

Language: stepping back

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That language would be an issue in Pakistan was first hinted at when Chaudhry Khaliquzzaman, a prominent Muslim League figure in the UP who later migrated to Pakistan, told a conference in Hyderabad in May 1947 that Urdu ought to be the language of the soon to be Muslim state. Two months later, in July 1947, Dr Ziauddin Ahmed, vice chancellor of Aligarh University, echoed Khaliquzzaman's views.

The Bangalee Abdul Haq, as AMA Muhihin informs us in his book State Language Movement in East Bengal (now Bangladesh) 1947-1956, initiated the debate on the place of Bangla in Pakistan. "Bangla Bhasha Bishoyok Prostob," the first article in which Haq argued for Bangla as Pakistan's state language, appeared in two instalments in the Calcutta daily Ittehad on June 22 and 29, 1947. On July 29, 1947 Dr Muhammad Shahidullah rubbed Dr Ziauddin Ahmed's advocacy of Urdu in his article, "Pakistaner Bhasha Shomosha," in the daily Azad.

It may be noted that in 1946 Abul Hashim, a prominent Muslim League politician in Bengal, had proposed in his party's election manifesto that Bangla be the state language of Bengal. A decisive step in the advocacy of Bangla was taken by Prof Abul Kashem, under whose leadership the Tamaddun Majlis was formed on September 1, 1947. Through his efforts a

booklet, "Rashrabhasha Bangla Na Urdu?", containing articles by Quazi Motahar Hossain, Abul Mansur Ahmed and others, was published on September 15. Understandably, all the articles argued vigorously that the status of Bangla as the official language of East Bengal as also the state language of Pakistan should be ensured.

In November 1947, a memorandum demanding that Bangla be adopted as the state language of East Bengal was signed by a number of Bangalee luminaries, among whom were Moulana Akram Khan, Prof Abul Kashem, Moulana Abdullah Baqui, Abul Kalam Shamsuddin, Abdul Karim Shahityabisharad, Abbasuddin, Zainul Abedin, Principal Ibrahim Khan, Prof Mansuruddin and Abul Mansur Ahmed. The memorandum was submitted to Chief Minister Khwaja Nazimuddin.

Meanwhile, at an education conference convened in the country's capital Karachi in the same month, Pakistan's education minister Fazlur Rahman, a Bangalee, suggested that Urdu be the state language of Pakistan. Predictably, he ran into a hailstorm of criticism over his remarks.

As 1947 gave way to 1948, Pakistan's constituent assembly, having met in inaugural session on August 11, 1947 prepared to convene in Karachi on February 23, 1948.

REMARKS ON JS Tarikat chief slams Khaleda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Najibul Bashar Majibhondari, chairman of Tarikat Federation, yesterday stridently criticised BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia for terming the current government and parliament illegal.

"By describing the current government and parliament as illegal, she undermined all the MPs. It is a seditious offence," the Tarikat chief alleged while speaking in parliament.

Taking the floor on a point of order, the lawmaker, who has been elected with Awami League support, also demanded arrest of Khaleda for her remarks.

"Either arrest her or send her to a mental hospital as she is mentally imbalanced," Najibul continued.

Najibul also alleged Khaleda was involved in the 10-truck arms smuggling.

"No further investigation is needed. She should be immediately arrested," he said.

Awami League MP Mahbubul Alam Hanif also demanded actions against Khaleda and Tarique Rahman for the "arms smuggling attempt".

Not much done to get it back

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only to check whether the factory buildings are safe and enough fire safety measures are in place.

The government has also failed to arrest the killers of labour leader Aminul Islam, which is another condition for regaining the GSP status.

A committee has been formed to draft a separate labour law for workers of the factories in the Export Processing Zones (EPZs). The law is supposed to give EPZ workers legal space to demonstrate for realising their demands but it has not been passed yet.

The progress made so far is not enough to regain the GSP, Suson said. "The roadmap is pretty clear. It needs consistency, transparency to deliver and to resolve the problems."

The Obama administration suspended the duty waiver scheme putting pressure on Bangladesh to scale up factory and labour standards.

Only 0.54 percent or \$26 million of the total annual exports from Bangladesh to the US enjoyed duty benefits under the GSP scheme.

Bangladesh's main export -- garment -- was not included in the scheme. Garment exporters pay 15.3 percent duty to the US customs,

which amounted to \$746 million in 2012 for exporting a little above \$5 billion of apparel items.

But regaining GSP to the US market is important because other countries, where Bangladesh enjoys the trade privilege, particularly the European Union, might be influenced by the US decision.

Some 60 percent of Bangladesh's export items go to the EU. Under the European GSP scheme introduced in 1971, Bangladesh enjoys 12.5 percent duty benefits on all exports to the region.

Bangladesh signed an agreement, known as Sustainability Compact, with the EU in Geneva in July last year promising again to meet similar conditions, after the Rana Plaza collapse, the nation's worst industrial disaster that killed more than 1,000 workers.

