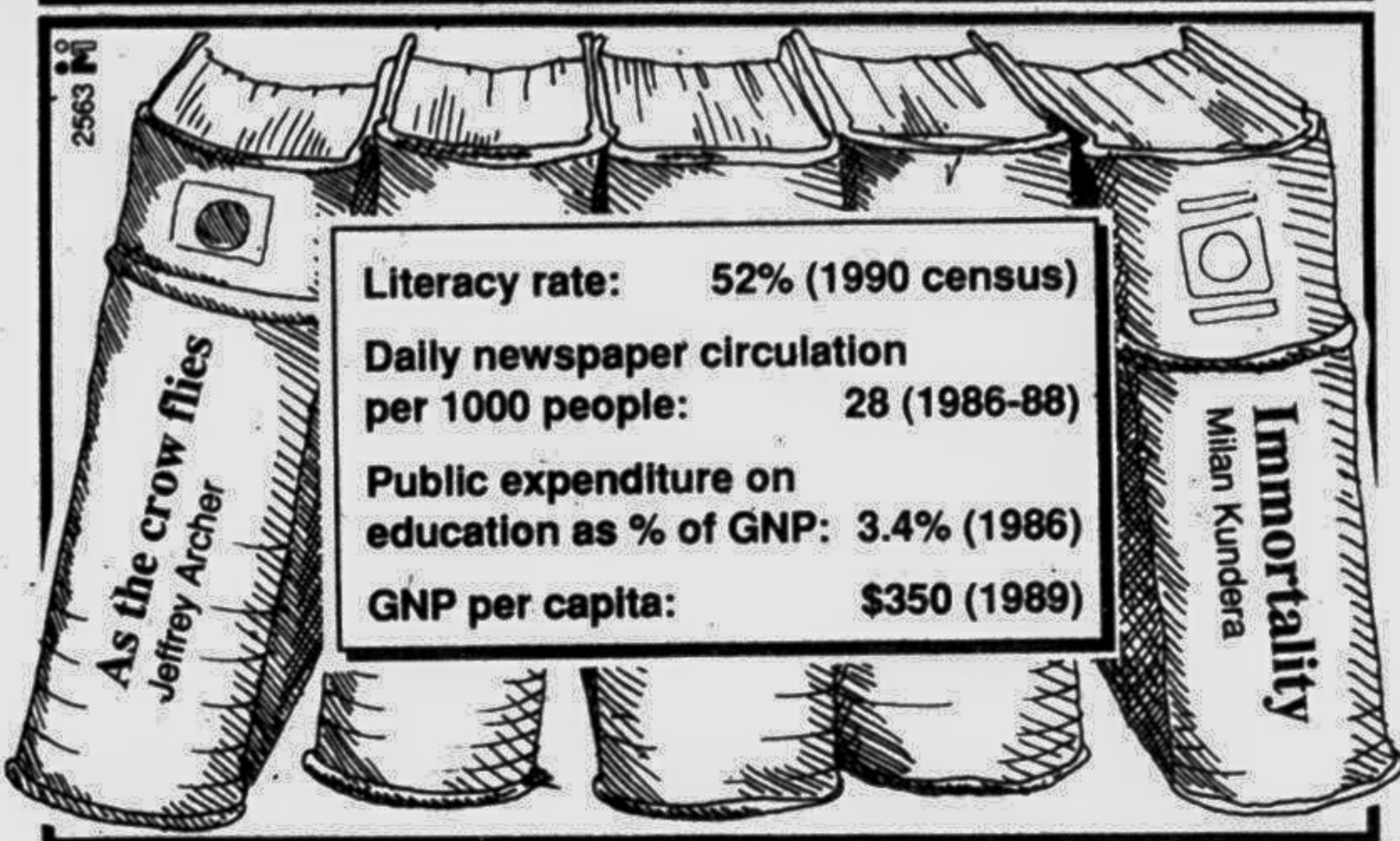


A BOOK REVOLUTION IS HITTING INDIA

India is one of the world's largest producers of books, despite its low literacy level. In recent years many big international publishers such as Penguin have opened up branches in India and produce quality books locally. Thus they have cut costs and made good literature accessible to India's growing middle class. Many Indians are now discovering the truth of the old observation: "There's nothing like a good read."

