

President should Take an Initiative

Just when we were beginning to feel that some sort of understanding may finally come about with the President being the centre-piece, came the announcement of the election schedule...

We are aware that the EC is bound by the Constitution to hold a free and fair election. But if the political situation is such that the possibility of a peaceful election is jeopardised, then obviously the EC must act accordingly...

Now that the election schedule is upon us, an agreement must be worked out between the ruling party and the opposition which will ensure a peaceful environment to make a meaningful election possible...

This, we see as the only possible way to bring the opposing parties to the dialogue table. Without an understanding between the two sides, we cannot have a peaceful, free and fair election...

BB's Testing-time

The Bangladesh Bank must be worried that the rate of inflation is currently hovering at 8.7 per cent. However, the measures taken by it to contain inflation have been wide off-the-mark...

In a copy-book style, the BB is trying to fight inflation through a contractionary monetary policy featured by an increase in the bank rates geared to discourage borrowing by the scheduled banks from the central bank...

Substantial amounts of unearned incomes could find their way into the scene to be laundered on the sly. Hence the need to enforce limits on election-related expenses.

However, it is the price control angle that needs to be taken to keep the inflationary pressure within a tolerable range. Erratic food prices which basically pushed up the inflation rate are apparently on the mend...

Insufferable

One can almost see the impish smile flashing across the faces of the spoilers of the Ramna Batomul frontage and grit one's teeth in livid anger. The open space overlooking the banyan tree-shaded high ground of a delectable stage...

The executive officer of the Dept of Arboury Culture who owned up having ordered the plantation not only betrayed an over-indulged sense of daring he also seemed to have a mastery over the art of drawing analogies.

However, the obvious answer to his poser is that the foliage and the girth of trees planted so close to each other are certain to rule out assemblage of people. There are plenty of spaces to plant trees in, even within the Ramna Park area...

Bangladesh Politics : Needed a Qualitative Change

by Barrister Abdur Razzaq

LIKE the bright sunny spells in a rainy day, democracy in Bangladesh has been short lived. We fight for democracy, we make supreme sacrifices for it, but we fail to sustain it.

Parliament is now dissolved. Constitutionally, we have 90 days to hold elections, but practically, because of Ramadan, we have more or less 45 days. And if no settlement is reached and BNP alone goes to elections, democracy will not survive.

With the passage of time, options are getting limited. The resignation of the Opposition MPs in December last year sealed off the prospect of amending the Constitution to incorporate the provisions of caretaker government...

Historically, Awami League's attitude towards elections has always been positive. It took part in the 1970-elections under Martial Law, and despite its six-point programme was in sharp contrast with President Yahya's 5-point LFO.

But a settlement today and an election tomorrow, past experiences say, will only bring short-term peace. Free and fair election is only a means to achieve democracy, peace and stability.

and fair, but it did not change the fate of the people. The 1970 Parliament, the end result of another free election, could not even see the light of the day...

Our political leaders must realise that the challenge of peace is much more challenging than the challenge of war. The best example is the example of Sheikh Mujib who survived the challenge of war...

but succumbed to the challenge of peace. Problems of peace are far more complicated. It is a fight not for power, but to give power — political and economic — to the millions...

Even if in the coming elections all parties participate, it is difficult to expect that the winter of discontent and disturbance will bring in a spring of continued hope and harmony. But the 8 November silent protests have shown that this kind of decent protests work.

with all honesty, and courage, and without any party affiliations exert their collective influence on politics, the present foul political weather is bound to change for better. But if we remain silent, and this kind of aimless and shameful politics continues, and one after another crisis is created either to go to power or to remain in power then slowly but surely we will perish...

