

Celebrating Eid-ul-Azha

Internalise the true spirit of the occasion

THE nation is going to celebrate Eid-ul-Azha tomorrow with the usual religious fervour. While it is one of the two most important festivals of the Muslim world over, the true essence of Eid-ul-Azha demands of us not so much of indulgence and merrymaking but understanding the true spirit of the occasion. There is need to rise beyond the rituals and understanding the inner message of the practice. It is a day to move beyond rituals and symbolism, to expurgate the evils in us and commit to ourselves to austere living and sharing our fortunes with those that are not as fortunate as we are. Let that be our resolve.

The day, as ordained by the Prophet of Islam, perpetuates the act of sacrifice of Prophet Abraham and his son Ismail, both of whom readily submitted to the command of Allah to sacrifice unto Him that which was most precious to Abraham. In it contains the true meaning of faith and submission to the will of the Almighty, as demonstrated by Abraham the Prophet and in equal degree displayed by his son who too was destined to be a prophet of Allah.

The aim of sacrifice, like all other fundamentals of Islam, is to imbibe piety and self righteousness. It also promotes the spirit of sacrifice for a right cause. To explicate its purpose, Allah says in the Quran, "It is not their meat, nor their blood, that reaches Allah; it is their piety that reaches Him."

Regrettably, we have become oblivious of the significance of the practice that the Prophet of Islam reestablished amongst his followers. We are so much taken up with ostentatious behaviour, with display of wealth, with outdoing the other in the size and the amount spent on the sacrificial animal, that we have failed to inculcate in ourselves the spirit of sacrifice for a greater and righteous cause, of patience and forbearance, of subservience to Allah.

This a time when there is huge movement of people all over the country wishing to join their dear and near ones on this occasion. And we seem to be caught unprepared both at the public and private level to cope with the pressure every time, repeatedly. And we are also unprepared to cope with the law and order particularly in terms of providing public safety.

While we are celebrating the auspicious day, there is need for all of us to exercise caution, to be extra careful on the roads. And the government must also provide the necessary support in terms of extra transport to meet the heavy rush of travellers. It is also essential that full security, both in the capital and on the highways, is provided during the period before and a few days after the Eid to ensure public safety.

On the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha we wish all our readers and well-wishers Eid Mubarak.

Ties with Turkey

Much deeper than inking of two accords

HISTORICALLY as well as contemporaneously, Ankara and Dhaka have had well-cultivated and many-layered bilateral ties. These have not only stood the test of time but fostered mutual endearment from time to time.

Kemal Ataturk, the founder of modern secular Turkey has been a magic name to the people of this part of the world. Beginning with poet Nazrul's Ode to him, we have an arterial street and a school named after him. Turkey being part of both Europe and Asia, its geopolitical clout engages our attention as we closely follow events in that country having to do with democracy, liberalism and quest for advancement we both share.

The historicity of the ties apart, what is of tremendous present-day relevance are the institutional links between Turkey and Bangladesh through D-8 commission, OIC and at the bilateral level via Turkey-Bangladesh Joint Commission on trade, economic and technical cooperation.

The bonds of friendship and cooperation have been featured, enlivened and enriched through regular exchanges of visits and contacts at the highest political levels between the two countries. Only in February this year, Turkish President Abdullah Gul visited Bangladesh following President Zillur Rahman's trip to Istanbul in connection with Economic Summit of Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation under the OIC auspices. And we have just had the auspicious visit to Dhaka by Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan heading a powerful delegation consisting of Deputy Prime Minister Ali Babacan, State Minister Mehmet Aydin, Finance Minister Mehmet Simsek and Energy and Natural Resources Minister Taner Yildiz.

They have signed two agreements with us, one on healthcare and an MoU on exchange of land for setting up embassy offices in the two countries. Beyond that, they have resolved that both-way trade which now stood at US\$ 927 million worth will be raised to US\$ 3 billion by 2015. Turkey is the main importer of jute yarns for its carpet industry and our RMG products have a great prospect there, aside from handicraft. Turkish exports are textiles, dyeing machine, chemicals, power generators and steel.

We welcome their investment in infrastructure, energy, agro-based industry, ICT, textile and river dredging. The possibility of relocating Turkish RMG industries with a relative advantage in Bangladesh in terms of affordable and trainable manpower will be well worth exploring.

We are heartened by Turkish vision for Bangladesh becoming a middle income country by 2021. We end on a note of air connectivity between Ankara and Dhaka planned for the very near future.

On Saturday, politics was laid low



On Saturday, it was not just Begum Khaleda Zia who was treated with disdain. It was politics which took a beating. It was our tenuous democracy which was fractured anew in a good many places. A weeping Khaleda Zia was an unedifying spectacle for all of us in this tortured land.

