



Wearing a sari made of jute and flanked by dignitaries in blue jute-made jackets, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurates a jute product fair in the city's Bangabandhu International Conference Centre yesterday cutting a jute ribbon. The purse Hasina had yesterday along with the sandals she wore was also made of jute. Yesterday was the National Jute Day.

PHOTO: PID

Work to tap potentials of jute: PM

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Hasina stressed the need for regaining the glory of jute and its products. The government has been taking programmes for the development, collection and preservation of jute, she added.

She said people involved with the jute sector should look at new items and markets for exporting jute goods to fetch more foreign currencies. "We

must not stick to one or two items for our export basket... we have to diversify our export as well as capture new markets."

Referring to decades-old machinery in public jute mills, she said those have to be replaced. The government has taken steps to procure new machines for the mills, she told the programme.

The premier urged all, including officials and workers, to be sincere in

protecting the mills as those provide livelihood to them.

Mirza Azam, state minister for textiles and jute, and Saber Hossain Chowdhury, chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on the ministry, were present at the programme as special guests, with Textiles and Jute Minister M Emaz Uddin Pramanik in the chair.

Earlier, the PM handed over

National Jute Award to 12 individuals and organisations under 11 categories for their contributions to the development of the jute sector.

She also awarded six winners of a countrywide essay competition.

Some 235 kinds of jute products have been put on display at the three-day fair. Hasina went round different stalls of the fair and witnessed a documentary on jute.

The thunder roars

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"Today, I appear before you with a heavy heart. You know and understand everything. We tried with our lives. But the painful matter is that today, in Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna, Rajshahi and Rangpur, the streets are dyed red with the blood of our brethren. Today the people of Bangla want freedom, the people of Bangla want to live, the people of Bangla want their rights," Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman said, his words ringing.

The undisputed leader of the Bangalees, Sheikh Mujib, at the mammoth rally at the Race Course ground on March 7, 1971, called on the freedom-loving Bangalees to fight back against the oppressive Pakistani regime.

In this historic speech, he mentioned the four conditions under which he and the Awami League would

attend the National Assembly meeting to be held on March 25 -- the immediate lifting of martial law, the immediate withdrawal of all military personnel to their barracks, the immediate transfer of power to elected representatives of the people, and a proper inquiry into the loss of life during the conflict.

He also gave several directives for a civil disobedience movement -- people should not pay taxes; government servants should take orders only from him; the secretariat, government and semi-government offices and courts in East Pakistan should observe strikes; with necessary exemptions announced from time to time, only local and inter-district telephone lines should function; railways and ports could continue to function, but their workers should not co-operate if they were used to repress the people of East Pakistan.

The speech, now included in Unesco's Memory of the World Register as a "documentary heritage", encompassed the history of Pakistan preceding the last 23 years.

Bangabandhu spoke in great detail about the many ways in which the people had been denied their political and economic rights by successive Pakistani governments. His tale of exploitation resonated across the thronging crowd. They felt every word on their skins, in their blood.

"If a single bullet is fired upon us henceforth, if the murder of my people does not cease, I call upon you to turn every home into a fortress against their onslaught. Use whatever you can put your hands on to confront this enemy. And for the sake of life, even if I am not around to guide or direct you continue your movement in a ceaseless manner."

And then in a roaring voice he

uttered the words that defined the road to the future:

"Since we have given blood, we will give more of it. Insha'Allah, we will free the people of this land.

"The struggle this time is for emancipation. The struggle this time is for independence.

"Joy Bangla!" This defining moment touched the hearts of every Bangalee across the then East Pakistan, now Bangladesh. It mobilised the whole nation, excepting a few pro-Pakistani elements, to prepare for the ultimate sacrifice.

His words became every Bangalee's strength with which they boldly put their lives on the line for the freedom of this nation.

This very speech had set the tone for the Liberation War that would officially begin on March 26, 1971. And this very speech would become the ballad for freedom.