On progress in fulfilling the conditions, Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed, however, has a different view: major steps had been taken to address some issues.

"I am hopeful that we will regain the GSP status by June as we have already made remarkable progress so far."

Tofail also said the government would raise issues of the GSP and duty-free and quota-free access to the

US market at the first Ticfa (Trade and Investment Cooperation Forum Agreement) meeting to be organised in Dhaka in April.

Emerging from yesterday's meeting with Tofail at the minister's secretariat office in the capital, US Ambassador to Bangladesh Dan W Mozena said, "Bangladesh has done a lot, but a lot of things have to be done for rejoining the US GSP programme."

The government will have to make progress in the 16 areas for reinstatement of the GSP, he added.

Mozena denied any links between GSP reinstatement and Ticfa that Bangladesh signed with the US in Washington in November last year.

"The purpose of Ticfa is to address the bilateral trade issues. Ticfa created a place or platform for raising issues and for resolving the issues," the US ambassador said.

A delegation from the US will arrive in Bangladesh on April 6 to hold the Ticfa meeting, Mozena added.

He also suggested that the committee comprised of three secretaries and five diplomats from the US, the Netherlands, the EU, Britain and Germany should continue monitoring the progress in actions on the GSP.

Two Inqilab journos again denied bail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday for the second time denied two journalists of Inqilab bail in a case filed in connection with publishing a "false report" about the participation of Indian troops in a joint forces' drive in Satkhira.

On January 20, a metropolitan magistrate's court had refused Inqilab News Editor Rabiullah Rabi and Deputy Chief Reporter Rafiq Mohammad bails.

The Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court of Dhaka yesterday denied them bail after their lawyer submitted a petition against the order of the metropolitan magistrate's court.

Detectives on the night of January 16 picked up four journalists of the Bangla daily and sealed off its press after a case was filed against five of its journalists for publishing a news item on that very day, claiming Indian forces had taken part in the Satkhira operations prior to the January 5 polls.

The other accused are Editor and Publisher AMM Bahauddin, Diplomatic Correspondent Ahmed Atique and Senior Reporter Afjal Bari.

The newspaper authorities had apologised for publishing the report on its website.

On Saturday, police took off the seals at the press of the newspaper on Ram Krishna Mission Road in the capital's Motijheel. The paper resumed publication on Monday.

ARMS CASE Ex-commissioner Shahid on 5-day remand

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday placed former councillor of Ward-83 Saidur Rahman Shahid on a five-day remand in an arms case.

Gendaria police filed the case against Shahid after Rab arrested him at his home with three illegal and one licensed firearms and 62 bullets.

The police had sought a 10-day remand.

In the remand prayer, the investigation officer said Shahid needs to be quizzed to get information about the sources of the arms and ammunition and the whereabouts of his accomplices.

Defence appealed for cancelling the remand prayer and sought bail, saying that Rab created a drama on the recovery of arms because Shahid contested the parliamentary polls as an independent from Dhaka-6.

Shahid was sentenced to death in a murder case but the High Court acquitted him later.

PMO under revamp

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amount of money and properties in the last five years.

"The prime minister is focusing on development activities to counter criticism over the parliamentary election. For this, she has opted to appoint officials who are experienced and have a clean image," said a senior minister preferring anonymity.

Not only that, Hasina has now made HT Imam her political adviser to ease controversy over his role in the civil bureaucracy. Earlier, he was her public administration affairs adviser. Many civil servants were unhappy about Imam's interference in the bureaucracy in the last five years.

The PM has appointed Senior Secretary of Economic Relations Division Abul Kalam Azad as the PMO secretary. The previous secretary, Molla Waheeduzzaman, has been made chairman of Privatisation Commission with the status of a state minister after his contractual appointment expired.

PMO sources said Hasina might extend the tenure of her principal secretary Shaikh Md Wahid-uz Zaman, which is to expire in mid-February.

However, if Zaman is transferred to any government organisation with the status of

a state minister like Molla, Abdus Sobhan Sikder, senior secretary at the public administration ministry, might replace the present principal secretary, added the sources.

The premier did not reappoint her press secretary Abul Kalam Azad. He has been made managing director of the state-run Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS).

Sources said her assistant private secretary Saifuzzaman Shekhor might be promoted as private secretary while former Bangladesh Chhatra League president Mahmud Hasan Ripon might replace Shekhor.

Meanwhile, Hasina has reappointed Gowher Rizvi, Mashru Rahman, Maj Gen (retd) Tarique Ahmed Siddique and Towfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury Bir Bikram as her advisers and Mahbubul Hoque Shakil, Abdus Sobhan Golap, Selima Khatun and Ferdous Ahmed as her special assistants.

According to sources, changes are also likely in a few other positions in the personal and press wings of the premier.

