

Justice Muhammad Ibrahim—an Exponent of Civil Liberties

by Shahabuddin Ahmed

Justice Muhammad Ibrahim, inspired by the ideals of freedom and democracy, took active part in the political movements during the last days of the British rule in India. He was a man of rare qualities of head and heart and never deviated from his principle.

SIR William Jones, a Judge of the Calcutta High Court, took the initiative to establish a society of scholarly people with a view to conducting research on the history and the people of the sub-continent. His pious initiative resulted in the formation of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784 in Calcutta. The Society was renamed as Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal when the British Monarchy took over the administration of India in 1858 from the East India Company. After Partition, the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal fell to the share of India, and the then Pakistani scholars felt it necessary to establish such a scholarly society in Dhaka. As a result, Asiatic Society of Pakistan came into being on 3 January 1952. The first President of the Society was Mr Abdul Hamid, Minister for Education, Government of East Bengal. Late Justice Muhammad Ibrahim was the President of the Society in 1956 and Professor Ahmad Hasan Dani was its Secretary General at that time. Professor Dani was also a founder-member of the Society. After Independence of Bangladesh, the Society was renamed as Asiatic Society of Bangladesh and it continued to work in line with its past glorious heritage in the field of knowledge and education.

In the past, the rich and the philanthropist people came forward to patronise arts, literature, education and culture. Now-a-days the tradition is on the wane. But in order to uphold the heritage of a nation, help from individual philanthropists and Government should be forthcoming. The Asiatic Society boasts of a number of Trust Funds established for the promotion of arts, research and education. The latest is the "Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Trust Fund". It aims at carrying out research on Humanities and Liberal Arts. Justice Muhammad Ibrahim, inspired by the ideals of freedom and democracy, took active part in the political movements during the

last days of the British rule in India. He was a man of rare qualities of head and heart and never deviated from his principle. He was held in high esteem among the lawyers, university teachers and educationists for his valuable contribution towards social and cultural uplift. The establishment of the Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Trust Fund testifies to the fact that the members of his family have kept alive the ideals for which he struggled throughout his life. Since I was in the same profession, I like to say a little more about his life and deeds.

The Asiatic Society was the brainchild of the eminent Judge of the Calcutta High Court—Sir William Jones—as already referred to, and two centuries thereafter this Society is paying today tributes to the memory of another Judge of equal name and fame, and of a High Court which may be called the extension of the same Calcutta High Court. Justice William Jones was an enlightened Englishman belonging to the then ruling race, and Justice Ibrahim was a Bengali first, last and all over his life, deeply interested in education, cultural activities, all along holding liberal views and cherishing progressive ideas. Justice Muhammad Ibrahim was born in 1898 in an illustrious Muslim family of Sadarpur in the undivided Faridpur district. A brilliant student all along, he took BA (Hons) Degree in English in 1918, and while doing his MA, he was profoundly influenced by the nationalist movement of the day carried on by the Indian National Congress jointly with the Khelafat leaders. He joined the movement which interrupted his studies for a few years. He came back and studied Law and joined the Dhaka District Bar. Simultaneously he taught Law in the Dhaka University as a part-time lecturer.

He was appointed the Public Prosecutor in the Dhaka District Court in 1939 and Additional District Judge of Barisal in 1943; there he was allotted a Court over which I also presided 15 years later. He was appointed District Judge, Barisal in 1947 and continued as such at the time of Partition of the country. He was elevated to the Dhaka High Court Bench in 1950. After six years of distinguished service there he retired in 1956. In the same year he was appointed Vice-Chancellor of the Dhaka University. He was Chairman of the Election Tribunal, President of the Bulbul Academy of Fine Arts and Chief Commissioner of the Scouts Movement. He had a literary bent of mind and wrote articles and stories in different periodicals under the pen-name 'Samson'. He, along with his two friends, founded a literary association named 'Ikhwan'.