Sanjiva Wijesinha writes from Hong Kong

India: in good books



Literacy rate: 52% (1990 census)
 Daily newspaper circulation per 1000 people: 28 (1986-88)
 Public expenditure on education as % of GNP: 3.4% (1986)
 GNP per capita: \$350 (1989)

CAPTAIN Gihan Goonetilleke made a wonderful discovery on a recent flight to India. The Sri Lankan pilot, who regularly flies Air Lanka's short haul route from Colombo to South India, found while browsing around the bookshop in Trivandrum airport, copies of Jeffrey Archer's recently published novel *As the Crow Flies* displayed for sale.

What was so wonderful about his find was the fact that he had seen the book for sale during the course of that month in several bookstores on his flights around the world — and here in this little corner of India the book was being sold for less than one-third of its price everywhere else in the world.

And these were no cheap pirate copies — these were books with as good a finish as those editions he had seen displayed in bookstalls in Colombo and Bangkok and Sydney.

Recognising a bargain when he spotted one, the young pilot soon bought up several copies of the best-selling book as gifts to take back home.

Pirated editions of books, computer games, videos and audio-cassettes, characterised by rock-bottom prices and dubious quality, are available in many big cities from Bombay to Taiwan.

The books Goonetilleke discovered for sale in Trivandrum are different. They are examples of a new tie-up between Indian publishing firms and foreign multinational publishers, that are providing a new deal for booklovers in India.

Sidney Sheldon's latest, *Doomsday Conspiracy*, for example, is one of some two dozen titles put out under the new Indus brand name — a joint venture between an Indian entrepreneur, Rupa and Company, and the giant international publisher Harper Collins.

Says Manmohan Bhatkal, head of Bombay's Popular Prakashan, a leading publisher: "The result of the government's foreign exchange squeezes, together with last year's devaluation of the rupee,

has been that imported books shot up four to five times their former price."

To retain their lucrative share of the massive Indian market, foreign firms like Harper Collins were forced to start publishing locally.

"Even though the government has moved to drastically ease earlier import restrictions," continues Bhatkal, "the trend towards collaboration with overseas publishers so as to produce the latest international publications locally will continue."

Ever since Oxford University Press established itself in India in 1912 — and it is still flourishing in New Delhi's Jai Singh Road — international publishers have been producing English-language books here for the vast population of English readers.

Orient Longmans, better known for its Indian editions of school textbooks, has for many years been bringing out English translations of Indian authors in addition to authorised reprints of foreign books.

Another good example is the English Language Book Society, which publishes solely for sale in India special low-cost editions of important medical and other texts for university students.

Indian readers who wanted to obtain the latest novels and best-sellers from abroad, however, usually had to buy them at high prices which included import tax.

The great leap forward for the Indian reader came in 1987 with the establishment of Penguin India. The original Penguin company in Britain, had been the first to provide

the average reader in that country, with access to good literature at affordable prices within soft covers.

Even these books, however, were too expensive in India, given the disparity in wages and in the exchange rate between the pound and the rupee.

With Penguin India opening up, Indian readers were offered top quality books that did not punch holes in their purses. Today, the cheapest book in Penguin India's range costs about 60 rupees (US\$2.60). The lowest price of its overseas books is about \$5.

Hard-cover Indian editions retail for around 130 rupees (US\$5.30) while the same volumes in their international editions cost about \$17.50.

With its experience, Penguin India is well-placed to

make full use of readers' preferences, producing editions that are topical and popular.

Says Ashley D'Cruz, a Bangalore surgeon who is an avid reader: "The biography of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, written and released just after his assassination last May, sold thousands of copies within a week of its release."

Penguin India's boss, David Davidar, encourages first-time authors — and has shown an uncanny instinct for picking best-sellers. Two books by former society columnist turned author, Shobha De, *Starry Nights* and *Socialite Evenings*, have had phenomenal success — as has *Old Cypress*, a book of short stories by first-time Nisha de Cunha.