Success without morality not acceptable

Says President Abdul Hamid

UNB, Dhaka

Mentioning the recent incidents of question paper leak in public examinations, President Abdul Hamid yesterday said parents want to see their children succeed, but an achievement without morality is not acceptable.

The president came up with the remark while addressing the inauguration ceremony of the National Primary Education Week-2018 at Osmani Memorial Hall in the city in the afternoon.

He observed that the question leak has become the most discussed topic in recent times. Reports have been published in different newspapers about the alleged involvement of teachers, students and guardians.

"Every parent wants to see the high-

est success of their children. But success without morality is not desirable in any way," he added.

"The success achieved through honesty, hard work and diligence is the real success."



President Hamid said teachers and guardians should have to take initiative to ensure proper education so that students stay away from any kind of wrongdoing and unethical activities.

"It is our moral obligation to ensure that each student can start his/her academic career on a solid foundation. If this can be done, then cheating in examination as well as incident of question paper leak will come to an end."

President Hamid urged guardians to provide their children with moral

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Bangabandhu's finest hour

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them right away. But how were they to come? Was freedom to come through negotiations or would it require us to wage an armed struggle? And what did we understand by armed struggle? Did we really know what it would entail? We romanticised about it, but knew nothing of it.

Things were becoming increasingly obvious that to realise our legitimate rights we may have to split the exiting country asunder and seek independence. But how is one to start an armed independence movement? What would be the consequence of making a declaration for it right now? What was needed for us to do in case we were to start such an armed struggle right away.

Though we all talked about it, and some may have even said so in public, yet it was for our elected leader, it was that man who was to speak to the nation on this day, who would have to take us through that uncharted path.

Many do not fully appreciate that a premature call for action or an unprepared move could nip all our dreams in the bud. Many a revolution failed because of that.

The man who should be the Prime Minister of whole of Pakistan by dint of his electoral victory had to take the right step at the right time. The critical question was when would be the right time to make that bold move? That was the burden that was being shouldered by the man who was to speak.

And this is where the speciality and uniqueness of the 7th March speech lies. One must fully understand the very critical nature of the speech and the crucial moment when Bangabandhu was making it. We were all aware that the Pakistani government and especially its military was waiting to pounce on us with all their might for any wrong move that Bangabandhu would take.

The brilliance of the speech is that it says everything without giving the enemy elements that could be used to hold us legally responsible under international law for breaking up the formal Pakistan. Though by then we knew that the country had actually broken up in every sense yet the nuances of the legal world had to be observed and Bangabandhu did so most dexterously in his speech.

To fully appreciate the magnificence of this speech one has to understand the context in which it was delivered. Awami League had fought an election and won the majority of seats in the parliament of Pakistan. Following the results, Gen Yahya had declared that Sheikh Mujib would be the Prime Minister of Pakistan. It was Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and some conniving army generals who did not want to transfer power to someone whose electoral programme was to realise the legitimate rights of the Bangalee people enshrined in the now famous six points. There were many indications about the impending betrayal of the verdict of the December '70 elections, yet it was not till the postponement of the session of the newly elected parliament that Bangabandhu could really give a call for an all-out movement.

When the session of the parliament was postponed on 1st March, '71, the fatal shot to the existence of united Pakistan was fired right into its chest. And it was on the night of 25th March, when Pakistani military cracked down on the civilian population of what was till then one country, and started what was later to become a genocide of the Bangalees that Pakistan was killed and buried. It was in the midst of this highly charged transition period -- that started from the 1st March -- when events were unfolding at a break-neck speed that Bangabandhu had to give this speech. And here lies the beauty and the craftsmanship of this speech, which transforms it as a classic in political ora-

tory, which has rightly been honoured by UNESCO recently.

