Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

## To Clear an Augean Stable

Dhaka, Thursday, December 5, 1996

It is good to hear Prime Minster Sheikh Hasina. repeat her commitment to separate judiciary from the executive making the former truly independent. Renewing her pledge on Tuesday, she told the BCS Judicial Association that judiciary came first among the three estates that now constitute a state and that rule of law was basic to all other manifestations of statehood. A state's state of development is best measured by the effectiveness of its judicial system. When such is the importance of judiciary there shouldn't be even a month's delay in realising the dream of our masses for a just society based on the rule of law. Independence of judiciary will be meaningless if it does not bring into being rule of law and then nurture it.

While pinning our hope on Hasina's words, we cannot but wonder what will happen to the mountain of cases, both civil and criminal, that have piled easily qualifying for a place in the Guinness Book of Records - even after an independent judiciary is here. Because of their nature and also because of the existing laws and judicial practice criminal cases are disposed of with dispatch. Civil suits take time, kind of a tortoise in comparison to the hare that is the criminal ones. Well, the number of pending criminal cases in the courts of the country now stands at exactly two lakh 55 thousand and 214.

There is no question of this backlog being ever cleared with the judicial system continuing as it is. Cases will only continue to pile up. How will an independent judiciary clear it? By doubling the number of judicial officials, if need be - for one. By requiring police and other branches of the executive to keep to set norms in court -related matters - on pain of being punished. By speeding up disposal through an overhaul of the whole system and its practices etc, etc.

If the government separates judiciary, it will go down in history in enviable colours. But can the government clear up the backlog substantially? This will be difficult but not impossible. Let them accomplish it — and the posterity will remember them for a thousand years.

### **Urban Poverty**

Urban poverty has assumed an alarming proportion. A seminar on urban poverty organised jointly by the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) further exposed the contour of this long gathering problem with some shocking but unassailable statistics. Five million, more than two third of Dhaka's population live below the poverty level and three million from that obolary population wallow in extreme poverty.

Bangladesh, like her fellow developing, countries in the Third World has long been exposed to the problem of urban poverty. The rate of population growth in its urban zone has been more than six per cent in the last thirty years. Concentration of this ever growing population has been at its densest in the larger cities. The main reason for this spiralling demographic index is the unabated migration of thorpsmen to the towns in search of better opportunities to keep their body and soul together.

Not only the migrated people are making poignant discoveries every day that the great source of hope and betterment they thought the towns and cities to be was actually nothing but mirage but they are also causing enormous pressure on the urban infrastructural system. It poses a serious health hazard to people who live below the poverty line as well to those who are above it. More than 55 per cent of this poverty-stricken people do not use sanitary latrines and 36 to 40 per cent remain ill for one reason or the other throughout the year.

These are ominous signs of an impending disaster. Unless the tendency to migrate to the urban areas from rural ones is stopped now, urban poverty will only increase. The Local Government and Rural Development Ministry should immediately come up with a plan to provide the villages with more working opportunities to hold back people from migrating to the cities.

## Of Bangla Academy

Poet Shamsur Rahman has hit the nail on the head. Where does the President of the Bangla Academy stand in the civil list? Who is the controlling authority of the Director-general of Bangla Academy? When back in 1955, the Bangla Academy was founded by the Abu Hossain Sarkar government by an act of law and in redemption of one of the major demands of the Ekush Dafa of the Jukta Front — a demand arising in the course of the Great Language Movement — was such a lowly creature in the vision of the law-givers? When Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman gave a new law governing the constitution and working of the Academy, did he want this to be an appendage of the administration performing some specialised jobs? No. As our dear poet has enunciated incomparably the Academy was envisioned to be the symbol of our national intellection. Shamsur Rahman goes farther to demand the Academy also become the symbol of the nation's conscience. Can a lowly adjunct of the culture or education ministry ever grow to match and fit these ideas? If these ideas were to be given up, the Bangla Academy should also go with them.

The leaders of Bangla Academy or for that matter of the Shilpakala Academy could be those who the President and Prime Minister could salaam in all respect — if only the academies were organised in a different, truly national level. Think of the French Academy and you will understand.