Comments D'Cruz: "Other publishers have been encouraged by the success of Penguin India, and are now willing to take more risks. Just look at the number of new Indian novelists and poets in English who have been published in 1991."

The government's original foreign exchange squeeze has benefited not only the average Indian reader. The enterprising pirates who often managed to get the pirated version of a best-selling hardback novel out on to the shelves even before the ink had dried on the legitimately printed paperback, now have less of an incentive to steal works printed in India that will be sold at local prices anyway.

With restrictions being eased by the new government and more English books being printed in the country, book prices should drop even further.

For Indian readers — and those like Captain Goonetilleke who are lucky enough to visit India these days — there will be ample opportunity to buy good books cheap, and sample the truth of that old observation: "There's nothing like a good read."

Especially so if one gets that good read at a good price.

— GEMINI NEWS
 Dr SANJIVA WIJESINHA is a Sri Lankan, trained in Oxford and Melbourne. He was Chief of Surgery at the Colombo Children's Hospital and is now working in Hong Kong.

Justice Abu Sayeed Chaudhury

A Tribute

Fazlul Quader Quaderi



TODAY is the 71st Birth Anniversary of Late Justice Abu Sayeed Chaudhury, the first constitutional Head of the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. It was on the 12th January, 1972 that Justice Chaudhury took oath as the first constitutional President of Bangladesh. History will bear testimony to the role played by Justice Chaudhury during those nine months of 1971 — the perilous period when 10 millions of people had to take refuge in India; three millions lost their lives and numerous others became homeless and led nomadic lives within the country and several thousands of women lost their chastity. All these combined made Justice Chaudhury boil in indignation and hatred against the Pakistani occupation army and actively associate himself in the war of liberation as special envoy and representative of Mujib Nagar Government of Bangladesh.

When the Pak Army cracked down on the innocent people and students on the 25th March 1971, Justice Chaudhury was in England. On hearing the news of atrocities of the Pakistani army through British Embassy, he sent a letter to the then Education Secretary saying: "There is no point in my continuing as the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Dhaka any longer after the shooting of my unarmed students. My dead body will lie in London street rather than I compromise with Pakistan". It speaks of his human quality, intellectual integrity and courage of conviction. He never faltered in respect of democratic ideas and political principles without himself being a politician.

While reminiscing his memory, it comes to our mind that 'Shahjahan', as he was fondly called, was born on 31st January in 1921 in a Zamindar family of Tangail. His grandfather was Mr Ebaduddin Chaudhury and his father Mr Abdul Hamid Chaudhury was speaker of the then East Pakistan Assembly. After finishing his school education, he got admitted to Presidency College, Calcutta and obtained his MA degree in history in 1940. He also got LLB from

Calcutta and went to London for higher studies in Law and obtained Bar-at-Law from Lincoln's Inn in 1947. Prior to this, he was elected President of All India Students' Federation, London Bench in 1946. On his return from London, he got married to Begum Khurshida Chaudhury. By dint of his merit he became Advocate General and Member of the Constitution Committee in 1948. He was a Judge of Dhaka High Court from 1961-1972. He also ornamented the chair of Bengali Development Board from 1963-1968. He was made Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University in 1969 and held that post till 11th January 1972, before the day of his becoming the first constitutional President of the country. He contributed to the draft constitution of 1972. He, as we know, supported nationalisation of banks and big industries for economic development and equitable distribution of national wealth, so that the toiling masses would change their lots. He had great regards for Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. He used to say that it was not a name — it was a symbol of hope for the Bengalees. As regards Mr Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, who travelled from one part of the globe to the other for the sake of liberation of Bangladesh, Mr Chaudhury said that her name would be written in golden letters in the history of Bangladesh.