SYED BADRUL AHSAN

NOTE the irony. On a day when Burma's long serving prisoner of conscience Aung San Suu Kyi emerged into freedom, a tearful Khaleda Zia made her way out of the home she and her family had lived in since the early 1970s. Notice another irony. On a day when Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Turkey's prime minister known for reaching out to varied sections of the population in his country, arrived in the Bangladesh capital on an official visit, Bangladesh's ruling circles stayed busy demonstrating before the rest of the world their unwillingness to promote inclusive politics in the country.

On Saturday, all men and women of good conscience, irrespective of political affiliation, were shamed through the spectacle of the leader of the opposition being made to leave her home in a manner that was as crude as it was bizarre.

No one will argue that it was wrong for

the Sattar government, in agreement with army chief General Hussein Mohammad Ershad, to have given away the residence in question to the widow and children of a just assassinated General Ziaur Rahman. It was an act that was highly charged with emotion and those who took charge of the state at the time did not or would not see the implications of the move. The home was made available to Begum Zia because she was a widow, because she had two sons who were yet to reach adulthood.

In all the years since, Begum Zia has evolved from the status of wife of a murdered military ruler into a politician in her own right. Her sons, for all the notoriety which has come to be associated with them, have prospered in life. It ought to have been for Begum Zia, therefore, to give up the residence on her own, to inform the country that she was grateful to those who had allotted it to her, that she was now returning it to the army, the rightful owner of the property, that she was moving out

and into circumstances befitting a pre-eminent politician of the country. Such a position on her part would have earned her the respect of the nation. It would also have upheld the idea that politicians who mean to serve the country do not take from the country but give it their best.

Begum Zia, of course, did nothing of the kind. We need not repeat the tale. Which is why we go back to the manner in which the government has now thrown her out of the house in the cantonment. Inter-Services Public Relations would have us know that the former prime minister vacated the residence on her own. And in a display of gross insensitivity, the Awami League has come forth to thank the chairperson of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party for leaving it through upholding the law.

Consider now the bigger realities here. When an individual weeps in public and tells you she was forcibly evicted from her home, you cannot quite tell yourself that she is making up a tale. And when the Awami League tells you, with much conceit, that the BNP leader demonstrated her respect for the law by saying goodbye to her residence, you ask why the law was not allowed to run its full course in the matter of the eviction.

When a hearing had been scheduled for later this month, what were the compulsions for the government to have the opposition leader's home surrounded and then raided by security agencies in order to

ensure that she could not stay there any more, that indeed she would be physically forced out if she refused to budge?

The ruling Awami League has patently landed a hard blow on itself. Self-inflicted injuries are often hard to treat, especially when these injuries are made in politics. In the latter phase of the first Awami League government led by Sheikh Hasina, the cabinet in its questionable wisdom decided that Ganobhavan, the official home of Bangladesh's prime minister would be made over to Bangabandhu's daughter as a gift from the nation.

In similar mode, a home in Dhanmondi was allotted to Bangabandhu's younger daughter. Both decisions were made in unwise manner. And because of the absence of wisdom involved in the acts, it was the nation that was left surprised.

When its turn came to form a government again, the BNP showed not a bit of sophistication in the way it rescinded the directives relating to Ganobhavan and the Dhanmondi residence. It could have adopted a legal and moral position to reclaim the premises in question. Its hurried moves soon after the October 2001 elections pointed to the vindictiveness with which it meant to deal with a beaten Awami League.

The Awami League, now that it is in office again, need not have followed the same course. It need not have given people reason to think that it was paying the BNP back in its own coin. It need not have let the world know that in Bangladesh, it is quite in order for those out of power to be treated with manifest contempt. It need not have set a few more of its supporters into rethinking their options at the next spate of general elections.

Millions of Bengalis have a thousand and one reasons to explain why they do not agree with the politics of the BNP. They remember the miseries the party has caused them over the decades; they will not forget the systematic mutilation of national history its leading lights, beginning with Ziaur Rahman and going all the way down to Khaleda Zia, have engaged in.

All Bengalis remember too the high moral ground of politics on which the Awami League operated in the era of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Tajuddin Ahmed. Why is it that they do not discover that Awami League in the age of Sheikh Hasina?

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A new horizon of cooperation

The ties between Bangladesh and Turkey are deep, and the people of Bangladesh have great respect for the Turkish leader Kemal Ataturk (father of the Turks), the founder of modern Turkey. Bangladesh's national poet late Kazi Nazrul Islam, wrote many poems in the '20s and '30s in which he lauded the leadership of Kemal Ataturk.