The government must free the academies and help them grow into organisations embracing the whole of the nation's mind and its creations — of past, present and future.

## **GLIMPSES OF HISTORY**

# Role of Bangladeshis in UK During the War of Liberation

Even before the commencement of the Liberation War, the Bangladeshis in the UK were conscious about and closely followed the political developments in the East Pakistan.

HE largest concentratof Bangladeshis anywhere outside Bangladesh in 1971 was and has still been in the United Kingdom. The number of those who were of Bangladeshi origin approximated then a quarter of a million. These included professionals, students, workers and, above all, restaurateurs, it was, therefore, natural to assume that the political turmoil at home would have due repercussions in their mind, resulting in their grave concern and spontaneous involvement in events leading to and during the Liberation War.

As for the Bangladeshi officials assigned abroad, the agony at the successive development of events was deep. Their sympathy and support for the cause of liberation, under the constant vigil of their superiors, could not be made public. at least at the initial stage, except among friendly and trusted compatriots. Then, there existed varied opportunities and conditions for them in host countries, depending upon latters' attitude towards the cause of Bangladesh

Even before the commencement of the Liberation War the Bangladeshis in the UK were conscious about and closely followed the political developments in the East Pakistan Evidently, distance and absence from their land made them nostalgic and deeply interested in the political and material wellbeing of their people. The students, medicos, lawyers and educationists spearheaded the movement among the general Bangladeshi community. The movement initially was obviously one for granting autonomy for the then East Pakistan. Following the barbaric events of the 25th March 1971

the movement spontaneously was transformed into that for independence. It had full support of all the expatriates, except for a small number of diehard unionists and fundamentalists. Since 25 March. meetings and demonstrations by students and others in prominent places like Hyde Park, Trafalgar Square and the Pakistan Chancery became almost order of the day. Even hunger strikes were staged heroically by our valiant fight-

Mohammad Ishaq, in front of the British Prime Minister's home and Pakistan High Commissioner's office. A very suspicious thing for the Bangladesh movement happened during this period Justice Abu Sayeed Chowdhury. while he was Vice Chancellor of the Dhaka University, had come to Geneva to attend meet ings of the Human Rights

ers. Sultan Sharif and

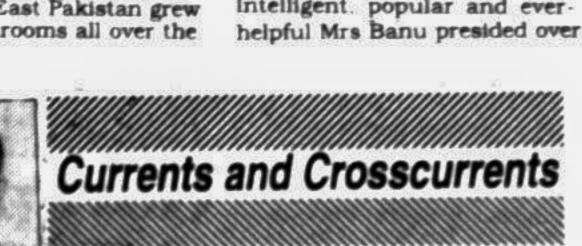
Commission. The political developments at home perturbed him immensely. He was in London when the military crackdown took place in Dhaka. The brutal killing of unarmed civilians, without provocation, specially on the campus and at halls of the Dhaka University moved him

He decided to resign from his job and to take up the cause for liberation of Bangladesh. He was then made the Special Overseas Representative of the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and was

entrusted by the latter to lead our Liberation struggle abroad. with the prime base in London. He was also appointed as the Head of our unofficial delegation to the UN General Assembly. The delegation included, inter alia, our present Foreign Minister and a number of MPs elected in 1970.

Numerous groups of Bangladeshi nationals to propagate and seek support for independence of East Pakistan grew up like mushrooms all over the

the entire movement. This conference was presided over by another noble person, Lulu Bilguis Banu, a prominent social worker, educationist and formerly Principal of Viquarunnessa Noon Girls High School in Dhaka. This was agreed unanimously, specially at the insistence of Justice Chowdhury who decided to remain temporarily in the background as a father figure intelligent popular and ever-



by M M Rezaul Karim

British isles. They found in Justice Chowdhury the quality of leadership they direly needed an eminent person holding a distinctive position in the society and endowed with firm conviction and unflinching dedication for the noble cause This was necessary for forging unity among diverse and. sometimes, rival groups

All such groups held a his toric conference at Coventry on the 24th April and elected a 5 member Steering Committee which was then entrusted with the responsibility of directing

also the first meeting of the Steering Committee and continued to serve the community. in all possible ways, till her death only a few months ago