On 7 October 1958, the Constitution of 1956 which was the product of nine years of laborious work of the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan, was abrogated. Martial Law was declared and administration of the country was taken over by President Iskander Mirza blaming the politicians as 'rogues' and appointing General Ayub Khan as Chief Martial Law Administrator. But within twenty days Iskander Mirza was himself thrown out of power by General Ayub Khan, who conferred upon himself the rank of Field Marshal and became President and supreme ruler of the country. He, however, appointed a Cabinet and declared that he would lift Martial Law as soon as possible and restore democracy and frame a Constitution 'suitable to the genius of the people' and for that purpose would appoint a Constitution Commission. Believing in these good words of President Ayub and that restoration of democracy

government would not depend on the whims of the legislature or on the support of the ignorant illiterate people, exploited and misled by the politicians. Parliamentary form of government must be restored as it was the root of all the troubles that led to the imposition of the Martial Law. President Ayub held the view that the Head of a Muslim State is the "Shadow of Allah", under which all the subjects shall take shelter. In support of these views he cited the causes of rise and fall of Muslim states, dynasties and empires in the past. Taking advantage of this official stand some sycophants suggested the establishment of a monarchy with President Ayub as its founder. Some of the sycophants, enlisted President Ayub as Allah's blessings on the people of Pakistan and advised him to become a monarch because "Pakistan had been fortunate enough to discover in Ayub and his family the most suitable dynasty to rule the

people. All these views were rejected by other members of the Cabinet. In the last Cabinet meeting, which the Law Member attended in the middle of November, 1961, he came under severe criticism from his colleagues. He left Rawalpindi and came back to Dhaka from where he submitted his resignation from the Cabinet in the first week of April, 1962.

Even after resignation Justice Muhammad Ibrahim continued to express his views about Constitution, government and the necessity for removal of economic disparity. He took active part in forming the Combined Opposition Parties (COP) through which democratic views could be expressed. The new Constitution as framed according to President Ayub's ideas was promulgated on 1 March, 1962 and it provided, as you know, for a strong central government and an electorate of 80,000 Union Parishad Members acting as Basic Democrats. Preamble of the Constitution read "In Field Marshal Muhammad Ayub Khan, Heral-e-Pakistan, Heral-e-Jurat, do hereby enact this Constitution."

In the Indo-Pak War of 1965 East Pakistan remained totally

Rio Plus Five, or Minus Five?

by Jerome Binde

For millions of human beings, many of them children, an 'ethics of the future' would bring the promises of the future closer to the present

FIVE years after the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Agenda 21 remains, for the most part, a dead letter. "Rio plus five" looks embarrassingly like "Rio minus five". How long can we afford the luxury of inaction? We are hurtling into the future, without any brakes and in conditions of zero visibility. Yet, the faster a car goes, the brighter its headlights must be," has warned Federico Mayor, Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Without proper attention, future generations are in danger of becoming the prisoners of unmanageable processes such as population growth, degradation of the global environment, growing inequalities between North and South and within societies, rampant social and urban apartheid, threats to democracy, mafia control.

Modern societies suffer from a dysfunctional relationship to time. A major contradiction is at work: on the one hand, societies need to project themselves into the future in order to survive and prosper. On the other hand, they must increasingly act in 'real time' and adopt short-term policies to cope with the challenges of globalization while facing the onslaught of new technologies. There is no escape, it seems, from the tyranny of emergency; financial markets, the media, politics (especially come election time) and development all march to the same tune. As for Dilbert, the cartoon character lost in his cubicle world, the horizon of modern societies has shrunk, in time and in space.

Far from a passing phenomenon, the logic of emergency is fast becoming a permanent feature of our societies and of our policies. And yet, as evidenced by the contradictions of humanitarian aid or, in Europe, of the struggle against unemployment, short-term and emergency measures have little impact on long-term problems. Development in the 21st century will require long-term vision and long-term investments, such as in education and health for all, science and technology, especially new information and communication technologies, and infrastructure.

Rehabilitating the long-term means that social actors and decision-makers will have to stop tinkering with the present and start anticipating. Shaping the future is by no means an easy task: one, sometimes several generations may elapse before we reap the fruits of our labour. The ethics of the future, says Federico Mayor, "is an ethics of farmers. It consists in transmitting a heritage". The reinforcement of anticipation and preventive capacities is therefore a priority for governments, international organizations, scientific institutions, social actors and the private sectors.

UNESCO has taken steps in that direction in the past few years in setting up the Analysis and Forecasting Unit; with the cooperation of the Brazilian sociologist Candido Mendes, it convened an international meeting in July 1997 in Rio de Janeiro on "the ethics of the future". The UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, also recently set up within his office a Strategic Planning Unit, charged with identifying emerging global trends and issues, and proposed the convening in the year 2000 of a Millennium Assembly to prepare for the 21st century.

