

Chequered career of Jyoti Basu

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Jyoti Basu, whose death here yesterday came as a huge blow to Indian communist movement, straddled the Indian political arena like a giant for more than six decades as a charismatic leader and was respected across the political spectrum.

As a young barrister from England who embraced communism, Basu displayed remarkable pragmatism by acknowledging that socialism was not possible in the capitalist set-up of India.

As the chief minister of West Bengal, he wooed private domestic and foreign investment for industrial development of the state.

A political legend, Basu was the longest serving chief minister of West Bengal for 23 years from 1977.

His CPI (M)-led Left Front government in the last years in power showed that it was ready to woo private capital and adopt some market-oriented policies.

A relentless crusader against communalism and a fervent advocate of secular politics, Basu was instrumental in prodding his party CPI (M) into supporting a Congress Party-led government in 2004 after parliamentary elections did not give Congress majority with a view to keeping BJP at bay.

Born in an upper middle-class Bengalee family in Kolkata in 1914, Basu's father Nishikanta Basu, a doctor, hailed from the village of Barodi at Narayanganj in Bangladesh.

Jyoti Basu studied at St Xavier's Collegiate School in Kolkata and graduated from prestigious Presidency College with an honours degree from the Arts Faculty in 1935 before travelling to England to study law.

Ushered into the Communist Party of Great Britain through another legendary

communist leader Bhupesh Gupta, Basu involved himself with the India League, the communist party and the London Majlis.

On his return to India in 1940 after qualifying for the Bar, he became a fulltime activist of the Communist Party of India in 1944 and got involved in trade union activities.

He was married to Kamal Basu who predeceased him.

Basu joined the electoral arena by defeating Congress stalwart Humayun Kabir from the erstwhile railway constituency in 1946.

He went underground when the Communist Party was banned in India in 1948 and was jailed several times during the Congress regime in West Bengal. He was imprisoned in 1953 for spearheading a movement against a hike in tram fare.

Basu had wrested the Baranagore seat from then Education Minister Roy Harendranath Chowdhury in 1952.

Though 28 communist candidates were elected to the West Bengal assembly that year, the then Speaker refused to accord Basu the status of the leader of the opposition.

The recognition finally came in 1957 when Basu was re-elected from Baranagore constituency, the seat that he retained till 1972 when he suffered the only electoral defeat in his political career.

He emerged as an influential member of CPI (M) after the

1964 split in Communist Party of India over sharp ideological difference over the Sino-Indian war in 1962.

Basu, in a letter entitled 'Save the party from revisionism and dogmatic extremists' written from jail in 1963, a year before CPI (M) was formed, was initially against its creation saying, "We have to continue our ideological struggle against SA Dange's politics of revisionism. It will not be right to

split the party."

The content of Basu's letter was revealed in a book 'Communist movement in Bengal, Documents and Related Facts' published by CPI (M).

In 1967 and 1969, Basu was deputy chief minister of the United Front governments in West Bengal. Eight years later, he became the chief minister in 1977 and remained in the post for 23 years.

In 1980s, he played a key role in convening a meeting of non-Congress chief ministers in Kolkata to raise their voice against the "step-motherly attitude" of the Congress government at the Centre in close liaison with late NT Rama Rao of Andhra Pradesh and late Ramakrishna Hegde of Karnataka.

Basu's political astuteness showed up once again when he succeeded in his efforts in late 1985 to convince late premier Rajiv Gandhi of the utility of forming a hill council to restore peace in strife-torn Darjeeling where the Gorkha National Liberation Front under Subhas Ghising had waged a violent agitation for a separate state.

A fierce critic of economic liberalisation policy of the Congress government headed by the then Indian Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao government (1991 to 1996), Basu, however, initiated formation of an "alternative" policy to woo investors. He also went abroad to attract foreign investments in the face of strong criticism by his own party comrades.

This clearly showed Basu's pragmatic approach to political and economic issues. He was the main advocate for the initial participation of the Tatas in the Haldia Petrochemical Complex in West Bengal, which was among the first major industrial initiatives during the Left-ruled state.

Basu was among the CPI (M) leaders who fully supported his successor Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee's initiatives for



Jyoti Basu

private-capital driven industrialisation.

Acknowledging that socialism was not possible, Basu said, "We want capital, both foreign and domestic. After all we are working in a capitalist system. Socialism is not possible now."

Basu resigned from the post of chief minister in 2000 for health reasons.

The 18th Congress of CPI (M), held in Delhi in 2005, re-elected Basu to its Politburo although he had pleaded to be allowed to retire from it.

The era of coalition politics in India, which began in 1996, had offered him the chance to become the prime minister of the United Front government in 1996 but his party CPI (M) declined to take over power at the Centre.