Justice Chowdhury went to senior British government officials and held meetings with lan Sutherland, later Sir lan, to apprise situation of the genocide being perpetrated in our land and to seek diplomatic and material support for the people struggling for independence His appointment as the Special Overseas Representative of a government not yet recognised

by the British government posed an insurmountable protocol barrier to his being received by the British Foreign Secretary (Foreign Minister). Str Alec Douglas-Home, later Lord Hume. His relentless efforts in holding meetings with British parliamentarians. lawyers, business leaders and heads of various political and social groups contributed to our cause enormously. Besides, making London as his principal base he paid visits to a number of countries on mainland Europe for the same pur-

We. Bengali officials in the Pakistan High Commission in London, like in many other countries, were passing through an acute sense of mental anguish, particularly after the 25th March 1971 Most of us. having the same mental disposition, were utterly dismayed at the inability to express our feelings in public A few close friends and confidants were the only exceptions. Besides giving them advice, some of us took an active role in drafting letter to British law givers and to leading personalities in the society.

I recall vividly an episode at that time. I was then Political Counsellor in the Pakistan High Commission. On the 27th March, the High Commissioner sought and got an appointment with the British Foreign Secretary. As the political officer I had to accompany him and to keep a record of the conversations and later to draft a dis-

patch to the Foreign Office in Islamabad, with or without recommendations. The High Commissioner, during the meeting, sought to establish the point that all that had happened in East Pakistan were more reactions to acts of saboteurs and these were but another ploy of India to divide and destroy its adversary. Pakistan. He wanted to make recommendations that no foreign journalists should be allowed to visit East Pakistan for some time.

was already deeply frustrated to hear a bundle of lies seeking to justify the most devilish acts of an unpardonable crime against humanity to our people. Like any other Bengali, wanted these fiendish acts to be known widely all over the world so that international help and cooperation for promoting our cause would be made available. I did not write these recommendations, despite High Commissioner's clear and specific instructions to do so. The High Commissioner looked up at me in amazement, disbelieving his eyes at the unexpected defiance of an otherwise trusted officer. He wrote the recommendations in his own hands.

As a consequence, within a few weeks I received instructions to leave London immediately for Bulgaria, on deputa tion, to open up a diplomatic mission there. The work in the Bulgarian capital. Sofia. was purely administrative and nonpolitical. There were none from our part of Pakistan. The obvious purpose was to keep me away from the sensitive political work and not to allow me to establish contact with and to cultivate political activists of the Bangladesh movement in London, at least for some time.

(To be Continued)

Nobel Peace Award Winners Boost East
ORMER Portuguese territory of East Timor Timor's Struggle for Inde-pendence independence the Democratic Republic Struggle for Inde-pendence independence in the Democratic Republic Struggle for Inde-pendence in the Democratic Re land: withdrawal of Indonesian

> The Nobel Peace prize may help to prove that a nearly-forgotten conflict in East Timor does not have to be a lost cause, writes ASM Nurunnabi

dent as the Democratic Republic of East Timor in 1975. It was then invaded by Indonesian forces and annexed. The claim was not recognised by the United Nations. Indonesian move into that territory aroused considerable international protest as well as triggered a massive revolt that was led by a guerilla movement called 'Fretilin'. While at first Fretilin scored successes, the Indonesian government sent thousands of troops to force the group to retreat to the mountains. The government policies of forcing the guerilla's civilian supporters to resettle or stay in else to go. detention camps and of access to Fretilin's area of operation succeeded in virtually eliminating all native opposition to In-

In a move to revitalise the search for peace in East Timor. the Nobel Committee in Norway awarded the Peace Prize to Timor's Roman Catholic Bishop. Carlos Filipe Xiamenes Belo, and pro-independence activist Jose Ramos-Horta Ramos-Horta, special representative for the National Council for Maubere Resistance, a prominent pro-independence group, was cited for unflagging international lobbying to keep East Timor's troubles in the public eye. Belo shared the award as a steadfast advocate of human rights and the preservation of Timorese culture.