Contacted by The Daily Star, Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury on Monday said the government would focus on posting efficient people in the bureaucracy to expedite implementation of development projects.

Cold gets

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temperatures of less than 59F (15C) for around 10-15 minutes caused hormonal changes equivalent to an hour of moderate exercise.

These same hormonal changes have been linked to the creation of brown fat, a form of fat that actually burns up energy.

Brown fat was once only thought to be found in babies, but scientists have since discovered that adults possess small amounts of the tissue, with slimmer people having more.

Around 1.7 ounces of brown fat are capable of burning up 300 calories in a day -- the same amount of energy stored in 1.7 ounces of white fat -- the tissue where excess calories are stored.

Jamaat hartal today

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party decided to enforce the hartal on Thursday (today).

Today's hartal will be the first shutdown since the BNP-led alliance wrapped up its non-stop hartals and blockades on January 12. The combine then announced that it would come back with a fresh schedule of demonstration programmes to oust the incumbent government.

BNP Joint Secretary Ruhul Kabir Rizvi Ahmed on Monday said the party had not decided whether it would extend its support to today's hartal. The party was yet to come up with any version till the filing of the report at 9:00pm yesterday.

Last Thursday, a Chittagong court handed down the death penalty to 14 people, including ex-state minister for home Lutfozzaman Babar, former industries minister and Jamaat ameer Nizami, and former top intelligence officials, on charges of smuggling 10 truckloads of arms into the port city during the last BNP-led government's

tenure.

Meanwhile, a group of pro-hartal activists yesterday evening exploded around 12 crude bombs in the capital's Paltan to create panic in the area.

Shibli Noman, assistant commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (Romna Zone), said: "A group of pro-hartal activists exploded around 12 crude bombs at EBL crossing in Paltan area around 6:40pm. None was injured in the incident."

JAMAAT VANDALISM ON HIGHWAY

No fewer than 25 buses were vandalised, as Jamaat-Shibir and BNP men went on the rampage blocking Dinajpur-Dhaka highway at Ranirbandar under Chiribandar upazila in Dinajpur yesterday evening.

They were protesting the arrest of a local Jamaat activist, our district correspondent reports.

The blockade was going on till the filing of the report at 9:00pm.

Due to the obstruction, vehicles got stuck on both sides of the road, causing untold

Yusuf's trial at final stage

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several hundred people dead in Khulna and Bagerhat.

During his 40-minute testimony, Mahbubur said his father was "not involved" in any such crimes and the charges brought against him were "totally false and baseless".

The 54-year-old witness said he along with his other family members used to live in Khulna town until mid-September in 1971 when his father had become a member of the Malek cabinet.

He added they had lived in a government residence on Minto Road in Dhaka until December 14 when the Malek government stepped down and they had taken shelter at the then Hotel Intercontinental, which was declared as a neutral zone by the Red Cross.

Mahbubur said five to six days into the Victory on December 16, the Red Cross had handed them including his

father to the "Indian army" and they stayed at Dhaka Cantonment for around one and a half months.

His father was then handed over to the Bangladesh government, said Mahbubur, adding that a case was filed against Yusuf under the Collaborator Act, 1972 and his father was awarded life sentence in that case.

Mahbubur further said his father was released in December 1973 after Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman declared general amnesty, as Yusuf was not accused of committing killing, genocide, looting or arson.

Killing, genocide, looting and arson were out of the purview of the general amnesty.

"It's true that my father was supporter of undivided Pakistan, but he was not involved in any such crimes," said Mahbubur, adding, "After 40 years of independence, several cases were filed against my father since 2009 only

for political reasons."

"During the Liberation War in 1971, my father never has gone to any place under Bagerhat sub-division... while he was a minister, he had gone everywhere under government protocol. The charges brought against my father are totally false and baseless," he claimed.

During cross-examination

Mahbubur however said his father had contested the by-polls of Pakistan national assembly in 1971 from Khulna-2 constituency, which was constituted with Bagerhat sub-division and some parts of Barisal district.

As prosecutor Syed Haider Ali asked him about the result, Mahbubur said he didn't know if he had won or lost the polls.

In reply to a question of the tribunal, the witness said they had hailed from Rajair village in Sarankholia, Bagerhat.

Powerful ex-GM finally indicted

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According to the charge sheet, the railway published an advertisement in a national daily for recruiting four fuel checkers. Admit cards were issued to 268 candidates. But 125 examinees sat for the test on March 25, 2011, at two centres in Chittagong and Rajshahi.

The ACC found that the accused railway officials altered the answer sheets and results in the tabulation sheets, and recruited those who failed in the exam in exchange for money.

Mridha and the two other officials are also accused in five other cases filed for their involvement in irregularities in other recruitments in the railway.

Mridha was suspended on April 15, 2012, a week after he was caught with Tk 70 lakh inside the Pilkhana Headquarters of the Border Guard Bangladesh. The

money had allegedly been collected from