



THE POLITICAL
THOUGHT OF
**TARIQUE
RAHMAN**

—— Empowerment of the Grassroots People ——

Editorial Board

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Bangladesh Policy Forum Cambridge was founded by some Bangladeshi researchers and alumni from different disciplines of the University of Cambridge. It was established to produce and promote policy ideas drawing on the participation of students, academics and practitioners from Cambridge and other leading think tanks across the world, which in turn, would contribute towards a more transparent and democratic governance in Bangladesh. In essence, the Forum functions to facilitate policy research, analysis and advocacy for communicating knowledge and ideas relating to social, political and economic development of Bangladesh. The objective is to converge the ideas and passion of the youth of Bangladesh situated both within and outside the country, and in doing so, provide a platform to discuss and debate the policy trajectory the country should be undertaking.

Bangladesh Policy Forum Cambridge is delighted to publish this book for the benefit of national and international readers to familiarise themselves with the life and political thoughts of Tarique Rahman. Given the scope of our endeavour we harbour for Bangladesh, this book is selected as a means of addressing the policy concerns of the people of Bangladesh. Building on our experience of meeting and speaking with Tarique Rahman, we have come to realise that he is a forward-looking politician who wants to forget the atrocities and injustice that he has endured. In order to move on and warrant the future development of Bangladesh, he utilises academic and professional expertise, engages in rigorous research, and ensures evidence-based policy making. Tarique Rahman's awareness of global best practices through action-oriented research is of particular interest to us and we are pleased to outline some of his policy viewpoints in this book. Furthermore, the book reflects his vision for a developed and progressive Bangladesh through the empowerment of the grassroots and their inclusion in the critical decision making processes.

The articles contributed by eminent individuals from various professional backgrounds reveal that Tarique Rahman's politics is of great deal of interest to the people of Bangladesh and beyond, and he is planning to bring forth considerable positive changes to advance Bangladesh not just in the economic front but also in the social and political spheres, where cohesion

is needed to create an inclusive, tolerant and just country. It is clear that his appeal is not confined to the followers of his political party, as he wants to reach out to all Bangladeshis who are the main proponents of a new approach to politics and take the nation forward engaging in constructive ideals and methods of governance.

Tarique Rahman is speculated as the leader who has the commitment and ideals to fulfil the expectations of all Bangladeshis. He has already proven to be an astute party organiser with his own style of politics of bottom-up empowerment and two-way involvement, and now he has incorporated a method that would integrate the general Bangladeshis with the mainstream politics and national development schemes when he decides to enter the public life again. We strongly believe that Tarique Rahman will succeed in his endeavours, and it gives us great pleasure and pride in being affiliated with the publication of this book on his past, present and future. The ideas and thoughts discussed here would contribute positively to the existing policy discourse and enrich the debates on the kind of future all Bangladeshis want to embark upon.

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EDITORIAL

We unveil this book titled *The Political Thought of Tarique Rahman*, about the Senior Vice Chairman of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), to present the readers with detailed insights into his personal and political life, and also to share his visions for the betterment of the country so that an accurate representation of his political ideology and commitment to Bangladesh can be portrayed. Tarique Rahman firmly believes in the common people's participation in the democratic process as a means of achieving social stability, economic growth and national development. He strives to bestow the grassroots members of his political party with a range of opportunities so that they could develop and influence the strategic and operational decisions of the top leadership. Likewise, he envisages in propagating a bottom-up approach to inform national policy making through the involvement of the rural people, urban dwellers, and specialists across all sectors.

This book is a collection of seventeen articles along with a biography of Tarique Rahman, contributed by distinguished politicians, academics, journalists and other professionals who have either worked with Tarique Rahman or familiarised themselves with his progressive political thoughts and wide-ranging developmental actions. The contributors discuss Tarique Rahman's vision of building a dynamic political party to uplift the well being of the people and project how they perceive his future role in Bangladesh's polity. Moreover, they illustrate his idea of a unified decision making process engaging all critical stakeholders, divulge some of his political experiences in empowering people all across the country, and articulate his exchange of views with professional and academic experts in various sectors.

We deem that our efforts in this book will assist all those interested in the present and future politics of Bangladesh to gain an in-depth understanding of the life and thoughts of a visionary political moderniser whose commitment has long been to mobilise the people and change the face of his country. We have full confidence that the dissemination of the political thoughts of Tarique Rahman is time befitting not only for Bangladesh, but also for other developing countries that have an ambition to change the status quo and move forward with greater success in the continuing endeavour of socio-economic development. We look forward to taking the book one step further in the days ahead, and producing subsequent editions by incorporating the updates of the pertinent information.

TARIQUE RAHMAN AT A GLANCE

Family and Early Life

Tarique Rahman was born on 20th November 1965. His life is integrated with the origin, inception and emergence of Bangladesh as an independent state. He is the eldest son of Shaheed (Martyred) President Ziaur Rahman, the decorated hero of the liberation war of Bangladesh, who proclaimed the country's independence, formed the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), and established the multiparty parliamentary democracy in the country. Tarique's mother Begum Khaleda Zia, the current Chairperson of the BNP, was elected as the Prime Minister for record three times. Tarique has a younger brother named Arafat Rahman. Tarique is married to Dr Zubaida Rahman, daughter of Late Rear Admiral Mahbub Ali Khan, who was the Chief of Staff of the Bangladesh Navy and also served as the Minister of Telecommunications and Minister of Agriculture in subsequent governments. Zubaida Rahman is a qualified cardiologist by training and studied at Dhaka Medical College, the premier medical college of Bangladesh. Tarique and Zubaida were married on 3rd February 1994, and they have a daughter named Zaima Zarnaz Rahman.

When Tarique Rahman grew up to go to school, he was admitted to a school in Dhaka popularly known as Shaheen High School and College, primarily meant for the children of the Army personnel. Having passed the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examinations with commanding results, Tarique entered the University of Dhaka as a student of International Relations, a subject of his choice. While in the University, he read political thoughts of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, Locke, Roussou, Voltaire, Karl Marx and other exceptional thinkers. He concentrated more on socio-economic and political subjects, including the in-depth study of the gradual development of democracy and the dynamics of economic liberalisation. Tarique graduated in a volatile situation at the height of the nationwide movement against the autocratic regime of Hussain Muhammad Ershad, which his mother Begum Khaleda Zia was leading. Upon completion of studies, Tarique became a successful entrepreneur and established several businesses, particularly in the textile and agro-based industries.

Political Rise and Prominence

Tarique Rahman joined the BNP in early 1990s as a primary member in the party unit of his father's birth place, i.e., Gabtali upazila (sub-district) of Bogra district. He actively assembled support for the party during the national elections of 1991, when the transition was taking place from the autocratic ruling to the democratic government. He was a member of the BNP's National Campaign Strategy Committee, and was also responsible for coordinating the election campaigns in five constituencies from which his mother Begum Khaleda Zia was contesting. During that period, he proactively organised the BNP units of Bogra and changed the inherent organisational culture to make the party's politics more production and development oriented.

After the BNP's success in the national elections of 1991 and the formation of the new government, Tarique Rahman was offered a senior role in the party as recognition of his contributions. However, he was reluctant to take up a higher position in order to boast enough time strengthening the party at the grassroots level. As such, for many years, he remained active in developing the Bogra units of the BNP. During the national elections of 1996, the party's grassroots activists, as well as the senior leadership, requested Tarique to contest in a constituency from Bogra. But Tarique declined the offer with a view to furthering his work at the grassroots level and coordinating the election campaign for his mother.

During the ruling of the Awami League government in 1996–2001, Tarique Rahman mobilised movements against the misrules and atrocities of the government. He actively campaigned to address issues of economic deprivation and started championing a countrywide consultation programme in getting to know the plight of the people living in the rural areas. This large-scale programme, first time in the history of Bangladesh of this nature, drew great popularity and drove mass mobilisation against the government, which in turn, played an instrumental role in fostering the return of the BNP to power. In the national elections held in 2001, the party enjoyed a landslide victory with a two-third majority. There was immense pressure on Tarique from the party grassroots, as well as the national leadership, to assume a position within the government. But time and again, he refused and pledged to keep working within the BNP instead, so that he could build a strong party which would then build a stronger nation.

Thereafter, the Standing Committee of the BNP, its highest decision making body, unanimously selected Tarique Rahman the Senior Joint Secretary

General as recognition of his effective organisational and administrative skills. Having attained a central position in the party for the first time, Tarique replicated his Bogra model of progressive politics and reorganised the BNP to bring forth positive qualitative changes. He expanded his consultation programme further and travelled from one village to the other and one corner of the country to the other to actively participate in discussions with the leaders and activists of the BNP, as well as to meet and greet the general villagers and the common people. In doing so, he reformulated the BNP as the country's only political party truly of the people, by the people, and for the people. Seeing the popularity and potential of Tarique and realising how he could transform the face of the party and the nation, the BNP decided to leverage his capabilities to the fullest and to synergise his revolutionary programmes with the strategic planning of the top leadership. Therefore, in 2009, in its fifth national council, the BNP unanimously elected Tarique Rahman as the party's Senior Vice Chairman.

Political Ethos and Visions

By disseminating a duty-bound political philosophy – “An initiative and a little endeavour brings self-solvency and makes the country self-reliant” – Tarique Rahman covets humanity to grow in all localities, development to sustain in all communities, and everyone to stand up for everyone else. His philosophy is a story of meritocracy and togetherness anchored in hard grafts and social dialogues. Tarique stresses that it is high time we change our political culture and rely on good governance mechanisms to take the country forward. He articulates that speeches and accusations cannot bring about changes in people's lives, so the party leaders should visit the people with a view to setting the examples as to how they can change their lives. Towards that, Tarique fosters an ideology of drawing on intra-party political hierarchies for the betterment of the country, wherein individuals from each level would communicate and exchange their views and ideas with individuals located in the level above them.

Tarique Rahman conceives politics as a means of channelling much-required social movements, creating value-adding awareness, and solving community problems. He urges his leaders and activists to get involved with a great variety of activities pertaining to social and communal reformations. He inspires them to work as change agents and play a critical role in empowering their fellows and followers, so that the society as a whole can move forward

by solving critical problems and forsaking negative practices. Tarique plans to introduce a structured and transparent process through which his leaders across all levels would use their political positions to emerge as social role models and launch small-scale movements to guide others, which would then make their communities solvent, secure, peaceful and progressive.

Tarique Rahman's viewpoint is that communication between policy makers and grassroots is central to good governance and that policies ought to derive from the bottom. He wants the government policies to be based on dialogues with the general people from all walks of life. He promotes interactions of critical decision makers with the common citizens to better understand their popular needs and demands, and thereby turn those into realities. He also deems that a self-reliant country is not possible without the economic empowerment of the grassroots people, and the more they engage with the policy makers the more empowered they become and the more value they add to the society. Tarique advocates the shaping of the decision making processes of the political parties in order to make them bottom-up rather than top-down. He firmly believes in opening up the parties to the grassroots activists so that decisions are taken in an inclusive way where all members feel engaged with the decisions, share ownerships of the decisions, and combine together their heads and pairs of hands in the pursuit of implementing the decisions.

Tarique Rahman plans to develop a self-sufficient and economically sustainable Bangladesh based on a liberalised economy, where creativity of individuals, groups and businesses would be facilitated. He takes a rural-based economic development programme and articulates that it would be meaningless to pursue politics if he fails to mitigate the sufferings of the deprived and the distressed. Grounded on action-oriented research, he reviews the future of the geographic regions of Bangladesh in terms of industrial and economic potentials, and puts in place regional development programmes that would ensure specialised and tailored support to all the regions. Tarique considers Bangladesh's large population as an asset and proposes schemes to transform the inoperative population into a skilled manpower that would reap direct economic benefits, both at home and abroad. With that in mind, he places heavy emphasis on developing a holistic strategy to create a generation of skilled graduates, entrepreneurs and workers.

Tarique Rahman envisions a humble and non-partisan Bangladesh that is integrated by a common national identity rather than being split

into divisions based on races, religions, values, beliefs, ideologies, etc. He merges the concepts of nationalism and internationalism, and as an output, endeavours to infuse a healthy governance structure with superior democratic norms and stronger public institutions. Tarique stresses that Bangladesh must be well connected with the world community by pursuing friendships and exchanging resources through partnerships with external stakeholders, especially in the developmental areas where Bangladesh lacks knowledge, skills, resources and technology. He also asserts that Bangladesh has a role to play in spreading peace and tolerance in an increasingly interdependent world. He passionately follows the global best practices in various areas of socio-economic development and plans to transmit many of them to Bangladesh through the creation of an interface of global excellence and local expertise.

Political Vengeance and Propaganda

After more than fifteen years of political preparations and grassroots engagements, Tarique Rahman was finally considering to contest from a constituency of Bogra in the national elections of 2007. However, due to the country's democratic system being thwarted by an interim military-backed government, he was restrained from doing so. Owing to the insecurity of Tarique's popularity, the sectarian government framed fabricated allegations of corruption and launched an active campaign to malign him. The onslaught was also driven by the fact that Tarique declined to agree on a deal with the then military leadership and intelligence agencies to give recognition to the unconstitutional government, which he strongly believed, was acting against the interests of the country.

Tarique Rahman was arrested on 7th March 2007 and severely tortured in the custody. Special armed forces regularly interrogated him with utmost brutality, with the intention of eliminating him for good. The people of the world openly observed as to how he was subjected to the steamroller of oppression amidst the government's organised exploitation of state machineries. By the grace of the Almighty and thanks to the mass protests mustered throughout Bangladesh against Tarique's sufferings, he survived from the death tangle with a serious spinal damage, for which he required urgent specialist medical attention. Such was the sensitivity of the treatment that it was not available in Bangladesh and Tarique needed to get admission in an avant-garde hospital abroad. On 3rd September 2008, after 18 months of imprisonment, Tarique was released on bail from the Supreme Court of

Bangladesh for the treatment purpose. After five years, far from returning to a normal condition, Tarique still resides in London, nursing the injuries he sustained from the vicious physical and mental tortures.

The BNP, other parliamentary oppositions, the popular media, the civil society, and most importantly, the general people of Bangladesh, have long been demanding that the politically motivated cases against Tarique Rahman be dropped, just like the ones withdrawn against the Awami League leaders. Yet, after being elected with the support of a partisan Election Commission and the unconstitutional military-backed regime, the Awami League government continues to use the cases against Tarique as a means of creating propaganda and sabotaging his political stature. Many of the Ministers, including the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, have repeatedly spoken about Tarique's alleged corruptions in the public outlets. However, standing in the verge of ending the tenure of five year, they have failed to prove a single case. Finding no other way to implicating conviction, they are now relying on further conspiracies and propaganda to trap Tarique into fabricated cases.

Lessons learnt from the history teach us that passionate patriots never get ruined and perished for loving their countries and fighting for great causes. Instead, their names are written in the history in golden letters. The present phase of life of Tarique Rahman is likely come to an end and to follow the same route. It is no surprise that Tarique is not just a name to the general Bangladeshis anymore, but an emotional symbol that generates inquisitive attention and deep admiration. Having subjected to political vengeance and unprecedented propaganda without any proof of guilt, he stands tall as the leader of today and the leader for tomorrow. Hence, Tarique is the man whom Bangladesh thrusts the responsibility to take the country forward and he is the reformer who would make a heroic return to make the nation self-reliant and progressive. The common people are looking up to Tarique Rahman with the belief that he will build on President Ziaur Rahman's sanctified work and make Bangladesh a dreamland of national development.

1

DAVID NICHOLSON

As I See the Policies of *Tarique Rahman*

Presenting a positive vision for the future, Tarique Rahman is determined to improve the economic and social condition of his fellow Bangladeshi countrymen. He believes that more must be done to bring Bangladesh into the 21st century, to connect the country with trading partners worldwide and to assist both rural and urban communities.

While Bangladesh is a country with a great wealth of natural resources and an industrious people, its development has been hampered by lack of investment and access to new technology. Tarique Rahman has pledged to change this situation by bringing greater democracy to the country, by putting the power to choose their future into ordinary Bangladeshi's hands and by establishing greater security for all.

Where today there are difficulties for many local communities to have their voices heard and to achieve democratic change, Tarique Rahman has spend a great deal of time and effort listening to the issues that affect communities, working out ways that he can best support their aspirations and bring forward a more representative society in Bangladesh. He wants to create a society where power is vested in the people, rather than imposed by an unrepresentative elite.

Looking back to his role as the Senior Joint Secretary General of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), Tarique Rahman became widely known in his country for visiting local communities to hear the views of grassroots organisations, particularly on issues affecting agriculture. He carefully compiled information, statistics and data on the rural population of Bangladesh, so that the party could better understand its constituents. Tarique Rahman's mission

was to help make working people and farming communities economically self-sufficient, to alleviate poverty and improve educational standards.

Tarique launched two important initiatives in the early 2000s. In the Poverty Alleviation Programme, he distributed livestock and clothing, assisted students with grants to help them gain an education, and helped to facilitate social gatherings including a number of weddings. In 2004 he then created the Grassroots Council, organising the country into 20 political regions, each with its own council. Local community leaders played a prominent role in these councils, in contrast to the top-down political organisation prevalent at the time.

From the opinions and comments gathered at these meetings all across Bangladesh on subjects ranging from dowries, to birth control, to schooling and poverty eradication, Tarique Rahman would pass on information to the party leaders, helping to form the BNP's policies.

Just as Tarique Rahman's father created historic ties between Bangladesh and the United States in the late 20th century, he plans to make similar advances, bringing economic prosperity to millions of Bangladeshis.

In a similar way, Tarique Rahman aims to improve building standards, so that disasters like the garment factory collapse cannot be repeated in future and the country can be better prepared against natural disasters such as floods. To achieve this, he is determined to foster stronger institutions in Bangladesh to promote fairness and justice, so that companies or individuals who ignore the law or behave in corrupt ways can be brought before a court and punished.

Throughout his political career, Tarique Rahman has held to his principles of bottom-up rather than top-down exercise of power, fostering strong grassroots organisations such as unions, working with local communities and helping to bring his party, the BNP, to power in earlier elections. He was part of a nationwide consultation programme which collected information from around the country on the condition of Bangladeshi people and the issues that they wished to discuss. He helped to give the party a new reputation as a force for ordinary people to express their views and produce change.

This was not simply about recording the views of people in local communities, but about inspiring people that their views can matter and that, by organising themselves into political action groups, they will gain strength in their numbers and persuade others to join them. Besides this quality, Tarique Rahman has a gift for diplomacy and for conflict resolution, bringing opposing sides together to resolve their differences and helping Bangladesh to

become a more peaceful nation. We have seen this in his action when he was the Senior Joint Secretary General of the BNP.

He supports women in their quest to gain a more equal position in society, in politics and in economic terms; he is a vocal defender of human rights legislation and he has a strong track record of promoting free and fair elections, as the best way for Bangladesh to gain the respect and cooperation of its neighbours and the wider international community. Without such elections, and the full and open democracy which follows, Western nations (in particular) will always point to other nations who have introduced full democracy and argue that they are happier to do business with them. Tarique Rahman, with his background in international diplomacy and his experience of countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States, understands this issue very well.

Tarique Rahman has set his sights on Bangladesh forming much stronger diplomatic, political and economic links with important international allies, both regional and across continents, through persuading them that Bangladesh is on a course towards full democracy and the rule of law, of independent institutions unfettered by influence from the government, of consultation between government and local communities and of high standards of governance across the country.

Dictatorships, fascism and communism have all come and gone, both in Asia and in other continents, but the most convincing model of government, Tarique Rahman believes, is democracy, since it has a far greater legitimacy among a nation's people and is truly representative of their wishes. Alongside this, governments themselves have to obey the rule of law, rather than imprisoning or restricting political opponents, or ignoring regulations regarding payments.

Across many areas of Bangladesh's development, in education, transport, energy, technology and food and water, Tarique Rahman has proved that he has the right policies to advance the cause of Bangladesh's millions of citizens. He has devoted himself to the cause of his countrymen, to advancing their situation by leading Bangladesh in whatever way he is called to do. He has set an excellent example to his fellow Bangladeshis of the priorities that a leading politician should have.

2

BARRISTER MUHAMMAD JAMIRUDDIN SIRCAR MP

The Legacy of *Tarique Rahman's Family*

Scion of a respectable family of Gabtali, District Bogra, Bangladesh, Tarique Rahman was born in a family which is well known for education and cultural heritage. People around the area used to go to his ancestors for local reconciliation and arbitration knowing the family to be pious, God fearing and truthful. The century old building standing on the ancestral homestead bears the relic and lustre of feudal aristocracy for the posterior generation to remember, in retrospect, the tradition of love and affection of the family towards the people and vice versa. With such background, it is not a surprise that Tarique Rahman has proved himself to possess the qualities of a leader that is demanded for bearing the high responsibilities for conducting affairs of his party and the people.

His father President Ziaur Rahman chose his career in the Military service as being enthused by patriotism from his boyhood. Thus, while in Military service, Ziaur Rahman was wedded to Begum Khaleda, daughter of Ms Tayeba Begum and Toyabur Rahman, a descendent of famous 'T' family of Boda Police Station within the greater district of Dinajpur Prior to the partition of India in 1947. Boda, Debiganj, Panchagarh and Tetulia police stations were part of rich district of Jalpaiguri of undivided Bengal. 'T' family of which the origin was Munshi Tariqullah, a landlord otherwise known as famous jotdar who used to employ revenue collector for collection of rents from the tenants and cultivators to cultivate vast chunk of lands of his own possession. Besides, Munshi Tariqullah was shareholder of tea garden and a businessman during the World War I and earned huge amount of money. The family came in touch with the British Administration through the Deputy

Commissioner of Non-Regulating district of Jalpaiguri which was the richest district for tea garden and tea industry in the then united Bengal. As long as Munshi Tariqullah was alive, he lived with fame, honour, dignity and power of a respectable landlord. 'T' originated from Tariqullah; his descendants were named with 'T' being the first letter of the name such as Taskinuddin, Taslimuddin, Toyabur Rahman, Tayeba and so on.

Incidentally the family of Ziaur Rahman was related to the 'T' family. Khaleda was the youngest daughter of Eskender Majumder and Tayeba Majumder. Majumder came also of a landed aristocracy holding Mouza of land at Fulgazi in the greater district of Noakhali. Majumder was tall and handsome and chose his occupation as businessman in addition to his Mouza land and gracefully retired as the chairman of Dinajpur Chamber of Commerce.

Of the three sisters, Khaleda was the most beautiful. There was an ongoing household talk in the greater district of Dinajpur that the matchmaker proposed to Ziaur Rahman that he had seen a bride for him. Had he agreed to marry her, he would not need a lamp or electricity in his house as the dazzling beauty of the bride would clear out all the darkness. Ziaur Rahman smiled and agreed to marry. So they were happily married.

Out of this happy wedlock, Tarique Rahman was born as the eldest son of the family. Ziaur Rahman was widely recognised as a respectable, dignified, dutiful and truthful professional soldier. Tarique was brought up in an unostentatious and peaceful atmosphere. Both Ziaur Rahman and Begum Khaleda Zia disliked the idea of giving or offering more than the son Tarique needed. Tarique was grooming up under the affectionate care and custody of his beloved mother Begum Khaleda Zia who was a popular and loveable housewife liked by all the members of the family, including the near and distant relatives. When Tarique grew up to go to school, he was admitted to a reputed school named Shaheen High School and College, primarily meant for the children of the Army personnel.

The political struggle for the right of self determination of nation was at the peak and well spread all over the country. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the then leader, was taken to custody by General Yahya Khan's military Junta. There was none to lead the disappointed and frustrated Nation. And at that crucial moment, Major Ziaur Rahman declared the war of independence of Bangladesh from Kalurghat Radio station, Chittagong. Thus, the war of independence was started by Major Ziaur Rahman and other heroic Sector Commanders.

After a severe fight of war of independence for about nine months from 26th March to 16th December 1971, against Pakistani forces of about 93 to 99 thousands, Bangladesh became independent. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was released from Pakistani jail and became the President of Bangladesh. A Constitution was passed in the National Constituent Assembly on 16th December 1972. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman ruled mercilessly with the Rakshi Bahini, Mujib Bahini and Lal Bahini, all of which were his own creatures. Motivated by communist and extreme leftist like his nephew Sheikh Fazlul Hauq Moni, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman amended the Constitution for One Party Rule naming the Party as Bangladesh Krishak, Sramik Awami League i.e., BAKSAL. That was the turning point from democracy to dictatorship which was abhorred by and unacceptable to the people.

Subsequently, with the passage of time, One Party Rule of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman came to an end by a coup-de-tat led by Colonel Faruq Rahman, Colonel Shahriar and some other democracy loving army personnel. And Khandakar Moshtaq Ahmed, a close political colleague of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, was made the President. Moshtaq Ahmed appointed Ziaur Rahman as the Chief of Army Staff, as he was the senior most Major General at that time. Moshtaq Ahmed ran the administration for about ninety days.

Suddenly, Major General Khaled Mosharaff and Colonel Shafaet Jamil attempted a coup-de-tat against President Moshtaq Ahmed and asked him to hand over the power to Major General Khaled Mosharaff, which Moshtaque Ahmed refused. And the attempted coup failed with a compromise that Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh, Abu Sadat Md Sayem, would become the President of Bangladesh. Major General Ziaur Rahman was arrested and kept in custody by Major General Khaled Mosharaff.

Soon after, the anti-Indian common soldiers staged a mid-night coup overthrowing Major General Khaled Mosharaff. They freed Major General Ziaur Rahman from the custody and restored him to his position of the Chief of Army Staff under the Chief Justice as well as the President Abu Sadat Md Sayem. Thereafter, Chief Justice Sayem, not being a good administrator, resigned of his own free will and nominated Ziaur Rahman as the President of Bangladesh. Shortly afterward, in the General election held in 1978, Ziaur Rahman was directly elected by the people as the President defeating his rival candidate General AG Osmany, nominated by the Awami League.

Having passed the SSC and HSC examinations, Tarique entered the University of Dhaka as a student of International Relations, a subject of his

choice. While in the University, he read political thoughts of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, Locke, Roussou, Voltaire, Karl Marx and other exceptional thinkers. He concentrated more on socio-economic and political subjects including, the in-depth study of gradual development of democracy, especially in the British India. He also read social science subjects to know the condition of the people, such as Economics for the solution of economic problem of the people, and Political Science to embrace the concept of welfare state for providing food, clothing, shelter, medicine and education to the people. He learnt a great deal about statehood comprising of territory, population and an effective government elected by the people through a free, fair and impartial election.

Tarique Rahman's entry into politics dates back to 1990s. In the 1991 national elections, he watched the politics and thought of devising the ways and means as to how to win the mind of the voters. In the 1996 elections, he put in his disc of three hundred constituencies of Bangladesh, with the names of leaders and vital active political workers of districts, upazilas, pourashavas, union preshads, and other administrative units of his party, i.e., the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). He strengthened the student front, youth front and other allied organisations of the BNP. It is here, his success lies. If there is any problem anywhere, he can sort it out easily because he knows who are creating the problems and what for. It was a fruitful lesson from his mother 'Deshnetri' Begum Khaleda Zia who was elected Prime Minister three times and developed the country enormously, changing the fate of the suffering people for the better.

As a son of a President and a Prime Minister, Tarique was never given or granted any extra benefit or privilege. Tarique lives a modest life, having no attraction towards money or money making. Tarique married Zubaida Rahman, a beautiful daughter of Late Rear Admiral Mahabub Ali Khan whose family background is also well known and famous in the greater District of Sylhet. Some of her ancestors had been educated in England during the British regime. A physician by profession, Zubaida had been an intelligent student with well-educated pedigree having human approach towards life. Their only daughter Zaima, good looking, intelligent and well-mannered, has been pursuing her school education successfully for an easy access to any of the best universities of the world.

