

A Note of Salute to General Moeen U Ahmed

Sukhamaya Bain

It is indeed refreshing to see Lieutenant General Moeen U Ahmed saying quite a few right things recently before a group of freedom fighters and prominent citizens of Bangladesh; <http://www.thedailystar.net/2007/03/28/d7032801011.htm>. While a military officer leading the country is not my choice, the General in this case seems quite a bit different from the ones that have come to the forefront of state power in Bangladesh and its predecessor, Pakistan.

The Nation Has Failed to Recognize the Father of the Nation:

After much turmoil in Bangladesh over the last three decades, it is a sign of hope that the head of the country's military is acknowledging the contributions of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

While I personally do not call him "the Father of the Nation", I do not object to it either. In 1970-71, he was undisputedly the supreme leader of the Bangalees of Pakistan. He sacrificed most of his life fighting for the rights of the Bangalees of East Bengal, which now comprises most of Bangladesh. In the history of Bengal there has never been a more popular leader than the Mujib of 1971.

Mujib's fight was for the Bangalees to have the proper share of power and dignity within the framework of the nation of Pakistan. He tried his best to preserve Pakistan until the very end in March 1971, when the brutal Pakistani military left no choice other than a liberation war for the Bangalees. Mujib did not really conceive of Bangladesh. There are credible indications that after the creation of Bangladesh, he regretted the break-up of Pakistan.

The credit of the fatherhood of Bangladesh probably belongs more to General Yahia Khan or Zulfikar Ali Bhutto than to Mujibur Rahman. Of course, that would make Bangladesh the creation of a rape, as opposed to that of an affectionate love-making. Thus, it is better to give Mujib the credit, even if that is inaccurate.

However, fatherhood of the nation or not, Mujib's contributions for the rights of the Bangalees of today's Bangladesh, including their independent nationhood, should be recognized. And that should be done in spite of the mistakes that he has done during 1972-1975. His assassination in 1975 should be written as a shameful and sad chapter in the history of Bangladesh.

The War against Corruption:

Indeed, as General Ahmed has noted, the corrupt politicians have hindered the progress of the country, and a war against corruption needs to start now. Corruptions have many facets. Injustice is no less a corruption than making illegal money.

The care-taker government headed by Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed and supported by General Moeen Ahmed has so far been even-handed in trying to bring corrupt politicians and businessmen to justice. The people of Bangladesh have been appreciative of that.

It was refreshing to see Dr. Ahmed, in his first address to the nation, criticizing religion-mongering in politics. Using religion and religious groupings for illegitimate political and financial gains has been a major facet of corruption in the country over the last three decades.

Prosecution of War-Criminals:

I do not know much about General Ahmed's background. But it is great to see him talking about prosecuting the war criminals of 1971. Sheikh Mujib was not serious about the subject. A freedom fighter, named Ziaur Rahman, who was in power in Bangladesh by some unfair means, also did not talk about bringing the heinous war-criminals of 1971 to justice. A nation that is unwilling to seek justice for its innocent people who were victimized by the forces that opposed the nationhood is really an illegitimate nation. The nation of Bangladesh is overdue for getting out of that shame.

Conclusion:

General Ahmed and Dr. Ahmed do not have any mandate from the people to run the country, and it may be too much to ask of them to successfully handle all the problems of Bangladesh. But that is the challenge that they have gotten into. The failures of elected representatives have made it necessary for the country to have a few good, strong and responsible individuals to take charge. Fairly or unfairly, the country expects the current leadership to make miraculous changes in politics for an honorable and prosperous Bangladesh. I, for one, wish these individuals success.