

Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazlul Huq The Braveheart of Bengal

AMANULLAH

OCTOBER 26 is an auspicious day for the Bengali people, for on this day in 1873 was born Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazlul Huq, the great leader of Bengal, who came as a saviour of his fellow Bengalis from the tyranny of the exploiting landlords and British colonial rule. A man who, with his rare qualities of head and heart, indomitable courage and mental power, fought throughout his life to protect the interests of his people. And it was he who instilled in them the belief and confidence that the Bengalis are to live as a nation with freedom, honour and dignity.

Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazlul Huq is a legendary figure in Bengal and All-India politics and in the history of movements for social change. Like many other leaders in public life, Fazlul Huq had his lamentations over some of his past actions and decisions. But to delve into those is hardly possible in a short piece like this one.

Fazlul Huq lived a life of dignity and honour. Of course, there were occasions when circumstances around him were not all that pleasant. At times he had to confront resentful critics often misunderstanding his intent and purpose.

Fazlul Huq's principal political adversary, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, founder of Pakistan and its first



AK Fazlul Huq (1873-1962)

Governor General, lies buried in a grave in distant Karachi. Jinnah presided over the All-India Muslim League Conference at Lahore where Fazlul Huq, then Prime Minister of Bengal, moved the historic Lahore Resolution for a Muslim homeland in India. Only two years after he moved the resolution, Jinnah attacked him as a "treacherous person doing incalculable harm to the Muslims of Bengal."

Mohammad Ali Jinnah as the Governor General visited Dhaka in March 1948 and addressed a public meeting on the Ramna Race Course ground (now Suhrawardy Udyan). In that meeting, he asserted that Urdu

shall be the only State Language of Pakistan. Thus, he sowed the seeds of Bengali Language Movement, which ultimately led to the independence movement of Bangladesh.

Jinnah, during his visit, must have realised that there was growing unrest and discontent among the Bengalis. He must have also realised the importance of a meeting with Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazlul Huq for a kind of reconciliation between the two stalwarts of All-India Muslim politics. It was at the instance of Jinnah that a reluctant Fazlul Huq was finally persuaded to sit for a meeting of reconciliation. The first session of talks between the two was somewhat

of a failure and ended in anger and disgust. However, the second sitting seemed to be useful because of a conciliatory approach by an otherwise arrogant and uncompromising Jinnah.

At the end of the meeting, Fazlul Huq's assurance of cooperation gave some relief to Jinnah, who was worried about the defence of Pakistan's Eastern Wing.

Fazlul Huq, the illustrious leader of Bengal of All-India fame, was widely known to have a chequered political career and was often blamed by his critics for his vacillating character in politics. In the face of criticism by his rivals, Fazlul Huq stuck to his own ways and means in his political activities. He used to tell

his people quite often that he had an ideal of his own for which he acted in the ways suiting the time and circumstance.

By way of personal explanation, Fazlul Huq said, "It is my crime that I love the common man of Bengal, otherwise there would not have been any need for me to deviate from a chartered path or fixed opinion." He said, his ideal was to serve the greatest good of the greatest number of the masses of Bengal's poor peasantry and other have-nots. He also said that he had noticed in the whirlwind of complex politics that it would not be possible to perform the job properly. So, he had to change his opinion under compulsion.

Fazlul Huq was a practising

Muslim, proud of his Bengali identity, and staunchly believed in Bengali nationalism. He was secular in his approach to socio-political issues. And he always worked for Hindu-Muslim communal harmony.

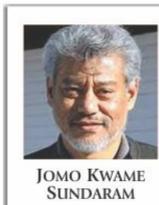
Fazlul Huq was considered by PC Ray, the great scientist, as a symbol of Hindu-Muslim unity on which depended the future existence of the Bengali nation. PC Ray, Fazlul Huq's one-time teacher, said he did not understand the Indian nationalism of the Congress. He knew only Bengali nationalism. And he believed that only Fazlul Huq could establish this nationalism. He said Fazlul Huq was "from head to toe" a Bengali and a Muslim at the same time, adding that he had never seen such an excellent combination of pure Bengali character and pure Muslim belief.

In one of Fazlul Huq's brief biographies, Bhabesh Roy, the author, began his writing with lavish praise and compliments for Sher-e-Bangla as a leader. "Sometimes some people are born who love their motherland a lot more intensely, may be very differently. And in the process of loving their land and the people differently - they themselves emerge as a different kind of human being - extraordinary personality." AK Fazlul Huq, indeed, was such an extraordinary personality.

Amanullah is former chief editor of Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS) and former director general of Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB).

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Why lessons from the 1997 Asian crisis were lost



JOMO KWAME SUNDARAM

VARIOUS different, and sometimes contradictory, lessons have been drawn from the 1997-1998 East Asian crises. Rapid or V-shaped recoveries and renewed growth in most developing countries in the new century also served to postpone the urgency of far-reaching reforms. The crises' complex ideological, political and policy implications have also made it difficult to draw lessons from the crises.

Conventional wisdom
The conventional wisdom was to blame the crisis on bad economic policies pursued by the governments concerned. Of course, the vested interests favouring the international financial status quo or further liberalisation also impeded implementing needed reforms. Such interests continue to be supported by the media.

Citing currency crisis theory, the initial response to the crises was to blame poor macroeconomic, especially fiscal policies, although most East Asian economies had been maintaining budgetary surpluses for some years. Nevertheless, the IMF and others, including the international business media, urged spending cuts and other pro-cyclical policies (e.g. raising interest rates) which worsened the downturns.