An ethics of the future means more than a long-term vision. It means, first of all, that responsibility should now be turned toward the distant future. What has been entrusted to us by nature and by past generations is fundamentally fragile and perishable: life, the Earth, the City itself. We need to broaden the social contract to encompass future citizens. Our sense of responsibility toward them is a condition of their survival. Secondly, it also means the exercise of the principle of precaution, to take into account the possible consequences of our actions and also the uncertainty even in the foreseeable — in a word, learn to manage risk. Thirdly, it means that heritage extends beyond stones. It encompasses the intangible and the symbolic, the ethical, the ecological, the genetic. In this spirit, UNESCO's International Bioethics Committee has prepared a draft Declaration on the human genome. Heritage thus becomes a foundation of human responsibility toward future generations, for "in the absence of a link between the past and the future, any reference to tradition is doomed to appear as an ideological conceit, or worse as a regressive fundamentalism," says the Belgian philosopher Francois Ost.

Caring about the future has profound political implications. Max Weber warned that "the proper business of the politician is the future and his responsibility before the future". We must steer a path that will bring closer to us the horizon of the future, through the formulation of intermediate projects still within our reach. An ethics of the future is quite simply an ethics of time, which rehabilitates not only the future itself, but also the past and the present. Those who would have us ignore the plight of the poor and the excluded are usually the same who would have us turn a blind eye on disappearing languages or ignore the hole in the ozone layer. Solidarity toward present generations and solidarity toward future generations are intimately related.

An ethics of the future will be useless if it is not translated into educational, scientific, technological, economic, financial and political measures, laying the foundations for a genuinely human and sustainable development. For millions of human beings, many of them children, an 'ethics of the future' would bring the promises of the future closer to the present. As Craig Kielbaso, the 14-year old founder of 'Free the Children', put it: "it also takes a child to raise a village." To paraphrase a great lawyer, the future delayed is the future denied.

The author is Director, Analysis and Forecasting Unit, UNESCO



The author (left) is inaugurating the 'Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Trust Fund Memorial Lecture'.

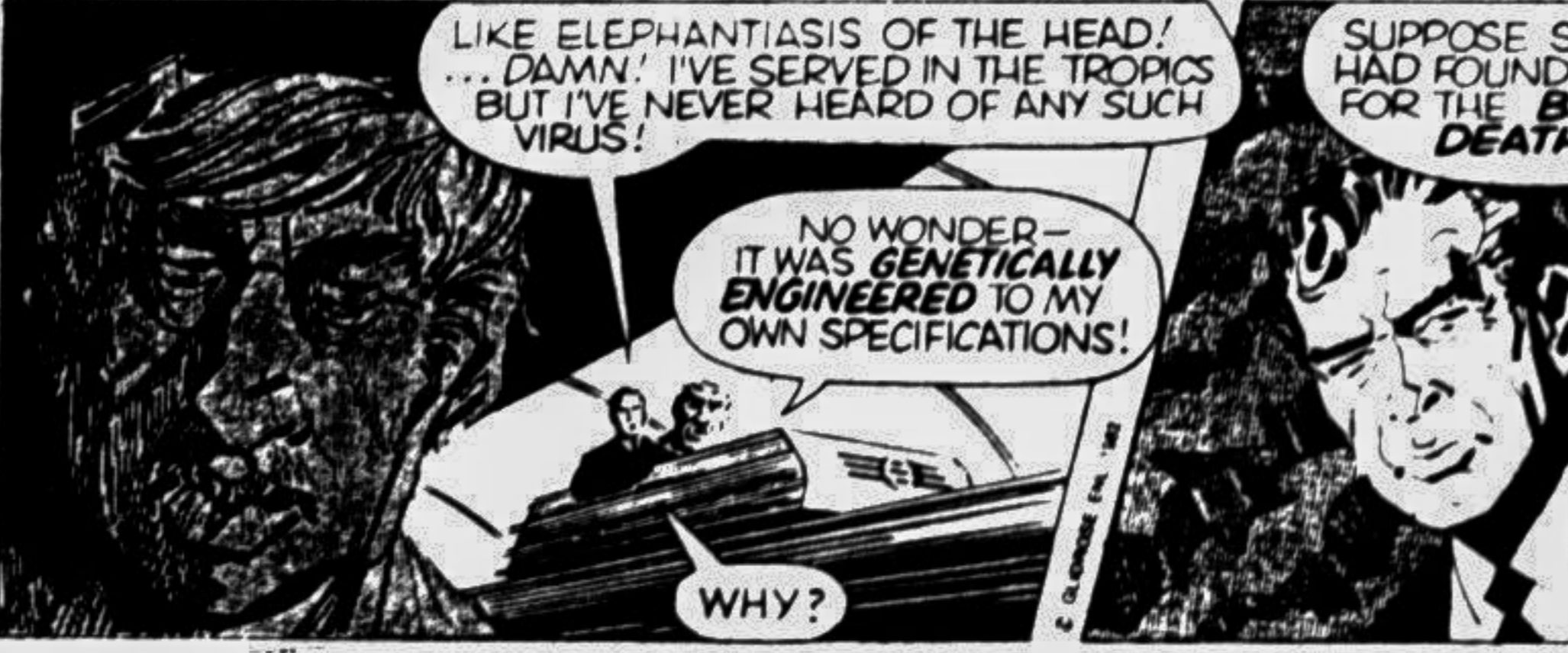
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Many Bangladeshis languishing in Delhi charity homes