While casting an eye to his

family life, we see that he was blessed with a son, Kaiser Chaudhury, on 15th April, 1951 and Khaled, the second son on 21st June, 1958. Later he was blessed with a daughter in 1961. Mr Justice Abu Sayeed Chaudhury will long be remembered as a gentleman per excellence. During his chequered career, he came in contact with Siddharta Sankar Roy and Satyajit Roy — both of them happened to be his classmates. He was close associate of Acharya Prafulla Chandra Roy, Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das, Subhash Bose, Sher-e-Bengal A K Fazlul Huq.

Besides his close association with all these stalwarts, he was a conscious voice of the nation. He could quote profusely from Rabindra Nath and Nazrul. His education and aristocratic background was never in conflict with his mental qualities, simplicity of heart, milk of kindness, courtesy and friendliness. He would never permit others to know his fathomless knowledge in literature, history, social science and politics. He hated to build for himself a pedestal high above the commonmen.

During his hectic and historic role in the UK, at the time of the war of liberation, he, by dint of his sheer personal quality, was able to obtain written support of 270 members of the British Parliament and travelled every nook and corner of Europe. He was the first man to unfurl the National Flag of Bangladesh at Hyde Park in London in April 1971. It was covered in the famous weekly magazine 'Time' in its issue of 27th April 1971. The dignity, honesty and simplicity demonstrated by him in discharge of his duties earned respect of all.

Besides being jurist by profession, he earned name and fame at home and abroad as a front-ranking freedom fighter and as a man known for his belief in human rights and common justice. Mr Justice Abu Sayeed Chaudhury, because of his personal image, dignity and status, was again re-elected as the President of Bangladesh on 10th March 1973. But with the change of political climate, he resigned on 24th December 1973. He represented Bangladesh in many international seminars, one such was the WHO seminar in 1975 in Geneva. He was elected chairman of the Commission on Human Rights in United Nation in 1985.

While in active life, his sudden death came to us as a bolt from the blue on 1st August 1987. His dead body was brought home from abroad. It reminded me of Lord Tennyson's "Home they brought the warrior dead." Really a valiant warrior for humanity, nationality, liberty, equality and fraternity was brought home dead covered by the red and green National Flag of Bangladesh. I vividly remember his tape recorded historic speech which was delivered in Geneva entitled "Genesis of the holocaust", published in the Sunday Times on 6th June 1977 and reproduced in the book entitled "Bangladesh Genocide and world press" — the first comprehensive and authentic records of the liberation war about which Justice Chaudhury said, "The book will help us writing the history of liberation war".

On his death, the dearest collage friend of Justice Chaudhury Siddharta Sankar Roy erstwhile Chief Minister of West Bengal wrote a letter of condolence to Mrs Chaudhury saying: "Shahjahan was one of our brightest jewels. God has taken him away. My prayer is that when the time comes for me to part too, I may be able to see him again, be with him together again." This shows how fondly they were tied together in mental world and friendly bond.

On the 71st birth anniversary of Mr Justice Abu Sayeed Chaudhury, let us take this vow that we should all stand up straight for realisation of human rights, democracy, liberty and fraternity, as this brave warrior did profess and practice in his own life.

Bravo Bangladesh: A Message to Posterity

The sculpture "Sabash Bangladesh (Bravo Bangladesh)" on the campus of Rajshahi University, commemorating the Liberation War, will be unveiled by Jahanara Imam, the chief guest at the ceremony on February 8 next, says a press release.

Begum Sadeka Samad and Begum Salema Begum, two other proud mothers of valiant freedom fighters, will grace the ceremony as special guests of honour while the Vice-Chancellor Professor Amanullah Ahmed will preside over the ceremony.

The sculpture designed and shaped by Artist Nitun Kundu, was first initiated by the central students' union (RUCSU). The fund for it was collected from all sections of the people — students, teachers and others. The University, particularly its present Vice-Chancellor, has chiefly patronised it.

At a time, twenty years after our struggle for independence, when the values for which the great sons of our soil fought and died, are sadly being eroded, an erection like this bears much significance. It is indeed a message of 1971 to the posterity. The biggest in Bangladesh, the sculpture altogether is almost three-storey high with an open stage in front and some relief works around.