The speech had to live up to the high expectation of the people who wanted their independence and yet there should be nothing in it that could give an outright excuse to the Pakistan army to start military action against the unarmed Bangalee people. In fact, Tikka Khan's bands of killers would want nothing better than to be given a publicly announced excuse for an army action which we now know to be genocidal and which had already been decided upon by the army junta.

So Bangabandhu had to say everything, and yet not give the excuse that Pakistan military was looking for. He had to stand steadfast and yet keep open the doors for negotiations which he knew and we understood to be, nothing but a farce.

Under no circumstances could he appear to be the one responsible for the breakdown of the talks. And yet he had to take his people forward and give them the right directions, maintain the militancy, ask them to take all the necessary preparatory steps, and clear people's minds about the final goal. It was a political and intellectual challenge of the highest kind, and it could be tackled only by a speech of the type that Bangabandhu delivered that day.

Take for example the content of the speech. In it he gradually builds up the whole rationale for the movement that has been going on. He argues, cajoles, pleads, demands and finally warns, not to take lightly the demand of a people who have realised their strength through struggle. He talks of peace and yet gives clear signals that peace cannot come at the cost of capitulation. He talks of sacrifice, but not in terms of a helpless people who are weak but in terms of a courageous and bold people who have knowingly taken upon themselves a task which they knew to be an arduous and dangerous one and for which they were ready to face any consequence.

There was superb cleverness in the construction of the speech in which he said all that he needed to be said and yet the enemy could not hold him responsible for having said anything which was illegal.

The voice in the speech is one of its most magnificent aspects. It was so bold that the whole nation could and in fact did, take strength from it. There was the unhesitant enunciation of everything that needed to be said. There was such a magnificent modulation of voice that every word uttered seemed irreplaceable. The way the words flowed it came from the heart and yet never lost that fine balance that a political speech of such significance had to have especially at that moment in time.

Throughout it all the strength of the man came out and touched us all who heard him, drawing us all close to him and making us automatically and unquestioningly trust and repose faith in him.

If ever a speech united, strengthened, enthused, inspired a people, and gave courage to them to become bolder and more determined than they usually are, it was Bangabandhu's speech of 7th March 1971.

If ever one single speech became the most effective motivational weapon for a nation at war then this was it.

If ever a speech of a leader became the constant companion for young freedom fighters (like myself and millions like me) facing an enemy known for their proficiency and ferocity and which acted to link the people in a spellbinding string of words and sounds, then this speech was so, for all of us, the freedom fighters, spread throughout the nook and corner of what was then our enslaved motherland.

The above is an updated version of the article originally published 21 years ago as a commentary in this paper in 1997.

Ethnic cleansing continues in Rakhine: UN

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"The Government of Myanmar is busy telling the world that it is ready to receive Rohingya returnees, while at the same time its forces are continuing to drive them into Bangladesh," Gilmour said.

"Safe, dignified and sustainable returns are of course impossible under current conditions."

Myanmar's military has largely closed off the north of Rakhine state to journalists, diplomats and most aid organisations apart from brief chaperoned trips.

It has justified the crackdown as an effort to root out Rohingya mili-

tants who attacked border police posts in August, killing about a dozen people.

But the UN, rights groups and many Western powers have accused the army of using those attacks as a pretext to expel a minority which has faced brutal discrimination for decades.

James Gomez, Amnesty International's director for Southeast Asia and the Pacific, said the UN's new findings "sadly echo our own".

"Fleeing Rohingya told us how they are still being forcibly starved in a bid to quietly squeeze them out of the country," he said.

Doctors Without Borders (MSF) has

estimated that at least 6,700 Rohingyas were killed in the first month of the crackdown alone.

Hundreds of Rohingya villages were torched, and recent satellite imagery showed at least 55 villages have since been completely bulldozed, removing all traces of buildings, wells and vegetation.

Myanmar's military has denied committing any abuses outside one incident in the Rakhine village of Inn Din, where it said security forces assisted with the killing of 10 unarmed Rohingyas.