A good number of Bangladeshi nationals, including minors, women and teenagers, have been languishing in charity homes under the Delhi Central Jail, reports UNB.

Many of them, who were trafficked into India, recently described their ordeal to members of a human rights group.

A team of Action Research on the International Development of Human Rights in Bangladesh (IDHRB) talked to them at the charity homes during a visit to the Indian capital in July.

According to a IDHRB press release, the girls and boys were anxiously waiting to return home. But they alleged that no individual nor any organisation has yet taken any effective step to bring them back.

It said four boys were found in State Hand Boys Home of Alipur Juvenile Home.

Of them, Masud, 15, son of one Siraj of Mohamadpur village in Laksham thana of Comilla district, brought to Delhi two years ago by one Aig.

Police rescued Masud and sent him to Alipur Juvenile Home. He is now learning welding there.

Omar Farooq, 12, son of one Khalil of Sachar Bazar in Chandpur district, lost his left hand and leg after an electric shock. He was brought here seven years back by one Shafig with a promise of getting an artificial leg.

Omar could not remember his mother's name. He said that he had two brothers and three sisters. His father was a boatman, he said.

Rafiq, 10, son of Shah Alam

and Luchi, said he was too small to remember the time when he came here. But he recalled that he was abducted.

Another boy, Jamal, 13, son of Nurul Islam, could not give his address nor recall when he came here. His mother's name is Fatema.

The IDHRB team also found some girls in Nirmal Chhaya Balika Griha at Jail Road in

Hadinagar Chak area.

Of them, Rubi Fowzila, 14, daughter of Md Foyaz and Lulu Banu of Pachuria village in Natore district, came here eight years ago along with her stepmother. Later, police rescued her. Fowzila is now a student of class eight. She could recall the name of her two maternal uncles.

Mahima, 19, daughter of Khairul and Abeda, said her father worked in Italy. She could only tell the name of her village as Amabari. She was found near Jame Mosque in old Delhi.

Rashida, 12, daughter of Alauddin, could not give her address but said she and her mother were brought in and sold to a man in Delhi. She escaped and went to Rajasthan from where police rescued her.

The human rights workers recovered two girls in a social welfare house at Jail Road. They are Popy Rehana and Farida.

Popy, 18, daughter of late Akin of Magurdangi village in Rajbari district was sold to a trafficker. Her husband Abdul Latif. She was pregnant at the time.

A muslim rescued her and handed her over to the police. She was sent to the house on February 8, 1997.

Farida, 20, daughter of Jamal Bepari and Jaheda of Chandanpur village in Gorpara thana of Jessore district, was brought to Bombay by one Laila. She has been staying in the house for last 13 months.

Most of them alleged that they were being repressed there, according to the press release.

The handicapped students in spite of their various limitations will never give in to obstacles. They will never surrender to fate," said the enthusiastic organisers of the recently formed forum named "No Surrender" in the city Sunday.

The organisers said the motto of this forum was to help financially the physically disabled students who need it badly.

Some 15 Dhaka University teachers, 45 students and a good number of philanthropists ventured all their efforts for this noble task.

Scholarships have already been arranged, each amounting to Taka 500 (five hundred) per month for fifteen disabled students of DU including three women, forum sources said.

The forum will provide physical facilities for the blinds and impart training as well as organise orientation to make them suitable for jobs. It will also act as the guardians of those handicapped students who do not have families to look after.

The "No Surrender" organisers have carried out a survey on the handicapped students. The survey revealed that there are 41 disabled students in Dhaka University. Of them 31 are blinds, six crippled, three deaf and dumb and one is just a deaf.