awarding the honour to Belo and Ramos-Horta, the Nobel Committee had done for Timor what it did for Tibet and Myanmar with awards to Dalai Lama and pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kye, respectively, which breathed fresh life into their causes. Ramos-Horta and Belo do not. however, share the same approach to East Timor's troubles. According to analysts, Ramos-Horta consistently pushed for a UN supervised referendum on self-determination, and insisted that Indonesia repatriate its civil servants, traders and others who are overwhelming the local population. Belo, on the other hand, did call on the

According to observers, by

UN to facilitate a referendum in 1989, but since then he had shied away from direct attacks on the province's political status. The bishop, according to observers, prefers to criticise the heavy-handed manner in which integration has been implemented. His church became a clearing house for reports on human rights abuses from priests and villagers who use to feel they have nowhere

Observers tend to feel that Belo remains much more of a neutral figure than Ramos-Horta. The bishop's moral authority as the territory's most prominent Catholic invites respect from all sides. Ramos-Horta, on the other hand, reportedly suffers from credibility problems even among some of his associates in the pro-independence movement. It was also reported that behind all the carping about Ramos-Horta lingers perceptible regret that Belo was not the sole winner of the prize. Even some human rights advocates are known to say that this would have been more effective in furthering the Nobel Committee's stated goal of accelerating a solution of Timor's troubles. Yet it was felt that the favourable contrast with Ramos-Horta might succeed in shoring up Belo's position and protect his ability to speak out more freely.

The Indonesian President Suharto recently made a trip to the provincial capital of Dili and inaugurated a landmark statue of Christ, 27-metre-high, with an ode to the rapid improvement of East Timor's infrastructure. His trip, the first since 1988, was clearly meant as a monumental display of faith in Timor's integration

with the rest of Indonesia. Indonesia's government complained about the award to Ramos-Horta, calling him "a political opportunist" who "has incited the people of East Timor to separate from the unitary

Republic of Indonesia." Jakarta did not criticise the other winner. Bishop Belo, who has a reputation for resisting pressure from government and

guerillas alike. The challenge tacing Belo and Ramos-Horta now is to build on the Nobel momentum to cement improvements in human rights for the Timorese The Indonesian government faces an even greater test breaking the current diplomatic deadlock without appearing to cave in to international

pressure. The attitude of Ramos-Horta, who lives in exile, if far from conciliatory. We are going to intensify the resistance in East Timor, in Indonesia and the international arena. We will not surrender. The Indonesian government should not harbour any illusion of winning this battle." he declared He also pledged to work harder to forge links with Indonesia's embryonic pro-democracy movement, which has come under severe government pressure following riots on July 27 last.

Apprehension was felt in

some quarters that the Peace prize might spur violence in East Timor. For those harbouring deep opposition to Indonesian rule, the Peace prize is a powerful vindication of their beliefs. Particularly for a vounger generation radicalised by the army killing of protesters in the capital Dili in 1991, round-the-clock surveil lance and continuous reports of torture, the prize remains a powerful symbol that the world has not forgotten. Some fear that the prize's potential to revitalise youthful resistance might lead to more arrests consequent on more demonstrations by the youths despite the

Rather than succumb to such fears, activists outside the country cling to hopes for a significant breakthrough. In course of his recent trip to the

United States, Ramos-Horta urged the Clinton administration to play a more aggressive role in bringing peace to his troubled homeland — East Timor. He made an appeal that the United States should also

work with Europe to push Indonesia towards democracy and do more than just express concern about human rights in that country. He outlined a threestage peace plan that he believes will bring stability to his home-

troops from East Timor followed by the establishment of self-rule and five years later negotiations on the final status of the disputed territory.

Some observers make optimistic prediction for East Timor to the effect that change may come when the reign of Suharto who is now 75, ends in his death or retirement. In that case, the Nobel Peace prize may help to prove that a nearly forgotten conflict doesn't have to be a lost cause.

tried to remove disparity be-

# Suhrawardy — A Founder of Democracy

by Prof Roushan Ara Hoque

ODAY. December 5, is the 33rd death anniversary of Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, a champion of democracy in this part of the world. He was a great political leader of this region who left his mark in history as an undaunted statesman, a highly charismatic speaker and a political Messiah of the neglected teeming millions of Muslims

Born in 1892, in an illustrious Muslim family at Midnapore. Suhrawardy inherited liberal and humanistic ideas from his family and dedicated his life for the political liberation of his own countrymen. As a Deputy Mayor of Calcutta under C R Das he worked hard to establish the fundamental rights of the workers of the Khidirpur Dock area. They found him as their saviour and elected him in 1921 as their representative to the Bengal Legislative Assembly.

