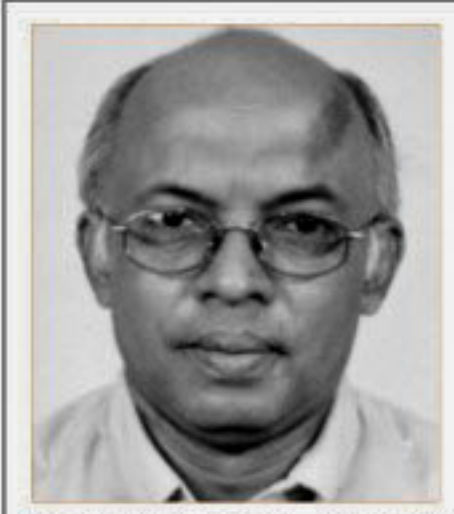


## GROUND REALITIES



SYED BADRUL AHSAN

**I**N death, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman has been under immense pressure from those who have lived after him. First there

was the unconcealed glee with which his murderers informed the country that he had been dispatched and that his government no longer existed.

For quite some days afterward, people unhappy with his politics, indeed with the break-up of Pakistan in 1971, celebrated his death in a manner that was as shameful as it was immoral. Politicians you thought had better sense suddenly decided that Bangabandhu's assassination was in effect a moment of deliverance for Bengalis. They called it najaat dibosh. Our heads hung low in unmitigated embarrassment.

What followed was worse. In the five years in which Ziaur Rahman's writ ran in this country, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman became a non-person. He was simply airbrushed out of history. Yes, there were the routine observances of Independence Day and Victory Day, points of history that only Bangabandhu could have brought to fruition. And he did. But the regime of Bangladesh's first military dictator, in its efforts to pilfer history, thought that a celebration of Bangladesh's proudest moments minus reference to its greatest man was all right.

And so we were told that on March 26, 1971 Bengalis launched themselves into a twilight struggle against the occupation army. Note that in the Zia years the term "Pakistan" did not accompany the following two words, "occupation army." Every December 16 we were awakened with news that we had fought and won a great victory in 1971. There was no mention of the inspirational leader behind such momentous happenings.

In his time, General Ershad made a huge show of visiting Bangabandhu's grave at Tungipara and yet would feel not at all uncomfortable allowing the assassins of the Father of the Nation to operate a political party that was in effect a group of gangsters.

With Khaleda Zia, a sea change, or sort of, occurred where the attitude of the right wing in Bangladesh's politics was concerned. It was not

# Bangabandhu . . . under posthumous pressure

Bangabandhu, said the Begum and her amnesia-driven acolytes, who had declared Bangladesh's independence in March 1971. It was, said they, Major Zia who had injected courage into a despondent nation.

They were right, but only up to a point. What they did not say or would not say was that they were presenting

1971. Now, here is the other sort of pressure the Father of the Nation has been under, this time from some of his more enthusiastic followers. You get some idea of how, in their frenzy to ensure that Bangabandhu's legacy remains unchallenged and beyond reproach, some individuals in government at this

tures after him? The dead do not return. But were Bangabandhu to return, he would be appalled by all this petty authoritarian effort on the part of his twenty-first century followers to seize the farming lands of poor and middle class citizens, his "shonar manush," as in Arial Beel, because of that airport.

There was hardly any point in renaming the Bangladesh-China Friendship Hall in the capital after the country's founder. The planetarium on Bijoy Sharani ought to have borne the name of a renowned Bengali scientist. It is pretty much obvious that there are people in the Awami League and in the government it runs who do not realise how much of a trivialisation they have been subjecting Bangabandhu to.

The entirety of Bangladesh is Mujib's legacy. You go anywhere in the world and speak of Bangladesh. Those who listen to you will instantly recall the contributions Bangabandhu made to the creation of this secular Bengali republic. There was the superhuman about Bangabandhu. Must we then bring him down to earth by acts that can only lead to questions from citizens?

There are all the dreams Bangabandhu dreamed for this country. His vision was on a grand scale. But to suggest that every little detail of life and society in Bangladesh was an offshoot of his dreams is stretching things a little too far. His dream shaped a free country for his people; he dreamed of a Golden Bengal; his greatest wish after the attainment of national liberty was to see the faces of his people wreathed in smiles, through experience of prosperity and an abundance of worldly as well as intellectual satisfaction. Why must we whittle down this broad vision of his into anecdotes and tales that can only cause dents in his otherwise solid reputation as a gigantic figure of history?

It is time for Bengalis to reclaim the man who led them to freedom, from both his detractors and his acolytes. And then move on.