Tarique's father President Ziaur Rahman was a great commoner. He used to consult proper persons and experts in complicated problems and then

used to give his decision. In ninety per cent cases, his decisions were right. He had no vengeance against anybody who disagreed with him. He was a hard working person. He could keep the citizens busy with works such as canal digging, planting fruit bearing trees, increasing number of hatcheries and fisheries, and encouraging people to grow more food. He travelled from villages to villages, police stations to police stations, districts to districts, enthusing people to do something to change their fate. A great democrat, a believer in the rule of law, Ziaur Rahman stabilised law and order, democracy and the sovereignty of the country. With all the achievements, he became an outstanding leader in the national as well as international politics as the thinker and planner of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Vice President of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), member of the Al-Quds Committee, and an Arbitrator in the Iran–Iraq war. From the ignominy of bottomless basket as remarked by the US Foreign Secretary Henry Kissinger, President Zia raised Bangladesh as a member of the Security Council.

Tarique possesses all the qualities of his father. Besides, Tarique's thoughts for promotion of international peace, security and solidarity, respect for national sovereignty, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, peaceful settlement of international disputes, respect for principles enunciated in the United Nations Charter, renunciation of the use of force in international relations, are well known.

Tarique is eloquent to support the oppressed people throughout the world waging a just struggle against imperialism, colonialism or racialism and to consolidate, preserve and strengthen friendship to all and malice to none. He is a great upholder of human rights and empowerment of the women. Tarique can contribute a lot in the politics for the BNP, Bangladeshi nationalism and the people.

His rivals are jealous and afraid of him, for, he had been a political activist leading successfully the active BNP politics shoulder to shoulder with the people as Senior Joint Secretary General. He is now the Senior Vice Chairman of the BNP with utmost commitment to democracy, rule of law and sovereignty of the country, and with an emphasis on the peace and prosperity of the people. He keeps in view the Islamic values of life as more than 90% citizens of Bangladesh are Muslims. He hates communalism and terrorism of any manner. He is thorough about the election processes and machineries to hold a free, fair and impartial election. He can implement his father's much

acclaimed 19-point programmes for the people to solve their social, political and economic problems. He knows the new generation, as well as their problems and demands thoroughly, so as to easily win them on his side.

Well conversant with world politics, Tarique Rahman can successfully participate in any important table talks, round table conferences, seminars and symposiums, as well as national and international conferences. While delivering speech either in a private or a public meeting, Tarique speaks lucidly point-wise, bringing home his point to the listeners who grasp it quickly. He has a well established network of men and materials throughout the country to win the general elections, if held, under the non-party caretaker government.

Notes

1. 'Deshnetri' means leader of the country in Bengali.
2. I have intentionally avoided calling him the architect as some does with my view that normally architect commences work upon getting instructions from someone.

3

BARRISTER MOUDUD AHMED MP

As I have Seen *Tarique Rahman*

To understand and determine the position of Tarique Rahman in the national politics of Bangladesh, one has to look first at Shaheed (Martyred) President Ziaur Rahman, a legendary statesman, emerged through the passage of history as one of the most popular leaders of our time. Otherwise an unknown young military officer, stationed in Chittagong as a Major of 8 East Bengal Regiment, he took the courage of declaring the independence of a new sovereign state now called Bangladesh in the face of the onslaught of the Pakistan Army on the unarmed people of East Pakistan. In the absence of the political leaders who had so long led the people to struggle for a self-rule for the Bengalis, it was the voice of Ziaur Rahman broadcasted over the radio from Kalurghat transmission outlet, in the afternoon of 27th March 1971, which inspired millions of people to start a war and ultimately liberated the country in December 1971.

After the glorious victory in the war, Ziaur Rahman returned to his professional position in the Bangladesh Army, while the political leaders took the responsibility to govern the new nation. In less than four years on 15th August 1975, the people faced a national tragedy when some army officers killed Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who only five months before had turned the country into a one-party monolithic rule to become the omnipotent President of the new Republic. With the demise of Sheikh Mujib, the government was taken over by Khandaker Moshtaque Ahmed, a senior leader of his own party, by imposing Martial Law in the country. After 2 months and 18 days, on 3rd November, in a counter coup, the Chief of General Staff Khaled Mosharraf put Ziaur Rahman, the Chief of Army Staff, under house arrest and reversed the

country to the hegemony of the neighboring state of India. As an instant reaction, it caused a spontaneous public uprising on 7th November 1975 when common people and ordinary soldiers of nearby cantonments joined hand to free Ziaur Rahman and install him in power to lead the nation.

The emergence of Ziaur Rahman to power, already well known for his brave role in the liberation war of 1971, caught the imagination of people, and more so, as he neither staged any coup or killed any political leader, nor did he dislodge any elected government. Further, he neither proclaimed the Martial Law, nor did he dissolve the Parliament to assume the authority to govern the country. He appeared before the nation as a clean person endowed with a great amount of charisma.

So unlike other military leaders, the rise of Ziaur Rahman in the national politics was unique by itself. In order to unite the people and rebuild the nation, he introduced a new political philosophy based on Bangladeshi nationalism to achieve a self-reliant economy for a modern Bangladesh. As opposed to one-party rule, he brought back the multi-party democratic system with all the fundamental rights, freedom of press, and independence of judiciary being guaranteed. Ziaur Rahman's new approach to national development galvanised the entire nation. In terms of peace, social harmony and good governance, Bangladesh entered a golden period under a remarkable leader, who was loved and admired by the masses for his integrity and dedication.

But unfortunately, Zia did not survive for too long. As the most outstanding leader of all time, Zia laid slain with piercing bullets in his chest by sixteen men who came in a jeep and two pick-ups from the nearby cantonment. The killing was accomplished on 30th May 1981 in twenty minutes in a commando-style attack by a group of junior and mid-rank military officers at the Chittagong Circuit House where he was staying the night. His extraordinary popularity was marked by a historical funeral attended by more than one million people.

Zia ruled for about six years as an idol to his people. He was, in the traditional sense, incorruptible. He lived a frugal life. His personal habits and moral grounds were never in question. He had virtually no asset or property of his own and never tried to accumulate any. He lived a simple life and avoided any kind of luxury. He used 1300cc sedan ordinary cars for his travelling. He improved the relationship of Bangladesh with China and other Muslim countries, and was considered to be a nationalist opposed to the hegemony of

India. Ziaur Rahman enjoyed enormous public credibility as an honest leader and ruled the country with the trust and confidence of his people.

I had the privilege of working with Ziaur Rahman very closely in amending the constitution to restore democracy and Islamic values, and steering the new philosophy to build a modern state to stand as a respectable nation in the world community. I helped him in formulating the constitution and manifesto of the BNP to carry forward his philosophy and political programmes. I have seen in him a true patriot with relentless energy and resilience dedicated to the cause of people.

Now I clearly see in Tarique Rahman a lot of qualities of his father. A polite and amiable, eager to hear and learn, pragmatic than emotional, a bright young man who is destined to lead the new generations of a poverty-stricken country where youths under his leadership will strive to bring the emancipation of people.

Tarique Rahman has emerged as a political leader on his own merit. Although as a son of Ziaur Rahman and Begum Khaleda Zia he enjoyed some natural advantages in the beginning, he reached the leadership position from the grassroots level through a democratic process for which he had to work very hard. Tarique had already proved his quality of leadership during the national elections held in 2001. He established a high-tech unit at the party office known as Hawa Bhaban, devoted to research on national politics and the party's ground level position, election strategies and nomination procedures. With his office staffed by a young group of professionals trained in information technology, they had the entire country surveyed constituency by constituency and district by district, and their database was filled with information on the politics at the grassroots level. The young turkeys of the party from different levels provided the strength for Tarique to move forward and do all the political planning, which brought the BNP into power with a thunderous majority in the Parliament and made his charismatic mother the elected Prime Minister for the third term.

The BNP government of 2001-2006, led by Begum Khaleda Zia, made a great step forward towards progress in all major social sectors: education, healthcare, family welfare and child mortality. Having already attained a 6.7% annual growth rate in 2006, Bangladesh, under her leadership, achieved the distinction of being one of the rising tigers in Asia with the potential of a large-scale economic leap-forward backed by huge foreign investment.

With nearly five years of endless corruption, intolerance, misrule and tyranny of the Awami League government and their failures in sustaining a peaceful democratic order, the expectations now run very high among all sections of people to see a real change in Bangladesh. I believe that once Tarique Rahman returns from abroad to take over the leadership of the BNP, he will have a dynamic team of clean, bright, educated and motivated individuals to work with him and take the country to the next level.

Tarique Rahman would be committed to democracy and tolerance to usher in a new political culture in the country and he will follow the personal values and the political philosophy left by his father. He will be ruthless in dealing with corruption, particularly at the high levels of the government. He will establish rule of law, build institutions placed above the individuals and strive to establish a strong and effective Parliament to ensure transparency of the government. He will show respect to the opposition, and abandon politics of reprisals and vengeance. Tarique Rahman is going to encourage bipartisanship in resolving national issues like water sharing, transit, maritime rights and security of the state. With all the potentials of cutting-edge technology and enterprising minds of millions of youths, under the leadership of Tarique Rahman, the people will certainly see much better days to come for an economically vibrant, democratically independent and politically sovereign Bangladesh.

4

MUSHFIQUR RAHMAN

The Political Philosophy of *Tarique Rahman*

In broad terms, the people of Bangladesh are divided into two groups in terms of their political spirits: one camp belongs to the Awami League and the other to the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). Shaheed (Martyred) President Ziaur Rahman is the exponent of Bangladeshi nationalism, the political philosophy of the nationalist group and founder of the nationalist political organisation, i.e., the BNP. After the untimely death of Ziaur Rahman, his political successor Begum Khaleda Zia, upholding the nationalist ideals, has been continuing to uniting, extending and strengthening the nationalist group with her uncompromising and dynamic leadership. In continuation of his family tradition, Tarique Rahman, the elder son of Ziaur Rahman and Begum Khaleda Zia, got the opportunity to endow his leadership to the BNP's organisational politics along with his mother.

Tarique was raised in the family socialisation of multi-dimensional tradition of Ziaur Rahman and received political initiation from his parents. He grew up with the psychological attachment and resonance of the characteristic nature of his parents, as vindicated in perception and belief, history and tradition, consciousness and patriotism. Not only that, the personality of Ziaur Rahman is reflected in the physical figure, harmony of speech, measured conversation and political belief of Tarique. Tarique is a patriot for whom Bangladesh comes first before anything and everything. He believes in the principle of an inclusive society that is integrated by national identity and communal recognition rather than divisions based on races, religions, casts, etc. He believes in the promotion and development of a peaceful and harmonious society where people can live and work happily. He believes in hard work and

believes that one should always be optimistic in outlook. He believes in a future where the resources are shared and utilised for the benefits of all Bangladeshis.

Through my involvement in services with the government of Bangladesh and the World Bank and the United Nations agencies, I have closely seen top-tier leaders from Bangladesh and abroad. I can confidently say that I have not come across a Bangladeshi leader like Tarique in the recent years. In the political arena of today's Bangladesh, he is the only leader among the top leadership of both the BNP and the Awami League who not only has the experience of seeing historical national events from a close proximity, but also has the dynamism to add value to the existing system by bringing the spirit of the youth and changing the status quo, even more so in the greater interests of the country.

Tarique Rahman has been involved with active politics since the early 1990s and his portfolio includes some great electoral and strategic achievements. For over a decade, he was shying away from top leadership positions, despite the tremendous pressure created within the BNP to see him in a position that would make him the obvious leader of the future. Having contributed to the BNP's successful election campaigns in 1991 and 2001, he was repeatedly recognised for his political excellence. Finally, after the formation of the BNP government in 2001, upon the unanimous demand of the leaders and the activists, in June 2002, Tarique became the Senior Joint Secretary General of the BNP with a view to providing stronger leadership in organising the party from the grassroots levels. He, however, remained strict not to join the government and therefore stayed away from a position either in the cabinet or in the parliament.

After assuming the responsibility as the Senior Joint Secretary General, Tarique started the programme of holding council conventions locally at the grassroots levels and walked villages after villages in the whole of Bangladesh. He became successful in connecting local leaderships with the central leaderships – and at the same time achieved fame and popularity beyond the generic expectations – among the grassroots workers and supporters as a faithful young leader. They greatly valued that he drew on dynamic and sagacious nationalist leadership inspired by the notion of patriotism. Within a short period, Tarique became a brilliant potential leader stirred up with the nationalistic youthfulness. He organised hundreds of grassroots conferences throughout the country, beginning from the Union Parishad to the Upazilla, District and Division levels. As a part of this nationwide conference programme,

while participating in a council meeting held at Tungipara, Gopalganj, he visited the grave of late President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman which is a new addition of generosity and non-partisan values in the political culture of Bangladesh.

The main objective of the nationalist politics is to ensure the welfare of the people of the country through economic development. For this reason, Tarique believed that there is no alternative to obtaining the micro-level details of the socio-economic conditions of the people. He conducted in-depth economic research and large-scale surveys on the problems and prospects of the rural areas in Bangladesh. His research and surveys covered critical developmental sectors such as farming, agriculture, pisciculture, poultry and cattle, cottage, etc. He also took initiatives to get to know the demographic details of the individuals in those rural areas, particularly about their family members, academic qualifications, professional backgrounds, etc. Using these data, Tarique initiated tailored programmes to solve the problems of the rural areas and provided creative frameworks for the improvement of the living standards of the people. As an example, having taken a pro-agriculture mindset, he was particularly enthusiastic to initiate programmes for materialising green revolution in agricultural goods and products by taking seeds, oil, irrigation, subsidy, and loan projects.

Tarique is currently living in London as part of his physical recovery from the injuries caused by the brutal torture of the unconstitutional military-backed caretaker government of 2007. They made him a victim of scandalous conspiracy, but failed to associate him with any conviction whatsoever, which in turn, has made it clear that the cases were politically motivated. It all has made Tarique even more famous and lovable to his countrymen. He has come closer to the people and become a sparkling ideology from a mere person. He is an ideology of progressive politics, social empowerment, economic development and national advancement. I have had the privilege to visit Tarique in London a few times, to see his lifestyle and meet with the people who surround him, and to speak with him about his own present as well as the future of Bangladesh.

I am so glad that Tarique is spending his time in London reading articles and newspapers not just about Bangladesh, but the whole world. He is using the internet and watching television programmes to find solutions to the problems of Bangladesh. Parallel to the ongoing medical treatments, Tarique passionately follows the current conditions of Bangladesh and researches as to

how he will change the country with progressive policies. He is articulating a well-grounded plan of actions, and if the Almighty brings the BNP to the power and Tarique receives an opportunity to become an integral part of the government, I can assure everyone that he will change the fate of the country.

In the process, Tarique has been closely working with a group of non-political scholars and students based at the world's leading institutions, including the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford, so as to utilise their world-class profiles and cutting-edge educations in the advancement of Bangladesh. Tarique is not just using the spirit of the youths; he is also frequently exchanging ideas with eminent experts and professionals with exceptional track records in politics, public service, journalism, healthcare, business, social work, and other fields. In doing so, Tarique is bridging the energy of the youths and the experience of the olds, and aiming for a new era of Bangladesh's national development by exploiting the best of the nation's talent, know-how, expertise and labour.

Tarique's philosophy is that Bangladesh needs to have fundamental changes in the ways it has long been run. He advocates for a bottom-up approach, wherein party decisions and government policies would be generated from the grassroots. His vision is that the people of the grassroots would not only drive the way in which the country is run, but also take part in the implementation of the complementary policies and decisions. Tarique promotes a two-way communication mechanism between his party leaders and the general people, whereby the leaders pursue politics not just to attract votes for the elections, but also to stand by the people in their daily lives. Tarique believes that all the BNP politicians should work as change agents and play a critical role in empowering their followers, so that the society as a whole can move forward by forsaking negative customs and practices such as bribery, corruption, dowry, polygamy, school dropout, alcohol addiction, sexual harassment, domestic violence, etc.

Tarique envisions a rural-based economic development perspective where professional empowerment of the poor would play a key role. The prosperous future of the agriculture and farming sector lies in the central place of his plans. At the same time, Tarique extends programmes to decentralise Bangladesh and ensure that the disadvantaged people do not need to move from the villages to the major urban areas to earn proper livelihoods, and as such, the economic incentives would be spread across the country to defuse intra-country migration. This in essence, as Tarique argues, would ensure the

holistic development of Bangladesh instead of a development programme revolving around some selected cities.

To me and many others that I have spoken with, Tarique is the symbol of youth and he bears the torch of charisma and courage. His political visions centre around an improvement of the society, and the young generation in particular. As I travel in various parts of the country and mix up with the general people, I have been able to see the popularity of Tarique among the youths and the extent to which they are desperately waiting to see his return to Bangladesh. As the last genuine hope of the youths, Tarique appreciates his popularity and plans to revolutionise the education sector for the enhancement of their employability prospects and to ensure that the next generations would come out of the curse of unemployment. He commits to introduce leading-edge subjects in the high school level, including foreign languages and apprenticeship schemes, and thus make the education system more practically motivated and job-oriented. As such, Tarique's education policy is directly related to the policies of industrialisation and business development, so that new industries are facilitated, new businesses are formed, and new jobs are created at a fast rate.

In Tarique's view, it is imperative to accelerate Bangladesh's economic growth through securing jobs for the students, both inside and outside of Bangladesh. By ensuring proper teaching and learning mechanisms, he believes, our workers would be much more trained and competent to work in the local industries and agriculture sectors. This would then help the economy to achieve more efficiency and effectiveness. He articulates his plan to export more of trained and bilingual workers in various countries, including the Middle East, who will have certificates of technical and vocational education, as well as language proficiencies. Also, Tarique commits to send the bilingual workers to new, underexplored countries and get them involved in different, new professions. Tarique dreams that many of the young individuals coming out of such system would use their enthusiasm to become self-sustaining entrepreneurs. They will open their own businesses through the financial and institutional supports of the government. Tarique aims to create new industries that complement our garments/textile sector, such as data entry and processing, call centre business, electronic appliances, agri-biotech, frozen foods, ship building, etc.

Tarique has learnt the lessons of development and progression through his involvement with the people at the grassroots. He reckons that the only way the BNP could change Bangladesh radically is by using its political

engagements as a means of social reformation, which would then set up an example for all other political parties to unearth a new, constructive political culture. Building on these ideas, Tarique wants to pursue positive politics by reaching out to the general people, solving their problems, mitigating their miseries, and winning their hearts. In the eyes of the people, however, Tarique's works is on the course to show the unwillingness of the Awami League to change the traditional mal-culture of politics, as well as its inability to understand and respond to the needs of the people. So akin to his previous experience during the period of 2001–2006, I believe in the years ahead, while Tarique would flourish as a politician and make the BNP as the dynamic party suitable to march the country in the 21st century, his political oppositions would slide down and struggle to keep in pace with Tarique's developmental programmes and value-added politics.

The success of Tarique Rahman beyond expectations in organising and expanding the BNP in the grassroots levels, as well as the popularity of his illuminated leadership in the youth communities, generated revengeful and malicious political psychology based on fear and apprehension in the Awami League leadership. The Awami League became perplexed to see the reflection of the political behaviour of Ziaur Rahman's personality, leadership and political programmes in Tarique. Instead of facing the political rise of Tarique by an alternative positive political programme, the Awami League, maintaining its characteristic tradition, has been engaged in media propaganda full of Goebbelsian falsehood in a fascist and despotic way. The only objective of the conspiracy is aimed at character assassination of Tarique and to tarnish his popular image by using startling imaginary stories of falsifications. The Awami League wants to permanently destroy the possibility of getting the future leadership of the nationalist forces. It is still spreading the net of conspiracy against Tarique through the intellectual media coverage within and outside the country. This rising leader, a symbol of the youth of the nationalists, is going ahead overcoming all the obstacles.

The party and the persons who are involved in inflicting brutal torture, heinous oppression and disgraceful conspiracy on Tarique Rahman will certainly have to stand one day before the dock of the court of the people. Those who want to stop the wheel of the history of Bangladesh and make the nationalist politics silenced and motionless either by killing or crippling Tarique Rahman are unaware that the nationalist political ideology of Tarique lies deeply in the hearts of the patriotic people of Bangladesh. They do not accept that he has already become the symbol of an independent entity and progress of Bangladesh.

Today, under the terrible ruling of the Awami League government, Bangladesh is overwhelmed by unprecedented corruption and politicisation of the administration; the judiciary is crippling and constitutional institutions are breaking down; intellectuals are enduring oppression in expressing their views; media outlets are getting shuttered; law enforcement agencies are transforming into sectarian political forces; parliamentary opposition parties are facing heinous fascism; social, political and economic systems are collapsing; and the overall democracy is decaying. Given the current volatility in Bangladesh, the country has reached the tipping point from where it needs to start afresh and go forward through drastic improvement in democracy and governance.

In this situation, a change in the top leadership is a must, and under the competent guidance of Begum Khaleda Zia, Tarique Rahman, with his unique and forward-looking political philosophy, is the change that we all want to see. His safe return will lead Bangladesh to prosperity and progress with an agenda of social equity, and as an iconic leader of the developing world, he will act with wisdom to promote peace within and outside the world of turmoil. Having said that, I realise that expectation needs to be tempered by reality. And the reality is that despite his perceived popularity, Tarique does not enjoy unfettered power. He is constrained by antagonistic Awami League opposition, as well as public scrutiny and censure, perhaps more so than any other leader in the country.

5

SHAUKAT MAHMOOD

The Future Leader of Bangladesh

There has been a rendezvous by the elite groups of Bangladesh so as to debate on the country's politics centring one pivotal issue: With Tarique Rahman or without Tarique Rahman? In addressing this issue, let us all accept one truth: combating innumerable gossips spread against him, Tarique stands invincible as the future leader of the country. The vindictive and vilifying efforts of Sheikh Hasina's government have failed to dishonour his distinct stature as the most popular politician of the age. The failed efforts to brand Tarique as the number one villain of the country, as well as the manner in which he has upheld himself in the midst of provocative and adverse atmosphere, have in fact endeared him more to the general people. In terms of the popularity scale of the contemporary politicians in the minds of the mass Bangladeshis, Tarique Rahman holds the second position only next to his mother Begum Khaleda Zia.

It is not that just because I have the privilege to write columns, I have written whatever I felt like and documented a eulogy on Tarique Rahman. In every drop of dust of Bangladesh, the truth is evident that the responsibility of running the country will be reposed on Tarique and he will phenomenally glide the country's politics for a long time to come. At this point, there are only a handful of people who would ridicule this claim. It is not a fault on the part of the citizens to want to know about their politicians' activities. Towards that end, raising some questions about the nature and dynamics of the political leadership is now a necessity and getting answers to those questions may also be possible.

The future leadership of a political party lies in the united consensus of its party leaders. In the absence of Tarique Rahman, in the 'Coucil Session 2009' of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), the determined chanting of the slogan "Save the Country, Save the People" led to the election of Tarique Rahman as the Senior Vice Chairman of the BNP. The whole party wanted him as the leader not because he is the son of Shaheed (Martyred) President Ziaur Rahman and Former Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia. Instead, he was elected because he is a tested, indispensable and rightful commander-in-chief with an extraordinary track record.

According to the book titled as 'Tarique Rahman: Opekkhay Bangladesh' (Tarique Rahman: Bangladesh is Waiting), he was elected as a primary member of Bogra Zilla BNP in 1988. In the parliamentary elections of 1991, he was closely associated with the elections campaign. From 1997, he became actively involved at the BNP Chairperson's Office in Banani. The pioneering role of the Research, Monitoring and Election Conducting Cell under the competent leadership of Tarique Rahman into the historical victory of the BNP in the 2001 elections is known to one and all. Had he wanted, Tarique could have joined the BNP-led government in any capacity he would have liked. Yet, he stayed out of the government to reorganise the party and to make it the true political entity that stands for the fulfilment of the desires and demands of the general people. On 22nd June 2002, the BNP leaders unanimously appointed Tarique as the Senior Joint Secretary General of the party. As a young grassroots-venturing politician, he brought dynamism into the party politics by organising regular meetings with the representatives from various levels.

Tarique Rahman's entrance and rise into politics cannot be compared with other subcontinental politicians who came as a result of hereditary politics. Unlike Rajiv Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi, Benazir Bhutto, Asif Bilawal, Chandrika Kumaratunga, Khaleda Zia or Sheikh Hasina who took the helm in the existing vacuum at the request of the party, Tarique Rahman proceeded step-by-step and proved himself long before serving the people of Bangladesh. From his soul-burning urge to contribute to the country's growth, Tarique was motivated by a mentality to sacrifice for the nation rather than to gain as a person. Although Sheikh Hasina's son Sajib Wazed Joy has also taken the membership of the Awami League, he is yet to become active in party politics. He is probably not even interested in the first place. Contrasting to Tarique, he does not have the experience of getting embedded with the people and

soil of Bangladesh. In the case of a vacuum, Sajib Wazed may take up the responsibility, but that too would come with little prior political engagement.

There is a widespread propaganda spread by a particular group over Tarique Rahman assuming a bigger role at a young age. However, we need to put this argument into perspective. When Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman became the President on 21st April 1977, he was 41 years and 3 months old. When he appeared on the centre-stage of power through the Sepoy-People revolution on 7th November 1975, he was a spirited youth aged 39 years and 10 months. Begum Khaleda Zia was 39 years old when she took over the responsibility of the Chairperson of the BNP. When Sheikh Hasina was made the President of Awami League, she was 34 years old. Rajiv Gandhi became the Indian Prime Minister at 40 years. So by no means is age a detrimental factor for Tarique Rahman. I would like to insist that on top of his direct political engagement from the early 1990s, Tarique Rahman had the opportunity to watch critical national events from a great proximity. Having heard the announcement of independence in his father's voice, seen the liberation war and its victory, felt the revolution of 7th November, watched Shaheed Zia and Begum Zia's democratic journey in strengthening the development of Bangladesh, viewed the odious military rule and Awami misrule – on several many measures – Tarique has got enough firsthand experience to assume a bigger role than he has taken up till date.

One question that often arises in the political conversations about Bangladesh is: Which politician has been physically tortured the most in a false case? The name that can be pronounced in one breath is Tarique Rahman. Tarique was the main target of the so-called 1/11 government of 2007. During that period, children were growing up amidst the propaganda that he is the villain of democracy and governance. Tarique's office of that time, known as the Hawa Bhaban, was shown as the root of all irregularities. Just like the Hindi movies, storied of venom and hatred were made about him all across the country by systematically spreading as to how he was disgraced and belittled in the eyes of the people.

At that darkest moment of the annihilation of democracy, vindictive and motivated propaganda against Tarique Rahman became a part of some people's regular activities. On 7th March 2007, without any complaint, Tarique was arrested from his house. The illegal caretaker government of 1/11, led by Fakruddin Ahmed and Moeen Uddin Ahmed, filed 13 cases against Tarique. Tarique was directly accused in none of those 13 cases, as he did not

hold any post in the government, nor was there any document bearing his signature in any of the claimed misdeeds. Making the alleged accused admit their guilt through beatings was the weapon for implicating Tarique in those cases. The High Court passed stay order against 11 of the 13 cases. A case was filed with the Kafrul Police Station on 17th April 2007 under summary trial law. Desperate to implicate Tarique in the case, the government amended the law twice within a gap of only two days. But the High Court did not take it into consideration. Of the remaining two cases, one case, known as 'The Dinkal', was dismissed. Another case pertaining to 'Zia Orphanage Trust' is still under trial. Tarique was later implicated in a money laundering case. An attempt is still on to implicate him in the '21st August' case. But he is not the main accused in these cases either.

