

Parliamentary polls

Contd from page 1
referred to the proposal made by a certain quarter for amending the Constitution and even holding elections under a martial ordinance suiting to their needs. He said "I told them categorically that we will not change the Constitution by applying Martial Law only the people's elected representatives have the right to amend it"

He said our loyalty to democratic principles has inspired us to take this stand.

President Ershad mentioned the reformative measures effected by his Government for improving the socio-economic condition of the country during the last four years, which included decentralisation of administration and judicial system, land reforms, new economic policy for a balanced growth of private and public sectors and said these far-reaching steps have already opened up a new vista for progress on the socio-economic fronts.

TEXT

The following is the English rendering of address to the nation over radio and Television by President Hussain Mohammad Ershad on Sunday evening reports BSS.

Bismillahir Rahamanir Rahim

Dear Countrymen

Assalamu Alaikum,

After another few days, four years will be completed since the responsibility to run the country was vested in us. We had to take up this responsibility at a promulgated due to unavoidable reasons. When we took up the responsibility we had three major goals like some reforms in the socio-economic and administrative fields, economic rehabilitation and transfer to democratic rule within a short time.

I had held out the assurance that we would place Bangladesh as a nation radiant in its own individual before the world.

I have come before you today to tell something about the background of my assurance and also to announce an important decision.

We had assured of reforms the existing administrative system had the long nurtured socio-economic system in vogue in the country. No direct link between the administrative system and the people could grow up, the participation of people in administration does not arise.

Although lip service was paid to the principle that the people are the source of all power, yet in course of the first decade of our independence no practical effort was made to establish the people as the main element of control and execution of power.

We have tried to take the administration nearer to the common men. We undertook the step to decentralise the administration with a view to establishing the direct authority of the people on it. We did it from the point of realisation of its historic necessity.

The upazila system is the first important step in that direction.

For the first time in our history, the administrative executive power has been vested in the hands of the people's representatives.

Dear countrymen,

With the introduction of the upazila system the administration has not only gone nearer to the people but the power to adopt planning locally and implement it has also now been

vested in their hands. Civil and criminal courts now have reached much nearer to the common men.

Decentralisation of the capital-based judiciary was equally necessary side by side with the decentralisation of the capital based administration.

We have therefore, decentralised the judiciary in conformity with the social reality and the hopes and aspirations of the people. The High Court branch of the Supreme Court are now in six centres outside the capital and the steps have helped the general people in availing of higher judicial facilities.

When the power was vested in us in 1982 the economy of the country was not at all in good shape. On the contrary it could be said that the economy was in a shattered condition.

The foreign exchange reserve was abnormally low. The slow

ness in the industrial production had caused great concern.

We had started our function with appalling food deficit.

The indiscriminate nationalisation in the industrial and commercial sectors did not help production. It also did not expedite the industrialisation and development of national capital too.

Rather the attempt had narrowed down the industrialisation and investment. Because of the

unfavourable situation, the national economy was going to be in great danger of becoming crippled with foreign loans and turning into a market for foreign goods. Instead of production increase in the mills and factories the state exchequer was under heavy pressure and an anarchy was prevailing in the entire economy.

This situation was beyond the capacity of our society.

It was urgently needed to end such a situation without delay

not only to streamline our economy but also to protect our existence. It was a great challenge.

We had to face these challenges soon after our taking up

the responsibility. We had

to take up the hard and com-

licated programmes in the

fields of industry, banks and

insurance, production and ca-

pital development and capital

investment.

And by the grace of Allah,

we had succeeded in our pro-

grammes. We could success-

fully overcome the crisis and

free the economy from the

stagnant position by disinvesting

capital from industry, banks

and insurance and by paving

the ways for private investment

in the industrial sector. The

rate of GDP in 1981-82 in the

country was 1.61 per cent but

it increased to 4.2 per cent in

the year 1984-85.

It was said that Bangladesh

would live if 68 thousand vil-

ages live. Again sixty-eight

thousand villages mean crores

of peasants of the country, be-

cause peasants make up 80 per

cent of the country's population.

Land and peasants are the back-

bone of our economy and they

contribute the lion's share to

the GDP.

Land reform is the precon-

dition for the meaningful deve-

lopment in the agricultural sec-

tor. But this important work

was neglected in the past. We

took up this most urgent task

on priority basis. We have

brought about significant re-

form, to the centuries-old land

tenure system. In our society

agriculture labourers and far-

mers are perhaps the most de-

prived section. We have been

able to take an honourable

stand in respect of their wage

structure. We have been able

to end the perpetual uncertain-

ty of the sharecroppers whose

contribution to the agricultural

production is most significant.

We believe that the funda-

mental reforms in administra-

tion economy and land ensure

system have marked the begin-

ning of a far reaching change

in the socio-economic field. Our

people have in the meantime

started getting the benefits of

these changes.

I have mentioned earlier that

we began the work of running

the government with critical

food deficit. Damage of crops

by successive natural calamities

deepened that crisis still fur-

ther. Many had expressed the

apprehension that Bangladesh

was going to face a famine still

more devastating than that of

1974. I declared that we would

not allow a single man to die

of starvation. By the grace

of Allah and with the united

endeavours of the people, ad-

ministration and Armed Forces

we had been able to face the

calamity. Not a single man

died of starvation.

Dear countrymen,

I pledged to establish Bangla-

desh with new dignity on the

world's map, we shall give still

greater dignity to everyman in

a nation glorified with its own

distinction.

The call for strengthening the

bonds of friendship and coope-

ration among the South Asian

countries was first uttered from

Bangladesh. That cherished

objective has now taken shape.

The summit of the Heads of

State and Government of the

seven South Asian countries

was held on the soil of Bangla-

desh in December last. The

South Asian Association for Re-

gional Co-operation (SAARC)

was born in the capital of

Bangladesh. Leadership of

this Association symbolising the

friendship and co-operation of

one hundred crore people of

this region had first been given

to Bangladesh. Bangladesh

today is representative of unity

of 100 crore people.

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