HARUN UR RASHID

BIGGER than France, Turkey is a part of Europe and Asia, adjoins oil-rich Iran, and sits astride the Dardanelles and Bosphorus straits. Its geopolitical importance is recognised by all big powers.

Prime Minister of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his wife Madam Emine Erdogan visited Bangladesh on November 13-14. Erdogan has been the prime minister since 2003. During his tenure, Turkish engagement with the outside world and in the region has increased through its proactive political and economic policies, making the country a key regional player.

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A main avenue in Dhaka was named after the Turkish leader Kemal Ataturk, and also a school in a rural area (Noakhali) in Bangladesh. There is a Turkish Hope International School at Uttara.

People of both countries have deep commitment to democracy and other liberal traditions. Both people fought to achieve their independence.

Bangladesh's relations with Turkey are excellent and mutually supportive, and they have been nourished by the successive governments of both countries through high-level bilateral visits.

President Zillur Rahman of Bangladesh visited Istanbul for four days from November 6, 2009 to attend the Economic Summit of Standing Committee for

Economic and Commercial Cooperation by the OIC, and had fruitful discussions with the Turkish president. On his invitation, Turkish President Abdullah Gul visited Bangladesh in February this year.

Finance Minister A.M.A. Muhith attended the Bangladesh-Turkey Joint Economic Cooperation in Turkey from November 17 to 20, 2009.

Given the warm bilateral relations, the visit of the Turkish prime minister to Bangladesh is the second highest political interaction with Bangladesh leaders and assumes great importance for economic cooperation between the two countries.

The economy of Turkey has registered a growth of 7% this year. Turkey's commercial influence over northern Iraq is overwhelming. It has signed a Free Trade Agreement with Jordan and says that trade with Iran will triple within the next five years.

During the visit, the two sides signed agreements on cooperation in the health sector and on exchange of land for embassies in Ankara and Dhaka. Air connectivity by Turkish Airlines between the two countries is expected to begin by next month.

Bilateral trade has increased considerably. In the last one year, from September 2009 to October 2010, two-way trade amounted to \$927 million, according to the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry. Both countries agreed to increase the trade volume to at least \$3 billion by 2015.

Fikret Cicek, president of the Turkey-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry, told the media that his country's carpet industry had been a major importer of jute yarns from Bangladesh. "Now Bangladeshi readymade garments are seeing a bigger opportunity in Turkey," said Fikret. He listed major



Turkish exports to Bangladesh as textile dyeing machinery, chemicals, power generators, steel products and red lentils.

The Bangladesh side sought investment from Turkey in various sectors, such as infrastructure, energy, agro-based industries, ICT, textile, and river dredging. It was pointed out that Bangladesh was a good destination for relocating Turkish RMG factories and other industries to make their exportable products more competitive in world market with availability of skilled cheap labour.

The Turkish prime minister expressed his country's support to Bangladesh so that it can turn into a middle-income country by 2021. He also expressed his country's willingness to enhance cooperation in education sector.

Mentioning the excellent bilateral relations that exist between Bangladesh and Turkey, Prime Minister Erdogan hoped that the relations would be further enhanced with the expansion of trade and business between the two countries.

Turkey and Bangladesh are members of D-8 Commission and both countries cooperate with each other in sectors agreed at the summit of the D-8 Commission in July this year in Nigeria, which was attended by the Bangladesh prime minister.

Bangladesh and Turkey have renewed pledges to work closely in different international forums to maintain world peace and security as well as combat terrorism

in all its forms and manifestations

The core aim of Turkish foreign policy is to pursue friendly relations with neighbours coupled with removing regional and global tensions. Turkey has adopted diplomatic initiatives to offer mediation in regional disputes -- such as between the US and Iran, Iraq and Syria, and between Israel and Syria. Turkey has also played a positive role in trying to remove misunderstandings between Pakistan and the Karzai government in Kabul.

The Turkish government's constructive relations with Iraq, its outspoken criticism of Israel's Gaza policy, the Turkish-Brazilian swap deal for Iran's low-enriched uranium in May and its "no" vote on the fourth round of sanctions on Iran at the UN Security Council demonstrate its pragmatism in the conduct of its proactive foreign policy.

Given the pre-eminent standing of Turkey in the region, the Turkish prime minister's visit to Bangladesh will reinvigorate bilateral relations and will provide opportunities in cooperation in mutually beneficial sectors.

The visit has made both countries recognise more fully the degree to which they share interests in important global and regional issues. Geopolitics and economics invite the two countries to move closer together.

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