Tarique's internment of 554 days at that time is a fearful history of human rights violation. Have we ever witnessed a politician adorned in the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) outfit and helmet to be produced before the court? Many politicians have served their times in the jail. But no one has been made to undergo such inhuman physical torture. Neither any head of a state nor any head of a government had any continuous internment in the dark cell of the jail, and none was forced to suffer from blindness like this. As a victim of barbarous acts in the interrogation cell, Tarique gradually moved from ailment towards death. Nowhere in the world is there a similar example of attacking a prominent politician like a hyena, and that too, in the name of so-called remand. In an interview given to me while I was in London, Tarique shared his bleeding past: "While I was in remand, together with electric shock, they physically tortured me in many ways. Among these, one was dropping me repeatedly from a great height. I agonised in great pain. But those officers did not have any mercy. Their assignment was to gradually kill me through torture. Back in the jail, no doctor ever came to me or no treatment was ever offered to me. I passed every single day in hellish pain. The pain of broken bones of my waist is so intolerable that I cannot express it in words. It is just too unbearable."

In January 2008, Tarique sought his life's security before the court. He said: "In the name of questioning, they took me on remand blindfolded. They tortured me for 18 hours out of the 24 hours of a day. I am a politician, not a terrorist." On 29th January 2008, he was admitted to a local hospital. On 9th June 2008, although he was taken to the court in an ambulance, he was even unable to stay sitting in his wheel chair on the dock. After getting bail in 12

cases, he was finally set released on 3rd September 2008. Tarique broke down in tears in the arms of his mother Begum Khaleda Zia at the PG Hospital. The painful tears of the mother and the son, along with their exchange of words in choked voices, made the air of the hospital heavy. On 11th September, Tarique left for London in the pursuit of treatment. Nearly five years have passed since then. He is now much better than before. However, he still limps when he walks and he will never be fully cured again. Tarique's mental strength remains immensely high though. In his simple soulful manner, he said: "I want to forget my bitter past and move forward. I will return to my country one day. Insha'Allah, I will make my dreams surrounding Bangladesh come to the reality."

Are false cases and physical tortures the only punishments for Tarique Rahman? The answer is no. He had become the victim of an unprecedented hatred in the media outlets. A group of journalists and some members of the elite society – not to speak of the Awami Leaguers – had disseminated all reports and information concocted and distributed by the Director General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI). Stories of corruption and false confessional statements were published in abundance. Those red headlines had hurt the democracy itself. The propaganda was planned in all parts. One may wonder: Has it stopped now? Again, the answer is no. The present government, after coming to the power, has sustained the propaganda by installing more hatred against Tarique, undertaking measures to make him an unpopular figure, sending Ministers to bring him back from the UK, carrying out international lobbying, making use of foreign detective agencies, publishing various types of misleading documents, and undertaking many other similar conspiracies. But nothing has worked in the government's favour. Tarique has stayed abroad in silence and loneliness by keeping his sufferings locked in his own soul. He has kept himself in exile, carefully allowing his wings of pleasure by staying aloof politically. By accepting the dreadful past and dissuasive present, he is building himself up for the future. In his life, Tarique Rahman has never violated anybody's rights, never arrested any journalist for writing against him, never locked up any media office, and never did anything beyond the political norms. Still, he had to go through such pain for no reason.

Tarique has upheld the long-lasting tradition of 'newspaper friendly and open to criticism' Zia family. In fact, the birth of many media houses took place under his patronage, including his own declaration of the newspaper 'Shamokal'. But today, when unholy means are underway to declare Tarique

Rahman as the enemy of the state, some of the very media houses are keeping mum. There are even believers of nationalism belonging to the high society, who hesitate to speak in his favour. We all claim that we believe in the rule of law. Unfortunately but factually, in the present day Bangladesh, the term 'rule of law' means that hundreds of criminals can go free through the loopholes of the law, while innocent patriots like Tarique Rahman could undergo the severest of sufferings. It is crystal clear that what has been done with Tarique Rahman is a disgrace to the rule of law and it sets up the worst example of a derailed political culture. At this juncture, revitalisation of the rule of law should mean a safe return of Tarique Rahman to Bangladesh, as well as the formation of a case-free atmosphere which would allow him to resume his political career and revive the country.

The extent to which fabricated stories are constructed and dreadful gossips are carried out about Tarique Rahman has been unparalleled in the history of Bangladesh. No other politician has been the victim of the creation of a similar situation during his lifetime. Religious scholars (Alems), in the explanation of the Holy Quran's Sura Asr, explicit that: "If someone spreads gossip that is a lie against anyone, Allah does not forgive the person for committing this sin. Only the victim of such rumour has the right to forgive. Gossip is such a grave sin that the person who speaks ill against anyone, all his good-deeds from his records are transferred into the records of the victim." According to the Holy Quran, Tarique Rahman is indeed a lucky person from this viewpoint.

The most important question that needs to be asked is: Have we come to know the announced dreams of any politician who is going to assume the future leadership of Bangladesh? Without any doubt, we can say that we have come to know about such dreams from Tarique Rahman. He has the dreams to make Bangladesh a self-sustaining nation with its own resources by awakening the people and the land, to make Bangladesh stand on its own feet as a modern and powerful state, to take politics forward by keeping the marginalised people in the front, and to make democracy's soul vibrant and dynamic. He has several many progressive dreams like the above, all of which would change the face of the country. Importantly enough, all these dreams are complemented by his announced action plans. One may rightly observe that they are the timely expansion of Ziaur Rahman's dreams. The outcome of the soulful tie that the Zia family possesses with Bangladesh's independence and sovereignty, as well as its bold and independent journey, has encompassed Tarique Rahman

as the perfect descendent of the family. In a roundtable meeting organised in 2005, he had articulated: “I believe that in 2025 Bangladesh will become a self-sufficient, economically successful, developed and democratic country that will be respected by others, looked at by the whole world with undue respect. This is the dream of mine, as well as that of the young generation of Bangladesh.”

Tarique initiated much interest in the development of the agricultural and industrial sectors of Bangladesh, together with the arrangement of modern education system and rapid technological advancement. He also envisioned programmes for providing good seeds to the farmers, poultry farming to the poor, and many other similar activities. He conducted large-scale surveys to know the exact amounts of fishes, fruits, and paddies produced in the villages across the country. Even turning the shoals that arise in oceans and rivers – into precious gold with high selling values – was not beyond his imagination and reach. By doing and thinking so much for the general people of the country, Tarique had slowly but steadily become the undisputed future leader of Bangladesh. It is now widely believed that in large parts our prosperity depends on him and he would lead the country in coming days.

Tarique Rahman himself never said that he has not committed any mistake in the past. As it goes with all human beings, if we do something good and great, there will always be minor mistakes. In Tarique’s case, the volume of propaganda was never commensurate with the quantity of mistakes committed by him. Mountain has been made out of a mole hill just to suppress this great leader. As derived in Tarique’s own self-reflection: “It was not always possible for me to guard against what somebody was trying to gain by using me. It may be that some had committed excesses. But whenever something came to my knowledge, I took measures.” In line with Tarique’s words, the famous American political clairvoyant George Friedman mentioned about the mistakes of the politicians in the preface of his revolutionary book ‘The Next 100 Years’: “It is the delight of all societies to belittle their political leaders and leaders surely do make mistakes. But the mistakes they make, when carefully examined, are rarely stupid. More likely mistakes are forced on them by circumstances. Politicians are rarely free actors.”

In conclusion, I extend my greetings to the focal leader of the country Tarique Rahman. The days of taking him into custody and putting him on the dock are over. All the misappropriation of the Awami League government’s power to defame Tarique has been exhausted. Not only that, all the misgivings

about him within the nation and beyond in the international arena have also been ended. The million dollar question in today's Bangladesh is: When will Tarique Rahman return? The citizens of Bangladesh are eagerly awaiting his heroic return to the country. He is the future of Bangladesh and we all are looking up to him with the belief that Tarique Rahman will build on his father's sanctified work and make our nation a dreamland of national development.

6

PROFESSOR M MANIRUZZAMAN MIAH

The Endeared Leader of the People

It has been proclaimed in our constitution that all powers of the Republic of Bangladesh belong to the people. Shaheed (Martyred) President Ziaur Rahman used to say that it is the people who are the source of power. As a successful President, he always felt that the people are the source of his inspiration. We have seen the materialisation of this principle in the state activities during his tenure while in power. Ignoring all sorts of protocols, President Ziaur Rahman used to go in the midst of the common people freely and without fear. The cheerful people also accepted him with sincere love. In his many programmes, including the canal digging scheme, the people's participation was inevitable. But why was it so?

Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman was aware of what focus the politicians are meant to have. Their main work is to serve the people and to stand by their side at the time of their sorrows, happiness and adversities. He moved forward with all his strength for the welfare of the people and thereby he was able to become an unforgettable and undisputed leader in the politics of Bangladesh.

The driving force of the development of Bangladesh is primarily our agriculture sector and the farmers are the vital force of the country – a narrative which was effectively reflected in Shaheed Zia's state policies. He remained active for taking multidimensional steps like providing water necessary for irrigation and preserving water necessary for drinking. In view of his sincere initiative, the common people participated voluntarily in the canal digging programme and made the country self-reliant.

We shall be able to save the country from national wastage if we can maintain the continuation of the history of Shaheed Zia's voluntary effort. During his time, our agricultural production was increased to double. We should not be unmindful about these development projects. Due to the success of development in the agricultural sector, the amount of foreign assistance was reduced to half during the time of Shaheed Zia. It is necessary to have moral strength and honest courage for taking such national steps with a view to reducing foreign dependency. It is also necessary to have strong self-confidence, which was totally present in the actions and activities of Shaheed Zia. As a successful leader of state, his dreams made him the spokesman of Asia. He became the favourite leader of the people across the third world countries.

We saw what the unconditional love of the people was, when the dead body of Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman was brought in Dhaka. As far as the eye-sights went, there was the cosmic concourse of people – everyone's eye was bursting with tears with the grief of loss of their beloved one. Perhaps it is called the emotional expression of the vast multitude of people. Why was this vast multitude of people? Who called so many people to come over there? There was no one to call them and make the arrangement. The people came with the passion to honour their beloved President; they came with the motivation to have a last glimpse of a person as close as their family members. There was no intricacy in the attraction of this love; there was only pure love. Why did it happen? I believe the main reason is that Shaheed Zia reached the people of the grassroots level and loved them.

Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman is no more today. But the Bangladesh of which he dreamt of still remains in the world map. His dear people still remain in the country and beyond. It is not possible to erase an ideology by killing a person. Tarique Rahman, a worthy son of his father, moves forward upholding the flag of his Shaheed Zia's ideology. He draws on the friendship and appreciation of the common people. He loves and looks after them. He makes them his partners in the development activities. He does things in such a spontaneous way that the people of the country think of him as a genuine friend and a close well-wisher.

As a deserving son, Tarique Rahman always keeps in mind that the inspiration for Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman to march forward was the love of the common people. With the unstinted love of the common people, Shaheed Zia dedicated himself totally to the country and to the people of the

country. Without thinking of his own peace and happiness and future interest, he served the people selflessly throughout his life and for this reason the people of the country still remember him with deep love – with unending regard.

In the present day Bangladesh, Tarique Rahman is living up to our expectations and adeptly following the legacy of his father. We enjoy the reflection of Shaheed Zia in Tarique Rahman's constructive actions of growth and development. That is why we have seen how he took numerous progressive initiatives during the last BNP period, which in turn, changed the visage of Bangladesh. No sphere of national life was unmarked in his policy programmes, and this gives us full faith that Tarique Rahman is the most appropriate person to lead the BNP and the nation. I believe that Tarique Rahman will go forward firmly in the way towards truth, justice and welfare with the strength of patriotism, upholding his father's ideology and programmes of action.

7

PROFESSOR ANWARULLAH CHOWDHURY

A Leader Subjected to Inhuman Tortures

I consider myself privileged to form a soul-searching warm relationship with Tarique Rahman by seeing his great works from the proximity. Like many other Bangladeshis, I was first introduced to his developmental plans through various print and electronic media outlets. I was utterly impressed by his constructive political outlooks and passionate socio-economic programmes to bring about the changes that we need in Bangladesh. On top of the secondary media sources, I was fortunate to meet Tarique Rahman in person and converse with him face-to-face about academia, society, economics and development. Our discussions also revolved around the political situations and policy reformations of Bangladesh and the wider world. Again, I was utterly impressed by his in-depth knowledge, wide-ranging ideas, and deep-rooted commitments about critical national and global issues of socio-political interest. It all assured me that Tarique Rahman is the man whom we should unanimously thrust the responsibility to take Bangladesh forward and he is the reformer who would create a self-reliant progressive Bangladesh, as was aspired by his father.

Tarique formally entered into the top circuit of politics about a decade ago as the Senior Joint Secretary General of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). He then played a pivotal role in the advancement of the nationalist forces. I firmly believe that he is the best suited successor of the noble spirit and ideology of his father Shaheed (Martyred) President Ziaur Rahman and mother Deshnetri (Leader of the Country) Begum Khaleda Zia. He was born and brought up in a traditional political family. He got his first set of political lessons and socio-political initiations within the family, which in turn,

encouraged him to get interested into politics in an early age. Tarique Rahman is well informed about the global political developments. He systematically prepared himself through the study of various national and international political issues, pertaining to both the major events and the key actors. He was eager to know about the contemporary society and the history of civilisation. He had considerable knowledge about the current stage of cutting-edge science and technology. Thereby, he used information technology in his political and organisational activities, which was imperative in building the BNP as a strong political institution.

Tarique identified the challenges for the BNP and planned its strategies and tactics to cope with the situation. In 1998, he established a research cell for the party and drew in the expertise of academics, professionals and entrepreneurs, along with the experiences and expertises of the politicians, to plan for the future of the party. He played an integral part in the national elections held in 2001 and masterminded the great success of the BNP. He was involved inextricably in that election process and the electoral success brought him closer to active politics. Evidences show that he has had absolute acceptability within the nationalist forces and beyond to the general people.

As it happens in any democratic party, Tarique was rewarded for his accomplishments and took up the position of the Senior Joint Secretary General of the BNP. He felt the urge to organise the party in an apt way through the involvement of the grassroots supporters. So he devoted himself to the organising of revolutionary activities with a view to building the party policies right from the bottom. I witnessed from a distance as to how he took politics to the hands of the local villagers and arranged conferences by ensuring the participation of their true representatives. In doing so, he came out of the conventional politics and set a new benchmark of constructive politics. Tarique's efforts of arranging conferences in the local levels and giving preference to the opinions of the representatives in the policy formulation processes made him a luminous and radiant revolutionist in the political arena. Clearly, he was influenced by the pro-village politics pursued by his legendary father.

Tarique Rahman is a symbol of youth. His youthful dexterity is an inspiration to the innumerable youths of the country. He is the representative of those young people who have got involved or want to get involved with politics. The aim of his politics is national progress and advancement based on science and technology. It seems to me that Tarique is an able organiser and he

used his juvenile attributes masterfully in all organisational underpinnings. As an outsider of the party, I reckon he played a critical role in building the BNP as an expanded and powerful organisation. Tarique's merit and organisational skills will be needed in the future to make the nationalist forces more united and powerful, and thereby improve the socio-economic conditions of Bangladesh.

Whenever I speak or write something about Tarique Rahman, the young patriotic nationalist's pain-afflicted image appears in my mind in the first instance. Tarique was subjected to brutal physical and mental tortures during the period of the last caretaker government, as a result of which, the darkness of the dark night of the new moon still overcasts the life of this lively, rising, and promising politician. There was even a widespread apprehension that due to the infliction of cruel and inhuman sufferings at the time of his imprisonment, his life was at the risk of loss. As known by one and all, some of the bones of Tarique's spinal cord were broken after the devilish tortures and he was facing the danger of becoming paralysed for the rest of his life. I sat firm in front of the television set to watch the video clips of him walking leaning on others' shoulders or sitting on a wheelchair while going to the court. It was never easy to see such painful scenes of a patriot standing with much trouble and moving with the help of others. It made the general citizens of Bangladesh feel his pains and shed into tears, even more so when we comprehended the agenda-driven political reasons behind this cruelty. In line with others, I too prayed for his release from such disastrous condition and was relieved when he went abroad for medical treatment by getting a temporary release.

Tarique Rahman was arrested on the allegation of corruption. Many politicians and businessmen were arrested at that time on similar type of allegations. Most of them were subjected to more or less the similar type of tortures as well. Some of the horrifying tales of these tortures are much more severe than the barbarism of the middle ages. Among all, the case of Tarique was by far the worst and in many regards the magnitude is unimaginable in an independent country. We, the general people and average citizens of the country, are against all forms of corruptions. We want to establish a society free from corruptions. We want justice by punishing the corrupt individuals. There should have been no objection in connection with the punishment of the corrupt people. But how can one claim that almost all the top-tier politicians and businessmen of the country were corrupt?

There cannot be a policy in a civilized society or a state to arrest the leading political activists and businessmen en masse with the allegation of

corruption. It is a shame that the then caretaker government was interested in collecting money from them by force; and that too, on top of torturing them so ruthlessly. Furthermore, it is unacceptable to any conscious citizen to call anyone corrupt and inflict punishment before proving his act of corruption. The case of Tarique Rahman is no exception. He had to suffer punishment before the trial, long before the proof of any guilt or wrongdoing. It is not only sad and tragic, but also stands against any civic law. All these unprecedented events of filing false cases and oppressing amid harassment made the civil society surprised and confounded.

Everyone has the right to take part in politics in an independent and sovereign country. Taking part in politics cannot be considered as a crime. The main aims of politics are to serve the people, to protect the interests of the people, to engage for the welfare of the people, and to sacrifice for the freedom of the people. Like all other aspects of life, there has to be the coexistence of success and failure in politics. Some might have more successes and some might have more failures. In the end of the day, it is the general people, who with their voting rights, determine the fate of politics and the politicians. Since ups and downs of politicians are very common phenomena in the political arena – it is totally unexpected and undesirable to call the politicians en masse as corrupt and inflicting them punishment before the proof of their guilt – which happened during the period of the caretaker government. Whenever we talk about sufferings of politicians in Bangladesh, the name that comes first to everyone's mind is Tarique Rahman. Such was the enormity of tortures and propagandas against him that the then government left no stone untouched to systematically obscure his exceptional achievements and destroy his political career.

The road to politics is very slippery and uneven, as there are a lot of hurdles and difficulties. Tarique Rahman was able to achieve great success surpassing all the obstacles and he earned unstinted love and support of the people. The people placed him on the apex of their hearts as a reward for his love for Bangladesh. I feel that Tarique is now crossing an uneven path in his political career, primarily because of the unprecedented love and support that he received from the people. The expansionist forces consider him a hindrance in attaining their ill-motivated political objectives and that is why he has had to undergo so much pains and sufferings. Even today, whenever I think of Tarique's torture back then, I feel distressed and frustrated. And after coming to power, the Awami League government dropped every single case filed

against its own politicians, but did not drop any of the cases filed against the BNP leaders, including Tarique Rahman. Instead, they filed more cases against the BNP leaders and built on the caretaker government's work to humiliate the BNP in the public eyes. After spending five years in the government, the Awami League has completely failed to support any of the cases or prove any of the allegations. They tried their best to accumulate fabricated evidences, but the whole propaganda failed and made it clear to all Bangladeshis that Tarique is subjected to political vengeance.

The lessons from the history teach us that patriots never get ruined and perished for loving their countries and fighting for great causes. Instead, their names are written in the history in golden letters. In Asia, Africa, Latin America or even Europe, many patriotic nationalist politicians paid the highest prices for loving their countries and countrymen. But they achieved immortality in the history of their nations and lived forever in the hearts of their people. I have no doubt that the present phase of life of Tarique is sure to come to an end and follow the same route. The sympathy and support of the mass people have increased for him due to the mental and physical tortures that he had to suffer. He will again get the opportunity to dedicate himself in organising the nationalist patriotic forces with a view to freeing the people. He will dedicate his life in safeguarding the independence, sovereignty and democracy of the country, with the aim of ensuring freedom of the people.

The innumerable people of Bangladesh are also holding the same expectation and looking forward to seeing Tarique Rahman's responsible developmental acts. The country and the people are waiting to see his dynamic and historical leadership in the future. To this end, I trust that the day is not far away when millions of Bangladeshis will congratulate Tarique like they did half a decade ago. I pray for Tarique's safe return to Bangladesh where he would resume his political career without any partisan hindrance. I have the faith that he is the best person to lead the country and complete his father's incomplete legendary works. I wish him all the very best of success with returning to Bangladesh, staying safe, and recommencing politics.

8

PROFESSOR KHANDAKER MUSTAHIDUR RAHMAN

Bangladesh in the 21st Century: *Tarique Rahman* as the Saviour

Tarique Rahman is a leader of the future of Bangladesh in the 21st century. He has become pre-eminent in the politics of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) by proving repeatedly himself at different levels of the organisational hierarchy. Before being named the Senior Vice Chairman of the party in December 2009, BNP's top leadership, including the Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia, launched a number of positive schemes to groom Tarique to look after strategic party affairs and eventually take charge as its next generation leader.

Tarique Rahman joined politics formally in 1988 accepting the primary membership of the Gabtali Upazilla, Bogra BNP – the birth place of his father Shaheed (Martyred) President Ziaur Rahman. He became a member of the Bogra district BNP at a conference held in June 1993. Oftentimes openly and oftentimes behind the scene, he played a vital role in providing strategic solutions and solving crucial crisis for the party.

Tarique Rahman was the mastermind in devising the election campaign and the election strategy in the parliamentary elections held in 2001, in which the BNP won with more than two-third majority. Shortly after the party formed the government following this victory, the BNP Standing Committee, its highest decision making body, unanimously appointed him as the Joint Secretary General in June 2002. Assuming the new office, Tarique Rahman took reformative political programmes for the BNP with a view to making the party modern and suitable for the age. He implemented a programme titled as “Conference in the Grassroots Level” in every district, with a view to knowing the outlook of the grassroots leaders and activists about the party, to

gain proper idea about the complaints and necessities of the common people, and to formulate party policies accordingly.

The conferences, principally based on Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman's view to conduct national politics with particular focus on the rural areas, were held in six divisions separately with the grassroots level leaders (Union Council level). As a result, the top level leaders of the party became aware of the demands of the common people and these were reflected in the party's activities. Under this programme, Tarique Rahman took part in hundreds of public meetings all throughout the country. Top level party leaders and senior politicians of respective regions participated in those meetings along with him. The series of meetings with grassroots activists promoted Tarique's image as a party organiser rather than just the son of the party founder or the party chair.

It was amid his visit to the Gopalganj district as part of these grassroots conferences, when he made a formal visit at the grave of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in Tongipara to pay homage to the departed soul on behalf of the BNP, despite the fact that the Awami League continuously speak ill of Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman. Though the Awami League has consistently criticised other family members of Tarique, his visit to the grave urged a change in the political malfunctioning of Bangladesh.

Such activities and approaches not only reflected Tarique Rahman's political attitude, but also widely created a positive response and awakened a new era in the BNP. During the time, he stood beside the distressed and stretched out his helping hands towards them. As part of his commitment to social welfares, he established a nursing home for asthma patient, Komol (nickname of Ziaur Rahman) Seed Project, Komol Water Resources Project, Flood Control and Agricultural Rehabilitation Project, Shaheed Zia Children's Hospital, Plastic Surgery Camp, and many other social welfare centres. He was involved with the party inextricably till the state of emergency was imposed in the country.

An unconstitutional government took over the power of Bangladesh on 11th January 2007, which began to run the country in the name of caretaker government, but pragmatically, in the behest of the army. The state of emergency was declared. It was being said anonymously that a civil war would have erupted if the scheduled 22nd January election were held, thus justifying the undemocratic takeover of power. The office bearers asserted that the state of emergency was imposed with a view to avoiding the civil war, stopping corruption and countering maladministration. They took their stand against

the politicians in the name of stopping corruption. As the political events advanced with time, it was made clear by the observers speaking up in the media that the army backed takeover was pre-planned as part of a conspiracy dating back to 2005. The Awami League made a secret entente with the army officials to resist the BNP from coming to the state power and implemented the agenda through some foreign diplomats. The role of the assuring party of the agreement to implement that agenda had also become clear. In fact, it would not be an exaggeration to argue that the undemocratic government took the power by force with a view to destroying the BNP.

The undemocratic regime arrested some leaders and workers of the Awami League, including its President. But these arrests appeared to have been done as a show off. It seemed that the major plan was to destroy the organisational set-up of the BNP from the grassroots to the central levels by resorting to filing of cases, harassments, oppressions and repressions against its leaders and workers through systematic exploitation of national law and order forces. They arrested all the top leaders and numerous workers of the BNP on false cases, including Begum Khaleda Zia, and threw them into jail. They ventilated their total anger against Tarique Rahman, the future leader of the BNP. They filed against him false cases of extortion, corruption and money laundering, and sent him to jail.

Tarique Rahman became subject to brutal physical and mental tortures after his arrest on 7th March 2007 in the name of remand. After some days, his health severely deteriorated and his spinal cord was fractured. A serious allegation of violation of human rights was raised against the caretaker government at that point. On 3rd September 2008, Tarique Rahman was released on bail, but stayed in the hospital where he was already recovering from the inhuman torture. Four days later, on 11th September, he left Dhaka towards London for medical treatment, directly from the hospital. On the eve of his departure from Dhaka, the representatives of a military intelligence agency forced him to sign on a statement at the airport, where it was said that he had taken retirement from active politics, including the post of Senior Joint Secretary General of the BNP.

Is it difficult to explain the main reason behind inflicting such torture on Tarique Rahman? It is not. Such an effort was made to weaken the BNP, led by Begum Khaleda Zia, at the conspiracy of the expansionist forces with a view to making the country dependent on others.

Now it is necessary to explain in brief about the politics of the BNP. Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman established the BNP upholding the ideology of the National Revolution and Solidarity Day of 7th November. Before 7th November, the country was free but not sovereign. There was no independent foreign policy. Everything was controlled at the hint of Delhi, India. After 7th November, the sovereignty of the country was established by becoming free from the clutches of the imperialist and expansionist forces. Ziaur Rahman established the BNP by taking independence, sovereignty and Bangladeshi nationalism as its fundamental principle, and expressed his confidence to build the country self-reliant through sustainably freeing it from poverty and illiteracy. It is noteworthy that Ziaur Rahman observed that there was no other option but to achieve self-reliance if we want to be known as a self-respected nation upholding our sovereignty.

For achieving self-sufficiency, President Ziaur Rahman focused on boosting production, especially in agriculture and agriculture based products of small industries. He also aimed to expand the industrial products and create new industries. He committed to ensure the balance of power and derived an independent foreign policy building on friendship and agreement with neighbouring countries on equal footing. He established friendly relations with the Islamic states, extended bilateral agreements with the East Asian countries including China and Myanmar, and fostered an excellent working relationship with the Western countries including the USA and the UK.

As soon as Ziaur Rahman started running Bangladesh as the President, thanks to his positive politics and revolutionary initiatives, the evil reputation of the country as a bottomless basket getting started disappearing. He started a green revolution by supplying seeds and irrigation instruments to the farmers at a nominal price. He began the nationwide canal digging programme through mass participation on a voluntary basis, with a view to ensuring the use of surface water and combat regular floods. In the agreement of Farakka Barrahe reached with India in 1977, he ensured the equitable share of water for Bangladesh and finalised the guideline for establishing a regional cooperation alliance among the South Asian countries.

By overthrowing the elected President of the BNP, as a dictator, Hussain Muhammad Ershad seized the state power within 10 months following the martyrdom of President Ziaur Rahman. In such a wretched condition of the BNP, upon communal demand of the party activists, Ziaur Rahman's wife Begum Khaleda Zia took the leadership of the party. On the one side, she

was reorganising the BNP and giving it a strong foundation to mitigate her husband's absence, and on the other hand, she was conducting the movement against the dictatorial government and striving to re-establish democracy in the country. Begum Khaleda Zia performed both these responsibilities efficiently and was widely applauded as an uncompromising leader. Later on, her popularity brought her the honour of performing the responsibility as a Prime Minister three times, after taking her party to power in each of those national elections.