Being a humanist leader Suhrawardy opposed The Whipping Bill of the British government by arguing that 'Indians are not animals' and that they were as good as the British. He also compelled the Congress to enter into The Bengal Pact of 1923 by which the Muslims got the majority in Bengal with the principle of separate electorate. equal representation and appointment in all elective bodies of Bengal. In those days of British rule these were regarded as great achievements of

Suhrawardy. During the disastrous flood of North Bengal in 193 Suhrawardy being shocked at the untold sufferings of the affected people personally visited the inundated areas and arranged to alleviate the sufferings of millions. As a represen tative of the Muslims of Bengal Suhrawardy attended the Round Table Conference of London held in 1932. In 1936 Suhrawardy was selected as the Secretary of the Bengal provincial Muslim League. His great popularity was proved when his party secured 36 out of 116 Muslim seats and he himself was elected from two seats. As Minister of Labour and Commerce under A K Fazlul Hug he passed the Labour Welfare Act and The Bengal Tenancy Amendment Bill of 1938. As a Minister of Civil Supply under Khawaza Nazimuddin he saved the lives of millions of faminestricken people by opening ration shops in all cities and set ting up gruel kitchens in all villages and establishing auxil

iary hospitals in many places. As a great expert in Law Suhrawardy formulated the first Constitution of Pakistan His convincing argument as a spokesman for Bengal delega tion compelled the west provincial leaders to pass The Lahore Resolution as proposed by Sher-e-Bangla in the Muslim League Conference of Lahore in 1940. Due to his great popularity in Bengal. Muslim League won 114 out of 119 seats. He became Chief Minister of Bengal on 24th April 1946 and his first act was to release all political prisoners including the convicts of Chittagong Armoury Raid. As a mendicant of Gandhi Peace Mission and as his devoted follower Suhrawardy travelled the entire riot-torn areas of Noakhali in 1946 with Gandhi at the risk of lives of both and was successful in mitigating the

As a true believer of British type of democracy Suhrawardy laid the foundation of the democratic process in this country. As a check to one party rule of Liaquat Ali he formed the Jinnah League at Karachi and within a very short time his party became very popular.



He united his Jinnah League with Pakistan Awami League of Bhasani and named the new party as Awami Muslim League in 1949 for which the Pak leaders called him a traitor and an Indian agent. In spite of all the oppositions he dedicated his life to achieve equal political rights for the then deprived east Pakistanis. Gradually, the party became very popular as a strong opposition both at the province and at the centre. In 1955 the party was made secular by withdrawing the word Muslim from it. He then toured the length and breadth of the country in convincing the people of its policy of striving for the equal rights of both the wings on the basis of parity of rights as framed by him in the

constitution. The regional individuality as stipulated in the Five-State-Principle and Parity of Rights as framed by him in the Constitution paved the path of demanding provincial autonomy

in future. As Prime Minister of Pakistan Suhrawardy tried to elevate the status of Pakistan in international arena and to give democracy a fair trial. He fully realised that without democracy and ensuring equal rights of both the wings by doing equal justice to the neglected regions the unity of Pakistan could not be maintained. Therefore, he convened a session of Parliament at Dhaka where Joint Electorate Bill was passed and

equal rights were guaranteed. To fulfil the 21-point programme of Awami League he abolished the Public Safety Act. released all political prisoners.