Some years later, Basu described his party's decision of not accepting the prime ministership as a 'historic blunder', which was termed by his party, the CPI (M), as his 'personal view'.

An astute politician, able administrator, a reformist and a record-setter in many respects, he had the distinction of holding membership of the West Bengal assembly uninteruptedly since 1946, save a break in 1972.

Steering the Left Front government, a coalition of Left parties, barring SUCI, since 1977, Basu put into practice the concept of decentralisation of power right down to the block level -- by introducing Panchayati Raj and effectively implementing land reforms. Even Rajiv Gandhi as a prime minister

had lauded Basu's role and convened a National Conference of Panchayati Raj in 1989.

Basu had raised his voice for restructuring relations between the federal Indian government and governments in the states and decentralisation of powers, which finally led to formation of the Sarkaria Commission in the late 80s.

It was his political foresight that brought together all like-minded parties on a single platform to provide a third alternative to Congress and BJP in the National Front-Left Front combine in the late 1980s and 1990s.

Age and indifferent health forced Basu to step down as chief minister of West Bengal in 2000 and six years later he requested CPI (M) to allow him to retire from politics.

But his plea was turned down and party general secretary Prakash Karat said the party wanted Basu to continue until its 2008 congress where the issue would be reconsidered.

At the party's 19th Congress in April 2008, Basu was not included in the Politburo, although he remained a member of the Central Committee and was designated as a Special Invitee to the Politburo.

CPI (M) may have made anti-Congressism as its main political plank for much of its existence, but Basu himself was considered close to Congress leaders like Indira Gandhi, for whom he had high regards, and Rajiv Gandhi.

Basu was one of the CPI (M) stalwarts to prod his party to extend outside support to a Congress-led coalition government at the Centre after the 2004 Lok Sabha polls to keep BJP at bay.

This was a far cry for CPI (M) from the emergency days of 1975-77 when it had ridiculed its present partner CPI for aligning with Congress, comparing the CPI to a calf along with the 'cow', the then election symbol of Congress party.



PHOTO: STAR

The two-storey ancestral house of Jyoti Basu, the legendary communist of India, stands tall with his vivid childhood memory.

A wish that remains unfulfilled

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

Legendary Marxist patriot and former chief minister of Indian state of West Bengal Jyoti Basu's wish to come to Narayanganj to inaugurate a memorial complex at his ancestral home under Barodi union in Sonargaon upazila remained unfulfilled.

After the grand alliance government came to power, it had taken a decision to set up a museum, an archive and a library in the house which is linked with the veteran communist's childhood.

The government contemplated that Jyoti Basu, the longest serving chief minister of India, himself would inaugurate the complex. But the hope remains as an unfulfilled hope. A pall of gloom has descended on Barodi at his death.

As the bad news spread fast, the emotion-charged villagers converged on the

historic house. They had a trip down memory lane of the eventful life of the relentless crusader against communalism and fervent advocate of secular politics.

A part of vivid childhood of the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) stalwart was spent at Chowdhurypara on the bank of the river Meghna.

Stands on 2.04 acres of land, the two-storey decorated house of olden days, which bears the memory of Jyoti Basu, still stands tall in the village.

Shahidullah, 75, the caretaker of the house, now lives here along with his family. His mother Ayatunnessa used to take care of the Indian political messiah in his childhood.

Jyoti's father Nishikanta Basu was a medical practitioner. He was also known as NK Basu in the area. Dr Basu married Hemalata, daughter of Khirodha Sundari of the same village.

They lived in the house from 1940 to 1942. Then they went to Kolkata for permanent settlement.

But NK Basu used to come to Barodi from Kolkata frequently and treated poor patients free of cost. Jyoti also accompanied his father during these trips.

After the sad demise of Hemalata, Ayatunnessa was given the charge of taking care of Jyoti Basu. Shahidullah was made the caretaker of the house.

Jyoti had a brother named Surendra Kiron Basu and a sister Sudha Dutta Basu. He was the youngest among the siblings. At present, there is no relative of Jyoti alive in Sonargaon.

While he was the chief minister of West Bengal he came to Bangladesh twice -- first on January 30, 1987 and then on November 11, 1997. During the visits, he went to his village home and spent some time there.

3 injured as BCL factions clash at DU

DU CORRESPONDENT

At least three activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) were injured in a factional clash at Sir AF Rahman Hall of Dhaka University yesterday.

The injured were identified as Feroz, a student of accounting department, Rakib and Reza of philosophy department. Of them, Feroz and Rakib received treatment at the medical centre of the university while Reza was admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital, hall sources said.

The incident occurred when the supporters of hall unit BCL General Secretary Mehedi Hasan and activist Reza Sekander clashed at the hall compound at around 3:30pm over the dispute of seat arrangement of a group of first year students at a room no.308.