unfortunate country of 120 million people where poverty, pain and suffering are the order of the day, who really cares for the half-fed and the unfed, the unemployed and the under-employed, the shameful slums where human beings literally lead the life of animals, the street urchins who are born on the street and brought up on the street, the homeless who spend their nights under the capital's open sky in sun and rain — in winter and summer, the 7-year-old who instead of watching TV is wandering in the streets and looking for food in the dustbin, the rickshaw-puller who

come a land of great inequalities. The high-rise buildings with all modern amenities are a horrifying contrast to the mud-hut of the poor millions. A considerable number of the hundreds of thousands rickshaw pullers in the fastest growing and polluted capital city of Dhaka could become factory workers in environment-friendly small-scale industries in a pollution free atmosphere on the bank of the river Jamuna with a guarantee for job security and primary health care facility and their children with opportunity of attending the factory school provided we have political stability which

population, an asset all our near and distant neighbours lack. We have natural resources. We have a potential economy, which attracts foreign investments. It is quite possible to give economic might and power to our people, and grow in them the much needed confidence that they can lead a decent life. They can be given freedom from want, and freedom from fear. Our people can be organised on the basis of our own values, our own culture and commitment, and can be transformed into a respectable nation. But we lack that leadership.

Moreover, there is fear and hatred and distrust in politics. Every major party, even if it is in an alliance, fears and hates and distrusts the others. And politics based on fear and hatred will neither take us anywhere nor will do any good to the country. We have to remove this distrust that darkens our political horizon. This can be done if the object of politics becomes people's welfare, and if there is a change in the quality of politics.

We have endured the exploitation of the British, and the zamindars, and the Pakistanis, and the military dictators; and we have endured it long. And now we have to carry the weight and burden of an uncaring leadership which is far more heavier to carry. We see no light at the end of the tunnel. Because we are not in the tunnel. We are in wilderness. Oh Lord! how long will this continue? Help us Lord to change ourselves. Send for us a Messiah who will save us from this ignominy and calamity.

The writer is a practising advocate of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh.

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four. One wonders what was the need of this purposeless and pathetic exercise when, unconditionally, the leaders have betrayed the blood of the martyrs who went into the street having full confidence on their leadership, on their ability to lead the nation, who have sacrificed their lives with little hope of reward, who have suffered in silence and by their blood nourished the plant of freedom so that we can prosper in freedom. Their widows, their orphans and their parents have remained ever deprived, while the leaders take pride in their martyrdom and enter into a swimming competition in the sea of their blood. This is simply inhuman, simply unacceptable.

The object of politics is people's welfare. There is a saying of our beloved Prophet (SM): People's leaders are their servants. When people cry leaders weep. But in this

has to feed a family of five and also to send money to his old mother and paralysed father living in a remote village in a thatched hut? Who really cares about the growing menace of drug addicts, the trafficking of hungry women and children, the educational institution which is closed and the campus which is violent, the desertification of once-mighty Padma and the devastation of Farakka, the plight of our people in Angor-pota and Dahagram who have become foreigners in their own lands, the Hill Tracts which amidst blood and fire poses a threat to national security? If our leaders do really care about this Bangladesh, and these Bangladeshis — who they claim to lead and whose votes they seek — they would never have fought on egos, but on principles in which they have little difference.

simply means sensible behaviour by the politicians.

The hundreds of hours of hartals called by the Opposition in the recent past have not made them any stronger, nor the government any weaker, but it has made the country more impoverished and much weaker. Germany was much more devastated in 1945 than Bangladesh in 1971. In 20 years Germany has become a strong country both politically and economically but in the twenty plus four years of our independence we have achieved less and lost more.

Therefore, the people have become extremely tired of the present politics. This was amply demonstrated by the symbolic protest of the business community. Perhaps never before in peace time, so many people have suffered so much at the hands of their own politicians.

We have a homogeneous

Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy: A Champion of Democracy

by Prof Roushan Ara Hoque

THE 5th of December, 1995 is the 32nd death anniversary of Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy. He was a great statesman, an undaunted politician and a highly charismatic leader who could charm the listeners with his eloquent speech and whom the deprived Bengalees regarded as their Messiah, a political saviour. In the creation of Pakistan, he was second to Jinnah but in the creation of the democratic process in this region, he was second to none.

Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy was born on 8 September, 1892 in an illustrious Muslim family from Midnapore, West Bengal. The ancestral home of the family was Suhrawardy, a city in Iraq from which it assumed its surname — Suhrawardy. The founder of the family was Sheikh Shahabuddin Suhrawardy who founded the Suhrawardia order of saints and sent out his sons and disciples to Iran, Turan, Turkey, Sind, Hindustan and Bangladesh to preach Islam. The Suhrawardia family of Midnapore pioneered the Islamic renaissance movement of Bengal. Suhrawardy's father Barrister Zahidur Rahman Zahid was a Judge of Calcutta High Court, who later resigned and became a member of Bengal Legislative Assembly. His mother Khojesta Akther Banu was a graduate with Hons in Persian Literature and a great advocate of women's education.

Suhrawardy's married life with Naiz Fatema, daughter of Sir Abdur Rahim, lasted only three years, as she died leaving a son, Shahab Suhrawardy and a daughter Akther Jahan Suhrawardia. Shahab died in London in 1940 while pursuing his studies at Oxford. Akther was married to Shah Ahmed Sulaiman, who died in Karachi in 1982 and is survived by her only daughter Shahida Munni, a barrister. Again in 1940, Suhrawardy married Vera Tiscenko, a former Russian actress of the Moscow Arts Theatre, and having Rashid Suhrawardy, the only child, was separated from her in 1946. Rashid Suhrawardy was brought up and educated in London and Oxford, now pursuing a career of an actor in England with the Royal Shakespearean Company. In 1920, Suhrawardy re-

turned to Calcutta from UK and became involved in the political movement of the day with the mission to establish political rights of the Muslims of Bengal. His political mentors were Maulana Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali. As Secretary to the Calcutta Khilafat Committee he worked hard to organise and unify the Muslims of Bengal. He had worked as Deputy Mayor under Mayor C R Das. In 1921, Suhrawardy was elected to the Bengal Legisla-

Table Conference in London as representative of the Muslims. He also formed an Independent Muslim Party. At the request of Jinnah, he became the General Secretary of the Bengal Provincial Muslim League in 1936. Suhrawardy who had already proved his mettle as an able organiser contested the election of 1936 and his untiring efforts were rewarded as his Party secured 36 out of 119 Muslim seats, he himself being elected from two

eral election to give democracy a fair trial, to elevate Pakistan's prestige in international arena and to ensure equal treatment to the neglected regions of Pakistan. Within one month of his assumption of power, Parliament was convened in Dhaka, passed the Joint Electorate Bill and equal citizenship to all guaranteed. The Awami League Government began to fulfil its 21-point programme, abolished the Public Safety Act, re-

He was a born leader destined to liberate the teeming millions ... A great champion of democracy and Hindu-Muslim unity ... One of the brightest stars in the political firmament of the subcontinent.



leased all political prisoners, called regular Assembly sessions, placed and passed Bills and Budgets and held seven by-elections. He adopted more economic measures to remove disparity, maintained balance of trade, distributed foreign earnings equally between East and West Pakistan, established Film Development Corporation, the Jute Marketing Corporation, the Dhaka Improvement Trust, the Chittagong Development Authority, the Inland Water Transport Authority, and Water Development Board to control flood.

Suhrawardy was highly credited for his spirited independent foreign policy based on honesty and truth. He established friendly relations with the United States and at the same time with China, Japan and Russia. While addressing the S M Hall students of the Dhaka University, attended by me as a student, he by an equation of zeroes proved the futility of creating a Muslim bloc of all zero-powered Muslim states. This severe public assessment angered the Arab world, especially Egypt. However, with the co-operation of the Western bloc he was able in passing the resolution at the Security Council calling for a plebiscite in Kashmir. This was considered a great diplomatic victory for Suhrawardy over Nehru.