Rights groups say that is the tip of the iceberg from a force with a grim

history of abuses around the country and open hostility towards the Rohingyas.

In a Facebook post yesterday, deputy army chief Soe Win reiterated the military's stance that the "Rohingya" are not a genuine ethnic group in Myanmar -- a view shared by many in the Buddhist majority, where there is broad support for the army campaign.

Myanmar's civilian government, led by former democracy activist Aung San Suu Kyi, lacks control over the military but has been castigated by rights groups for failing to speak out in defence of the Rohingyas.

Court accepts

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treatment and he could not appear before the court yesterday.

Mahmudur Rahman, now on a High Court bail, was present in the court.

The court also issued arrest warrants for Mohammad Ullah Mamun, vice-president of Jatiyatabadi Samajik Sangskritik Sangstha (Jasas), his son Rizvi Ahmed Caesar, and Mizanur Rahman Bhuiyan, an expat businessman living in the United States.

After accepting the charges, Metropolitan Magistrate Md Sarafuzzaman Ansari directed officer-in-charge of Paltan Police Station to submit the report on execution of arrest warrants by April 5.

On February 22, detectives pressed charges against Mahmudur Rahman, Shafik and three others for their alleged involvement in plotting to kidnap and kill Joy.

Police mentioned that Shafik and Mahmudur as the masterminds behind the "conspiracy to kidnap and kill PM's son Joy" in the charge

sheet. Mamun aided and abetted, detectives said in the charge sheet.

Caesar collected information on Joy from the FBI and sent it to others accused in the charge sheet. The DB filed the case with Paltan Police Station in August 2015.

According to the case statement, Mamun and a number of top leaders of the BNP and its allies met in the UK, the US and various places in Bangladesh before September 2012 and conspired to abduct and kill Joy.

In March 2015, a US court convicted Caesar of bribing an FBI special agent to collect information on a Bangladeshi political figure.

The US justice department did not name the politician, but it is believed to be Joy.

In a Facebook post on March 9 last year, Joy, also the ICT affairs adviser to the prime minister, accused the BNP leaders of conspiring to abduct and kill him.

Shafik, a British citizen, has worked in various media outlets including the BBC. He came to the limelight after becoming the editor of the weekly Jai Jai Din in the 80's.

State of emergency

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Sri Lanka's parliament yesterday issued an apology to its Muslim minority, which constitutes 10 percent of the country's population of 21 million.

The violence in Kandy, a serene region of verdant hills frequented by tourists and pilgrims, has threatened to reignite communal tensions that have roiled Sri Lanka in recent weeks.

WAR-ERA MEASURES The emergency declaration was made after a special cabinet meeting with President Sirisena.

It is the first time in seven years Sri Lanka has resorted to such a measure.

The island nation was under a state of emergency for nearly three decades during the civil war, when thousands disappeared and civilians were subjected to rights abuses.

Amnesty International said it was important authorities took action to protect minorities from violence and hold those responsible to account.

"But a state of emergency must not become a pretext for further human rights abuses," said Amnesty's South Asia director Biraj Patnaik.

Riots erupted on Monday after a man from the island's mainly Buddhist Sinhalese majority died at the hands of a Muslim mob last week.

Hakeem said the riots were concentrated in Kandy, but the government wanted to send a strong message following recent outbreaks of communal violence elsewhere in the country.

Mobs set fire to Muslim-owned businesses and attacked a mosque in the east of the country last week after a Muslim chef was accused of adding contraceptives to food sold to Sinhalese customers.

The government dismissed the allegation as baseless and ordered the arrest of those fomenting unrest in the area.

Last November riots in the south of the island left one man dead and homes and vehicles damaged.

In June 2014 riots between Buddhists and Muslims left four dead and many injured.

That bout of violence was instigated by a Buddhist extremist group whose leaders are on trial, accused of spurring religious conflict.