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*It is time for Bengalis to reclaim the man who led them to freedom, from both his detractors and his acolytes. And then move on.*

only half the truth. Had they looked to the other half, they would have enlightened us with the thought that in his seminal announcement, Zia had mentioned Mujib four times, describing him as "our supreme national leader" and "supreme commander." Never have Zia loyalists re-broadcast that call their man made on March 27,

present time have hit upon the thought that a new international airport in his name will be a superb way of strengthening his place in history. Is a new airport so much of a necessity? And whatever gives the government the idea that Bangabandhu's dignity is limited to a naming of airports and other architectural struc-

## BOTTOM LINE



HARUN UR RASHID

**I**NDIA and Pakistan, both neighbours with nuclear arms, have different perceptions of security, which complicates the security

situation in South Asia. While India defines its security position in light of China's military strength, Pakistan assesses its security concerns against India's position. This has resulted in nuclear arms and missiles race in South Asia.

It has been reported by US intelligence that Pakistan has become the world's fifth largest nuclear weapons power, overtaking Britain. The deployed weapons now number more than 110, according to recent estimates of US intelligence. Pakistan says that it is a credible, minimum nuclear deterrent, and people should not get unduly concerned about the stockpile of nuclear weapons.

Observers say that Pakistan has been infuriated by the nuclear deal between Washington and New Delhi, arguing that it has freed India's home-made fuel to produce new weapons. As a result, Pakistan argues that it has no choice but to bolster its own production.

It is reported that the US has spent \$100 million helping Pakistan to build fences, install sensor systems and train personnel to handle the weapons. But the US is deeply concerned that weapons-usable fuel, which is kept in laboratories and storage centres, is more vulnerable and could be diverted by insiders in Pakistan's vast nuclear complex.

Another concern is not the weapons but the increase in production of material, especially plutonium. Pakistan is completing work on a large plutonium

production reactor, which will greatly increase its ability to produce a new generation of weapons.

The biggest concern for the US is theft from the plants that produce plutonium. It is reported that Al Qaeda has been attempting to procure nuclear material and recruit scientists in order to build a "dirty bomb."

Western security chiefs told a Nato meeting in 2009 that Al-Queda was planning a programme of "dirty radioactive improved explosive devices" which could be used against soldiers fighting in Afghanistan. Furthermore,

ted, as part of a new arms control treaty that signals a dramatic improvement in relations between the two superpowers.

The Obama administration sees the adoption of Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty as important, and US officials reportedly say efforts are now underway to find a way to start negotiations in new forums, away from Pakistan's influence. Pakistan is opposed to the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty because that would cut into its ability to match India's arsenal.

The world faces threats of nuclear

*The US is deeply concerned that weapons-usable fuel, which is kept in laboratories and storage centres, is more vulnerable and could be diverted*

Al Qaeda papers found in 2007 convinced security officials that greater advances had been made in bioterrorism than previously feared.

There have been attempts by rogue organisations to smuggle weapons grade material. A freight train on the Kazakhstan-Russia border had carried weapons-grade material, and a small dealer in Lisbon had tried to sell radioactive plates stolen from Chernobyl.

How is Pakistan financing the new weapons production at a time of financial stress in the country?

During his election campaign, US President Barack Obama expressed his support for the goal of disarmament. Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin expressed similar sentiments in a speech in September when he talked of how it would be better to "close this Pandora's box."

The United States and Russia have made an historic agreement to reduce their nuclear arsenals to between 1,500 and 1,675 warheads, down from a maximum of 2,200 each now permit-

proliferation and nuclear terrorism. Because of this, it is a reality is that nuclear weapons diminish the security of all states. Indeed, states which possess them themselves become targets of nuclear weapons.

In his book "Engagement: Australia faces the Asia Pacific," Paul Keating, former prime minister of Australia, argues for scrapping nuclear weapons. He writes: "Three possibilities exist with regard to nuclear weapons and three only. First, they will be used, either deliberately or accidentally. Second, that they will not be used but will be managed forever by wise, prudent and well-meaning governments and military forces and will never fall into the hands of terrorists. Or third, that we agree to get rid of them. The first possibility offers catastrophe to the human race. The second requires us to make assumptions about the future that run completely counter to logic and experience. The third is the only possibility that can secure our safety."

The only complete defence is the elimination of nuclear weapons and assurance that they will never be produced again.

An organisation called Global Zero has emerged recently. In the US, the debate was kick-started by a joint call for "getting to zero" from a group of veterans of the Cold War, including Henry Kissinger and George Schultz.