The name of the sculpture "Sabash Bangladesh" is borrowed from poet Sukanto. The



Lines of his poem, if rendered into English, run as: "Bravo, Bangladesh! The world looks up in

wonder. She is not to bend her head Even if she gets burnt and destroyed."

(Continued from page 8)

through the legal process or by force, then doesn't go for face-to-face battle. He chooses guerrilla warfare. He doesn't go to the assembly because he doesn't have the power of the vote, so he goes for terrorism instead," Dr. Sen said, highlighting the futility of attempts to solve problems arising out of conflict of interest in societies through exercise of exclusive power.

One would have thought that such problems would not arise in a democracy, where rule is always supposed to be by consent. But, while a dictatorial rule by a single man inevitably breeds revolt, democracy too faces the same danger. This is because often, instead of sharing power, an elected group ends up using power for the vested interest of its own or a number of other caucuses. They get their desired result for a while — 10 years, 20 years, but then there is a reaction against that, and others will revolt.

"Now if there is a spirit of compromise, then a proper adjustment is possible, but if there is no give-and-take among the various socio-political groups, then that will not be possible," Sen said. In his judgement, Western

Conversation

societies such the British, Swedish, Norwegian, Swiss etc. have achieved a high degree of democratisation precisely because they have learned to compromise, to balance conflicting interests. Conversely in Ireland, where the spirit of compromise has been conspicuous by its total absence, democracy exists under severe strain.

Nearer home, the Sri Lankans too failed to learn the lessons. The most developed and literate nation in South Asia, the island today is a shadow of its former self because the majority Sinhalese and the minority Tamils refused to compromise. Attempts by the majority to impose its language over the minority met with a response that bred further hostility. Five lives were taken in retaliation for the killing of two and the spiral went on. It still shows no sign of abating after nearly a decade of bloodshed.

The problem requires a change of attitude, a recognition that for societies to be stable and peaceful, interests of all groups have to be accommodated. But, according to S.R. Sen, a thorough review

of the way the system operates is also in order, to eradicate the twin threats of corruption and arbitrary use of power.

"Lord Acton's warning that all power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely, is true even in democracies where effective checks and balances is lacking on the head of the ruling party enjoying a large majority in the legislature", Sen said. "Even in the Indian system, where the prime minister or the state chief minister who can command a safe majority both in the House and the party enjoys so much arbitrary power and is surrounded by sycophants, with so little time for objective reading and discussion, that such problems are becoming more ominous every year."

Sen attributed the success of the American system to the separation of powers and the checks and balances it imposes on the exercise of executive authority. That has been missing in the presidential forms tried in South Asia so far. But the parliamentary forms are not free of problems either.

The conversation never really came to an end, but Sen's life seemed come round a full circle when he heard the tragic news from Prof Razzak

Dancers who Die at Hands of Japanese Mafia

The biggest group of foreign workers in Japan is Filipino. Many are so-called entertainers (usually bargirls) recruited by Yakuza, the Japanese mafia. Their lives are often broken. Some go insane or return home penniless. Others die from maltreatment or even by murder. The Philippines faces a dilemma familiar to poor countries. It badly needs the foreign exchange these workers remit home.

Abby Tan

MANILA: They call them Japayukis. The term is given to Filipinos bound for Japan and they are biggest foreign migrant labour group in that country. Today Japayukis have become a major issue in the Philippines because of the mysterious death of 22-year-old dancer Maricris Sison.

Countless Filipino women have died in Japan in similar circumstances, but her death in September has led to an explosion of interest in the subject in Manila newspapers, magazines and TV talks shows.

Now the government is trying to curb the exploitation of Filipino workers by stopping women under 23 going to Japan. Some 97 per cent of 80,000 Filipinos in Japan are dancers and entertainers (read bargirls) and the entertainment industry in Japan is in the hands of the dreaded Japanese mafia known as the Yakuza.

Doctors at the Hanawa Medical Center in Fukushima Prefecture said Sison had died of hepatitis. Her family were not convinced. They brought her body to the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) in Philippines.