In continuation of the BNP politics intact, based on the foundation rooted in the 19-point programme of President Ziaur Rahman, Begum Khaleda Zia had implemented some epoch-making programmes. Some of her acclaimed programmes are trade liberalisation through structural changes, food and stipends for education, free education for girls up to the higher secondary level, reduction of poverty by implementing pro-people economic projects, and increase of the rate of national GDP. We can take some of the socio-economic metrics to assess the success of her governments. For instance, during the BNP period of 2001–2006, the rate of literacy, particularly among the girls, rose highly at that time. The poverty rate was 58.9 per cent in 2000; but it came down to 40 per cent in 2005. Population growth rate lowered down to 1.5 per cent. As a result of the development of child and maternal health condition, the rate of child and maternal mortality decreased notably. The average life span rose to about 67 years in 2005, which was 67 years in 2000. There are many similar examples.

Throughout the BNP period, Tarique Rahman, staying away from any government position and thereby from all policy making activities, under the direction of Begum Khaleda Zia, took the initiatives to reform the BNP with a view to making it more dynamic. He materialised several programmes of holding local level conferences of the party, with a view to incorporating the working class and the grassroots people into the mainstream politics. It was a significant step in changing the face of Bangladesh in the political arena.

I have mentioned about Bangladesh in the 21st century in the headline of this article. How would Bangladesh appear at that time? Who will make sure that good things happen to the country? If we pause for a while and visualise the incidents expected to be happened after 10 years, we will notice that the present context would be changed. Tarique Rahman will take all the initiatives that are required to rebuild the nation.

There will be a population of about 175 million, if the present rate of population growth continues. If the agricultural land decreases in an average rate of 1 per cent and the population growth increases in the present rate, it will be necessary to increase the annual agricultural production by 2.5 per cent for achieving self-sufficiency in food. It will be necessary to create wide employment opportunities through pro-people poverty alleviation programmes. It will be required to provide education to all. It will be imperative for health services to be reached to all by extending health facilities. Like the development in the agriculture sector, the industrialisation in the country is required to be developed rapidly, including the small industries for ensuring more employment opportunities.

At the same time, the port facilities would require to be increased, including the development of infrastructural facilities. The supply of electricity and energy would also have to be increased. Some unresolved issues should require to be solved with the neighbouring country, i.e., India, such as the border delimitation, reduction of wide trade deficit, sea boundary delimitation, and equitable water sharing of all rivers including the Ganges and the Teesta.

In restructuring Bangladesh's diplomacy, friendly relationship should be developed with all the states through skilful diplomacy, development of economic cooperation among the regional countries should require to be strengthened, and the relations with the East Asian countries including China should be developed for maintaining the balance of power.

Moreover, the people will be more conscious about their rights as a result of expanding technology. A massive change will occur in the environment due to global warming and climate change. Due to the rise of the water level in the sea, the salinity in the coastal districts will increase, the cultivable land will decrease, and about 20 million people will become environmental refugees as a result of decrease in production. They will have to be rehabilitated.

To solve all the complex issues discussed above, it is required to have a welfare oriented political party and a farsighted capable leader who will lead the country forward by accommodating its people in its political and social activities. The BNP, by keeping its declared policy and ideology intact, has the credit of developing the country by adopting newer schemes suitable for the need of the time. In terms of leadership, a new political dimension is required for taking the country towards fast development in vast areas of improvement, especially in view of the 21st century Bangladesh. We are lucky that towards that direction, Tarique Rahman has already added a new dimension under the

capable leadership of Begum Khaleda Zia. He is the only leader who can hold the country together and enable it to move forward as a respectable force in the global village of the 21st century.

Tarique Rahman is a severely tested man. His father, the decorated war hero Major Ziaur Rahman, was in the battlefield when Tarique was a child of only 5 years old. At that time, he saw how his mother Begum Khaleda Zia was passing the days with much anxiety and uncertainty. When he was 10 years old, he saw how his father President Ziaur Rahman filled the power vacuum followed by the revolution of 7th November. When he was a young boy of 16 years old, standing by the side of his mother, he became startled to see the bruised dead body of his father wrapped up in a coffin. He saw how his mother Begum Khaleda Zia had struggled for ensuring democracy, organised the party, and finally went to power overpowering all obstacles. It means that Tarique Rahman has taken lessons of politics every day in his way of life. He has seen its rise and fall, and its joy and cruelty. He has marked his farsightedness, merit and talent in the activities of the BNP. He has added a new height in the politics by including grassroots interaction, with a view to building the country for which he has always dreamt of.

A vision is required for a mentionable change in any social or political field. Throughout the history, such visions have been created by visionary politicians, philosophers, writers and intellectuals. Consistent with them, Tarique Rahman is a visionary politician in the case of Bangladesh. He has evolved ground-breaking programmes of incorporating the grassroots level people, both economically and socially, with a view to making the nationalist politics mass oriented. He has made successful efforts to take the nationalist politics closer to the people, much closer than any other party in Bangladesh has ever taken before. He has included the marginal people in wide-ranging political activities, and added a new facet in the anti expansionist politics pursued by his parents. As a result, the conventional politicians, the vested interest groups, and the local friends of the expansionist forces, are desperate against Tarique.

In the present reality, amid the devastating ruling of the Awami League regime, the awareness of the common people and their commitment to the country can show us the way of freedom. As Tarique has done throughout his political career, there is no other alternative but to strengthen the trend of the patriotic nationalist forces by awakening the population staying in the grassroots level and empowering them to face the challenges of the 21st

century. Time and again, Tarique Rahman is required to repeat his much appreciated political activities for the sake of the survival of his nation. He needs to resurrect the great works from where he had left five years ago. Then he will become our obvious saviour and create a Bangladesh thriving with social, political and economic success.

We have got such confidence in Tarique Rahman because he has marked his talent in the past, showed new dreams to his fellow countrymen, and accomplished many of those dreams in a short tenure. We have seen Tarique's commitment and capability, and there is no one else in today's Bangladesh who could match him. We hope that he will yet again lead the country towards development through his revolutionary political engagements. To this end, we believe that Tarique Rahman will infuse vitality in the nationalist politics and make Bangladesh a role model of equity and development for other developing countries of the 21st century.

9

PROFESSOR SYED RASHIDUL HASAN

Safe Return: Save Bangladesh

It is Shaheed (Martyred) President Ziaur Rahman, popularly known as President Zia, who made politics in Bangladesh people oriented. He brought politics from the drawing room to the thatched house of the farmers, to the sides of open fields and lands, and to the banks of rivers and canals. He taught the so-called politicians that politics is not an issue to discuss in the superior aristocratic drawing rooms, rather, it is an activity to mix up with the common people and work with them hand-in-hand for the development of the country. That is why President Zia once said, “I will make politics difficult for politicians.”

When President Zia was driving the nation towards the path of development with his own philosophy, the internal and external conspirators, those who did not want a developed Bangladesh, became reactive and brutally assassinated him in 1981. Everybody knows the history what happened in Bangladesh after the death of President Zia. General Hussain Muhammad Ershad, a crony of foreign conspirators, took over the power and established his autocratic regime for more than nine years. It was Begum Khaleda Zia, the widow of Zia, who challenged Ershad's unconstitutional government and finally became successful to topple down his regime through a mass movement.

In the national parliamentary elections of Bangladesh in 1991, Begum Khaleda Zia, a simple housewife, was elated to see the great victory in her hand. She started the implementation of the unfinished tasks of President Zia. The elections of 1991 were a turning point for Bangladesh. That was the auspicious moment when the 24-year old young man, the worthy successor of Zia family, Tarique Rahman, was brought to the pitch of politics by his

mother. In an interview with 'Channel-i' television, Tarique revealed that it was a demand of the time and the people for which he had to associate himself with active politics.

In the elections of 1991, Begum Khaleda Zia contested from five constituencies. She had to look after other constituencies as well, and strategise the elections throughout the country. So she could not find enough time to campaign in her own constituencies. In this situation, Tarique Rahman had to come forward to work for his mother in all the five constituencies. The able son of an able mother proved his worth, and Begum Zia won in all the constituencies with massive margin of votes. After that, Tarique Rahman did never take a break. He started his career as a politician at the invitation of common public.

In 1993, Tarique became a grassroots member of the Gabtoli upozilla BNP and formally entered into politics. After some time, he became the member of the BNP unit of the Bogra district. Like his father, he mixed up with the grassroots level common people with a new style of pursuing politics. As the days passed by, Bangladeshis realised that Bangladesh has got back another Zia in the persona of his son. Tarique Rahman, just like his father, had been relentlessly working for the development of the country. The overwhelming victory of the BNP in 2001 general elections was the result of strategic planning and effort of Tarique Rahman. He was the sole engineer because of whom the BNP got a two-third majority in the parliament. As a result of Tarique's glowing success, the Standing Committee of the BNP made him the Senior Joint Secretary General of the party.

Following the consolidation of the new position, Tarique started applying his own philosophy towards changing the fate of millions of helpless people of Bangladesh. For the first time in the history of the BNP, he arranged 'Grassroots Level Conference' in each district town, 'Upazila Conference' in each Upazila, and 'Divisional Conference' in each administrative divisional headquarters. By doing so, Tarique's ultimate aim was to locate and nurture right, dedicated and committed leadership at the grassroots level. His realisation was that not by the parasites, but by tested, motivated and passionate leadership imbued with the feeling of nationalism, development of Bangladesh is possible.

Akin to his father, Tarique Rahman also moved from one village to another and one corner to another of the country like the comet sprawling in the universe. He did not move with the political agenda in mind only, as

he mainly tried to connect the common people with the mainstream of the economic development. He himself joined in excavating canals for preserving water and irrigation, distributed poultry, livestock and high yield variety seeds to the impoverished farmers, and extended financial assistance to the poor meritorious students. Tarique was so introvert and press sensitive that many of the students who received his financial support could never know who actually financed their education.

Tarique Rahman followed his parents' and political mentors' footsteps in taking a positive approach toward other political parties and figures. In 1979, when President Ziaur Rahman delivered his speech in the second parliamentary session, he showed respect by citing the names of all the major politicians of the history of Bangladesh: Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazlul Huq, Hossain Shaheed Shohrawardy, Mawlana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani, and Sheikh Mujibu Rahman. Zia's wife, Begum Khaleda Zia, maintained the legacy and visited the shrine of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Tungipara, Gopalganj when she was the Prime Minister. In 2005, Tarique Rahman went to Gopalganj for attending a party meeting there. He along with his entourage, on their journey back to Dhaka, suddenly changed the course and directly visited Tungipara, where the shrine of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is situated. To the utter surprise of the entourage members, he went to the shrine and prayed to Allah for Mujib's departed soul. This is a simple example as to how Tarique has always respected people and extended them honour, even if they belong to the opposite spectrum of political affiliation.

It is untoward, but when we take into account what happened on the contrary, we find an exasperating picture of political malpractices. We have seen that when Sheikh Mujib's daughter Sheikh Hasian came to power as the Prime Minister, she removed the floating bridge named after President Ziaur Rahman on the Crescent Lake of Dhaka, and sent it to the remote area of Sylhet so that people cannot access Ziaur Rahman's shrine.

Mahathir Mohamed of Malaysia, Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore, and Ziaur Rahman of Bangladesh are the symbols of progress and development in the south and south-east Asian region. Tarique Rahman has been building himself up in line with the philosophy of these great statesmen. During his party's tenure in the government, he engaged himself all the time thinking about the model of development that would change the face of Bangladesh. Once he pointed out that Malaysia can be the model of Bangladesh. He visited Malaysia several times and tried to learn the process of development there. He

revealed that the two countries are very similar in many dimensions, including religion, culture and society, and hence Malaysia could be a role model for us.

We all believe that Tarique Rahman was on the right track in developing Bangladesh. But unfortunately, everything suddenly became chaotic. The enemies of Bangladesh started hatching conspiracy against the BNP who won a landslide victory in the general elections of 2001. Tarique Rahman was the main architect who worked from behind and fetched the huge victory. The conspirators became alert at the looming capability of Tarique. To them, Martyred Zia was unwanted and unwelcomed as he put the country on the right track of development and gave it a nationalist identity. So they brutally killed Zia in 1981 and stopped the wheel of development of Bangladesh.

The way how the anti-Bangladesh groups, haunted by Zia's growingly popular and pro-people politics, took charge by assassinating him, was witnessed once again in January 2007 when an extra-constitutional government backed by the army took charge in the guise of a caretaker government. It arrested Begum Khaleda Zia and kept her house-interned. On 7th March 2007, the so-called caretaker government arrested Tarique Rahman without any case or any sort of allegation. Putting him in remand, this junta brutally and inhumanly tortured him. The civilised people were stunned by hearing the brutality imposed on the son of the country's most successful President and three-time elected Prime Minister.

Under the veil of the caretaker government, the conspirators had only one agenda and that was to finish the charismatic leader Tarique Rahman. The conspirators came with a long-term plan. As part of that plan, they successfully set up the Awami League to take over the control of Bangladesh. Consequently, in the general elections of 2008, the betrayers of the country came to power amid sheer conspiracy. To keep their companion in power, the conspirators started killing the valiant sons of the nationalist forces. Arrest, remand, abduction and forced-disappearance became common phenomenon.

Today, these conspirators are looting the country and accumulating wealth in foreign countries. They have given up the sovereignty of our motherland to the foreign masters. The whole country is at a halt. The people are trying to create resistance against these looters, but the movements are being crushed in the bud by their subservient bootlicking police force. The government has put almost all the main leaders of the BNP into the jail. They have cut the constitution into pieces to pave their way to clinging into power.

However, the question is: How long will the unholy group of people continue to capture the power? Evidences from the past and results from the research done assure us that one day they will surely be thrown into the bin of the history. This time, in this ongoing war, as it happened when Ziaur Rahman called upon the people to start the liberation war to free our motherland, the people of Bangladesh will again jump over at the clarion call of Tarique Rahman, who symbolises youthfulness, honesty, success and sovereignty of the country. The victory is inevitable, so let us all wait for that victory to come. Let us all wait for the safe return of Tarique to Bangladesh. Let us all wait to see Tarique get into politics again with a sound health. Let us all wish Tarique the very best of success with all his personal, social and political endeavours.

10

PROFESSOR ABDUL LATIF MASUM

Tarique Rahman: A Statesmanlike Leadership

Leadership is an individual as well as collective issue. Leadership can be defined as a collective form of those desirable qualities of an individual that can inspire and motivate others for attaining the collective goals of a community. While defining leadership as a political concept, the eminent scholar CI Barnard says: “Leadership refers to the quality of behaviour of individuals whereby they guide people, a nation by their activities in an organised effort.”

Usually state leadership emerges from common leadership. Latent leadership is often spontaneously flourished and welcomed in a special environment or situation. While on the contrary, often a particular situation or environment may bring and establish some past event, individual or organised group into social and state leadership. SP Huntington, a great scholar of politics of the changing world, explained the matter in a different way in his book “Political Order in Changing Societies” through individual and collective contexts. He presented both the contexts in a psychological cover. The psychological standard reflects collective life sense flourished through coordination of the collective just as it incorporates beliefs and practices.

The individual issue is a unit while the collective issue is broad and wide. It is important in the judgment of leadership how an individual leader considers the issue and how he does his duty. On the other hand, success and failure of political leadership depends on two factors: success in building political culture, custom and institution, and statesmanlike far sight. In light of all these, in the critical situation of Bangladesh today, the need for a desirable future leadership is being seriously felt. The failure of present political leadership, its lack of quality and far sight, its corruption, partisan policy,

and above all, the latest atrocities have thrown the whole nation on the verge of a civil war. Simultaneously, the need of statesmanlike leadership among the civil society is being felt strongly. People are talking about the future of their society, about their hopes and aspirations, their desirable statesmanlike political leadership, and in the same way, about Tarique Rahman.

Statesmanlike Leadership

The French Premier during the First World War, G Clemen Sue, said, "A statesman would sacrifice his life for his state while a politician would remain satisfied at best by giving service." Thomas Jefferson, an American Founding Father, said: "A politician thinks for the next election. In any state system, leadership is a crucial issue." In the western countries having structural stability, rule of law is well established there. In the societies where democracy has taken deep roots, institutionalisation guides leadership there. But in a developing country like ours where statecraft has not yet gained expected institutionalisation, where an individual often directs the state, especially where perverted individualism has been established and inferior type of partisan policy has become the carrier of individualism, the need for enlightened national leadership is most felt there.

Background of Expectations

People do not expect something out of zero or an unworthy place or person. People do expect from a desirable heritage. They expect from reality or something authentic. Mass people's expectations developed encompassing Tarique Rahman due to the fact that he has a desirable heritage. His father Shaheed (Martyred) President Ziaur Rahman proclaimed the independence of Bangladesh and is an architect of modern Bangladesh who sacrificed his life to fulfil the expectations of the mass people. He imbibed people of Bangladesh with the spirit of working and serving. Tarque Rahman's mother Begum Khaleda Zia rescued the country from the grip of autocracy credit goes to whom for the establishment of the present parliamentary democracy. She has also gained the credit of uncompromising leadership ignoring all greed, fascination, fear and threat. This is a heritage to be proud of, and of dignity and patriotism.

Tarique Rahman was born and brought up in a disciplined, ordinary and decent environment with such family track record. His own memoirs speak of his aversion to power, pride and audacity. Socialisation process of

sociology explains that childhood and adolescent periods, known as the period of psychology building, are very important for developing psychology of an individual. So, something great can be expected from an individual born and brought up in a great environment. In the world, it is a rare coincidence for one to be fortunate of having his/her father as the President and mother as the Prime Minister. Thus, we find soul's heritage and the heritage of ideology properly blended in the personality of Tarique Rahman leaving space for great expectation of the people in him.

A Man is Known by His Own Name

Morning shows the day as a child shows the man, goes the saying. As far as we know, Tarique Rahman's childhood pointed to an enlightened future. However, that he does not want to be known only by his heritage was the reflection of his confidence. A proverb in rural areas goes like this (English rendering):

“To be known by one's father's name is of half significance,
By one's father-in-law's name is worthless,
By one's own name is like being a prince.”

Thus, Tarique Rahman has become familiar in his native village by his own name, through his own qualities and capabilities, and through his service mentality. This is a matter of confidence, and the way he has acquired the place in the hearts of the people in a short span of his political life is simply stunning. His popularity at this age is incredible. If politics is a matter of acceptance in the mind of people, then undoubtedly Tarique is already many steps forward defeating his natural rivals, including Sheikh Hasina's son Sajeed Wazed Joy. This is neither the language of flattery, nor any exaggeration; just an analysis.

Foundation of Expectations

The common people of Bangladesh are undoubtedly and utterly frustrated about the politicians, especially the ruling elites. This is unfortunate for the whole nation that in a country with a population of 160 million, we do not have a wise man with statesmanlike qualities or some representative civil society members who can rescue us from the ongoing stalemate. In this situation, many people are dreaming of Tarique Rahman as the person who could emerge as a saviour in the future, if not at present. They hope that he will create a silver future for the country, defeating the present monsters and

beginning a new era. They trust that Tarique will be the Mahathir Mohamad of Bangladesh. They assume that Tarique will be like an ornamentless Mahmoud Ahmadinejad or Hugo Chavez. While blessing Jawaherlal Nehru's coronation as the Prime Minister of India, Mahatma Gandhi famously said: "Be a great ruler like Omar or Ashoke. People's expectations are sky high." Similarly, Tarique's reality would be as nearer as his people and land, and their expectations will be meaningful and fruit-bearing.

The foundation of the expectations has already been laid. Tarique has already been elected as the Senior Vice Chairman of the BNP. He has successfully performed his duties as the Joint Secretary General of the party. He has set an example of first registering the party membership at the grassroots level and then gradually moving up to the top step-by-step. Since Tarique's joining in the BNP, his political activities can be explained in two ways as below.

1. Building ideological basis or political philosophy.
2. Structural foundation or organisational recasting.

The fundamental basis of a political party is its political philosophy or ideology. The ideology of a party is manifested through its aims, objectives, programmes and activities that are implemented and followed, statements of the leaders and the types of life that they lead. On the other hand, structural foundation, which means rules and regulations of forming committees right from the village level to the capital city, manpower survey, determination of nature, and type of leadership, etc., are crucial for any political party's very existence. In both of these issues, Tarique Rahman has left marks of his creativity, strategic maturity and intelligence.

It may be mentioned here that the essential principles on which President Ziaur Rahman served the nation are the followings.

1. Bangladeshi nationalism.
2. Politics of productivity.
3. Exploitation-free society.
4. Corruption-free administration.

The above have been reflected through President Ziaur Rahman's 19-point programme. He tried to train and motivate his party leader, activities and common people on the basis of these principles. Whenever he addressed any party meeting or mass gathering, he used to emphasise these issues. To this effect, he developed appropriate training institutes as well. In continuation of this trend, his son Tarique Rahman tried to train and

motivate the party from the grassroots to the top. Thereafter, for strengthening the BNP as an organisation, Tarique organised, attended and participated in conventions with union level leaders throughout the country. These conventions were not just practice of rhetoric. He took initiatives to collect information, data and opinion from the bottom levels through discussions and workshops. In the political culture of Bangladesh, this is an exceptional political programme of people empowerment. Some of the fundamental and strategic recommendations put forward by Tarique Rahman towards building an ideological base, determining party programmes of the BNP, and above all, for the national progress and development, include the followings.

Ideological Implications

1. Our politics shall have to be dedicated for development of the country and its people.
2. For rural development, there is no alternative to development of the farmers. To attain self-reliance, it is necessary for us to bring about a green and agro revolution.
3. It is not enough to go to the people and ask for vote only. Rather, we must be beside them at all times.
4. We must have love for our motherland and its people.
5. Whoever is a wrong-doer, irrespective of political affiliation, we have to resist him/her along with our workers and leaders.
6. There shall be a political war against anarchy.
7. We shall advance the politics of development and productivity.
8. We shall encourage honest and qualified people and give them proper position in the party.
9. All of our leaders and workers must have legitimate income sources.
10. We shall do politics maintaining consistence with mass people's hopes and aspirations.
11. Our students shall continue their studies and pursue politics keeping their studies unaffected.

Strategic Implications

1. An initiative and a little endeavour brings self-solvency and makes the country self-reliant.
2. Make a blend of experience of the older generation and enthusiasm of the younger generation to advance the country.

3. Cancel the committees of all levels that completed their term.
4. End quarrel and factional conflicts.
5. Do something for people leaving hollow talks.
6. Utilise youth force in income generating activities.

Core Focuses

1. National sovereignty.
2. Steel frame national unity.
3. Politics of productivity.
4. People's democracy.
5. National stability.
6. Social justice.
7. Overall development and utilisation of public property.
8. Women empowerment.
9. Development and capacity building of armed forces.
10. Appropriate status of freedom fighters and their proper rehabilitation.
11. Neutral and independent foreign policy.

Our Duties

Tarique Rahman is currently staying away from us, very away – in a country far beyond ours - in the UK in Europe. But people have developed huge expectations centring round him. The foretellers of politics confidently claim: “Tarique is the focal point of our politics. He is the future of the nation. He is the future helmsman of the state of Bangladesh.”

Tarique must have realised how tough and complicated politics and state power can be, through the events and his experiences following the formation of the caretaker government, which swept the country in 2006. However, the future of nationalist trend and flow of politics lies in continued efforts, and this path is not strewn with flowers. The opponents have already realised that the return of Tarique Rahman in the politics of Bangladesh means their exit from the stage of power. The positive side is that people admire Tarique and consider him suitable and fit more than anyone else. The negative side is that the Awami League would not allow Tarique's return in any plea and tactics. They will announce him unfit for participating in the elections. They will launch false propaganda against him, just as they have been doing ever since his political emergence. They will try to make him unacceptable and

controversial to the society and the people.

The torch bearers of nationalist politics do have a role to play towards making Tarique's return expected and inevitable. Following is a list of things that we need to do to rescue the country.

1. False Propaganda: To face the propaganda campaign against Tarique through well-organised efforts and using facts.
2. Legal Fight: To continue legal fight against ongoing legal process more effectively and strategically.
3. Diplomatic Efforts: To strengthen diplomatic manoeuvring to convince the diplomats and make Tarique's acceptance inevitable.
4. Save Country, Save People: To facilitate the "Save Country, Save People" campaign launched by Begum Khaleda Zia to a successful consequence.
5. People's Unity: To maintain firm unity of the people in strong hand. At any cost, remove all doubts and distrust and strengthen the basis of 18-party alliance towards making the fall of the Awami League regime inevitable.

People's Expectations

It is now the expectation of the people that Tarique Rahman will be able to acquire, flourish and apply multi-faceted statesmanlike qualities. Such qualities, as expected by the people, can be categorised into three dimensions: personal, party based and state related qualities.

Personal Excellence

People expect that on a personal level, their future leader will be a highly educated Mahathir Mohammad in the context of Bangladesh. It is a matter of assurance that Tarique Rahman has got his undergraduate degree from the country's premier institution, i.e. University of Dhaka. People feel assured that he has made positive utilisation of negative times. They pray to Allah so that he can overcome the harm he incurred on his personal health due to tortures by the hyenas in the inhuman form. The private family life of the leaders of developing countries is a concern for the people. People are happy that Tarique's life is not controversial as that of his opponents. In that sense, Tarique's family has emerged as a role model before the whole nation, which is a matter of pride and glory for us.

Good fortune lies in misfortunes. Tarique Rahman is at present at a place which is the centre of education, culture and communication in the world. He can interact with eminent politicians, leaders, policy makers, scholars, journalists, students and other movers and shakers of the world who break the boundaries to advance humanity to the next step. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto wrote in his biography that during his London days he spent much time in touch with some great men of the world which made it easy for him to attract the attention of Ayub Khan. Side by side, with personal image building and establishing communications with varied people, Tarique can now study Bangladesh affairs more deeply. It is a bitter truth expressed by the Nobel laureate poet Rabindranath Tagore about one's ignorance of his own country: "Alas! I failed to view my country with my own eyes!" Now that Tarique is not extensively involved with direct politics, he has the time to study and scrutinise the basics of South Asian politics with his friends and foes in focus.

Party Level

People have been motivated who are now roused by the neutral and ideological attitude with which Tarique was advancing forward. To maintain continuity of this trend, it is necessary to make party literature for building ideological basis for his party, establishing publication institutions, and launching research programmes. In all countries of the world, effective arrangements are there to maintain dynamism in the party. Tarique too realises this and takes a strong position in resolving factional crises, conduct corrective measures to end politics of compromise and advantage, and set priority for liberal politics and ensure for each what they deserve.

State Level

People's expectations are sky high as has been hinted earlier. People believe that dynamic, qualitative, liberal, and welfare seeking leadership will be available from Tarique. People also believe that following the footprints of his father, he will ensure national interest, national development, and national unity. He will adopt long-term strategies towards uprooting mass corruption. He will amend, make additions, and implement poverty alleviation strategies after necessary review works. He will ensure the rule of law without any bias.

It is difficult to forget the past, especially if it is bitter. In the interest of the country, Tarique will forget his bitter past and forgive the anti Bangladesh forces that are making every effort to destroy him. In the interest of greater

national unity, we will sing the song of love in chorus forgetting all the sadness. President Ziaur Rahman's achievements in formulating a progressive foreign policy were the greatest among all statesmen in Bangladesh. Tarique can implement his father's policy of "Amity with all, enmity with none" in effect. He can strengthen the policy of mutual trust, respect and benefit of his mother. The present Awami League rulers have become the lackeys of the expansionist forces bringing change in the pro-Muslim world policy followed by Ziaur Rahman. People believe that if once again Allah establishes Tarique Zia's dynamic leadership in Bangladesh, he will surely reintroduce a pro-Muslim and in the same time pro-West world foreign policy in the interest of ensuring supreme national interest of the country.