Global Zero consists of 100 leading figures seeking practical steps towards nuclear abolition and gaining public support for that goal. They include former US president Jimmy Carter, former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, former Brazilian president Fernando Cardoso, businessman Sir Richard Branson, Ehsan Ul-Haq, the former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Pakistan, and Brajesh Mishra, former Indian national security advisor.

Polling in 21 countries for Global Zero found an average of 76% of the population favouring an agreement to eliminate nuclear weapons within a time-bound agreement. But members of Global Zero emphasise the need for more public information, particularly to educate the post-Cold War generation for whom the dangers of nuclear weapons may be more remote.

The Global Zero group believes that reducing the large US and Russian stockpiles -- which make up 96% of all the nuclear weapons in the world -- should be amongst the first steps, which in turn can then draw in third parties and other nuclear powers into a wider and deeper process.

Finally, unless the big powers take concrete steps to eliminate nuclear weapons, there is no hope that other countries will get rid of them. Nuclear weapons not only reflect power and prestige of a country but also prevent a stronger power from attacking a non-nuclear power.

The writer is a former Bangladesh Ambassador to the UN, Geneva.

## BNP blamed for prices and shares chaos

*Looking for scapegoats only highlights failure*

**P**RIME Minister Sheikh Hasina has just blamed the opposition BNP for the rise in prices of essential commodities and the crisis in the shares market. Her remarks are not only shockingly surprising but are also a clear hint that the government is looking for scapegoats to pin blame on over the issues. At a time when volumes of reports have come up, from the media, experts and others, over the reasons behind these sordid conditions, the government's propensity to hold everyone and everything but itself responsible for the mess is deeply worrying. It thinks there are syndicates working to undermine it. Generally syndicates are the preserve of the ruling classes. Assuming, of course, that the opposition too has its syndicates, what prevents the authorities from going after those syndicates rather than trying to score points through mere rhetoric?

Some very plausible explanations have been making the rounds among citizens regarding the elements and factors behind the price rise and stock market crash. A number of businessmen have openly pointed fingers at individuals they think are behind the market chaos. The government should have taken such criticisms seriously and neutralized the price jackers. But now for the prime minister to suggest that the BNP has been behind it all stretches credulity to the limit. Will she or her government now explain how such a conclusion has been arrived at? For its part, the ruling party has been unable to demonstrate the degree of governance people expected from it. It has clearly been floundering, to a point where public discontent over rising prices is beginning to be expressed in increasingly vocal manner.

Looking for scapegoats to explain away political and administrative failure has long been a bad legacy of successive governments in Bangladesh. Such a tendency has gone too far. We believe there is yet time for this government to step back, accept the reality and take corrective action. Governance can never be an offering of excuses for failure.

## Landmark trees are an asset

*Why cut them down?*

**D**HAKA is fast acquiring a semi-barren condition due to senseless felling of trees, most of them with immense historical value in that they adorn the vicinity of olden architectures of Dhaka, for instance, Sir Salimullah Hall, for one. Disappearance of the greenery is a glaring instance of how fast we are destroying bounties of nature. No one bothers to plant trees in replacement.

Dhaka wore a green look not many years back, the people then treasured the trees and planted them by roadways and in parks. This added to the natural beauty and the coolness of the environment. The practice of cutting them down was almost unheard of or a rare scene. It takes ages to have green surroundings but perhaps one-fell stroke to destroy it.

Today Dhaka is almost devoid of tranquil shades under which a tired body would rest. The mindless onslaught on the wooded parts of the city has changed its landscape, creating a climatic disorder and contributing to global warming. With the loss of trees we have lost many lovely species of birds which chirped along its branches indicative of healthy biodiversity.

In their obsession to create space either for housing or commercial projects or to accommodate more vehicles, realtors, works ministry and the DCC are competing with each other to expand the road spaces any how.

In most countries, they plant and preserve the greeneries. They plan construction of buildings or roads and pavements giving top priority to save the trees and bushes, sadly; this not so in our case.

It's time the concerned authorities take into account the tree-cover under threat due to poorly planned schemes and save whatever is left of the lovely greenery of Dhaka. In fact, we ought to grow more trees in this historical city.

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

February 9

**1825**  
After no presidential candidate receives a majority of electoral votes in the election of 1824, the United States House of Representatives elects John Quincy Adams President of the United States.

**1950**  
Start of "McCarthyism." Senator Joe McCarthy launches anti-red crusade.

**1991**  
Voters in Lithuania vote for independence.

**Birth**  
**1943**  
Joseph Eugene Stiglitz, a recipient of the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences (2001) is an American economist and a professor at Columbia University.

**Death**  
**1881**  
Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky is a Russian writer and essayist, popularly known for his novels Crime and Punishment, The Idiot and The Brothers Karamazov.