The NBI said the girl had been murdered. She had head injuries and many stab wounds in the body. The Japanese doctors said the wounds were caused by the autopsy. The NBI stuck to its verdict.

The Senate held an inquiry and the Sison family sought the help of President Corason Aquino. The President was seen on TV poring over coloured photographs of the

who had just returned from BIRDEM, the diabetic hospital in Shahbagh.

"Have you heard? Huda is dead!" S R Sen said incredulously as he came back to the room.

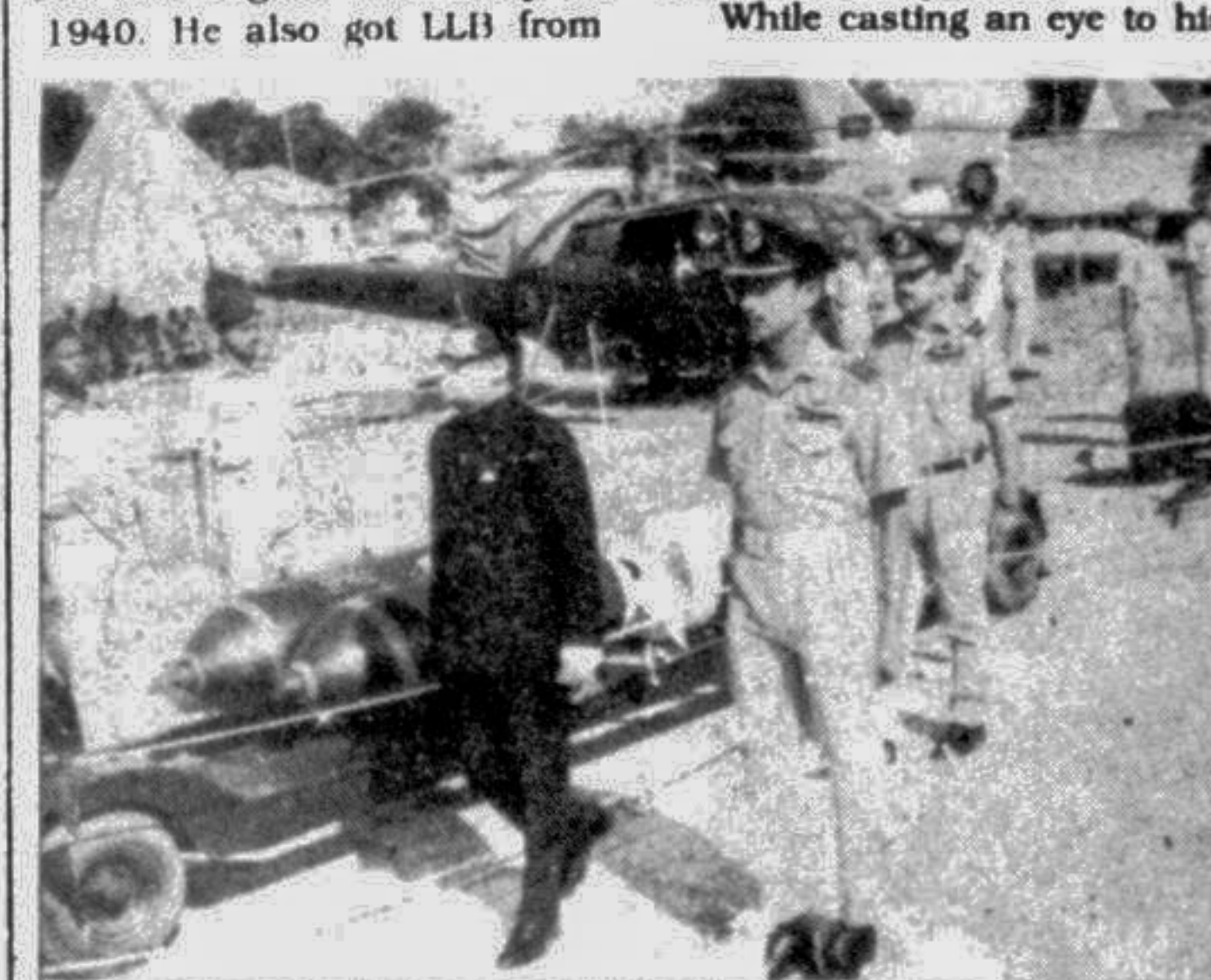
Dr M N Huda, prominent economist and former vice president of Bangladesh, was Samar Sen's first student at the Department of Economics, Dhaka University.

victim's wounds. Labour Secretary Ruben Torres was frustrated was frustrated by the lack of Japanese cooperation. He went to Japan to investigate, but the Japanese closed the case the day after he left.