Such talks may seem embarrassing to some in the present times. Again, this may sound like the language of the flatterers and the sycophants. But to those who think of the country before their personal interests, this may not be unexpected. If all our talks, activities, aims and objectives are selfless and dedicated to our dear motherland, then we will surely succeed one day. Tarique Rahman, as we expect, will be the protagonist of that success story.

Expected Return

In this land of ours gained through sacrifice of millions of lives, divisions have been given an institutional form. Throughout the history, hatred and counter-hatred coupled with mercilessness and barbarity have been given state patronisation, which have taken the country on the verge of destruction. As an exception, President Ziaur Rahman resolved all conflicts and chaos, and integrated all rightist and leftist forces into politics, thereby made Bangladesh an imitable ideal state in the world map. Tarique Rahman is on his way to repeating his father's legacy. On the contrary, today, the Awami League government has put the issue of development and progress out of equation. Mass killings and arsons are going on rampant, as that is the area where the government is committing its focus. The common people have reached to the extreme end of injustice and torture.

Under the present circumstances, the most popular leader of Bangladesh, Begum Khaleda Zia, has called for a movement: "Save the Country, Save the People." It is encouraging that the people of the country have come to the street responding to her call and reached their desired goal in helping the nation at a difficult stage. Then, Allah willing, the return of their dear leader Tarique Rahman will take place. People are counting days with

those expectations. We can then address Tarique Rahman in the following way: “Let your name be familiar with this that you belong to us; no more identification needed, and let this be your last identity.”

11

PROFESSOR SAHABUL HUQ

A Cruel Victim of the 'Goebbelsian Theory'

Prior to launching my teaching career, I was involved with professional journalism for quite a long time. As a reporter of one of the leading newspapers of Bangladesh, I had the privilege to cover some of the most critical national events of the political arena, as well as to interact with the major national politicians from a close proximity. I still vividly remember several of the matters of that time, particularly the innate and bitter way in which the present Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina used to criticise the four-party alliance government led by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). On a regular basis, she extended negative and outrageous comments about the then Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and her son Tarique Rahman. I also remember how Tarique Rahman brought about fresh and awe-inspiring air in the traditional culture of political malpractices.

At that point of time, following the national elections held in 2001, Tarique Rahman was yet to formally enter politics with a significant position. Hearing the speeches of Sheikh Hasina, I often asked myself: What is the reason of so much negative speeches about the man who has appeared in the political scene just recently and is yet to set out his political step properly? I could no quite understand it back then. But later on, I realised the reason that was behind this. There are some burning questions that one needs to consider to get the answer: Why did Tarique Rahman become a target of the Awami League from the beginning? Were they afraid of him? Did the high popularity of Tarique become a misfortune for him? Was he not the leader of Bangladesh for the future? Was it a crime for Tarique to dream about the country and love its people? Such innumerable questions appear in the minds of many.

The political opponent of the BNP, Awami League, has got some principally negative characteristics. I am sure many would hold the same opinion in line with me in this matter, and this could be captured and explained by the Goebbelsian theory. I do not feel that there exists any other political party in Bangladesh which is more skilful in applying the theory than the Awami League. When the party makes someone a political target, its members leave no device unturned to make him personally contemptible by masterfully mingling the truth and the false. Tarique Rahman has also been subjected to a multi-dimensional negative propaganda of the Awami League, to whom a complete support and state patronage were provided by the 1/11 government of Fakhruddin Ahmed and Moeen Uddin Ahmed. They captured the power and exercised it unconstitutionally in an undemocratic way. The expansionist forces could not tolerate the far-reaching activities and successes of Tarique Rahman in the elections held in 2001. They hated his ceremonial appearance in the politics so openly. They were threatened by his organising of representative conferences with a view to strengthening the party from the grassroots level and thereby gaining popularity among the youths and the workers.

As a capable successor of Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman – who dreamt of a modern Bangladesh, who was the pioneer of the multi-party democracy, who was a successful leader, and who was the father of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) – Tarique Rahman tried to complete the works left incomplete by his father. By initiating programmes concerning canal digging, pisciculture, full utilisation of uncultivable lands, exchange of views with the general people, empowerment of the youths, and many other similar developmental projects, Tarique made a dynamic effort to follow his father's legacy. The full image of Ziaur Rahman was reflected in him and the common people found Ziaur Rahman in the polite statements and purified works of Tarique Rahman. They started hoping afresh and dreaming centring round him.

Tarique Rahman realised that the main obstruction to the development of Bangladesh is corruption and terrorist activities. So he started a movement against corruption and terrorism, both politically and socially. He relentlessly travelled the country to build a society free from corruption. He started discussing about the matter with people from different socio-economic groups and backgrounds. Having observed the spread of corruption in every section of the society, he wanted to make people conscious about it. He

instigated a political movement known as “corrective measures”, which started from within the BNP itself. He commenced to organise union representative meetings with the grassroots representatives of the party. He tried to make the leaders conscious about corruption and terrorist activities by explaining the following: “There will be no compromise with regard to corruption and terrorism. Any person, be a local activist or a central leader, will not be able to escape if s/he is found connected with corruption or indulging in terrorism. The party will not take the responsibility of such offences. There should not be a mentality that you are doing it as others have done so.”

Tarique Rahman made the point that the difference between the BNP and the Awami League lies in ethics and morality. He extended: “Please keep in mind that our politics is for development and production. Our politics is based on the soil and people of the country. You should remember that the people rejected the Awami League again and again as they indulged in corruption and terrorism. The people brought you to power as you did not involve yourselves in such offences. You will have to keep the trust and confidence of the people. It is the only thing that I want from you. Please do not disappoint me.” With a zero tolerance policy, Tarique also institutionalised appropriate punishments on proof against those leaders who were involved in such offences. Many lost their portfolios, many had to quit the party, and many had to suffer prosecution. The fact that Tarique communicated with his party leaders and activists in such a strong manner revealed the extent to which he was vocal against corruption. It set up an excellent example of commitment and integrity, as vindicated by the popular media following the fall of the BNP government.

But all these positive precursors brought disastrous results for Tarique Rahman. The expansionist forces became envious of his widespread popularity. They could not accept him nonchalantly and did not let him persist with his good works. They realised that it would be impossible for them to attain the power again, if Tarique Rahman continues to work in a way that holds the interests of the country, the people, and the party. Consequently, there was hardly any negative or disgraceful approach left by them unused against Tarique Rahman. Today, Tarique Rahman stays far away from the soil and the people of his very own country. But it does not mean that the ill-motivated publicity has been ceased. It is still going on with the same proportion and rate as ever before. The enemies of the nation are aware that Tarique Rahman is a very powerful person no matter which corner of the world he lives in. It is no

secret that the expansionists are therefore afraid of his patriotism.

The President of the Awami League Sheikh Hasina considers Tarique Rahman as her powerful political opponent. She regularly makes slander or poisonous remarks against Tarique. There is hardly any difference of age between her son Sajib Wazed Joy and Tarique Rahman. From this perspective, Tarique should be like a son to Sheikh Hasina. Besides, both Sajib and Tarique appeared in politics in the same way. The mother of one of them was the Prime Minister, while the father and mother of the other was respectively the President and the Prime Minister. In light of this complementarity, a question arises: Why does the Prime Minister fear Tarique Rahman so much? The answer of this question lies in the fact that Tarique Rahman is the symbol of patriotism, independence, sovereignty, and youthfulness. He is the future leader of the nationalist forces and a rebel against the expansionism. He carries the pulsation of the millions of people. He is the voice of the working class of people.

During the period of the so-called caretaker government, 15 cases of corruption were filed against Sheikh Hasina in comparison to 13 cases filed against Tarique Rahman. It was between 1996–2001, when she was in the office as the Prime Minister, Bangladesh became the champion in corruption for the first time. But there was no base of the corruption cases filed against Tarique Rahman during the caretaker government. Yet, he was put in jail without any offence and had to undergo inhuman physical and mental tortures. Such was the degree of tortures that it remains an unparalleled incident not only in Bangladesh but also in the recent history of the world. Violating the human rights in an extreme manner, the subordinate power resorted to unlimited falsehood by fully applying the Goebbelsian theory against Tarique Rahman. The people of the world, including Bangladesh, openly observed as to how he was subjected to the steamroller of oppression and sufferings amidst the government's organised exploitation of state machineries.

There is a widely talked about English proverb which says: "If you want to kill a person, give him/her a bad name." The Awami League has resorted to such kind of ill-intended media publicity of imaginary stories against Tarique Rahman for long. It seems that the theme of the proverb is reflected in the Awami League psychology very clearly. The objective of such kind of ill-intended media publicity pursued by the Awami League is to identify Tarique as: (1) the most corrupt person not only to the people of the country but also in the international arena, (2) a Mafia Don at home

and regionally and (3) a patron to the rising Islamic terrorism within the country. Only for these three vile intentions in front the publicity, based on non-informative, irrational, fabricated and imaginative stories, some media has been going on for long in a Goebbelsian way against Tarique Rahman. Many of the print media houses of Bangladesh are pro-Awami League and so they resort to such media propaganda with a view to achieving the political interest of the Awami League. In the electronic media also, the reflection of the continuous Awami propaganda has been seen. After coming to the power, the Awami League government started controlling the BTV, run by the taxpayers' money as the country's national channel, which now broadcasts imaginative stories continuously against Tarique.

Has the Awami League benefited from the media propaganda and conspiracy targeted to condemn Tarique Rahman? Has the Awami League elected by the verdict of the people by their actual vote? The Awami League formed the government after they won in the election of conspiracy and they fear the BNP's revival. Because they know that the people did not elect them, they have no confidence in and loyalty to the people; they have a loyalty to the power outside the country. This is why they take their stand against the Bangladeshi nationalism, propagate against the religious values and consciousness of the people of Bangladesh, and engage in the politics of hijacking on party basis the history and tradition of Bangladesh and spirit of the liberation war. In view of the strong politically organised stand and determination of Begum Khaleda Zia and Tarique Rahman against such anti-state and anti-people political and intellectual activities, the Awami League has been in a move to continue its malicious and revengeful assault, filing cases and forming media propaganda against Tarique Rahman.

It should be noted that the Awami media propaganda, to a certain point, created some confusing idea among the people against Tarique Rahman. But the idea of the people was changed during the 1/11 period when false cases were filed against him and he was subjected to inhuman torture in remand. Observing the series of events, the people realised that he became a victim of Awami revenge and malice and the baseless media propaganda against him was directed to satisfy the vile political interest. As a result, Tarique has been accepted by the people of the country as a respected personality. Observing the oppression inflicted on him, the people of the country now welcome him with their love, affection and sympathy. To speak the truth, he has appeared before the people with his clean character imbued with patriotism like the

Pied Piper of Hamelin after being tested by a touchstone. The patriot people, including the youths of the country, have been waiting for the moment when Tarique Rahman, the Pied Piper of Hamelin in the case of Bangladesh, will return home from abroad and reunite the nation by playing his flute, provide dynamic leadership in protecting the freedom and sovereignty, and ensure development of the country.

Man is not like the angel. Tarique Rahman is also not above human errors and omissions. It has been observed that the unexpected errors and omissions is a normal phenomenon in the case of the persons who are connected with power in the present political culture of Bangladesh. It is almost evident in the case of all. It might be occurred in the case of Tarique too, though without his knowledge. He was required to be more careful in the matter. I remember some of the lines of a poem written in 1974 by poet Abul Hasan who wrote it observing the expansionist and anti-state role of the Awami League and the Awami League government:

“Before my death I want to say
The scholars please stop – be quiet like the rose
What is the benefit of waging war?
Please speak, what is the benefit of engaging in enmity?
So eager you are to have supremacy?
And the newspapers are full of the news only of your wear and tear,
destruction and ruin.”

Has any Awami League leader or intellectual ever read this poem of Abul Hasan? Before I conclude my writing, I want to quote some lines from a poem of Farrukh Ahmed, an eminent poet of Muslim renaissance. He wrote the poem for the youths who are similarly inspired with the nationalist spirit and counting down every moment with much eagerness for welcoming Tarique Rahman after his return to home from abroad.

“I am hearing the call of the salted ocean again
The crown of the white moon is forcefully appearing at the top of
the wave Mountain like huge wave carries the call of the salted ocean
Voyage in the new water route this time O Sindabad, the sailor.”

The leader of the mass people, Tarique Rahman, is currently living his life in an ailing condition across the seven seas and thirteen rivers. Though he might want to keep himself isolated, the country considers him as her main man and the countrymen are awaiting his return. All the people in Bangladesh, except the expansionist forces, expect that Tarique Rahman will come back

home with a sound health and engage himself in the country's service through active politics. The nation believes that Tarique Rahman will start showing dreams to the people and translate those dreams into realities.

12

ABDUL HYE SIKDER

Propaganda Never Prevails

One

Standing in the dock, the great scholar Socrates who was sentenced to death in 399 BC, told the judges: “I did not live a common life free from cares like other people. I lived my life with the firmness of my ethics. I did not accept the life in which I shall not be able to do good to myself or to others. I always tried to make you understand that it is better to give attention to the development of one’s soul that rises beyond self-interests. Even after imparting such invaluable knowledge, what am I getting today? Do I really deserve this? You may gain temporary fame by inflicting me to the death sentence. But after some days, the whiners of today will blame you for killing me. It would be a mistake if you think that you will be able to kill and silent my loud voice against your evil acts. You cannot get rid of a voice this way. The only way is to make yourselves superior human beings rather than suppressing everybody who stands against you.”

After 2,334 years since the utterance of the infallible words of Socrates, the last independent Nawab of Bengal, Siraj-ud-Daulah, imprisoned at the connivance of the native and foreign conspirators, articulated the same notion of language. As found in the prominent Bengali playwright Sachin Sengupta’s published drama ‘Siraj-ud-Daulah’, the incarcerated Nawab said before becoming a martyr: “Believe me my brothers, I moved around the paths, plains and places of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa like a spark. I ignored the irresistible attraction of my youth. That is the only reason why people of Bengal are not totally ruined. Your happy families are not destroyed at the flame of wrath of Bhashkar Pandit. Your children are not forced to kill

themselves like insects. Is the seat of thorns a reward for that? Is the inhuman torture a reward for that? Is it the reward like the humiliation of a thief?”

It is not to make a comparison between anybody with the wise Socrates or the martyr Siraj-ud-Daulah. However, various kinds of similarities can be ascertained when the processes, natures and resemblances of making the allegations are observed. Socrates was fearless in the propagation of truth. So a good number of fraudulent allegations were brought against him: that he was an atheist; he did not acknowledge the gods and goddesses of Athens; he wanted to establish new gods and goddesses; he misguided the youths morally; and so on. On the other hand, Siraj-ud-Daulah flared up against the intrigue and conspiracy with a view to safeguarding the freedom of his motherland. He had to sacrifice himself to uphold his integrity as several many fabricated allegations were brought against him: that he was a tyrant; he was sensual; he was ardently desirous of women; and the likes. The complainants against Socrates were a group of trivial and opportunist intellectuals of the then Athens, while those who opposed Siraj-ud-Daulah and planned his murder were all conspirators against the motherland.

Two

Similar to Mir Jafar, a widely criticised traitor who betrayed his motherland and masterminded Siraj-ud-Daulah's death, the exponents who wanted to make Bangladesh a failed and ineffective state brought a henchman in the form of Moeen U Ahmed. Later on, the responsibility of Moeen U Ahmed was transferred to Sheikh Hasina in the way by which power was transferred from Mir Jafar to the East India Company. Moeen U Ahmed and Sheikh Hasina saw three main obstacles in the way to reach their ill-motivated goals.

1. Political ideology of Bangladeshi nationalism of Shaheed (Martyr) President Ziaur Rahman, and his exceptional image;
2. Zia family and its legendary legacy;
3. Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), the upholder of the nationalist ideology, and its political wings.

The expansionist forces became desperate to destroy these three pillars, a safeguard of Bangladesh from the paws of the expansionist power. They realised that after Begum Khaleda Zia, the future leader of the nationalist forces will be just one person and that is Tarique Rahman. It will not be possible to satisfy their high political ambitions by keeping Tarique unharmed. They also realised that Tarique is the symbol of youth in Bangladesh who has

unprecedented acceptance in the heart of people across all sects of the society. It will not be possible to make the future of Bangladesh meaningless if its symbol remains intact. The group had no doubt that Tarique will vigorously march against them. Like his father, he organised the youth forces of Bangladesh and uprooted the past politics of partisan conspiracy to bring forward the futuristic politics of national development. Had he been able to carry on and complete his works unobstructed, it would have been very difficult for the enemies to keep Bangladesh, the emerging tiger of Asia, a crippling nation.

Who does not know that Tarique Rahman is the architect of the 'Digital Bangladesh' for which the Awami League government claps on the side in joy? He took innovative steps to make the BNP a genuinely general people's party, which created a sensation even at the grassroots levels. He introduced a whole different model of political leadership, promoting a bottom-up approach and facilitating the empowerment of the grassroots. As a result, the opponents became cornered and faced a crisis of their own pompous existence. They, along with their collaborators inside and outside Bangladesh, became desperate to find a way of survival. They identified Tarique as their main obstacle and targeted him to launch a disgraceful conspiracy. They took advantage of their own media houses and made a hue and cry throughout the country of the ill-motivated propaganda. They were involved in all kinds of malice and evil activities.

After managing everything according to the blueprint of the expansionist forces, Moin U Ahmed and Fakhruddin Ahmed came to the power on 1/11. The government of Sheikh Hasina, which is averse to the growth and goodness of Bangladesh, subsequently came to the power following their initiation. They jointly filed 13 scandalous and false cases against Tarique Rahman. One of those cases concerns the grenade attack in a public meeting of Sheikh Hasina.

Three

The incident of grenade attack on 21st August 2004 is one of the most discussed matters in the recent political history of Bangladesh. The incident occurred during the tenure of the BNP government. Many top-level BNP leaders, including Tarique Rahman, boldly condemned this shameful attack. The BNP government took various speedy steps, including the formation of a judicial committee to probe into the incident. An immediate charge sheet was submitted as well.

The so-called caretaker government of Moin U Ahmed and Fakhruddin came to the power following the BNP government. The main agenda of the caretaker government was to destroy the Zia family, the BNP, and Tarique Rahman. They left no stone unturned in doing ill-motivated actions against these three interrelated pillars of Bangladesh, which in turn, enabled them to implement their diabolic agenda. The caretaker government also made a fresh investigation on the grenade attack of 21st August and submitted a new charge sheet. In spite of their desperate attempts and plotted efforts, they could not find a way to include the name of Tarique in their charge sheet. Consequently, the name of Tarique was not in the charge sheet that they had originally submitted.

Four

Since Tarique Rahman is the main opponent of the Awami League, they cannot find peace of mind unless he is entangled with cases. For this reason, from the onset, the leaders of different levels of the Awami League started uproar to establish the fact that Tarique was involved in the grenade attack. Even Sheikh Hasina, when she was the leader of the opposition party, claimed that Tarique was the main man not only responsible for the grenade attack on 21st August but also for all other incidents of bombing and terrorist activities. It is not surprising that she neither had any evidence, nor did she take into account the findings of the investigation reports. She simply ignored the reports so as to pursue her own political agenda.

Furthermore, Sheikh Hasina personally made many indecent, indecorous and abusive remarks about Tarique Rahman. Responding to those humiliations, Tarique said in a humble way that she was like his mother and the responsibility belonged to her for what she had said. He did not say any ill words about Sheikh Hasina, as he considered it indecent and inappropriate. Even then, there has never been an end to the trend of unreasonable, undemocratic, unconstitutional and indecorous words of Sheikh Hasina, which she is continuing till today. Given the fact that the government cares a little about honesty, ethics, rules and regulations, it was reasonably assumed that it would make a fresh investigation and submit a new charge sheet as a public eyewash, with a view to destroying Tarique Rahman and thereby the nation. Unfortunately but predictably, the public eyewash occurred as many had thought.

After coming to the power, the Awami League government, under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina, brought back the retired Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) Abdul Qahar Akhand in service. This partisan action violated all the existing rules and regulations of the police service. He was always considered a blameworthy, suspicious and censurable person with strong political affiliation with the Awami League. He was assigned with the task of investigating the grenade attack incident of 21st August and to submit a charge sheet thereof.

During his service life, Qahar Akhand was an incredibly reprehensible person. Everyone knew him as a serious activist of the Awami League. After his retirement from the service, he completed all his preparations to contest the parliamentary election as a nominated candidate of the party. A case was filed against him at that time, as the expression of his inborn violent and cruel behaviour was evident in his electoral constituency. It is known from the report of the Daily Jankantha in its 29th April 2001 issue that his supporters were involved in conflict with the supporters of a rival candidate who was attached with the politics of the BNP. Eight persons were injured as a result of the clash between the supporters of the two groups. The headline of the newspaper was: "Clash between the supporters of Major Akhter and Abdul Qahar Akhand in Kishorganj – 8 injured".

The Daily Janakantha published another report on 14th May of the same year, in which it stated that the supporters of Qahar were yet again involved in clash with his political opponents. In another report, it was covered that the supporters of Qahar damaged the houses of their rival supporters. On 4th May 2001, the same newspaper published a report extending that the Awami League had nearly finalised the nomination of Qahar in the Kishorganj-2 constituency (Katiadi). There was another clash occurred on 1st June of the same year and more than two hundred people were injured at the hands of the supporters of Qahar. Throughout the period, Qahar continued his election campaign with posters incorporating the standard Awami League slogan 'Joy Bangla, Joy Bangabandhu.' Everyone in Bangladesh knows that the Daily Janakantha is a stern supporter of the Awami League. I have used here the reports that were published by the very newspaper, notwithstanding its strong support to the Awami League, the party Qahar is associated with.

Earlier, he contested the Muktijoddha Sangsad (Freedom Fighter Council) election from the Awami League panel. According to the government's official statements, he is a non-partisan, impartial and neutral man. Qahar

Akhand was reappointed on a contract basis to conduct investigation of the grenade attack and to submit a charge sheet thereof. He was promoted from the ASP rank to the rank of Superintendent of Police (SP) in the face of surprise of the administration and the police force. It is clear from the analysis that as an ASP he will have to work under the supervision of a superior official, which might cause hindrance to the implementation of his assignment. He was promoted to the post of SP to assume the supreme authority of the investigation, which in turn, allowed him enough flexibility to work freely without any accountability. It is not a question to ask what kind of impartial investigation will be available from Qahar Akhand, as the answer seems to be known to all long before the depiction of a formal conclusion.

However, the story did not finish just there. After finalising the blueprint of involving Tarique Rahman in the case, the government's State Minister for Law Qamrul Islam and the General Secretary of the Awami League Syed Ashraful Islam appeared in the scene. It is not appropriate to comment or suggest anything in advance about an incident that is under investigation. In spite of this norm, the State Minister for Law, with the intention of influencing the police, administration, the judiciary and the inquiry committee, all on a sudden declared on 13th June 2011 that the charge sheet of grenade attack will be given against Tarique Rahman. In any democratic country, nobody should know about the identity of the person(s) to be charged in the investigation report of an incident that is still under investigation. But the State Minister for Law clearly said the name of Tarique in advance. If not a plotted farce, what is the meaning of it? Syed Ashraful Islam, however, surpassed him further. He declared on 5th July that Tarique was the main man to devise the plan for grenade attack and that the judgment of the case will be made effective during the period of his government.

On the one side, there was Qahar Akhand, and on the other side, there were Qamrul Islam, Syed Ashraful Islam and other similarly talkative yet powerful persons. As a result, the wrath fell on Mufti Hannan, the main accused of the grenade attack, who was subjected to indescribable mediaeval barbarous torture. He was taken to remand for many days, with a view to making him a confession by force and intimidation. They tried to force him say that Tarique Rahman was involved in the grenade attack. They themselves prepared a deposition on behalf of Mufti Hannan and forced him to sign it on 7th April 2011 under Section 164 of the criminal procedure code. The leaders and the blind supporters of the Awami League expressed their joy: "Look,

Tarique Rahman is involved in the grenade attack incident!”

But the virtue proclaims itself. On 27th September 2001, Mufti Hannan withdrew his so-called deposition taken under Section 164 by submitting an application through his lawyer. Let us see what he said in his courageous statement:

“Before recording the second deposition in this case, i.e., on 4th April 2011 at about 11pm in the night, I was brought in the Dhaka Central Jail from the Kashimpur Jail. After my arrival in the jail gate, the Senior Jail Super Touhidur Rahman asked me to sign a written paper which I refused. Getting furious, he abused me with filthy languages and threatened to kill me by poisoning. The next morning, i.e., at about 7.30am on 5th April 2001, the Super along with the Jailor and the Deputy Jailor, came to my place of stay at room number 6 of cell number 6 of Bonoful. They asked me again to sign that paper, but I refused to sign it again. The Super then abused me, threatened to kill me, and went away.

In the evening of 5th April 2011, I was sent to Sylhet on dispatch for appearing in the court there. After the hearing at the court in Sylhet, I was taken back in the Dhaka Central Jail the next day i.e., on 7th April 2011. Immediately after my arrival in the jail gate in the evening, Fazlul Kabir and some other officials of the CID took me to the Dhaka Court in their car. At that time, there were no jail officials or staff members there. After arrival in the court, they put me in a room where the lawyers sit. Later on, Fazlul Kabir took me to the room of the Magistrate. I asked the Magistrate the reason for bringing me there and the Magistrate said that I was brought there to record the deposition in the case of the grenade attack on 21 August in reference to my application. I became perplexed and shaken to hear it. At that time, Fazlul Kabir and Abdul Qahar Akhand, who remained sitting in the room of the Magistrate at the outset, handed over a paper to the Magistrate.

In this so-called deposition of mine, the names of Tarique Zia, Haris Chowdhury, Abdus Salam Pintu, Lutfozzaman Babar, and many others were mentioned. I refused to sign that recorded and prepared deposition. I was threatened to be subjected to oppression in the remand and killed inside the jail. It was about 11pm at night when the Magistrate, in the presence of Abdul Qahar Akhand and Fazlul Kabir, asked me to sign some blank papers. But I did not sign the blank papers. Since I did not sign, I was sent back to the Dhaka Central Jail with police escort.

I would like to mention here that the officials used to take me in remand and oppress mentally and physically before sending me to the Magistrate. Fazlul Kabir and Abdul Qahar Akhand took me in the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) blindfolded at regular intervals, and the RAB took me outside the city. They said: “You will have to confess that you attended meeting at Hawa Bhaban with Tarique Rahman, Haris Chowdhury, Abdus Salam Pintu, and Lutfozzaman Babar in connection with the grenade attack of 21st August. It is also to be confessed that Abdus Salam Pintu and Lutfozzaman Babar provided money and grenade. Otherwise, you will be killed.”

Since my arrest, I have been taken to remand on about 410 days by the RAB, the CID, and the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI), and they tyrannise me inhumanly. As a result, both my eyesight and memory have deteriorated. My right hand and right leg have become paralysed. I was not in any way involved in the grenade attack of 21st August. I never met Tarique Zia, Haris Chowdhury, and Lutfozzaman Babar at Hawa Bhaban. I never went to the house of Mr Abdus Salam Pintu and I do not know him. I do not know other accused individuals either. I do not have any acquaintance with any of them.

Today, on 27th September 2011, having appeared before the court, writing my statement through the commissioned lawyer, reading and finding it correct, and thereby voluntarily and with my own knowledge without instigation by others, I put my signature on every page of the withdrawal deposition.” - Abdul Hannan.

Five

I thank Mufti Abdul Hannan for his courageous honesty in the face of brutal oppression and death anguish. His statement has not only unearthed the character of the heinous rulers, but also inspired many oppressed people to speak up and share their truths irrespective of the consequences imposed by the Awami League. Charles Baden, a great thinker, rightly said: “No imprisonment can destroy any truth. Maybe it creates only a temporary obstruction.”

Likewise, the national poet of Bangladesh Kazi Nazrul Islam uttered the notion:

“The traveller to the way of sacred place of truth!

There is no fear, no fear,

Those who have the goal of peace, there is no defeat for them, no defeat.