As a national leader, Suhrawardy was gaining international support for his diplomatic victory and was then at the peak of his popularity. This made Iskander Mirza jealous against him. As a victim of his treachery, Suhrawardy had to resign on 11 October, 1957. When Ayub Khan assumed power on 7th October, 1958 he banished

constituencies of which he surrendered one to Khawaja Nazimuddin. Suhrawardy joined the Krishak Proja League Coalition Government of A K Fazlul Huq as Minister for Labour and Commerce in April 1937. Subsequently he held several other portfolios one after another including that of Finance. Under him he passed the Labour Welfare Act, the Maternity Benefit Act and the Bengal Tenancy Amendment Bill of 1938. Thus he became very popular with the people.

He attended the Lahore session of the Muslim League in 1940 and as spokesman for Bengal delegation his convincing argument helped passing the Lahore Resolution proposed by AK Fazlul Huq in 1940. In 1943 Suhrawardy joined the Khawaja Nazimuddin Ministry of Bengal as Civil Supply Minister and saved the lives of millions of famine-stricken people by opening ration shops in all cities, gruel kitchens for poor villagers and auxiliary hospitals throughout the country.

Suhrawardy, as Secretary of the Bengal Provincial Muslim League and in charge of organising the election campaign toured the remotest parts of the country and became so popular that he won 114 of the 119 Muslim seats in the election of 1946. So he became the Prime Minister of Bengal on 24th April 1946 and his first act was to release all the political prisoners including the convicts of the Chittagong Armoury Raid. This earned him people's gratitude. Suhrawardy's victory in Bengal proved to be

to save the helpless Muslims. He lived with Gandhi in a dilapidated house at Belaghata where a crowd of 20,000 people tried to kill Suhrawardy but Gandhi told them to kill him first before killing Suhrawardy.

Suhrawardy became a pauper when the Indian Government appropriated the entire property of his father after his death on the false ground of non-payment of income tax. Being compelled, Suhrawardy returned to Karachi on March 5, 1949 and his membership to the Legislative Assembly of Pakistan had been cancelled. Against the one-party state of Liaquat Ali Khan, Suhrawardy created an opposition party known as Awami League, and in 1950, he extended it as All Pakistan Awami League. He then toured all the nooks and corners of East Pakistan and made it the most popular and powerful party in the province. He contested the election of 1954 as a coalition party of the United Front which won all the seats except nine. He worked so strenuously during the election that his health broke down very seriously. When Martial Law was declared in East Pakistan, he was undergoing treatment in Zurich. Golam Muhammad, the then President of Pakistan sent an emissary to Zurich requesting him to return to Pakistan to resolve all the political crises, being assured to ultimately be the Prime Minister of Pakistan although to begin with he should join as a Minister of Law being empowered to 'wash the dirty linen of the regime'. To his credit he resolved all constitutional crises and was able to sign the Murree Pact of 1955, which stipulated Five State Principle. He framed the first Constitution of Pakistan on the basis of Parity for East Pakistan. This recognition of regional individuality coupled with geographical incongruity made the granting of autonomy an imperative need of East Pakistan, denial of which ultimately led to the independence of Bangladesh.

On 12th September, 1956 Suhrawardy was sworn in as Pakistan's fifth Prime Minister. Then his three main objectives were to be a gen-

Tissue culture technique

Sir, My attention has been drawn to the news item published in your daily on November 18, 1995 under the heading 'Call to apply tissue culture technique'. Prof Ahmed Shamsul Islam of Dhaka University mentioned in it that Bangladesh imports potato seeds worth Tk 300 to 400 crore every year. This statement is far from reality. In fact, presently Bangladesh

imports potato seeds mainly from Holland which costs less than one crore taka. It would be interesting and useful to know about the source of Prof Islam's such information.

Much works have been done on the use of tissue culture techniques at the Tuber Crops Research Centre (TCRC), Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI), Joydebpur, Gazipur to produce virus-free potato seeds. The technology is now

being used for 'Breeder's Seed Potato Production' at the Breeder's Seed Potato Production Centre, Debiganj of BARI. It is surprising to note that Prof Islam either ignored or deliberately did not mention about the contribution of TCRC in the area of virus-free seed potato production.

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