

## Ban Ki-moon, Pranab stress relevance of Gandhi's legacy

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee Thursday maintained that the legacy of Mahatma Gandhi, whose non-violent struggle led to an independent India and inspired movements for civil rights and freedom around the globe, was vital in today's world, where the rights of 'too many people are still violated'.

Marking the second annual International Day of Non-violence, observed on October 2 in honour of Gandhi's birthday, Ban noted that this year's celebration falls during the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

'There is a profound philosophical connection between the fundamental principles of human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration and those practised by Mahatma Gandhi,' Ban said Thursday at a ceremony at UN headquarters here during an informal plenary of the UN General Assembly.

'The answer for Mahatma Gandhi was always found in action. The rest of us can seek to emulate his spirit only by practising the tenets of non-violence, justice and peace,' he maintained.

'The rights of too many people around the world are still violated. That is why the Mahatma's legacy is more important than ever,' the secretary general stated.

Mukherjee recalled that last year, while speaking at the same forum, Sonia Gandhi, chairperson of India's ruling United Progressive Alliance (UPA), had conveyed the gratitude of the people of India to the UNGA. He too expressed his deep appreciation to all member states that supported the initiative to pay tribute to the life and legacy of Gandhi.

He said Gandhi's message of peace and non-violence is more relevant today because the world continues to be plagued by weapons stockpiles and terrorism.

Explaining that Gandhi's idea of ahimsa, or non-violence, hinges on justice and equity, the minister said, 'If our current economic and political order is based on unjust methods and stark inequalities, that too is a form of violence, which requires urgent resolution.'

General Assembly President Miguel D'Escoto recalled that Martin Luther King, Jr. followed Gandhi's teachings during the civil rights struggle in the US, revealing the power of non-violence 'to begin to transform the course of even the most powerful nation in history'.

D'Escoto suggested that today, people around the world adopt the concept of Satyagraha - encapsulating Gandhi's philosophy of non-violent resistance - and begin to reflect on its meaning.

'If we do so, we will have entered into the process of liberating humankind from its dependence on violence as a means to resolve differences,' he stated.

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