In the guise of deception the trouble-maker won at intervals,
Finally becomes insulted forever in disgrace and shame.
The rubbish of the road throws up by the storm wind,
But never think that it climbed up!
It creates obstruction to those who march upward,
It creates the path slippery but the mud never won.”

Following the literary works of great thinkers and taking cue from the historical examples, there is no fear for the patriotic nationalist forces. While like any other individual, Tarique Rahman is not a man above minor faults and little errors, by no means is he a villain in the political arena of Bangladesh. Yet, there are systematic political efforts to substantiate outrageous propaganda and make Tarique a villain in the eyes of the people. They fail, however, to jeopardise the special place that Tarique holds in the heart of the people. Those who are engaged in such conspiracy are not the friends of Bangladesh and they do not have the right intentions. They are coward ill-forces who are scared of Tarique's swift rise within the BNP and his incredible popularity among the public. It is essential to resist them, both politically and socially. The people of Bangladesh have realised this and resisted them.

Bangladesh will become free from the curse of ill-motivated politics if we could similarly work together and defy all the propagandas in the future. It is the greatest demand of the moment that everyone among us participates in the critical task of rescuing and protecting our patriotic leader Tarique Rahman from the wrath of bigot sectarians. It is desired, if not destined, that the nationalist forces will hear the crucial call of the time and get the country back on track.

13

JAMES SMITH

How I See *Tarique Rahman* as a Leader

Bangladesh is a poor and developing country with the potential to become one of the world's power players. With more than 160 million people within its borders there is enough labour force, skill and enterprise for Bangladesh to become a fully developed nation. All the pieces of the machine are there, they just need the right man to assemble and operate them. Perhaps the main issue is the spread of the population across the country. More than 70 per cent of people reside in the rural villages and farmlands where life is tough. Food is hard to come by, flooding is rife, and healthcare nonexistent. These people are so detached from the government they are not aware of their rights, or how to make their voices heard in the corridors of power.

Currently Bangladesh is moving forward, but at a very slow pace. The government blames the massive population and its countless economic issues; the people blame the government for lining their gilded pockets and pursuing their own interests. They say the government elites are not interested in engaging the grassroots in the policy making process, or in learning more about their thoughts and ideas. They do not want to take on the massive challenge of empowering the grassroots for the benefit of Bangladesh. Instead, they put serious developmental issues aside and engage in petty political bickering to benefit themselves.

Thankfully for the people of Bangladesh, there is the chance of change in the form of Tarique Rahman. Tarique is not a man of words, rather a man of action. Tarique believes that those who possess the key to the future of Bangladesh are not found in the upper-echelons of government and high society, no, they are found tooling the remote farmlands and rural villages. He

believes that the current style of top-down politics would literally be turned on its head if the masses were made fully aware of their rights and their powers. This is why he wants to facilitate a political climate in which the opinions of the people are reflected in all political and economical processes. He wants to empower the masses.

This is an idea he learned at an early age from his father, President Ziaur Rahman, who founded the Bangladesh National Party (BNP) in 1978. Zia was a politician of the people. He relentlessly moved from village to village across the whole of Bangladesh in order to better understand the grassroots, even while he was President from 1977 until his untimely assassination on 30th May 1981 in Chittagong. It was estimated that more than two million people attended his funeral in the parliament square.

It was not until 1991 that the BNP returned to power at the hands of Khaleda Zia Rahman, Ziaur Rahman's wife and Tarique Rahman's mother. It was at the same time that Tarique himself joined the Bangladesh National Party and instantly followed in his father's footsteps. For more than twenty years, Tarique has made the grassroots his priority and passion. He has forsaken his own political career, refusing positions of influence on countless occasions, to better appreciate the masses and the struggles they face on a daily basis. For Tarique, the grassroots are not a means to power in Bangladesh; they are Bangladesh.

Perhaps some of the most significant work undertaken by Tarique occurred in the early years of his political career during the Awami League ruling of 1996 to 2001. Throughout this time he campaigned fiercely against the alleged immoral actions of the incumbent government. Much like his father before him, he also carried out the extensive and exhaustive task of a countrywide consultation programme. While on his travels he would distribute seeds, fertiliser, livestock and a smile to the agricultural workers.

The consultation programme was understandably successful and is often attributed to the BNP's landslide victory in the 2001 national elections. As recompense for his work in securing the BNP's return to power the grassroots and the national leadership wanted Tarique to accept a role within the government. However, he flatly refused so that he could continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with the people.

Tarique was, however, unanimously nominated for the role of the Joint Secretary General of the BNP. From this position he was able to drastically reorganise the party and implement his vision of flipping the decision making

process from the top-down to the bottom-up. He wanted to generate a culture where the workers would influence the thoughts and actions of the upper tiers of the party and the government. For the first time in its history the BNP was opened to the grassroots, creating an energised, proactive support base for the party where its members felt engaged.

He did this by visiting local units of the BNP on a daily basis, and holding briefings to hear the opinions of the grassroots, particularly on policies affecting the agricultural sector. During his travels, Tarique was able to gather information, statistics, and data on the rural population of Bangladesh. This helped the party better understand the people and shed its reputation for being run by former technocrats and businessmen.

At the core of Tarique's ideology is the need to make the farming and lower classes economically sound and self-sufficient. Through his work with the grassroots he was able to identify the areas where they needed help, and went on to launch a poverty alleviation programme. Under the programme, Tarique would distribute livestock and clothing, and also helped fund students through education. He also brought happiness and a smile to a number of brides and grooms by organising a number of weddings.

To build on this work, Tarique established the grassroots council conferences in 2004. He divided the 64 districts of Bangladesh into 20 political regions. Each region had its own council, and when that council sat it was the union, upazilla, and district leaders who took to the stage and not the ruling elites. Used to making speeches and dictating policy, for the first time Tarique forced the central leaders to sit and listen to the problems of the grassroots. It was his bottom-up system working at its best.

These council conferences were held over two parts, the second of which saw Tarique Rahman join the grassroots on stage. He would listen to their problems and ideas, but also advise them on how to make society free from the curse of dowry, to use birth control, to send their children to school, and how to work together to eradicate poverty. The matters discussed at these council meetings would then work their way back up the command chain to the politicians and help mould the BNP's policies and ideologies.

From these councils Tarique was able to implement a number of other changes to better the lives of the grassroots. For example, around 5 per cent of Bangladeshis suffer from asthma. However for a number of years there was only one specialist hospital in the whole of the country; Tarique built two centers within one year. That said; Tarique not only deals with the Bangladesh

of the present, but also the Bangladesh of the future through education and the empowerment of the youth.

Tarique understands that the boundless enthusiasm, creativity, and passion of the young are vital in terms of developing and leading Bangladesh into the future. This means ensuring they are educated to the highest standard, and that they are provided with the opportunities to gain useful employment or the support needed to establish their own business. Tarique also believes that the ideas and opinions of the young should help mould the policies and decisions made at the government level.

Much like his father, Tarique Rahman has paid the price for his popularity and his politics. Since 2008 Tarique has been living in the UK for recovering his health. Tarique was willing to contest a parliamentary seat in the 2007 national elections. However, at the time Bangladesh was being run by an unconstitutional interim military-backed government, which had crushed the normal democratic processes. After failing to agree a deal with the then military leadership Tarique was arrested. On 31st December 2007 special armed forces allegedly interrogated him in prison. The interrogation was so severe that he suffered severe spinal damage, which required urgent specialist treatment.

Tarique's injuries were so bad that not a single hospital in Bangladesh was equipped to treat him. Eventually a special court granted permission for Tarique to be flown to England to a specialist hospital for treatment. Five years on and Tarique is still recovering from his ordeal in London. Despite being thousands of miles away from his homeland he is still very much in the hearts and minds of the grassroots. The support for Tarique is overwhelming, both politically and personally. His position within the party was strengthened in 2009 when he was made the Senior Vice Chairman of the BNP.

There is no doubt that Tarique Rahman will make a return to Bangladesh soon. When he will it is expected that he will eventually take over the leadership of the BNP and of the nation. From there he will be able to oversee his masterpiece. Tarique has always believed that the future of Bangladesh is in the hands of the people at the bottom, at the grassroots. And from what better position is to listen to their problems and ideas than from the very top, as the statesman of Bangladesh.

14

SALEH SHIBLY

The Bottom-Up Approach of *Tarique Rahman:* The Formula of Development

One

It is proved throughout the world that politics cannot bring welfare for the people if it does not bring social welfare and economic success for the country's very grassroots. It applies even more in the case of the developing countries of the third world. Although Bangladesh is a developing country with immense potential, it is moving forward with gradual development at a slow rate. Many accuse that the ordinary political leaderships and the poor political cultures are responsible for this. The political leaderships of Bangladesh always highlight its 160 million people as an excuse of slow development, but never take any meaningful measure to address the interests of the grassroots in the policy making process. Instead, they put developmental matters aside and keep the general people busy in trivial political issues, which in turn, fulfil their own individual and group interests. They never try to help people intensify their physical efforts and sharpen their mental strengths, nor do they make the people aware of their rights, interests and empowerments.

In light of the current context, Tarique Rahman is a glittering exception in the midst of our political malpractices. He believes that the ordinary style traditional politics would definitely be changed if the political parties extend their willingness to add value to the people's lives and the people become aware of their own rights. This is why Tarique wants to ensure that the opinions of the people are reflected in the political and economic processes of the country. He believes that people's involvement and mobilisation is a necessary precondition to make every citizen economically sound and self-reliant. To this end, the main foundations of Tarique's political ideology

are grassroots empowerment, bottom-up approach, two-way engagement, problem-solving, and research orientation.

Tarique Rahman's philosophy is that an initiative and a little endeavour will bring self-solvency and make the country self-reliant. The gist of this belief is that if every citizen becomes economically self-reliant, each family will also be self-reliant and when each family will be self-reliant, their opinions will be given priority in the socio-economic and political systems of the country, and the whole of rural population will then be empowered. Likewise, when the grassroots level people will be empowered, their opinions will be prioritised in the state policies and qualitative changes will be ensured even within the current political structure of Bangladesh. In Tarique's narrative, the only way out of poverty is through working together as a community and collectively addressing all the obstacles. He urges his politicians to serve their communities through public works and infrastructures, using the grassroots networks of the political party. He believes that the purpose of pursuing politics lies in visiting local communities to document their hardships faced on a daily basis, catering them insightful analysis of the country's vibrant present, and articulating a prosperous and attainable future encompassing nationalism, democracy and progression.

Two

Throughout his political career, Tarique Rahman had set out to find the way through which the grassroots population will be able to reflect their opinions in the state policies. He believed that this is the only way forward through which all citizens of Bangladesh will become self-reliant. A focal point of his work plans was to communicate as to how an individual can be self-reliant by his own efforts, ensuring that the government helps the citizens' initiatives for self-prosperity. Tarique began to work with the question of how the grassroots citizens' opinions would reach the top end of the government and believed that his party could play an important role in this regard. This is because of the fact that the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has a powerful network and its political leadership ranges from the capital to the villages. It is possible that the news from the villages, along with the villagers' problems and prospects, can reach the central leadership through the chain of command of the BNP, moving up from the grassroots level leaderships towards the higher party officials in Dhaka. To ensure this swift flow of information, Tarique conceptualised that all the BNP activists down to the grassroots should be given training about

their limits, responsibilities and roles as part of their grooming process within the unique political framework.

When the BNP government was in power between 2001 and 2006, Tarique launched a political reformation programme to build up his party as competent as a party of the 21st century. He wanted to groom the grassroots leaders with new possibilities. He not only organised grassroots level leaders' councils, but also took new and brilliant approaches in the styles and processes of organising those councils. The grassroots leaders were given some questionnaire with 18 different issues, including the then socio-economic situations and political circumstances of Bangladesh, at least one month prior to each council. The first question of the questionnaire was: Why do you support the BNP? Tarique believed that the politics of the 21st century needs qualitative changes and the leaders across all levels need to know why they support their parties. He thought that if the grassroots leaders of any political party are aware, trained and enriched, that party will become more vibrant and the country will proceed ahead with an expected level of progress.

Tarique organised councils with the BNP leaders and activists from all 64 districts of Bangladesh, directly engaging with over fifty thousand personnel and encouraging them to extensively get involved with social activities beyond routine political works. Using the councils as means of the empowerment of the grassroots people, Tarique discussed the systems and techniques on how to make the people economically self-reliant. The 64 districts of the country were divided into 20 political regions, where the party representatives from the upazilas (sub-district) and the unions, the two major local administrative units of Bangladesh, took part simultaneously. The arrangement was such that the central leaders of the party sat on the stages. The presidents and the general secretaries of the districts, upazilas were given chairs with the central leaders on the stage. The leaders invited from union levels of the party took their seats with the general audience. The day-long councils were divided into two phases.

In the first phase, the leaders of the upazila and the union levels spoke about their problems and prospects. The central leaders sitting on the stage who normally used to give speeches in all political occasions, silently listened to the speeches of the grassroots leaders and took notes of the major points. According to Tarique, the aim of listening to the speeches of the grassroots leaders is to pick their logical and thoughtful opinions for the inclusion in the party and government policies. If this can be done, the people will feel that

they are an integral part of the development activities of the party and the country will truly go forward with a development flow.

In the second phase, Tarique came down from the stage to the audience. He talked to the grassroots leaders as a round table discussion. He had open discussions with them on important social issues such as freeing the society from the curse of dowry, briefing the people about birth control, sending all children to school, finding the ways to eradicate poverty, increasing the rate of women education, stopping early marriages, etc. Tarique was the first ever politician in Bangladesh who directly inspired the grassroots leaders how to solve social problems using their respective political positions.

Tarique firmly asserted that not only the BNP but also other political parties can bring the thoughts and opinions of the grassroots population in their central policies through a disciplined approach. On the one hand, this will bring qualitative changes in politics, and on the other hand, leaders of all levels will freely conceive themselves as responsible politicians and true representatives of the people. In such structure, the leaders of different levels of the party will work as the bridge between the government and the citizens. Tarique believed that social changes and community developments could be ensured if the grassroots leaders of all the political parties, along with the local people, could work together in planned ways to resolve their own issues. Hence, Tarique's bottom-up approach of holistic development stands as a pragmatic model for other developing countries to transform the political power into the strength of socio-economic development.

Three

If we look back further, Tarique Rahman came into politics with new agendas to take the development flow ahead and keep pace with the demand of time. He stepped boldly in the political arena and his opponents were shivering in fear following his active movements and revolutionary steps in the political field. His farsightedness became a headache for the national and international ill-forces that do not want to see democratic progress in Bangladesh. If we look at Tarique's past, it is clear that he never misused power despite having a lot of opportunities. The most youthful and powerful period of an individual is the age between 25 and 30. When Tarique was at this stage of his age, his mother became the Prime Minister for the first time. Tarique could have comfortably made use of the political power and gained personally. But that never happened and he always maintained a clean image. Representing an extraordinary

political atmosphere, Tarique's way of life had been truly ordinary and he made no headline at any point. He was a responsible and modest youngster with no flamboyance to show the type of political and family background that he hailed from. Understandably, people were comfortable to rely on such a down-to-earth character and envisioned him as their leader of the future.

Following the parliamentary elections of 1996, the BNP became the opposition political party. As such, its Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia was the leader of the opposition in the parliament. During that time, Tarique Rahman was an active party leader and worked with the grassroots leaders and activists. Being the son of the founder and the then Chairperson of the BNP, he could have taken advantage and occupied the party's central leadership. Instead, he decided to become a general member of the BNP from his father's birth place, i.e., Bogra district. Later, he performed many important responsibilities for the party and slowly moved towards higher positions.

Tarique worked as the coordinator of the BNP in the national elections of 2001. His skilled and tactful role in conducting the election campaign made him a brilliant and popular leader and the BNP got a landslide victory. Later, in 2002, he was rewarded for his contribution and got elected as the Senior Joint Secretary General of the party. When Tarique was given the designation in 2002, he fulfilled the responsibilities perfectly, showing a lot of courage, character and charisma. In 2009, he was elected as the Senior Vice Chairman of the party. Tarique was patient and democratic to receive all these party positions. Tarique proved his skills and credentials, as well as political characters step-by-step, and gradually reached the higher end of the party leadership in the span of nearly two decades. This is why the party leaders and activists endear Tarique so much and unanimously cherish him as their future top leader.

Tarique Rahman has always been a gentleman with strong morals and values. He speaks less and works more. He believes that travelling to different countries using public expenses, be that alone or with family, with the excuse of purchasing degrees or spending leisure, is too much for any politician of Bangladesh. Rather, he loves to stay in Bangladesh as much as he can so as to frequently speak with the mass people and engage himself in social and national welfares. He loves to listen to their problems and become their associate. As part of his responsibility as a leading politician, Tarique visited many countries of the world; but that too, not to celebrate his birthday, neither to enjoy holiday trips. He took those tours as means of seeing the world and learning

new things. In Singapore, he spoke to the pioneer of its development Lee Kuan Yew and learnt the secret stories of the country's sudden development. When Tarique was the Senior Joint Secretary General of the BNP, he travelled to the USA. He did not sink himself in luxury, rather, had courtesy calls with high officials. He called on Microsoft Chief Bill Gates as well, and invited him to visit Bangladesh. Only after seven months of Tarique's visit to the USA, Bill Gates acted on Tarique's invitation and visited Bangladesh.

Building on Tarique's experience with Microsoft and other high-technology companies, he made databases for all districts, upazilas and unions identifying their problems and prospects. Those databases included the numbers of working people in each union, the numbers of unemployed people, the numbers of senior citizens, the indications of area-wise proposed development projects, and other social and economic indicators of living standards. He wanted to develop an agriculture based economy with diversified industries, complemented by modern communication systems and favourable infrastructures. He merged nationalism and internationalism masterfully and endeavoured to permeate good governance, rule of law, institution building and international standard democracy. Tarique's views on decentralisation of urban facilities, liberalisation of global economies, and understanding of the necessary socio-political changes also contributed to his immense popularity.

Four

Tarique Rahman takes inspiration from his celebrated father Ziaur Rahman to pursue value-adding politics and build a prosperous Bangladesh. For Tarique, his family is a unique educational institution. His family is related to the history of Bangladesh's independence. Tarique saw his father as the proclaimer of the independence of Bangladesh, as the Chief of Army of an independent country. Both his father and mother established an example to become successful heads of the country. The whole family has become inundated with the love of the people. The family has given a political philosophy for uniting the people of the country. The family has still been playing an important role in the welfare of the country. It is fair to say that a unique family like this is rare in the entire world. It is obvious that Tarique, raised up in such an accomplished family, would undoubtedly be different from others in terms of leadership quality, and therefore, in terms of ruling a state.

It can be contended without any reservation that Tarique grew up in a family that precisely enabled him to obtain positive perspectives about

life, people and politics. The views of Ziaur Rahman played a central role in building the characteristic content and political perspective of Tarique Rahman. The military personality of Zia inspired him to learn discipline and commitment. The pro-development belief of Zia motivated him to dedicate his own life for the betterment of the people. Tarique saw his father very close to the centre of the state power at a young age. Such situations often entail deprivation for a child in terms of parental attention, which was not the case with young Tarique. Given a busy and outward Zia, Tarique was cared, raised and groomed by his mother.

Family values significantly influence one's matured life, as parents make the best teacher and family makes the best school. We find in Islam that parents are greatly respected in the Muslim tradition, where mothers in particular, are greatly honoured. Allah states in the Holy Qur'an: "And we have enjoyed upon man to be good to his parents. With difficulty upon difficulty did his mother bear him, and wean him for two years. Show gratitude to me and to your parents; to me is your final goal" (Al Qur'an 31:14). Every other religion has also emphasised the role of parents. Fortunately for Bangladesh, family was a content teacher for Tarique Rahman and he learnt a great deal out of his upbringing.

A particular incident, maybe a small one, still enormously influential in Tarique's early life, can be mentioned here. Tarique was a young teenager who was eager to know about other countries. In 1981, Nepal's King visited Bangladesh and had his Queen and two sons accompanying him. When departing, he invited Zia to visit Nepal in return, and after few days, Zia decided to make a return visit to Nepal. While the preparations were going on for Zia and his wife, Tarique and his younger brother were not asked to take part. So he went to his mother and shyly informed that both the brothers were willing to visit Nepal with their parents. Zia heard this while Tarique was expressing his desire, and came behind him with a plain question, "Why do you want to visit Nepal?" Tarique ardently replied, "Nepal's king came with his children." Zia understood his son's emotion and compassionately said, "They are King's sons."

The abovementioned single statement gives a clear idea about Zia's political ideology and the unique family context within which Tarique was raised in the early years of his life. Although Tarique was sad for a few minutes hearing the response of his father, through this exemplary incident, the family school taught him a significant political lesson that has been residing in his

head for the rest of his life. His father, even after being the President, never wanted to lead a life filled with preferential treatments. He wanted to be a true patriotic leader of the people who always stands by their sides, and fulfilled his desire by serving the nation in a way that it eventually became self-reliant. Tarique saw that in spite of being the most powerful person of Bangladesh, his father became the king in the hearts of the people, not the king that pursued a life with luxury. Thus, the humble perception and ordinary lifestyle of President Ziaur Rahman set up an example for all the politicians of Bangladesh, not just for Tarique Rahman.

Five

Tarique Rahman's father became a martyr on 30th May 1981 by some disgruntled army officers. The then government declared a record 40 days national condolence. In the case of the death of some previous rulers, however, the people of Bangladesh did not bother much and there were hardly any people moaning in pain. After Zia's murder, Tarique saw the wailing and sobbing of millions of people for his father. The ideology of Tarique was influenced by one question: Why did the entire Bangladesh become tearful after his father's departure? The answer lied in the fact that great works never go unnoticed in the eyes of the people and there are always rewards in their hearts. The premature death of Zia was a huge strike in Tarique's disciplined life, but his mother Begum Khaleda Zia embraced him with all her love and affection.

After the death of Ziaur Rahman, the people of Bangladesh wanted to see his heir in the power. Begum Khaleda Zia could not avoid the people's emotional urge. The pressure built from within the country compelled her to engage in politics, and at one stage, she held the steering of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). In spite of her hectic schedules and political commitments, Tarique Rahman's mother Khaleda Zia did not want to send her son abroad for superior education or foreign exposure. Ziaur Rahman and Khaleda Zia both believed that if millions of young students could study in Bangladesh, their children should do the same and receive their schooling within the country. Since the people of Bangladesh always responded to the calls of Zia family, brought out procession on the streets on Ziaur Rahman's call, and took life risks on the movements of democracy as per Khaleda Zia's call, Ziaur Rahman and Khaleda Zia thought that sending their children abroad would be a betrayal with the confidence of the people. Therefore, Zia

family never lived outside the country on will and Tarique never exploited any opportunity to establish residence abroad in the name of security or study. Indeed, the ideology of Zia family's politics is: "Bangladesh is first, Bangladesh is last, Bangladesh is life, and Bangladesh is death." It is no surprise that the people of Bangladesh also value this. They know and believe that Zia family has never been greedy to lead a luxurious time out abroad, and neither do they ever spend public money as private expenditures.

When Khaleda Zia was leading the anti-dictator movement against the autocratic government, Tarique had to face considerable threats and went into house arrest in a number of times. He was then a student of the University of Dhaka, studying his Bachelor's degree in International Relations. On the one hand, the anti-dictator movement was on the peak, and on the other hand, Ershad was determined to stay in power no matter what. Conspiracies were hatched to make Khaleda Zia panicky by threatening that her son's life is in danger and could be destroyed. But Khaleda Zia, as the uncompromising leader of the movement, remained firm and kept marching against Ershad. When the movement transcended from the streets to the institutions, the campus of the University of Dhaka also went berserk. Tarique's university life became even riskier, like thousands of others students. Yet again, Khaleda Zia could not become selfish to send her son abroad by leaving all other students unsafe, and Tarique completed his graduation overcoming all the obstacles.

Six

After the unconstitutional government led by Fakhruddin Ahmed and General Moeen U Ahmed grabbed the power of Bangladesh on 11th January 2007, Tarique was warned to leave Bangladesh. But he did not do so in an effort to avoid bowing to the lawlessness and to stand by the side of his countrymen. He faced his enemies with guts and heart, just like his parents responded in all the similar occasions they had faced. In doing so, Tarique received so much admiration and empathy from the people of Bangladesh that they gave him the title 'Deshnayok' (People's Leader). His political ideology that the country will not progress meaningfully without the empowerment of the grassroots people has now become popular not only among his leaders and activists, but also among the general countrymen. All these positives were bringing great results for the country and the people.

That Tarique Rahman emerged as an exceptional politician and as the future of Bangladeshi nationalism was not tolerated by the Awami League and

the anti-Bangladesh forces. They could not stand any of his achievements and tried in all possible means to destroy his image and make his achievements controversial. They realised that Tarique had come to politics after tremendous deal of preparation. They clearly understood that after the three-time Prime Minister of Bangladesh and the Chairperson of the BNP Begum Khaleda Zia, Tarique is all set to handle the steering of the BNP. To satisfy their political resentment, the top leadership of the Awami League, under the guidance of Sheikh Hasina, did not wait to point out Tarique as their main target and went after him by all means. They began to tarnish his image via mass-scale falsifications. In all possible platforms, formal and informal, home and abroad, they continued to spread forged statements against Tarique to smear his image. Even after being the Prime Minister and trying as hard as she could, now in the verge of ending the tenure of five years, Sheikh Hasina has failed to prove a single case of corruption against Tarique. Finding no other way, she is producing further conspiracies and spreading more propaganda to trap Tarique into fabricated cases. This is just the tip of the iceberg of human rights abuses carried out by the Awami League government.

The reality is that the success of Tarique is the failure of the Awami League, and the inability to prove Tarique guilty has yet again opened the disgraceful character of the Awami League in the eyes of the general public. The people of Bangladesh have understood from the very beginning that Tarique is the victim of systematic falsifications. They are aware of the Awami League's scary belief that if Tarique Rahman can be stopped, the endeavour of the patriotic nationalist forces would be stopped. And that, to a large extent, would mean that the sovereignty and the unity of Bangladesh will be weakened.

Taking into account Tarique's political background and the ongoing conspiracies of the Awami League against him, Tarique is highly admired by his countrymen for his commitment and contribution – even more so to the grassroots people who have seen him from a close angle – just as one of them who stands by their sides no matter what. There is an emerging consensus in the contemporary Bangladesh that Tarique has done his level best for the betterment of the country and he is the best leader to change the face of the nation. Tarique is also the inherent of the Zia family and his family has had a significant role in the birth and growth of Bangladesh. Therefore, no matter how hard the Awami League tries to destroy Tarique Rahman, he holds a special space in the hearts of the millions of Bangladeshis and he would overcome all the conspiracies and propagandas through their unconditional love and support.

15

HUMAIUN KOBIR

The Vanguard of the Nationalist Movement in Bangladesh

Tarique Rahman has now been out of the country for almost five years on medical grounds to recover from injuries that he sustained from the inhumane torture, by the law enforcing authorities, on the executive order of the then unconstitutional military backed civilian government in 2007.

Uncertainty and speculation continues to prevail over Tarique Rahman's return to Dhaka and even his future role in Bangladesh's politics. It is this uncertainty, that arouses a sense of nervousness among the nationalist forces and more so about the future of nationalist politics in Bangladesh with his mother Begum Khaleda Zia now at the fag end of her distinguished political career. It is widely perceived that without Begum Khaleda Zia's uncompromising leadership in the current situation, the BNP as a party would not have a chance of returning to power in 2014. She has been the sole unifying pillar for the nationalist forces within the country and in revitalising a sustained campaign to oust the current oppressive Awami League regime.