He failed to persuade his government to deliver a diplomatic protest. The government is reluctant to generate friction with Japan, its largest aid donor and trading partner.

Half the Filipino labour force in Japan is working illegally and any move to tighten up will be unhelpful to the workers. The Philippines knows it has little leverage. Public discussion, however, goes on. Some Filipino women relate horrific experiences. Others have made good, found Japanese husbands and a fortune.

The Department of Labour published a two-page advertisement warning Japayukis of what to expect. It said: "Japan wavers in its attitude towards foreign workers. On the one hand, business wants them. On the other hand, the society scorns them as outsiders."



On first Air Force Day after liberation, Justice Abu Sayeed Chaudhury, as the first President of Bangladesh, inspecting units with Gr. Cap. Bashar and Air Vice Marshal Khandaker (2nd and 3rd behind him respectively).

The Philippines faces the dilemma of many Third World countries which need the foreign exchange their workers remit home, but must bear the humiliation and exploitation that goes with it. They can do little to protect the workers. The government has tried many times to ban domestic workers to Hong Kong, Singapore and the Middle East because of a host of problems such as exploitation, non-payment of salaries, sexual abuse, psychological breakdowns and harsh working conditions.

The problems are so many the Labour Department has a permanent office at Manila international airport to help workers returning home, their dreams unfulfilled. Rose Khan, head of the assistance division, says: "Every day we have to fetch a body, or someone who has gone insane or a worker repatriated penniless."

Khan handles 2,000 cases a month at the airport. Almost one a day is of mental illness.

Most are entertainers who have been sexually assaulted. They are recruited by Filipino firms fronting for the Yakuza, which controls most of the night clubs employing Filipinos.

The Batis Center for Women in Manila, a support group set up to help abused Filipino women overseas, says many entertainers who go to Japan end up in white slavery rings run by the Yakuza. Many become prostitutes and get raped. One recent case involved a woman who was pushed out of a window. Another was drowned in a bathroom.

Usually the families cannot afford to go to Japan to file a case. Sison's family was the exception and pursued the matter. Hers was the 33rd recorded Filipino death in Japan in 1991. GEMINI NEWS

ABHY TAN is a Singaporean journalist specialising in economic and political affairs.

WRITE TO MITA

Dear Mita,

I have put my daughter in play group, she is a little more than 3. It has already been one week but she still cries and seems to be afraid. I have to sit with her all day. What can I do and when do you think she will start to adjust?

Reshmi, Gulshan, Dhaka.

Dear Reshmi,

This is a very normal phenomenon and nothing to get alarmed about. Children are not used to being away from home and usually react by crying or showing other signs of fear. Some children even start bed-wetting. If you have stayed with her for one week it is time that you stopped now. The child will adjust soon when she knows that she has to and "mummy" cannot sit with her any longer. Efficient and sympathetic teachers will deal with them. So don't worry. In time your child will start to love going to school.

Dear Mita,

I passed the HSC examination with very good results but my father refuses to let me enter the university. He thinks it is too unsafe and I will get into bad company. He does not allow any argument and gets angry whenever the topic comes up. What can I do?

Shahana, Azimpur, Dhaka.

Dear Shahana,

You are only probably 18 and cannot go against your father's wishes. Please keep on trying to persuade him till he agrees. The atmosphere around the university area is not what it should be. Nevertheless, students do end up getting a good education. Make some kind of agreement with your father such as if he allows you to study, you will get very good grades within the first three months etc. See how it works. Parents usually give in to sound and logical arguments.