

# Dhaka Day by Day

## A Man's Success Story Abroad

by Raffat Binte Rashid

It all started when they approached Habeebullah to do their paper work, like filling up tax bills, housing benefit forms, medical forms, etc. etc. They, the first generation Asian migrants but when it came to writing, specially in English, they were stuck. It was then that they needed help and Mohammad Habeebullah then a Chartered Accountant student in London, quite fitted in the situation. In his spare time he would voluntarily help his community people.

After completing his higher secondary level education here in 1974, he went to London following his brother's footsteps, a practising CA there. But things were not exactly the way Habeeb wanted it. Lending these helpless people a hand, he thought he ought to do something to cater to their needs. He then switched his courses to social policy and community development and earned a post-graduate diploma there in '81. With this sudden change of course he joined Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council in the planning department as a social and policy development worker in '82.

"In Rochdale, the place where I work there is approximately 200,000 Asian population, which only makes five per cent of total Rochdale's population. Among these Asian migrants only 1200 to 2000 are Bangladeshis and 90 per cent of them are Pakistanis," Habeeb says. These settlers are of two types. Economic migrants who in the early fifties or sixties were taken as manual labourers, mostly from Noakhali and Sylhet and the others are the ship deserters. These first generation Asian migrants worked mostly in textile mills. They were all enrolled for the night shift which the Whites usually avoided.

These migrants slowly brought their family members or started their own family in London, which was very natural as it saved a lot of money. But in the early 80's when there was a recession in the textile industry, these Asians working in the night shift were first to find themselves jobless.

These elderly people found no other options open to them. Their children, who were, by then, 15 to 16 years of age, were plunged into uncertainty. The rate of school drop-outs or 'O' level failure cases among these children were as high as 70 to 80 per cent. As a result they were not continuing their education further and were also not taking any non-vocational technical govt. training.

This was more so because of their parental pressure. Like all parents they wanted their

kids to be doctors, engineers or big officials whether or not they were capable of fulfilling the expectation. They couldn't fit their children into the picture of doing menial jobs and as a consequence the kids roamed around without work, or any aim.

"In these hopeless circumstances we, my two unemployed Pakistani friends and myself decided to set up a project to help these teenagers. We submitted our project profile to Manpower Service Commission and after reviewing it thoroughly the authority decided to fund 'Kashmir Youth Project' — and the biggest black youth organization in Europe came into being," Habeebullah explains procedures. (Black here are the Asian migrants).

"Our job was to motivate these kids, give them training and help them choose a career. Our fund was renewed the second year and on the third year the central government gave us aids for next four years and finally for the following four years EEC is funding us as well. This project is now founded by the EEC. UK government along with self-finance as well," he reports, proud of his work.

At the moment they have about 40 per cent Asian and 60 per cent white teenagers under their guidance. "In 1993 Prince Charles hand picked our project and visited the site, it has definitely grown into one of the biggest NGOs there," says Habeebullah, who was in Dhaka recently for a vacation. For a Bangalee and that too a first generation Asian migrant to Europe, he came a long way and all the time helping his community members. His project is just one example of his work there, he is actively involved in many such organizations that cater to Asians there.

Morever in 1987 he was appointed by Lord Chancellor as a Justice of Peace (JP) in the Magistrate Court. (The first step in their legal ladder). "This JP thing of theirs is a 1000 years old tradition. Only a good, reputed citizen, involved in voluntary social jobs can apply for the post, but selection is strictly maintained by the upper level of administration."

"He has the power to sentence anyone up to six months in jail. There are 120 JP in Rochdale, among them three are Asians and only one is a Bangalee," he says, happy about his appointment. Currently he is the Chairman of the Magistrates.

Apart from all these, he also has four national publications to his credit. (This he shares with other writers also). Extremely active, hard working and at the same time creative, this man has not only helped himself but also others of his community.



Habeebullah serves his community with a commitment.



Jatiya Party Secretary-General Anwar Hossain Manju addressing a public meeting at the Bangabandhu Avenue in the city yesterday. —Star photo

## NGOs to launch campaign on water issues

By Staff Correspondent

Environmental activists and NGOs of the country are planning to launch a campaign on the cross boundary water issues, including the Farakka barrage.

According to sources in the NGOs, the campaign aims at highlighting the recent ground water shortage, drying up of rivers, including the impact of the Farakka barrage and other issues relating to water resources in South Asia.

The NGOs also plan to form a network with the NGOs in the neighbouring countries so that the water-related disputes could be resolved amicably.

Besides, they plan to chart an outline for plan of action and develop an information bank.

The Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA) will work as a focal point for water issues, the sources said.

The BELA has convened a meeting on Thursday (April 20) of all Coalition Environmental NGOs (CEN) members, concerned groups and individuals to work out a pro-active plan for the cross boundary water issues.

The move by the NGOs to launch the campaign apparently came in the backdrop of increasing water shortage in the country, repeated crop failure and other impacts caused by drying up of the major rivers.

## Shamsul condoles deaths of mediamen

Information and Commerce Minister M Shamsul Islam condoled the deaths of mediamen belonging to Bangladesh Television and Information Department in a tragic road accident yesterday in Chittagong, reports BSS.

In a message the information minister conveyed his heartfelt sympathy to the members of the bereaved families and prayed for the peace of the departed souls.

Information Secretary Dr Ekram Hossain also condoled the deaths.

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ALL MEMBERS OF THE INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS, BANGLADESH ARE REQUESTED TO CONTACT:  
Ar. BADRUL HAIDER, PHONE: 865122 OR  
Ar. MUSTAFA AMEEN, PHONE: 811703/329437  
FOR REGISTRATION & OTHER DETAILS.

**Ar SHAMSUL WARES**  
GENERAL SECRETARY

S-194

## Col Shawkat hospitalised

By Staff Correspondent

Chairman of the Muktijoddha Sanghati Parishad Col (ret'd) Shawkat Ali has been hospitalised.

Shawkat Ali, who resigned as an Awami League MP recently, was suffering from fever for the last few days and was admitted to the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) yesterday.

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**Ar. SHAMSUL WARES**  
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S-195

**BIRTH**

Born 16th April 1995, to Sadia and Sajid Hossain Choudhury, a son, at Monowara Hospital, Dhaka.

S-192

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