The Awami League and its anti-nationalist allies are strategically planning to prevent the BNP from returning to power. This anxiety of theirs, is simply not reduced to the fear of facing the public wrath post elections in 2014, and the fear of being brought to justice for the heinous crimes they are committing during their term in office. Furthermore, they very much fear the return of Tarique Rahman. The Awami strategists perceive to view Tarique Rahman as a more important obstacle to them, if they are ever to return to power again in the future. Therefore, they always took a strategic stance to dent the future of symbolic nationalist politics in Bangladesh through a vicious and malicious campaign both at home and abroad to defame and tarnish Tarique Rahman's future involvement

in Bangladesh's polity.

Those of us who believe in nationalist values, we do not have a symbolic rallying figure in the country post Begum Khaleda Zia to unify people around the principles of Bangladeshi nationalism. As such, should we want the country to be centred on the values and principles of Bangladeshi nationalism, we have to properly project Tarique Rahman and ensure his role in the Bangladeshi political mainstream. Otherwise the nationalist movement would go into oblivion post Begum Khaleda Zia altogether.

In writing this article, I must make it clear that I have never met Tarique Rahman in person. I had two appointments arranged for me to meet him when I declared my interest to do so. However, I failed to meet him due to my own unfortunate personal circumstances, once let down by the weather on a flight from Sylhet which never took off and on another occasion having to return to London to attend an urgent family matter on the date of getting an appointment to see him.

On both the occasions, officials working closely with him were kind enough to offer me time in his diary without any hesitation and without any condition or demand. I also learned on both occasions from his aides that he spends most his time during the day outside of Dhaka, visiting district and upazila headquarters to meet with party grassroots and activists. Tarique Rahman was happy to offer me an appointment for a slot for the two hours that he would be in his office in Dhaka on either day. Therefore, it always personally disturbed me to read very malicious stories surrounding officials around him and his alleged conduct whilst serving as the Senior Joint Secretary of the party and always begged questions in my own mind.

Therefore, why is there such an indecent assault by Tarique Rahman's political adversaries on the man who has spent most of his life growing up in the country that he wished to serve? Tarique Rahman is unique among the political elites of Bangladesh. Most political elites of his generation have spent time away from the country, have studied abroad, have married into families outside of the country, and have a sense of luxurious lifestyle as an indicator of their well being and social advancement. Tarique is totally on the opposite of this elite political paradigm. He went to normal schools and colleges in Bangladesh, got married in Bangladesh and lived a modest lifestyle. Should Tarique Rahman have opted to go abroad he could have, most of his party well wishers would have been happy to host him in any country of his choice but he did not do so, because he felt a sense of commitment to the country and the nationalist movement.

Tarique Rahman started his political career with an inward looking focus whereby he distanced himself from directly intervening on government affairs and steered away from the media and concentrated on the bottom-up process of establishing participatory democracy within the party. He wanted to make the BNP a dynamic political party in order to create a more ideologically rooted membership based party by diversifying the recruitment of well trained members who share the same values and principles of Bangladeshi nationalism.

If Tarique Rahman had projected himself through the media early in his career to both raise his profile and his political ambition for the party and the country, he might have succeeded better in his early career. Given the present day media and public relations centric politics that prevails in Bangladesh, this perhaps would have not allowed his political adversaries to project Tarique Rahman to the world or even across Bangladesh via the media through a malicious propaganda campaign.

Tarique Rahman's interest was far too pure and simple in today's context of politics. His first step was the grassroots; engaging with the grassroots of the party, farmers and agriculturists across the country, engaging them in the country's development process. He tried to be innovative by doing something different, taking politics closer to the people. Unfortunately, in Bangladesh's vicious partisan politics, political adversaries are considered enemies, and in this scenario, the Awami League and for the anti nationalist sections of the society, Tarique Rahman started becoming far too rooted and entrenched among the common people of the country. They started to fear his acceptability to the people and therefore took practical steps backed with immense financial resources to eliminate his politics through a coordinated media and political propaganda both at home and abroad.

It was not possible to counter the people centric politics of Tarique Rahman on the ground, as the then Awami League opposition lacked his energy and vision to penetrate the grassroots on such a wide scale throughout the country. Thus, Tarique Rahman became a victim of his own bottom-up approach to politics, whilst his political adversaries used a top-down media propaganda strategy to eliminate him from politics.

So, has it been possible to finish Tarique Rahman and the nationalist future in Bangladesh? Certainly not. Late President Ziaur Rahman was assassinated to end Bangladeshi nationalism and its values from the country, yet his martyrdom and his De Gaulle style national reconciliation politics is the historical narrative that drives the heartbeat of every nationalist activist in Bangladesh. Zia's pro-people legacy is a defining factor in returning the BNP to office on every occasion.

Similarly, Tarique Rahman's exit from Bangladeshi politics is a temporary phenomenon. This temporary exit can be seen as an opportunity for both Tarique Rahman to revitalise his vision and passion for a self-dependent and self-reliant Bangladesh, and for every nationalist to re-engage with the values and ethos of Bangladeshi nationalism.

Tarique Rahman's political philosophy seemed to centre around creating a renewed BNP, that was not simply restricted to achieving political objectives of power, but also a party that contributed to the wider development programmes of the country. He actively galvanised the party grassroots through introducing a system of participatory democracy that can be compared to the academic work of Professor Robert Chambers's theory of 'Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)', whereby, Chambers places emphasis on using the knowledge of local people for socio-economic advancement. In other words, you could say Tarique Rahman was probably the first and amongst the foremost leaders in South Asian politics who pragmatically put the notion of 'participatory political organisation' into practice through his bottom-up vision of using the knowledge of the party grassroots activists to ensure they had a voice in the party's policy formulation, and also an influence in shaping the government's development priorities when in Office.

Tarique Rahman travelled extensively and tirelessly to hold parleys with activists across the country on a daily basis during his tenure as the party's Senior Joint Secretary General. He was perhaps naive in underestimating the vicious nature of political opposition in Bangladesh. His political adversaries fearing electoral defeat and discomfort at his rapid connectivity with people from all walks of life and particularly from the rural parts of the country took a short-sighted political decision to tarnish his reputation via a coordinated public relations strategy.

For someone like Tarique Rahman who was busy on a day-to-day basis with party affairs full-time, it was not always practical to be self-aware of plots against him or naturally cannot be expected to detect such failings hands-on. Tarique Rahman is not only a nationalist political personality but also, and importantly, a political brand whose brand reputation needs to be protected by activists of the nationalist movement. Tarique Rahman is not alone; many leaders around the world face similar challenging circumstances in their careers at some point. In some way, it puts him at an advantage to experience these challenges now, rather than when in government. As it gives him the chance to learn from such experiences which can only ensure his emergence in the future as a superior statesman. I very much look forward to that day, just like millions of other people in the country who await his return to the political foray of Bangladesh again.

16

MAHDI AMIN

How a Socio-political Moderniser Rebuilds the Face of Bangladesh

One

Bangladesh has arrived to a crossroads under the ruling of the Awami League government. In its national history spanning over four decades, the country has hardly been in a situation worse than this. In such an uncertain and dreadful scenario, there are a few questions raised by the on-looking populace who have legitimate self-survival concerns: Will there be an end to our sufferings? Will we be able to start a journey afresh? Who will lead our revival? The answers of the above questions revolve around one name, Tarique Rahman, a political moderniser who has long entered the foray and is increasingly being tipped to bring about radical changes in Bangladesh. Tarique Rahman is not just a name to the general Bangladeshi, but an emotional symbol that is synonymous to inquisitive attention and deep admiration. Having subjected to political vengeance and unprecedented propaganda without any proof of guilt, he is far from conviction and stands tall as the man of today and for the future.

On a personal level, I take pride in that I have had regular opportunities to meet Tarique and discuss about various issues of national interest. I have also been privileged to converse with several global leaders, Nobel laureates, and great minds; and I firmly believe that Tarique sits in the top cohort of the list in terms of personality, capability and integrity. Taking this impression on board, in this article, I set out to touch base a few interrelated issues grounded on the intersection of Tarique Rahman, the person, and Bangladesh, the country: What makes Tarique different from other Bangladeshi politicians and how does he live up to the people's expectations? What has Tarique done for Bangladesh over the years and how will he bring forth the much needed

changes? What do Tarique's dreams and visions entail and how will they drive a new journey for Bangladesh?

Two

Before embarking on the discussion of Tarique Rahman's values, beliefs, actions and attainments, it is imperative to scrutinise the backdrop of his political emergence. Unlike any other prominent Bangladeshi politician, Tarique is a social artefact of nature and nurture. No other leader except Tarique was born to a father who proclaimed his country's independence, then became the Chief of the Army Staff, and finally went on to become the country's first elected as well as the most popular President. No other leader except Tarique was born to a mother who took on the mantle of her husband, played the most critical role in establishing democracy in her country, and made history by becoming a record three times Prime Minister. Only a handful of leaders had the unique social upbringing, systematic political grooming, stupendous firsthand experiences, and structured training exposures like Tarique. Only a handful of leaders spent more than a decade in preparing themselves before formally entering into politics like Tarique. It all played a pivotal role in making Tarique Rahman who he is, in determining what he believes, and in shaping how he functions.

Tarique has lived in the UK for half a decade and seamlessly integrated himself within the Western society. Staying away from active politics and relying on action-oriented research, he has spent most of his time critically analysing the present situation of Bangladesh and methodically investigating how the government should revive the nation with a progressive approach. Tarique has comprehended that there is a bigger and better world behind and beyond Bangladesh, from which global best practices of socio-economic development and successful models of public sector engagement should be transmitted to his motherland. On the one hand, Tarique has meticulously examined the dynamics of the Westminster style parliamentary system, democratic culture and policy making process to yield qualitative changes in the political arena of Bangladesh, and on the other hand, he has repeatedly interacted with the world's brightest politicians, bureaucrats and intellectuals so as to exchange socio-political insights and absorb state-of-the-art policy prescriptions.

As a case in point, I have been blessed to attend some of the meetings where Tarique Rahman imparted in-depth discussions about critical developmental matters with compatriot scholars and professionals from

reputed universities and organisations. He not only ascertained the non-partisan and fresh perspectives of the partakers concerning paradigm shifts in our politics and policies, but also committed to them the creation of an outstanding atmosphere so that they could return home and contribute to the growth of Bangladesh upon completion of their professional or educational commitments – be that in the form of service in public or private sectors, job or business in industries, or teaching or research in academia – and thus clinch the conversion of pricey brain drains into precious brain circulations.

A successful political leader means leading the people of the nation, by means of a government, and by means of the practice of an ideology. The success of a nation has always been determined by its leader, who demonstrates a broad vision and becomes an example for others. There have been many noteworthy world leaders who have led their people to security and prosperity and demonstrated the greatest scale of political victories, social reformations and economic measures at a time when the people truly needed a revolutionary leader. In all possible metrics, Tarique Rahman, with his phenomenal political thoughts, is on his way to becoming one such leader for Bangladesh, perhaps with the prospect of being the most successful Prime Minister of the country following the legacy of his father as the most successful President. Having seen the depth and breadth of some of Tarique's developmental programmes, as well as come across his incredible persona, profound knowledge, widespread interests and entrenched commitment, I am utterly convinced that he possesses the invaluable characteristics that would make him a legendary statesman in the years ahead.

Indeed, Tarique has thus far proved himself a worthy successor of his celebrated parents and risen through the political hierarchy faster than most others. He has achieved it by his own merit and work though, as reflected by his exceptional political and electoral track record as well as unparalleled reputation within the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and in wider political circles. Tarique's energetic leadership, forward-looking thoughts, dynamic initiatives and work ethics are welcomed across Bangladesh as a much anticipated departure from the traditional culture of political malpractices.

Three

As many political analysts in Bangladesh portray Tarique Rahman, he is not only a competent politician but also a pragmatic philosopher and social reformer. His values and actions demonstrate that he is consistently on the

right side of arguments on the issues of national importance. Tarique is practical yet passionate; he cares for the people and wants the best for the future generations. He aims to propose policies and stir social movements to revive Bangladesh and create a new direction of hope. He repeatedly contends that what we need in Bangladesh is not division, what we need in Bangladesh is not hatred, what we need in Bangladesh is not violence and lawlessness; but is love and wisdom, and empathy toward one another, and a feeling of justice toward those who still suffer day in and day out, whether they be rich or poor.

Owing to a mindset heavily infused with the requisite of social reformations, Tarique has created a road map through which he would address the local problems of Bangladesh with global outlooks as per international standards, and thereby rebuild the country from the interface of local expertise and global excellence. All facets of state intervention – ranging from domestic security to foreign policy, agriculture to industrialisation, healthcare to education, energy to infrastructure, technology to communication, and corruption to terrorism – are integral to Tarique’s far-sighted yet fine-grained development programmes. By disseminating a ground-breaking and duty-bound political philosophy – “An initiative and a little endeavour brings self-solvency and makes the country self-reliant” – Tarique covets humanity to grow in all localities, development to sustain in all communities, and everyone to stand up for everyone else. His philosophy is a story of meritocracy and togetherness anchored in hard grafts and social dialogues. Analogously, this is a personal story that has its roots in his father’s triumphant statesmanship, a social story that has the potential to erect the restoration of improved living standards, and a national story that is likely to take the best out of Bangladesh and change its face in the world map.

Tarique stresses that we must not just change our policies, but the political culture and the inherent processes as well. He has a principle of two-way engagement between the politicians and the people, as part of which, he plainly asks the people to contribute to the society in which they live, in order to build a society from which they – from which everyone – can benefit. He suggests other politicians to let the differences of opinions rest on the podiums and stages, but not in the welfare and development of the country. He vindicates that our political parties should work for us, not against us; they should help us, not hurt us; they should ensure opportunity not just for those with the money and influence, but for every Bangladeshi who is willing to work. He articulates that political speeches alone cannot bring about changes

in the common people's lives. Hence, he urges his party leaders to visit the people so as to set an example as to how they can change their lives. Tarique reckons that only by doing so, we can bring the changes necessary to realise the full potential of Bangladesh and restore the promises of the liberation war.

Tarique Rahman pronounces that we need to get united and stand against our government's catastrophic ruling when it fails to make systemic and lasting changes. He denotes that we deserve more as a country: our government owes us much better development programmes and far bigger societal contributions. He stresses that real changes do not come from the government in isolation, but from collective endeavours. Tarique's viewpoint is that the government should operate with a bottom-up approach instead of a top-down approach. He advocates the government policies to be based on dialogues with people from all walks of life. He insists that communication between policy makers and grassroots is central to good governance, wherein policies should be made in consultation with the general public. In line with many legendary leaders, he deems that a self-reliant country is not possible without the empowerment of the grassroots and their integration into the mainstream. He believes that popular public policies can form only when the people are inspired, mobilised, empowered and involved in the strategic and operational decisions of the government. It is in the heart of Tarique that the government can foster socio-economic progression by directly or indirectly engaging everyone in its decision making processes, development programmes and democratic exercises.

Tarique argues that all our problems can be tackled if we pull together, if we stick together, and if we work together. In his accounts, we all are in the present situation together and we must seize this defining moment to make fundamental changes. Only together we can improve the living standards of the people, streamline the agriculture sector, and ensure food and water security. Only together we can swell new industries, create millions of permanent jobs, develop a vigorous education system, generate sustainable power and energy, embrace the progression of science and technology, and advance the transportation sector. Only together we can drive religious tolerance, combat corruption, tap into transparency, make our politics and politicians work better, and ultimately promote a healthy governance structure with superior democratic norms and stronger public institutions.

Tarique expresses the notion that together – through a lucid communication instrument and cooperative feedback loop between the

top and the bottom – we can solve all our problems. He believes that the government should proactively facilitate all the citizens of Bangladesh to combine their pairs of hands and jointly form and substantiate a selfless entity – the pride of Bangladeshi nationalism – which is more important than the identity of individualism and wherein everyone complements each other to rise or fall as one nation.

Four

During the ruling of the BNP-led government between 2001 and 2006, although not taking any position within the government, Tarique Rahman still contributed considerably through his party position as the Senior Joint Secretary General and did exactly what the people wanted (he had to subsequently climb the ladder and become the Senior Vice Chairman to meet the demand of his leaders and activists). Amid the most open platform process in the history of Bangladesh, he reached out to all the Bangladeshis who hungered for a new direction. He communicated with the common citizens to better understand their needs and demands, and then turned those into realities. Thereby, he changed the whole way the country had been run. He was involved in a great deal of activities pertaining to social and community services. He utilised politics for the welfare of the people by breaking the barrier of the conventional political culture of speeches and accusations.

Throughout the BNP period, Tarique retained a very positive yet simple outlook about the future: “I am hopeful that we will be able to build a beautiful country. In that beautiful country, there will be social security and an environment of political tolerance, including first-rate law and order. For this purpose, we will have to work together coordinating the power of the youths and the experience of the elders. We will have to work like a family, whose members ranging from the young to the old, work together to make the house beautiful before the arrival of a guest. The task of building a happy and prosperous Bangladesh would be easier if we can do it together. I am optimistic that not too long from today, we will become proud of Bangladesh more than ever before and bring it on equal footing to the social conditions of the developed world.”

Tarique called his unique brand of politics as the “politics of production” and worked accordingly to add value to the socio-economic productivity of the nation. Time and again, he associated himself with the happiness and sorrows of the people. He made every effort to ensure a smile

on the faces of the poor. He stretched his helping hands as far as possible to the distressed and the deprived. In doing so, he earned the trust, confidence and love of the general Bangladeshis as a social worker and patriotic leader. For someone who was not holding any government position and personally taking radical developmental initiatives out of his own passion, the magnitude of Tarique's actions was so incredible that it is a national consensus that it would remain unmatched in the years to come. Within the scope of this article, in the following section, I highlight a fraction of the myriad programmes that Tarique singlehandedly took in the five years when the BNP was in power.

Five

The foundation of all economic activities in Bangladesh is agriculture and farming, which almost exhaustively take place in the rural areas. Tarique Rahman rightly thought that it is essential to flourish the villages so as to ensure the economic and social development of the country. He took a rural-based development programme and articulated that it will become meaningless to pursue politics if he fails to mitigate the sufferings of the farmers. He travelled from villages to villages dispersed across the country and enquired about the well beings of the farmers. He tirelessly visited them in muddy fields and wholeheartedly appreciated their contributions. He stood by their shoulders and stretched his hands with a warm smile. At most times, he personally handed them seeds, saplings, fertilisers and fowls. He encouraged them to diversify the production of agricultural goods and use modern technologies for the improvement of productivity. In an effort to ensure a swift flow of resources towards the agriculture sector, Tarique requested the government to revise its funding mechanisms and enhance soft loans to the farmers, as well as to establish large cold storages and supplement critical logistical supports.

In accordance with eminent agriculturists, Tarique launched seed projects under which high breed seeds were produced and distributed among hundreds of thousands of farmers at a fair price. In addition to this, he provided farmers with the training as to how they could produce high breed seeds on their own. Tarique repetitively said that every inch of soil should be utilised for the development of the rural economy, while production of paddy, jute, pulse, oil seed, onion, garlic, ginger, capsicum and potato should be optimised to the limit. He encouraged the unemployed young individuals to initiate pisciculture in ponds, lakes, swamps and marshy lands. Like his father, Tarique himself dug canals with spade in hands and released young fishes in ponds with

a view to extending togetherness within communities, as well as to eroding the accustomed hierarchal differences between the politicians and the public. Furthermore, he searched for exemplary success stories in agriculture, farming and pisciculture, and visited highly successful individuals of these sectors as a means of extending them appreciation, recognition and inspiration.

Tarique Rahman encouraged his relatives, friends, leaders and activists of the BNP, as well as the wealthy persons of the society, to stand by the sides of the underprivileged and the helpless. He launched countrywide poverty alleviation programmes in order to reduce the number of people living below the poverty line. He arranged mass-scale projects of distributing fowls of high breeds, goats and cows, which in turn, empowered hundreds of thousands of families and strengthened their economic bases. During the bitter winters, Tarique presented himself with warm clothes among the people suffering from cold. He was concerned about the socio-economic conditions of the poor at such a micro level that he regularly used to arrange weddings and receptions of economically deprived girls.

Tarique established hundreds of health camps across Bangladesh, where patients were being treated and provided medicines free of cost. These camps also passed on health consciousness among the uneducated people in the rural setups. Tarique set up several many children hospitals that provided modern treatment to the children, decreased the rate of child mortality, and offered training to the doctors and the nurses. There was just one public asthma centre in the country, which seemed insufficient for the large number of patients. Tarique not only established more asthma care and prevention centres, but also arranged modern asthma trainings for the doctors, nurses and patients. Likewise, he organised plastic and reconstructive surgery camps by inviting specialist surgery teams from the overseas, where operations were conducted free of cost to heal the patients suffering from hare-lips, palate-cuts and burns.

Tarique conceived environmental pollution very seriously and created task forces to assess the environmental stipulation of Bangladesh. After each and every flood, he formed medical teams and sent them to different areas to provide treatment to the affected people. He launched several collaborative projects to combat the problem of acquiring pure drinking water, as people in many areas consistently faced this predicament due to environmental imbalance. Moreover, he started social forestry and tree plantation programmes with a view to protecting and developing the environmental equilibrium of

Bangladesh, as well as to augmenting awareness of the people concerning this critical issue.

From the belief that the new generation of today is going to become the nation's value creators of tomorrow, Tarique Rahman encouraged children to become educated and qualified. He provided regular monetary assistance in the form of scholarships to a countless number of students, starting from the primary level and going up to the secondary level. He visited thousands of schools and engaged himself in informal chatting with the students. On the macro level, Tarique planned to formulate a cohesive framework to facilitate the fulfilment of Bangladesh's enormous educational potential in light of the international best practices. He wanted to make the education system more dynamic and adaptive, consistent with the learning practices of the advanced world. He realised that the essence of education lies in making it as much practically driven and job-oriented as possible, with particular emphasis on the development of skills and competencies pertaining to real life tasks, which in turn, would unearth respectable job opportunities in Bangladesh and abroad.

Tarique took a keen interest into the advancement of science and technology. He visited Microsoft Corporation and other high-tech companies while making a trip to the USA. He enthusiastically learnt about the undertakings and operations of those companies, both in the local and the national levels, and modelled the advancement of Bangladesh's information and communication technology accordingly. Tarique urged the government to use the avant-garde technology in solving the national problems in an array of sectors, including manufacturing, information, communication, transportation and energy. He contended to rely on modern instruments and software so as to enhance transparency and foster accountability among the public servants and electoral politicians. Besides, he initiated projects to identify and promote technological industries with high potential where investments could be garnered and jobs could be created.

Six

Today, Tarique Rahman remarks that the world can enthrallingly look back into the rich history of Bangladesh and appreciate the significance of its existence, since no other country has dedicated lives for a language, not many have endured such repression before independence, and very few have sacrificed so much in a liberation war. Elation of the past thus derives the inspiration for the future, and as per Tarique, the day is not far away when global leadership

in certain areas, not survival, will be Bangladesh's primary agenda. As a step forward, he cherishes to utilise his charismatic leadership in reformulating the BNP as the country's only political party truly of the people, by the people, and for the people. Tarique aims to commence a new journey for Bangladesh: a journey to redefine the development goals of the country; a journey towards unprecedented economic growth; a journey to set an exemplary governance mechanism; a journey towards the recognition of the best citizen in a global village; a journey to set a new benchmark of living standards; and a journey towards the new identity as the world's powerhouse of progression.

Tarique craves a free and fair election that would pave the path for the BNP to form the government again. He wants the voices of the voters to be heard and the preferences of the people to be prioritised right at the top of policy making. He starts every day with one mission and that is to plan for a government that would listen to and speak with the people from all professional bodies, initiate policies derived from the grassroots, provide progressive programmes for national development, and establish performance measurement tools in all public sector tasks. Tarique raises his voice for a historic government which people would consider as their own emotionally attached establishment: a government that would reflect their communal desires, give them a new birth of freedom, emphasise human rights at its core, facilitate freedom of expression and independence of media, ensure harmonious coexistence of all faiths and religions, make the society safe and sound, and provide a new meaning of life to the people, to their families, to their communities, and to the wider nation.

Tarique Rahman has a lifelong dream that Bangladesh will one day become a land of opportunity by transforming its large sections of unskilled communities into resourceful pools of human assets. Giving the beacon of hope to the people born without privilege, as a socio-political moderniser who commits to change the status quo, Tarique dreams that our next generations will live in a Bangladesh where no one would be judged by the wealth of their family or status in the society – where everyone would be judged by the content of their character and contribution to the country – and where anyone would achieve success through their hard work and disciplined effort. As such, Tarique ideologically envisages a self-sustaining Bangladesh with the idea that we all are responsible for ourselves, but that we also prosper or struggle as one nation irrespective of our social backgrounds, financial conditions and political affiliations. It is no surprise that the visionary dreams of Tarique are

shared by all the Bangladeshis who seek for collective advancement and strive for national betterment.

Seven

The embarrassing failure of the subsequent governments in Bangladesh, characterised by their emphasis on the party's interests instead of the people's interests, is well documented in the national and international media and policy outlets. It is widely perceived that a complete overhaul of the governance system and its associated organisational structure has long been overdue to surmount the humanitarian crisis caused by the sectarian governments. While we cannot rewrite our past, we can certainly create our own future, and in the democratic course of action, the future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams and remain immoral in the hearts of the people. There is a public consensus that Tarique Rahman, a political prodigy on his own merit, with his brightest dreams and incomparable esteem, is the future of Bangladesh. Therefore, most parts of the contemporary Bangladesh, if not the whole, stand for him, stand behind him, fight for him, and fight with him.

Nelson Mandela's inaugural speech marked the moment when South Africa's first black President took power after intolerable sufferings and apartheid was buried once and for all: "Never, never and never again shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another." Following Tarique Rahman's inhuman tortures by the hands of radical forces, if he too rises to the occasion and makes a political comeback to lead Bangladesh pass by the long road ahead, he would reiterate Mandela's statement. In the context of Bangladesh, Tarique would launch a voyage with all-encompassing impacts just as high as Mandela's. He would hail a rare moment of sanguinity and pledge to live up to the aspirations he has raised. He would forget the past and forgive the propagandists in order to build a prosperous future. He would deluge the country with enterprising policy initiatives and draw a remarkable development scorecard.

Humanity perishes without hope, and every so often, someone emerges to renew that hope and to inspire us to believe that it need not always be so, that our species can become better and superior. This is the domain of heroes and legends. The domain, in other words, of Tarique Rahman, the political moderniser of Bangladesh whose visionary journey and heroic road map corroborate him a legend in making.

17

ASHIK ISLAM

The Road to Go

Tarique Rahman... This is not just a name, but an ideology. Tarique Rahman is a visionary leader; a successful organiser; and a great reformer. A symbol of commitment to the progression of the country and passion for the advancement of the nation, he wants to arise and organise the patriotic nationalist forces of Bangladesh. Tarique Rahman moves from one part of the country to the other, just like a traveller who never takes rest to persist with passion. He dedicates himself to build a strong foundation for transforming the political culture of Bangladesh, which he believes, should be connected with development and production, and rooted in the grassroots level.

Tarique Rahman wants to sketch the picture of a bright Bangladesh symbolised by development and progression. He imagines a new Bangladesh that would held its head high in the future. He envisions a Bangladesh where no one would strive for hunger; no one would live on the streets; no one would suffer from cold; no one would stay out of school; and no one would work as a child labourer. He dreams of a strong Bangladesh that would follow the pathway of radical development. His dream is never too wild; nor is it unrealistic by any means. In fact, it is very much pragmatic; very much practical; and very much possible. For Tarique Rahman's dream to come true, all we need in Bangladesh is an initiative and a little endeavour. And that would bring personal solvency, which in turn, would lead to national self-reliance. And that is how Tarique Rahman conceptualises a simple but powerful work ethics with a view to writing a new success story for his country.