The university authorities and police brought the situation under control.

A three-member committee headed by house tutor Abul Kashem was formed to probe the incident. The committee has been asked to report within five working days.

Check terrorism in South Asia for peace

President tells Indian air chief

UNB, Dhaka

President Zillur Rahman yesterday emphasised curbing terrorism in the South Asian region with a view to establishing peace and tranquility.

"Terrorism must be stopped," he said when the Chief of Indian Air Force, Air Chief Marshal PV Naik, called on him at Bangabhaban.

The Indian air chief was accompanied by Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Rajeev Mitter and other high officials of Indian Air Force.

During the meeting, Zillur intended to work with India to check terrorism in the region. "We need to help each other, as we want peace and tranquility in the South Asia region," he said.

Describing India as the most tested friend of Bangladesh, he recalled the assistances and cooperation given by India during the War of Liberation in 1971.

Welcoming the Indian air chief, the president put emphasis on cooperation in training between the air forces of the two countries to further strengthen the bilateral relations.

Naik said India is willing to extend its cooperation to Bangladesh in all sectors. The Prime Minister of India assured all-out cooperation to Bangladesh during the recent visit of the Bangladesh Prime minister to India, he mentioned.

OFFICE SPACE FOR RENT

AT UTTARA

Update Tower
01 Shahjalal Avenue
Sector-6
Uttara, Dhaka.

ONLY FOR MULTINATIONAL & CORPORATE OFFICE

Available Space: Level- 05 to Level- 10

2,430 sft
2,770 sft
5,200 sft
10,400 sft

Facilities:

- ✓ 14 storied newly completed commercial building with 03 basement Car Parking (109 Nos.)
- ✓ 2000KVA Electric Sub-Station
- ✓ 100% back up Generator
- ✓ 04 Nos. Passenger Elevators (21 persons capacity)
- ✓ International Standard Safety & Security System

UPDATE BUILDERS LTD.
Mobile : 01746645839, 01746639175
Tel : (880-2) 9892453, 9892628
e-mail : builders@updategroupbd.com

Search For Your Desired Apartment in Mobile type text message * dom area "location name" and send message to 7464

ISO 9001:2008 CERTIFIED

DOM-INNO
where home is an inspiration ...

SALES CENTER: House No-36, Road No-13, Block-D, Banani, Dhaka-1213
Tel: 9891869, 9893827, 9873165, 8857067, 8851026, 8814056, 9888824
8819742, 8810266, 8829797, 8837356, 8837357, 8833983, 8836918
Cell: 01819 253767, 01819 410102, 01819 230946, 01817 044556
01817 143884, 01817 158304, 01817 295665. web: www.domino-bd.com

* sms charge applicable

UTTARA
DHANMONDI
LALMATIA
NIKETAN
BAILEY ROAD
IQBAL ROAD
KALABAGAN
RAJA BAZAR
GREEN ROAD
GREEN SQUARE
CENTRAL ROAD
NORTH ROAD
ELEPHANT ROAD
FREE SCHOOL STREET
KHILGAON CHOW. PARA
SHANTINAGAR
SHANTIBAGH
MOGHBAZAR
SIDDESHWARI
SHAHIDBAG
DILU ROAD
MALIBAG
AVOY DAS LANE
PALTON
GULSHAN
BANANI
NAKHALPARA
ZIGATOLA
WEST DHANMONDI
INDIRA ROAD
MIRPUR
D.O.H.S.
TEJKUNIPARA

Projects at Prime Locations for which

NAVANA takes pride for

Baridhara	Niketan	Shantinagar
Gulshan	Sobhanbagh	Outer Circular Road
Banani	Kalabagan	Bijoy Nagar
Dhanmondi	Mohammadpur	Bashabo
Uttara	Eskaton	Bakshi Bazar
Bashundhara	Bangla Motor	Hatkhola
Nadda	Moghbar	

NAVANA Residential Projects

NAVANA Commercial Projects

Gulshan Link Road	Purana Paltan	Sobhanbagh
Panthapath	Bangla Motor	Kakrail

Navana Real Estate Ltd.

Corporate Office :
House No. 35, Road No. 9/A (New), Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka.
Tel : 880-2-912 1602 (Hunting), Fax : 880-2-911 8292
E-mail : info@navana-realestate.com

Gulshan Office :
House No. 16/B, Road No. 93, Gulshan 2, Dhaka.
Tel : 880-2-881 5305 (Hunting)
Fax : 880-2-881 5195
Cell : 01817 036 507 01819 411 227
01817 036 512 01817 036 501
01713 424 248 01817 036 505

Member REHAB

www.navana-realestate.com