

THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER

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Hegira 1400

Hegira 1400 in the Islamic calendar begins from today, the first of Muharrum. The curtain rises over an endless prospect of historical possibilities making demands on 750 million Muslims spread over the world today. Beginning with the Prophet's (SM) migration in 622 A.D. to Medina the 1400 years of Islam's role in history has been one marked by challenges, reverses, victories, conflicts, reconciliations and assertions. The phenomenal spread of Muslim power, in its heydays, from the coast of the Atlantic to that of the Ganges was synonymous with the establishment of a civilization and culture rivalling or outrivalling its predecessor or contemporary civilizations or cultures.

As an overriding political power Islam functioned with a great deal of difference with its forbears in history in that it kept its pride and glory subservient to ethical needs of setting up and consolidating socio-political justice consistent with fundamental human values. Even its military prowess was hardly directed to conquests for their sake but was wielded with strict regard for human rights exemplified almost for the first time in history, in administration and statecraft. In fact a sea of chaos that had been prevailing socially, politically and economically in the then world was straightened out by total dedication to, and practical realisation, of man's long-cherished goals of liberty, fraternity, and social justice.

But the ideal frame thus built up was sustained for a short period of about three decades proving though that Islam as a new world

vision and philosophy in socio-political-economic reconstruction was viable and could provide the answer to all crises and chaos that might afflict humanity any time in future. The vicissitudes following the golden era of Islam were however interspersed with cultural and intellectual achievements of such global dimensions as to contribute substantially to the cultural and intellectual Renaissance of Europe. But for the spade-work done by the Arabs what we call modern western civilization would have been a difficult proposition. At least it would have been delayed indefinitely. This is the consensus of history.

Hegira 1400 to celebrate which festive programmes have been drawn up faces the entire Islamic world with serious questions to which answers are a must: The most pressing of these is the unity and solidarity of the Islamic world in the face of the challenges of the time. Problems and priorities in this regard have to be sorted out with a sense of urgency compatible with pressures and demands of regional and international circumstances and development. The next five-year programme of celebration as announced by the Islamic conference has to be a five-year breathing space for the Muslim world to set the house in order and for planning and organising global Islamic solidarity in a more purposive way in accordance with the ideal of Islamic fraternity as preached and practised by Prophet Muhammad (SM) who led the greatest human revolution in history.