Such policies were adopted in much of the region from late 1997, precipitating sharper economic collapses. By the second quarter of 1998, however, it was increasingly recognised that these policies had worsened, rather than reversed the economic deterioration, transforming currency and financial crises into crises of the real economy.

By early 1998, however, as

macroeconomic orthodoxy lost credibility, the blame shifted to political economy, condemning "cronyism" as the cause. US Federal Reserve Bank chair Alan Greenspan, US Treasury Deputy Secretary Lawrence Summers and IMF Managing Director Michel Camdessus formed a chorus criticising Asian corporate governance in quick sequence

Jeffrey Sachs supported Keynesian counter-cyclical policies.

Regional contagion and response

The transformation of the region's financial systems from the late 1980s had made their economies much more vulnerable and fragile. Rapid economic growth and financial liberalisation

suddenly became massive outflows when the crisis began.

Significant inflows were also attracted by stock market and other asset price bubbles. The herd behaviour characteristic of capital markets exacerbated pro-cyclical market behaviour, heightening panic during downturns. Fickle market behaviour

Much later, in Chiang Mai, Thailand, the region's finance ministers approved a series of bilateral credit lines or swap facilities, conditional on IMF approval. Many years later, the finance ministers of Japan, China and South Korea ensured that these arrangements were regionalised, and no longer simply the aggregation of bilateral commitments, while increasing the size of the credit facility.

New international financial architecture

A year after the crisis began in July 1997, US President Clinton called for a new international financial architecture. The apparent spread of the Asian crisis to Brazil and Russia underscored that contagion could be more than regional.

The collapse of Long-Term Capital Management (LTCM) following the Russian crisis led the US Federal Reserve to intervene in the market to coordinate a private sector bailout. This legitimised government interventions to ensure functioning financial systems and sufficient liquidity to finance economic recovery.

After the US Fed lowered interest rates, capital flowed to East Asia once again. The Malaysian government's establishment of bailout institutions and mechanisms in mid-1998 and its capital controls on outflows from September 1998 also warned that other countries might go their own way.

Ironically, the economic recoveries in the region from late 1998 weakened the resolve to reform the international financial system. Talk of a new international financial architecture began to fade, as recovery was presented as proof of international financial system resilience.

Jomo Kwame Sundaram, a former economics professor and United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development, received the Wassily Leontief Prize for Advancing the Frontiers of Economic Thought in 2007.

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The initial response to the crises was to blame poor macroeconomic, especially fiscal policies, although most East Asian economies had been maintaining budgetary surpluses for some years. PHOTO: PORNCHEI KITTIVONGSAKUL/AFP

over a month from late January.

The dubious conventional explanations of the Asian crises were not shared by more independently minded mainstream economists with less ideological prejudices. The World Bank's chief economist Joseph Stiglitz and other prominent Western economists such as Paul Krugman and

attracted massive, but easily reversible, footloose capital inflows.

New regulations encouraged short-term lending, typically "rolled over" in good times. Much of these came from Japanese and continental European banks as UK and US banks continued to recover from the 1980s' sovereign debt crises. But these gradual inflows

also exacerbated contagion, worsening regional neighbourhood effects.

Japan's offer of USD 100 billion to manage the crisis in the third quarter of 1997 was quickly stymied by the US and the IMF. Instead, a more modest amount was made available under the Miyazawa Plan to finance more modest facilities, institutions and instruments.

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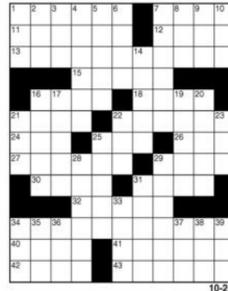
HAILE SELASSIE

EMPEROR OF ETHIOPIA FROM 1930 TO 1974

Throughout history, it has been the inaction of those who could have acted, the indifference of those who should have known better, the silence of the voice of justice when it mattered most, that has made it possible for evil to triumph.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Hoofed it
 - 7 Canary snack
 - 11 Meeting slate
 - 12 "Sesame Street" character
 - 13 Appointment
 - 15 Turns suddenly
 - 16 Diner desserts
 - 18 Cooking fat
 - 21 Stadium group
 - 22 Pewter ingredient
 - 24 Bank offering
 - 25 Dapper fellow
 - 26 - Paulo
 - 27 Bone-muscle connector
 - 29 Expense
 - 30 Doe or buck
 - 31 Handle
- DOWN**
- 1 Hunk of gum
 - 2 Historic time
 - 3 "-- Miserables"
 - 4 Contents of a kitchen block
 - 5 Borders
 - 6 Copenhagen native
 - 7 Establishes
 - 8 Yale student
 - 9 Punk rock offshoot
 - 10 Oxford bigwig
 - 14 Fiery crime
 - 16 Did a KP chore
 - 17 Nonsensical
 - 19 English racing town
 - 20 Make fun of
 - 21 In shape
 - 22 Beans buy
 - 23 Go bad
 - 25 Hip-hop headgear
 - 28 Red-ink amounts
 - 29 Milk buy
 - 31 "Swell!"
 - 33 Drawer feature
 - 34 Hold up
 - 35 Ostrich cousin
 - 36 Confession item
 - 37 Charged bit
 - 38 Flamenco call
 - 39 Bottom line



YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

BANAL HALLOS
EXILE GLOBE
DELTA WAGON
JINREI SET
SOFTSELL
ESAU PLACES
ELUDE STOVE
DONEUP IDEA
STOUTEST
AYE ETTU
HONOR IDIOM
ADDUP CELLO
BASTE ASKEW

BEETLE BAILEY

BY MORT WALKER



BABY BLUES

BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

