:

"The old order changeth yielding place to new,

And God fulfils himself in many ways,

Least one good custom should corrupt the world..."

We need to be skeptic, cynic and believer at the same time and foster a healthy sense of curiosity and wonder ,and determination to achieve mastery over our human miseries . In last hundred years we suffered two world wars. The United Nations was formed and it was thought if the peoples of the world enjoy human rights so that they would not take up arms against each other.

In our case the human rights were violated so blatantly that as a last resort we had to declare war against Pakistan. After our victory in the liberation war a copy-book of a constitution was framed within one year. That constitution had been violated and the people had to marry the violators in the fashion of a Hindu rakshasa marriage. A great pity, indeed. We are not the chosen people of God . We are to pay the price for our misdeeds and suffer for our failings. If we remember that and act accordingly then that will be a great step towards building peace at home and may be in the world.

Muhammad Habibur Rahman is former Chief Justice and head of caretaker government.

Removing the accumulated dirt

M ASHRAF ALI

THE prevailing scenario in the country points to the fact that the plight of the people knows no bounds. It is very unfortunate that even after 35 years, the country has been made to languish like a mule in the mud. The question that naturally comes to one's mind is: Whose democracy? What democracy?

People often forget the conditions for the success of democracy. Needless to mention that an educated citizenry is a first precondition for the success of democracy. In a country, where nearly 70 percent of the masses are illiterate and lac the minimum of consciousness about their life and living, democracy can hardly be functional and participatory. The 30 percent who are considered literate can hardly read and write making this literacy exist at a poor level not enabling them even to read a newspaper. In order to be knowledgeable, one must be able to read a newspaper so that he knows what is happening in his own country.

Although it is painful but true that about 90 percent of our people do not read a newspaper, merely because they are not conscious about knowing the goings-on in the country and because the newspapers are not made available to them and also newspapers are not cheap these days. Unless they are supplied to the rural poor free of cost or at a subsidised rate, the village people will not read them.

Accountability in a democracy is a must but without empowerment of the masses how accountability can take place?

Education of the masses is a top priority but this fact has been

The caretaker government has been doing a good job trying to clean up all the mess. The wrongs done are so pervasive that without any question it will take a long time to correct a good amount of that. However, some parties are demanding election within three months and needless to say that if their demands are accepted we will be back to square one. That means that the same scenario will return without any qualitative change in the parties and their functions. To my mind, it is the duty of the CTG to continue its programme and take its time as the general people are with them.

neglected by our rulers for the last 35 years. At the time of independence there were only 75 million people and about 80 percent of them were illiterate and now the population has doubled and there are nearly 90 million illiterate people in the country making democracy totally non-functional. Since our rulers avoided the education of the masses for reasons best known to them or for keeping the people in the dark and exploiting them, now we are facing the music for neglecting our duties. It has been said time and also again that economic development is not possible bypassing education. It must be realised that now we are paying the price for neglecting education of the masses.

The recent unearthing of widespread corruption and looting of the state property by the elected representatives(?) of the people point to the fact that this has been possible only because people are not conscious and empowered. Most of these corruptions were perpetrated at the local level and could have been prevented by the

local people had they been conscious and empowered.

The country has been back-tracking ever since it gained independence. Obviously the reason is bad, corrupt and inefficient governance. The latest debacle has taken the country at least 20 years back. It is a sad corollary that after all these years the character of the so-called people's representatives instead of improving has gone down to a deplorable level. Instead of doing good to the people which they were oath-bound to do, they have been busy plundering the state property with impunity. The reason is that the level of patriotism, education and efficiency to run a government was not forthcoming from them. So there has been a competition among them regarding corruption.

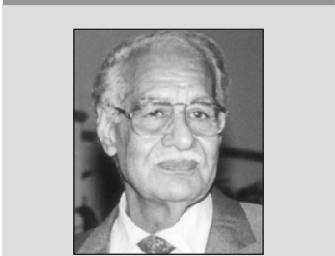
Now that some of them have been nabbed by the caretaker government there has been a sense of relief among the people who have been held virtually hostage by these parasitic functionaries. It seems many other big fishes of corruption are yet to be

earnestly pursued to bring to book. Needless to mention that the government will lose face if it fails to maintain a fair approach in its dealing with the corrupt elements. It is a stunning awakening as to how much rotten those government functionaries are and the magnitude of damage that has been done to the country. It is a great shame that these people were elected to run the country.

The caretaker government has been doing a good job trying to clean up all the mess. The wrongs done are so pervasive that without any question it will take a long time to correct a good amount of that. However, some parties are demanding election within three months and needless to say that if their demands are accepted we will be back to square one. That means that the same scenario will return without any qualitative change in the parties and their functions. To my mind, it is the duty of the CTG to continue its programme and take its time as the general people are with them. They should not let the people down. Our experience with the past democratic government is very sordid and it should be avoided.

In the meantime, the corrupt elements who have been held should be tried and meted out exemplary punishment. But our legal system, as it is, may prove inefficient and lawyers defending the culprits will find loopholes in the law which will claim their innocence and they will come out unscathed which will result in the loss of face of the government. The CTG must be well prepared to avoid such results in the trial of the culprits.

Dr. M. Ashraf Ali is a freelance contributor to The Daily Star.