tween the wings, to maintain balance of trade and to distribute foreign earnings equally between the east and the west wings. In East Pakistan he established the Film Development Corporation, the Jute Marketing Corporation, the D.I.T. the Chittagong Development Authority, the Inland Water Transport Authority and the Water Development Board Thus he became very popular. and being jealous of which. Iskandar Mirza dismissed him on 16th October 1957 in a dictatorial way. Then on 7th October 1958 Ayub Khan disqualified him from politics under the Electoral Bodies' Disqualifying Ordinance (EBDO) and on 30th January 1962 he was arrested on false allegation of anti-state activities. Thus this great politician was rewarded with dishonour by the military As Suhrawardy was highly

esteemed by the people of this wing, his arrest was vehemently protested by the public and student community who called strike and hartal throughout the whole country. The demand for his release gained such a momentum that Ayub Khan was compelled to release him on 19th August, 1962. This detention in jail for six and half months caused serious heart trouble to him. Being uncompromising to accept defeat he continued strong movement against military rule. He taught the people that the voice of the people is the ultimate source of all power and that any decision taken with the consent of the majority could never be wrong Thus he laid the foundation of the democratic process but he did not live long to see the success of his movement.

Immediately after his release. Suhrawardy came to visit East Pakistan. He was given a historical reception by a mammoth gathering to whom he appealed to remain united and oppose all conspiracy against democracy. By his charismatic speech he mes merised the people so much that they took him as their political messiah and gathered around him. His enchanting personality and appealing tone created great fervour for the return of democracy based on universal adult franchise. But the continuous movement broke down his health. So he went to Zurich for treatment. There in a solitary hotel room this great leader breathed his last on 5th December 1963. The news of his death plunged the entire nation in deep bereavement. On their behalf Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman went to Zurich and brought the body of the leader to his beloved fand. He was buried in the High Court compound of Dhaka.

To conclude it can be said that Suhrawardy created an example of selfless dedication towards achieving people's rights which the politicians of the present and future generation should follow as philosophy and guideline to alleviate people's suffering and oppression.

#### **Acting on intuitions**

Sir, The two top political positions of our country are occupied by women. Earlier Begum Khaleda Zia was the Prime Minister and Sheikh Hasina, Leader of the Opposition — and now, Sheikh Hasina is the Prime Minister and Khaleda Zia, Leader of the Opposition. I really feel very proud of it, and am sure that women of Bangladesh share the same feel-

Women are naturally kindhearted, forgiving and understanding. Cruelty, revengefulness and being hard-headed are the specialty of males. In intelligence, judgement and commonsense, women are not inferior to men in any way but it is very unfortunate women are deprived of the opportunity for some reason or other.

So, it is my earnest request to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, as she has got the opportunity, she should avail it by taking decisions which she thinks will help the country and its people. Women's intuitions are much better than those of males, so the Prime Minister should act on her intuitions and should not waver from it by suggestions put up by male members of her Cabinet. It is regretting that there are only a few women, and she is surrounded by males and it seems that every serious suggestion is

given by them. I don't think that males are well-wishers of females, so they

may mislead the Prime

Minister and give harmful ad-

hope Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will notice this letter and consider it as the utterance of the women of

Nur Jahan East Nasirabad, Chittagong

## The image problem of

Trade and Investment Promotion Service, said that the distorted image of Bangladesh abroad was the major factor and holding back foreign investment in Bangladesh. He also said that Bangladesh was known abroad as a place reeling under flood and disaster. Though he rated Bangladesh as a lucrative destination for foreign capital where the authority had done all ground works for long-term investment. He also praised for our cheap labour force who were dedicated to

Bangladesh.

Bangladesh Sir, A few months ago while discussing the investment climate in Bangladesh, Grant Figrett, the consultant of the

their profession. In my view, our main task

get rid of the country's poor image abroad. Because Bangladesh is known as a land of calamity to most of the foreigners.

But it is pitiful that no one seems to bother about changing the image. Both the government and the opposition don't think much about this issue, specially our Embassies don't seem to have taken any initiative to change the country's "bottomless basket" image. It's their duty to uphold the country's image and convince the foreigners not to be afraid to invest in Bangladesh

Masud Ahmed Sanzu 293/C Tally Office Road Rayer Bazar, Dhaka

#### Telephone teasing Sir, Someone uses to poke, a few looking for in a frantic

fashion and someone is adamant All this hotchpotch will be

received by an innocent phone This is a regular teasing. You

can't escape from this trouble. If you have a sister, wife or any other lady in the house, they will be very embarrassing for them. This is ridiculous. Authority should take care

for drawing the attraction of Mostafa Sohel foreign investors should be to Banani, Dhaka