Throughout Tarique Rahman's active political career, he ran to the rural areas of Bangladesh day in and day out. He visited the people from all

sections of the society. He hugged and shook hands with the rural mass, be they talented students, unemployed youths, industrious labourers, marginal farmers, retired elders, or anybody else. He extended his hands to the poor suffering from bitter cold; stayed by the sides of the deprived; experienced the lives of the distressed; and kept himself nearer the feelings of the disadvantaged. He shared the emotions of the grassroots. I know, for a reason, as someone who has worked with him for so long, how he got totally embedded with the happiness and sorrows of the common people. He is the only politician in contemporary Bangladesh, who has gone in such length and depth to associate with his countrymen.

Tarique Rahman is the first ever political leader in Bangladesh to believe that political parties need to establish a dedicated institute for research and analysis. As a progressive leader who stands ahead of his political peers by many years, he asserted that the research institute should devise workable, objective and harmonious communication between the socio-economic grassroots and the decision makers of the political top end. It should form a cutting-edge resource centre where information and data would be collated from all over the country on a wide range of areas, and thus establish a modern and outward-looking political party with the capability to inform and formulate policy making in line with global statesmanship standards.

Tarique Rahman further believes that politics should be based on regular observation and assessment of the concerned actors. Right from the grassroots going up to the central leadership, discipline and accountability needs to be installed. The politicians should work with an open mind to receive and evaluate new ideas from any level of their party's organisational hierarchy, and take the constructive ones on board for the sake of the improvement of the people and the country. There is no alternative to analysis of the dynamics of other political parties, not just the government, and that too, should be done on both the national and the global levels. When such analysis complements the findings derived from the engagement with the grassroots, new working plans are sure to derive and change the fate of the 160 million people.

Building on the people-oriented mindset centring grassroots empowerment, Tarique Rahman initiated and implemented a diverse range of projects. He selected the projects based on the extent to which they were needed by the common people and helped them improve their living standards. The projects were diverse and wide-ranging, and as revolutionary as launching a new agriculture movement to save the poor farmers of the country. There

were projects to produce and distribute seeds to grow a productive breed of rice known as 'Komol', to provide drinking water known as 'Komol Pani', to establish asthma care centres across Bangladesh, to pursue mass-scale poverty alleviation programmes, to provide reliefs, supports and rehabilitation schemes after natural disasters, etc.

The initiatives further included health and sanitation projects, flood rehabilitation projects, environmental protection projects, women empowerment projects, and other projects that contributed to positive socio-economic changes. Some of the projects went beyond the scope of the geographic boundaries of Bangladesh. For instance, in order to advance the use of information technology throughout the country, particularly in the rural areas, Tarique invited the President of Microsoft Bill Gates to visit Bangladesh, which Bill not only accepted but also subsequently visited Bangladesh within a year.

The above are just a few examples of the multidisciplinary developmental works employed by Tarique Rahman. On any topic, his thoughts and ideas are always very clear, topical and well-grounded. He has got so much thought about the betterment of the country and the people that it would be difficult to cover them all in one article. Being one of the individuals to have the opportunity of becoming a part of Tarique Rahman's efforts over the years, I am honoured to closely witness how thoughtfully, enthusiastically and honestly he acts on the fulfilment of his statesmanlike visions.

Based on my personal and professional interactions with Tarique Rahman, as well as my attendance in various rallies, seminars, symposiums, councils, conferences, and other platforms with him, in this short piece, I present some of his key opinions, viewpoints and plans on various areas of public policy and state intervention. His policy plans, I believe, lays out the road that Bangladesh should follow to drive a swift development. The sections below reveal the political thoughts and action plans of Tarique Rahman on critical socio-economic factors that would change the fate of Bangladesh and make it a model for other developing countries.

Politics

According to Tarique Rahman, politics should not be about acting on professional spirits. Rather, it should be about acting on passionate ideological urges. All politicians must have legitimate sources of income to support their

families. Aside from the regular political responsibilities, they should undertake constructive professional activities, or even start up socially value-adding organisations, which would contribute to the development of the society. Through this, they would be able to maintain an active role in promoting education, healthcare, sanitation, poultry, agriculture and other critical areas, perhaps with a complementary addressing of issues of concerns such as child labour, dowry, bribery, etc. These socio-economic actions can then broadly contribute to the scale up of economic development.

Tarique Rahman asserts that the principle objective of politics is to ensure the betterment of the people, both in the short- and the long-run, and both on the regional- and the national-level. It is normal for politicians to have political differences and opinions, but no politician should disagree on advancing the economic development of the country. The politicians should start to engage and make contributions towards the development and production of the society without limiting themselves to addressing public meetings and gaining publicity. This in turn, would enable us to expect the timely emergence of an agriculturally independent and economically stronger Bangladesh.

Political Party

Tarique Rahman believes that if the political parties do not exercise democracy within themselves, this would have a negative impact on the overall democratic governance of the country. Hence, democracy within the political parties is a vital prerequisite of the consolidation of democracy nationally. Democracy within the parties refers to the involvement of the grassroots into the mainstream, accountability of the policy makers to the general public, and the harmonious exchange between the two. The strength and base of a political party is its grassroots activists who act as an effective interface between the public and the organisation. The nature of the party grassroots principally includes the creation and empowerment of the grassroots leadership following their political training in accordance with the party's ideology, values, principles and objectives. Accordingly, the party's central policy makers have to consider the recognition and accountability of the grassroots in order to incorporate their political momentum into the national politics. The hopes, expectations, suggestions and inputs of the grassroots should be taken into account when the top leadership of the party makes a critical decision, be that strategic, operational, structural, or functional.

Tarique Rahman strongly views that in terms of the role of religion in politics, none of the extreme positions are tenable for the national political parties of Bangladesh. It is important for their sustainability that they are not fully based on religions and that they take a rather open approach to all beliefs and values. On the other hand, no political party can survive without maintaining proper respect to other religions, as disrespect to any of the religions leads to social instability, conflicts and divisions, and affects its overall acceptability. This concept of religious tolerance and mutual respect is particularly important for the visionary integrity and unity of Bangladesh.

Education

Tarique Rahman draws on a cohesive framework to facilitate the fulfilment of Bangladesh's enormous educational potential in light of the international best practices. His thoughts are principally based on the commitment to make the education system more progressive and dynamic, with particular emphasis on the employability prospects. In order to compete in the international arena, considering the immense advancements in technology and the world economy, we need our education system to provide high quality education. The education system will have to uphold three interrelated goals: ensuring human qualities, supporting innovativeness and enabling students to have stronger grounds in the job market. The education system should entail a proper mix of both curricular obligation and selectiveness with a diverse range of subjects like environmental studies, health, agriculture, animal welfare, food sustainability, computer studies, and other applied disciplines besides the existing major subjects, i.e., Bengali, English and Mathematics. Only by doing so, we can construct an education system dedicated more toward individual development of skills and values.

Tarique Rahman takes an open approach to reform the education sector. Given the conventional education system which is more generalised and takes longer to enable students to stand in the stage of self-support in terms of financial independence, it is imperative to put more weight behind vocational schemes and skill-based channelling from an early stage. With a degree of selectiveness involved, such system will allow students to route their student lives more aligned with professional aspirations, capabilities and skills, which at the same time, will optimise the mix of further education and critical competences. Thus, there must be two parallel streams within the system. First, one general stream that promotes high-up academic underpinning for those

wanting to pursue the traditional route, which will enable them to move on to the higher education and then become doctors, teachers, lawyers, engineers, scientists, etc. And second, one strong vocational stream for those who wish to gain professional skills for immediate employment with good grounding in technical areas such as garments, tourism, farming, carpentry, etc., which will allow them to obtain jobs straight after completing the vocational qualifications. In the latter case, employers would be proactively recruiting the newly generated skilled workforce through appropriate apprentice schemes and placement arrangements.

Healthcare

With much lower infant mortality rate compared to a few decades ago, reduced polio cases in recent years, and ongoing shrinkage in the number of operational health complexes, the progress of healthcare sector in Bangladesh has been noteworthy. However, the healthcare momentum is laid back in the cases of harmony and quality of services, particularly in terms of size and staff. A reasonable growth of the private sector in healthcare and its cooperation with the existent public sector is the way forward to overcome this. It is high time to device a new regulatory role of the government, perhaps by establishing a regulatory commission, to supervise the growth of the private sector, as well as its cooperation with the public sector to ensure efficiency and effectiveness, and thereby lift the standard and quality of the whole healthcare sector.

Tarique Rahman stresses that an integral part of swift change in the healthcare sector would be to have a strategic planning for healthcare which would involve educational institutions at the administrative and regional levels to encourage healthy living standards and bolster a healthy population. At the school level, the effort may include the mass-scale launching of health profiles for all students, wherein health screenings could be made compulsory within certain time intervals, by involving the local physicians in the screening process. This effort will enable the government to maintain dedicated healthcare information storages for the school-goers, which will also be a helpful tool for the planning of various policy interventions on the national level.

Agriculture

The agriculture sector needs to be based on the best utilisation of lands, effective mechanisation of agricultural works, and domestic manufacturing of vital raw-materials. As per Tarique Rahman, we should build all new homes

from a vertical design from now on and make people aware of this approach to save up more space. In this way, people will make better use of fertile lands to grow vegetation and be able to also build homes at an affordable price. If we look at our rivers, we see that during the winter season most of the rivers dry up and during the warmer season they overflow. Therefore, we require careful planning and evidence-based thinking. If we can explore the possibility of agricultural development and animal breeding around the banks of the rivers, this will make use of additional lands around the country for the development of the agricultural sector and we can also involve the young unemployed people from rural parts of the country to do this work. We can grow our own seeds, initiate projects to cultivate multiple crops and vegetables, and take a holistic approach to simultaneously conduct agriculture and farming. In order to develop the agricultural sector, a modern scientific plan must be taken and investments must be made in purchasing modern equipments and technologies. Although it is difficult to plan to keep prices in the agricultural sector products low, it is practically achievable to advance logistical supports and oversee market dynamics, and safeguard the interests of both the farmers and the customers.

Industrialisation

Tarique Rahman comprehends that agricultural development and industrialisation should happen in a complementary manner. Due to the shortage of availability in lands, the industrial sector has not expanded in Bangladesh. Through planned industrial development, by garnering investments from local and international businesses, we can ensure that the country achieves economic sustainability. It is critical to encourage and motivate people to take initiatives not only to set up new industries but also to extend the existing ones. For instance, the government can initiate support packages for expatriate Bangladeshi industrialists to encourage and motivate them to establish industries within the country.

Tarique Rahman argues that we should set up more small and medium sized enterprises, as this will generate huge employment opportunities and foster a culture of entrepreneurship. We ought to promote business and knowledge process outsourcing industry to use the engineering and technical talent of Bangladesh. At the same time, we must also develop an export market where we identify the items that will have an appeal to both domestic and international markets, just like our established garment and textile sector which

is operating very successfully in the international market. However, the items we produce in the textile sector are very much limited to low-end trousers, shirts, sweaters, etc., and we have not touched many other potential items yet. We must therefore focus on making new items and facilitate specialised supports to the garments sector to expand the production of new items. In this way, we will achieve a more successful sector in a short period of time. Likewise, we can further develop the export sector by introducing new manufacturing items such as diamond cutting, electronic goods, automotive vehicle parts, along with ensuring proper training and growing a skilled workforce in the critical industrial sectors.

Power and Energy

Energy crisis is a major concern in the contemporary Bangladesh since it is holding back the rate of industrialisation and the overall economic advancement. Tarique Rahman stresses that it is imperative to consider immediate and lasting sources of power in Bangladesh. Sources like coal and oil, which Bangladesh has traditionally been depended on, has to be effectively complemented by alternative sources, such as solar and bio-fuel. Given the riverine status of Bangladesh, a well controlled system of the utilisation of water resources also possesses the potential to ensure a sustainable supply of power. It would be a fruitful way forward to cooperate with the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries toward initiating mutually beneficiary joint power generation projects, in a way that retains the interests of all the nations involved while enlightening their cities and villages. As a point of strategic thinking, we can draw on the example of the collaborative Niagara Waterfall power project in Canada, which provides power in the USA.

Bangladesh is dependent on fertile lands and it is a miracle to find energy resources beneath these kinds of lands. However, with the blessings of Allah, we are endowed with natural gas reserves like Barapukuria Coal mine, Joypurhat limestone, etc. We can also expect to find oil beneath the Bay of Bengal. Tarique Rahman argues that such richness of natural resources can help us develop Bangladesh at a faster pace should we use them properly with the right vision. We should use the resources more strategically so as to apply the usage in important areas pertaining to agricultural and industrial productivity. The usage should also be done in an efficient way, if required by using cutting-edge technological tools, so that we can bring down the waste to the zero level.

At present, however, we do not have the exact idea how much gas reserves we have, and we are speculating the amount with little confirmatory validity. We should move away from such speculation-based practices and establish a plan to comprehend the amount of reserves and manage their optimal usage in line with the practicality.

Water Management

Tarique Rahman notes that the riverine status of Bangladesh has tarnished over the years due to partial or complete lack of strategic thinking and much needed maintenance. Besides major rivers, many small rivers across the country those have been vital sources of agro and naval communication for centuries, are now deeply affected by mismanaged water resourcing by the mass population. Aligning with the world where much thoughts and researches about sustainable water resourcing are underway, it is an imperative to workably enforce those thoughts in the context of Bangladesh for the sake of sustainability. Concerns about water resources, as well as its delicate management, take place due to the country's geographic location. Being a sedimentary basin topographically with predominantly flat lands, most of Bangladesh's major rivers have their sources in the upper regions outside the national border. This puts Bangladesh before challenging situations in cases of water management. Therefore, it is compulsory for Bangladesh to effectively strategise for alternative options and sources, for example, rain water, canal digging and preservation, maintaining reservoir, etc. Preservation of rain water can also be done by constructing specialised dams between low lands and high lands. Water refining is another effective way of maintaining alternative water sources.

Capital City

Tarique Rahman is concerned that Dhaka is one of the world's most populated cities and holds a population that is almost ten times larger than what any model city is expected to hold. The current population of Dhaka and its adjacent areas is around 20 million, which includes those residing in the city and commuting in and out of Dhaka. Yet, in terms of urban facilities and management of metropolitan affairs, the city is lagging behind in numerous aspects. The ever-expanding overpopulation of Dhaka has neared such a catastrophic level that it requires immediate state interventions. On the one hand, it is causing managerial difficulties concerning housing and accommodation, traffic and transportation, environment and pollution, and

other metrics of urban living standards. On the other hand, it is creating socio-economic instability and deteriorating the law and order situation. For instance, just because of the traffic problems, there is a continuous reduction of working hours resulting from the length of time it takes to reach respective employer destinations. As such, the current structure of Dhaka affects the daily lifestyle and work productivity of its residents, which, given the city's status as the country's commercial and political headquarter, affects the functioning of the whole country.

Consistent with the experts of urban planning, Tarique Rahman believes that the current traffic realities of Dhaka have gone beyond the traditional solution of the construction of flyovers and roads throughout the city. Rather, it needs more radical interventions and well-thought planning in the form of rapid development of an underground railway network. As part of an ambitious but realistic master plan, it is important to construct a circular motorway around Dhaka with exit points toward the existent roads, as well as the newly built roads. Indeed, the practical solution to address the traffic problem is by expanding more routes and links to adjacent districts near the city.

If transport networks are developed, then more people would have the opportunity to work in Dhaka and then travel back to their respective homes outside the city. This can also be facilitated by an efficiently developed and connected rail network between Dhaka and other nearby districts. Hence, there is also the possibility of developing satellite cities in nearby districts. This will allow infrastructure development in Dhaka to take place in a planned way, will ease the residual population, and give the city more capacity to cope with the housing pressure. If people are given the opportunity to travel in and out of Dhaka in an hour from neighbouring districts, then a lot of them would be interested in living in the nearby districts rather than the capital itself. If Dhaka is developed through appropriate planning guidelines extended by expert consultations, we can expect the instalment of discipline in the city's infrastructure management.

Special Regions

Tarique Rahman points that in this competitive world, all the countries want to promote themselves with some selling points to attract people, tourists, trading, businesses, etc. They want to have a unique quality of products, services or facilities so as to establish an image of excellence to others

around the world. For example, in the context of the UK, even after being a developed country, it is still developing region-specific and tailored economic development programmes that reflect the skills, resources and expertises of the regions. When we talk about Oxford and Cambridge, it becomes clear that we are talking about knowledge, intellect, training and research that are associated with two of the world's most prestigious institutions, the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. And this symbolic notion gives a unique image of the UK to the world as a leading nation with the best higher educational facilities. In the same way, London represents the capital of finance and commerce, Liverpool is a hub of culture and branding, Manchester stands as the place of industrialisation, Bath thrives in tourism, and so on.

Likewise, there are some cities and urban regions in Bangladesh that have developed special affiliations and recognitions. Yet, none of them is good or sufficient enough to promote Bangladesh in the global arena. Tarique Rahman believes that with appropriate planning, it is possible to give a unique identity to all the major regions of the country.

For example, Rajshahi has already developed a reputation for being a city of educational excellence. But it seems that Rajshahi is not the first choice destination amongst the students for attending schools, colleges or universities. The reason for this is, although Rajshahi has a reputation for educational excellence, the real benefits of attaining education from Rajshahi has not been adequately promoted and addressed. If steps were taken in Rajshahi from the school level through to the university level, and if all the educational institutions were developed in line with international standards and given adequate resources, then perhaps Rajshahi could be established as a leading city with education establishments. However, this does not mean that other quality educational institutions should not be elsewhere with all modern facilities required of a 21st century education facility. This will attract foreign students and academics from other countries of the South Asian region and beyond. All these would be possible if excellent facilities in student and staff accommodation are ensured, world-class library and research facilities are developed, and scientific laboratories and recreational environments are catered in line with other similar cities of the world.

In similar ways, we can develop other regions of Bangladesh and draw on their inherent expertise to symbolically associate them with geographic specialities in the world arena. Towards that vein, we can make Khulna an industrial hub, Chittagong a city of commerce, Cox's Bazar a city of tourism,

Sylhet a city of national heritage, and so on. In doing so, we can project to the world a much improved image of a modern Bangladesh.

Conclusion

I have seen Tarique Rahman reflecting and contemplating many issues relating to the development and welfare of Bangladesh and its people. Whenever he saw anything that adds value to the production and development of the country, I noticed him to conduct primary research, gather secondary data and collate in-depth information on the matter. In all facets of developmental areas, Tarique Rahman consulted with experts and exchanged insights with them, in an effort to sharpen his visions and put them in light of the practicalities. He systematically undertook a rigorous method to make evidence-based analysis and to understand what would and what would not work for Bangladesh. Whenever he came across a progressive idea that could contribute to the development of Bangladesh, he was patient and passionate to ponder its future applicability, and enthusiastically explored the idea in detail and length to find out a positive proposition.

The world renowned Greek Philosopher Plato, in his classic work “Republican”, stated that “Politics means serving the country and serving the people of the country.” Many political scientists utter the similar tone, “Having the intention to serve all the people of the country with honesty, regardless of religion or caste, or to serve for the welfare of people in general, is politics.” Tarique Rahman qualifies in the definitions of politics and stands out for his integrity in the service of the people of Bangladesh.

A state has many organs, and those employed to work within those organs serve the people and the country from their own respective positions. Just like doctors provide health services to their patients, teachers develop a learned nation, social workers develop social welfare institutions; all professionals work from their particular positions to toil for the betterment of the nation. Only politicians can work across all the sectors of the society and serve for the welfare of the people and the country by engaging in all spheres of the lives of their countrymen. Exceptional politicians are those who realise the hopes and expectations of the people and draw attainable new dreams in their eyes to unearth new doors of development. They show new pathway of national success; the pathway that is uneven but exciting, requires ambition with realism, and entails time and opportunity. Tarique Rahman, an ideal politician by the virtue of his characteristics, unique in many regards in the

context of contemporary Bangladesh, dedicates himself in the betterment of the country and addresses the people's needs. He installs within the people to envision their dreams and shows them the way to attain those dreams.

Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose awakened the youths of the Indian sub-continent during the anti-British rule movement. Oliver Cromwell awakened the youths of Britain to chuck out the power of the Royalist families and establish democracy in the country. Mao Zedong awakened the youths of China to get rid of the widespread addiction of opium and exert for a new, modern China. Similarly, patriotic Bangladeshis dream today that one day, not far away from now, Tarique Rahman will awaken the youths of Bangladesh to develop a modern, self-sufficient and visionary country. And with that in mind, along with our extraordinary faith in him, we all refer to Tarique Rahman as the 'Deshnayok' (People's Leader) of Bangladesh. Tarique Rahman has laid out the road to go and march forward for an economically self-reliant Bangladesh, at the core of which resides the empowered grassroots.

PHOTO GALLERY



1

Father of Tarique Rahman: Shaheed (Martyred) President Ziaur Rahman; proclaimer of Bangladesh's independence, decorated hero of the liberation war, first elected President of Bangladesh, and the most popular leader in the country's history.

Mother of Tarique Rahman: Begum Khaleda Zia; Three times elected Prime Minister of Bangladesh and the only undefeated parliamentary candidate in the country's history.



2 | An eleven months old Tarique.



3 | An infant Tarique with his parents.



4 | Tarique Rahman and his younger brother Arafat Rahman Koko with their parents at the Presidential residence of Bangladesh.



6 | Picture of a youthful Tarique.



5 | Tarique with his widowed mother and younger brother Arafat Rahman Koko.



7.1 | Tarique Rahman pondering about the country, its people and the future.



7.2



7.3

7.6



7.4



7.5





8.1 | The country and the common people, as well as the welfare of the grassroots, have always been Tarique Rahman's passion, priority and politics. This is why he extensively travels around the country to meet people from all walks of life.



8.2



8.3



8.4



8.5



8.6



8.7



8.8



8.9

- 9.1 Children are the future of a country. Today's students will build tomorrow's glorious future of Bangladesh. This is why Tarique Rahman recurrently engages with the children and the young people. He awarded continuous scholarships to a huge number of meritorious students from deprived families through the Ziaur Rahman Foundation on an ongoing basis.





9.2



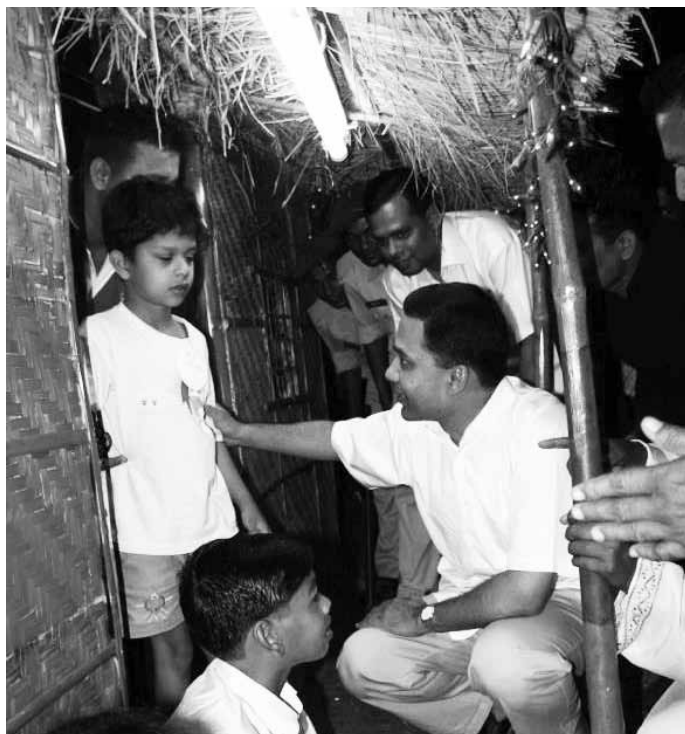
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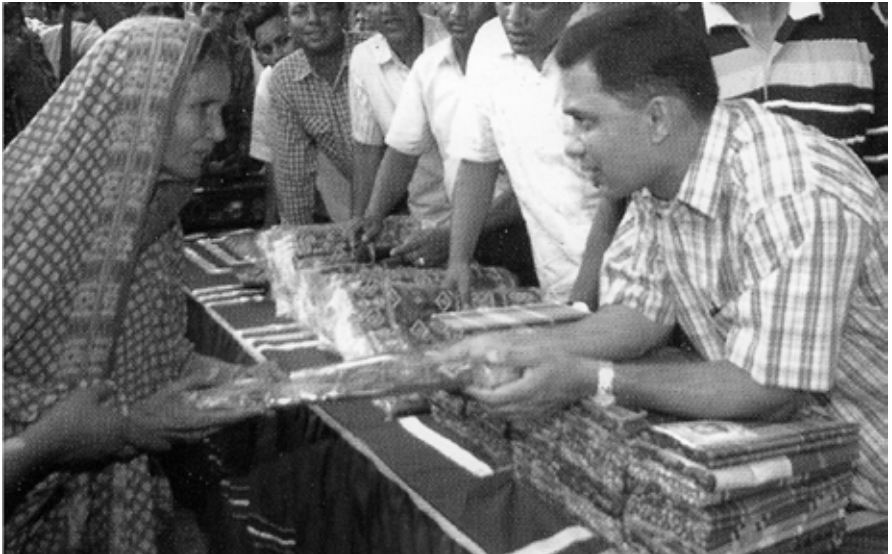
9.6



9.7

10.1

Tarique Rahman always stands by the side of the deprived, distressed, disadvantaged and marginalised people. He travels across the country day in and day out, sharing their happiness and sorrow and making a difference.



10.2



10.3

10.4



10.5

10.6





- 11.1 | Grassroots members are the main pillar and the heartbeat of a political party. Tarique Rahman runs from one corner of the country to the other, covering every administrative unit ranging from the villages to the cities, and thereby extensively capturing the views and opinions of the grassroots.



11.2



11.4

11.3





- 11.5 | Having covered the length and breadth of Bangladesh, received inputs from the grassroots members of the BNP, consulted with them about the past, present and future of the party and the country, and collated micro-level data to bring about qualitative changes for advancing the living standards, Tarique Rahman handed over a comprehensive report on his Grassroots Conferences to the Chairperson of the BNP Begum Khaleda Zia.



12.1

Tree plantation and forestation are vital in conserving the environment, and recognising the significance, Tarique planted hundreds of thousands of neem and fruit trees across the country.



12.2



- 13.1 | Tarique Rahman is the first ever politician of Bangladesh who encouraged the use of information and communication technology by giving a live, transparent and open-ended interview via the internet, connecting with representatives from 19 different countries, and that too, in one long session lasting for about three hours back in 2005.



14.1

Tarique Rahman believes that an initiative and a little endeavour brings self-solvency and makes the country self-reliant. Towards that goal, he regularly distributes livestock, seeds, fertilisers and materials amongst the poor people of the country on his personal initiatives.





14.3



14.4



14.5



14.6



14.7



15.1 | Tarique Rahman greatly values the cultural heritage of Bangladesh. He encourages mass participations in diverse functions, festivals and programmes to celebrate the country's rich heritage.

15.2







16.1 | Bangladesh is heavily dependent on agriculture, and Tarique emphasises the productivity, efficiency and quality of food grains and crops. He not only provides farmers with high yielding seeds to improve production outputs, but also stands by their sides to encourage their undertakings.

16.2



16.3





END

I dream of a Bangladesh where all citizens live in a society characterised by justice, equity and dignity – irrespective of their position or status; a humble non-partisan Bangladesh that is integrated by a common national identity rather than being split into races, religions, values, beliefs, and ideologies.

An initiative and a little endeavour brings self-solvency and makes the country self-reliant.

The pillar of a political party is its grassroots activists who act as an effective interface between the public and the party.

It is normal for politicians to have differences and opinions, but they should not disagree on the issues relating to the development of the country.

Politics is not all about speeches and accusations. It is about advancing the living standards of the common people and contributing to their welfare.

The nation will one day become a land of opportunity by transforming its large sections of unskilled communities into resourceful human assets.

Bangladesh is the first, Bangladesh is the last; Bangladesh is life, and Bangladesh is death.

– Tarique Rahman