KULDIP NAYAR writes from New Delhi

THEY were there, 100 of them, aged and weathered, followers of Mahatma Gandhi, fasting for 24 hours, opposite the Raj Ghat where he was cremated. They were hailing the centenary of Satyagraha, a non-violent struggle against oppression. Each one of them has participated in one Satyagraha or another. Yet none has been included in the All India committee that the Congress has constituted for celebrations.

"We met Prime Minister Manmohan Singh soon after he was sworn in to offer him our unconditional help to fight for basic priorities," says Bhai Amarnath, chairman of Sar Seva Sangh, which strings together thousands of Gandhians across the country. "We havenot heard from him since. We sense that our government, and the people sitting in the places of power, are completely cut off from the pain and problems of the common man."

The Gandhians tried to meet the prime minister this week as well. They faxed their request for an appointment because they wanted to give him the feedback of feelings at the grass-roots where they work. Their experience was that "the soul of democracy in the country was dead." They did not get an appointment with the prime minister, but they sent a letter to him and all the members of parliament -- 800 odd -- to urge them "to fight against all the forces sustaining the current eco-socio and political system."

Nobody met them from even the Congress Party, not even a small functionary. They wrote a letter to party president Sonia Gandhi who, they complained, never gave them an opportunity to meet her. Yet they have appealed to her: "It is up to you and your government to decide on what kind of relation you want to have with us."

In contrast is the politics of brimstone and gunfire of the

Naxalites, also called the Maoists, and the Communist Party of India (Leninist-Marxist). They hog the headlines because the media hardly bothers about the Gandhians.

The Union Home Ministry has a special section to follow the Naxalite activities because they "control" 125 districts in 10 states, trying to prove that power comes from the barrel of a gun.

A few days ago, when the Naxalites killed a Lok Sabha member, they said that they were retaliating for the force used by the police that killed 12 of their colleagues. How different they are from the Gandhians.

Why should revenge be visited on an innocent person? Murder is murder, whatever the rationalization. No amount of hatred the Naxalites arouse in the name of

I do not know why the best of movements go off the track and forfeit peoples' confidence. The stir for autonomy in Punjab ended up in terrorism, losing popular support. Similarly, the movement for autonomy in Kashmir acquired a communal edge, alienating Jammu, Ladakh and the rest of India. Both, the state and the militants, lost their way and adopted the path which was far from conciliation. The same is more or less true of the Naxalites. They once represented the poor and the landless. Today, the struggle is degenerating into even more senseless killings.

Unlike the Gandhians' passive resistance, the Naxalites advocate that "India's liberation would be achieved by a people's war, creating small bases of armed struggle all over the country by waging guerilla warfare."

In the corridor from Hyderabad to Kathmandu, which they have carved, they extort money, levy taxes and even administer rough and ready justice. They do not like the bourgeois parliamentary system and feel sorry for Nepal's Maoists, once their colleagues, who have forsaken arms for the ballot box.

The Naxalite movement did not begin at Wardha, the Gandhian centre of inspiration. They started their agitation from Naxalbari, a village in West Bengal, in 1967. Local peasantry took over the land belonging to the zamindars, in the wake of bloodshed; China, then under Mao Tse Tung, lauded the clash and considered it a step towards creating a "liberated" base for backing armed revolution in India. Subsequently, the movement went through many ups and downs. It got a new lease of life with the formation of the People's War Group (PWG) in Andhra Pradesh in 1981.

class war justifies the killing. Whether it is for forcible occupation of land belonging to the Kulaks, or for preparing the ground for revolution, violence eliminates something basic.

What the Naxalites do not realize is that man is not an economic but a moral being moved by ideals and aspirations. True, the system which is taking over the world dehumanizes man by reducing him to a mere potential source of profit.

But an eye for an eye, or a tooth for tooth is a medieval way of revenge. We have reached a stage in the affairs of human beings where violence will lead to annihilation, and ultimately oust whatever is good in the world in the shape of music, art or literature.

The society we aim for cannot be brought about by any kind of violence, big or small. It produces an atmosphere of conflict and disruption. It is absurd to imagine that, out of the conflict, the socially progressive forces are bound to win.

In Germany, both the Communist Party and the Social Democrats were swept away by Hitler. In India, any appeal to violence is particularly dangerous because of its inherently

disruptive character. We have too many fissiparous tendencies for us to take risks. Even otherwise, India has put its faith in the ballot box. There is no place for violence in a democratic parliamentary system. Other Communist parties in the country have adopted

the ballot box to come to power or to oust the rulers. And they have done quite well within the system.

The backwardness of an area and its people is the breeding ground for the Naxalites. No doubt, the mere threat of a gun makes people fall in line. Yet the ideology that gives free land to the landless and a better life to the poor brings around many. The government is

beginning to think in terms of welfare. But bureaucrats, the middle-men and the greedy in the police are appropriating most of the funds which should be reaching the targeted population. Still some dent is being made in the Naxalites' following.

The documents which the authorities have seized recently show that the revolutionary spirit of the 80s has "dipped" considerably. The Naxalites' own analysis is that they should recruit more sections of society that are "discontent." Their new recruits are the Dalits, the lowest caste, as their activity in Maharashtra shows.

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The Naxalites should learn from the experience. The Soviet Union, which once preached violent methods, has collapsed beyond redemption. The Chinese have stopped helping the non-conformist forces in the world. And the terrorism of Al Qa'eda and the Taliban has made many people question their type of violence. The basic thing is that wrong means will not lead to right results. This is all that the Gandhians preach.

Kuldeep Nayar is an eminent Indian columnist.