One Mahabubuzzaman, a leading businessman has donated a computer for the forum.

Prof Sirajul Islam of the Department of History of DU who is now acting as the chairman of the forum has played a pioneering role for its establishment.

When contacted, Prof Sirajul Islam said though handicapped they courageously faced their physical limitations and

Metropolitan

Organisers of 'No Surrender' will never surrender to fate

reached upto university level by dint of their merit, endeavours and exertion.

He said, his kind of help and assistance was sure to change the fate of the disadvantaged students to lead a dignified lives in society.

Govt committed to ensure basic minimum health care: Yusuf

The government is committed to ensure the basic minimum health care for the people with particular emphasis on the health of mothers, children and poor, reports UNB.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Salahuddin Yusuf said this while speaking at the presentation session of Implementation Plan under the Fifth Health and Population Programme at a local hotel yesterday as chief guest.

The present government wants to establish an effective and efficient health and family planning services system by the next five-year period, the minister said.

Salahuddin Yusuf further said they want to introduce a client-oriented, cost effective and sustainable health and family planning service delivery system by introducing an essential service package under the programme.

He hoped that their endless efforts would make the country prosperous, exploitation free and welfare oriented, leading the government towards its goal.

Presided over by Health Secretary Muhammad Ali, the function was also addressed by State Minister for Health and Family Welfare, Prof Dr M Amanullah and World Bank representative Dr Philip RS Gowers.

Bashar's death anniversary observed

The Bangladesh Air Force yesterday observed the 21st death anniversary of former chief of air staff, Air Vice-Marshal Muhammad Khademul Bashar, BU, with due solemnity, reports BSS.

A *mahtul-e-milad* was arranged at the BAF central Mosque, Kurmitola on the occasion. Prayers were offered for the eternal peace of the departed soul and also for the continued peace and prosperity of the country. Prayers were also offered at the graveyard of the deceased.

Chief of the Air Staff, Air Vice-Marshal Jamal Uddin Ahmed attended the *milad* and offered *feteहा* at the graveyard.

Bangladesh envoy to Latvia presents credentials

The newly appointed Bangladesh Ambassador to the Republic of Latvia Mostafa Faruque Mohammad has presented his credentials to Latvian President Guntis Ulimanis at the presidential palace in Riga recently, reports BSS.

Presenting the credentials the ambassador gave an account of the achievements of the government led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, aimed at building a prosperous society with an accountable administration.

The Latvian President, reciprocating the sentiment, elaborated the priorities of his government in integration with European Union along with economic reforms in the country and joining the NATO.

He also conveyed his good wishes to the President and the Prime Minister of Bangladesh.

HERE and THERE

FEJB
Environment and Forest Minister Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury said here today that the government was contemplating a special pilot project to intensify tree plantation and afforestation drives in the northern districts, reports BSS.

Speaking as the chief guest at a round table discussion on preparing a national agenda to make future development economically, socially and environmentally sustainable and combating poverty by giving the poor more access to resources they need.

Held at the Jatiya Press Club the round table discussion was organised by the Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh (FEJB).

The FEJB general secretary Quamrul Islam Chowdhury presented a key-note paper pleading that all on-going and future development projects should be owned by various stakeholders in government, private and civil society.

IUBAT
International University of Business Agriculture and Technology (IUBAT) organised an academic retreat recently at Bangladesh Krira Sikkha Pratishthan (BKSP), Savar. This programme was the first of its kind in Bangladesh, says a press release.

The theme was "quality in higher education", with special reference to Goals and Expectations (IUBAT) discussed in four sessions: i) Educational Programming, ii) Educational Delivery, iii) Evaluation of Performance, iv) Feed back on Process of Learning.

A light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely to occur at many places over Rajshahi, Dhaka and Chittagong divisions and at a few places over Khulna, Barisal and Sylhet divisions during the next 12 hours till 6 pm today, reports UNB.

A Met office forecast said a moderately heavy falls is likely at places over Rajshahi and Chittagong divisions while no appreciable change in the day temperature is likely across the country during the period.

The sun rises today at 5:40 am and sets at 6:16 pm while it rises tomorrow (Wednesday) at 5:41 am.

The maximum and the minimum temperatures and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature		Humidity	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	32.5	24.8	83	80
Chittagong	31.6	25.6	92	80
Rajshahi	33.0	26.0	90	88
Khulna	33.0	26.8	81	81
Barisal	33.0	25.8	97	86

Weather

Moderate rain forecast