

Edward College, Pabna Celebrates Centenary

What Edifies the College Most?

by A R Shamsul Islam

One singular trait that may tower the EC head and shoulder above many other sister academies is that it has stubbornly upheld a secular outlook in a century battered by wild communal frenzies.

THE Edward College has crossed a century. It is important but not singular. An inanimate object is destined like that unless animate beings wrap it up. Other sister colleges will also traverse that length of life tomorrow or day after tomorrow. It is appropriate as well as apting to recall on this occasion the architect of this college who had a vision in advance of that of his counterparts of other colleges that are yet to reach a hundred-year life span. The founder of the EC (Edward College) must have died probably long ago. But he is supposed to be born and reborn in the minds of the people every time his creation, the EC, gets to gain a public importance. Centenary may be the highest of this kind. And so is expected the greatest fluorescence of the creator, the legendary educationist Sree Gopal Chandra Lahiri.

Not it is that important that so much efforts were taken to observe the centenary in grandiloquent fanfare. The college authorities toiled over months to eke out dozens of committees to fulfil their obligations. Prior to that an association of the ex-students of the EC was carved out that persistently pinpointed the need to befittingly celebrate the centenary. The former students displayed an earlier urge than their youths. The Dhakaite Edwardians were on their toes and tenterhooks to thumping mark this historic occasion a second of which remains uncut, unless and until another full hundred years run out when none of us will remain in this world.

Undeniably the EC has swelled enormously in flesh and bone. Originally covering 50 bighas of land it has now encompassed about a 150-bigha chunk. Old colonial type buildings are flanked by and fastened to modern multi-storied structures. By leaps and bounds have increased academic facilities, students, teachers, furniture, appliances. In this, these may not be so lacking in other colleges of the like age and stature. No doubt all these proliferations are somewhat dazzling. But what edifies the EC most is something else.

One singular trait that may tower the EC head and shoulder above many other sister academies is that it has stub-

bornly upheld a secular outlook in a century battered by wild communal frenzies. Time and again its students, teachers have been lured to traps of religious bigotry. But every time they have successfully withstood the evil. Rather on every occasion of communal flare-up across the country the teachers and students of the EC have come forward with messages of brotherly harmony and amity. As for instance:

It was 1940. There were 448 pupils on the rolls of the EC. 321 Hindus and 127 Muslims. The country was gripped by bloody Hindu-Muslim riots. In those years the Pujá festivals used to be observed in the main premises of the EC. To plug up holes for offsetting communal animosity to sneak into the college, the authorities in a meeting held in the office of the District Magistrate adopted a resolution that the Hindu students would observe the Pujá festival in the hostel premises and the residences of the Hindu teachers instead of the main college premises. One Hindu student having violated this order had to face principal R Bose's notice warranting his guardian to remove his ward from the college falling which face expulsion from the institute. (*Shatabdir Chhyapathe*, Page 68). Taking such stern action by a non-Muslim principal against a Hindu student which community constituted the vast majority speaks of earnestness to forestall communalism.

Whenever the tender-hearted Hindu and Muslim students of the EC were instigated, chiefly from outside the college, to indulge in communal aggressions the college authorities did not hesitate to take prompt actions to keep the students immune from this frenzy and restore a cordiality among them. In 1944 the Principal, by referring to a GB resolution, served upon the Muslim boarders to say their prayer with calls for 'Azan' in their hostel and the Hindu boarders to perform their 'Sankirtan' in the assigned room of their hostel. (*Shatabdir Chhyapathe*, Page 75).

In 1962 a communal riot, probably the first in its kind in the town since 1947, broke out in Pabna. The teachers, students EC rose to resist its infiltration into the college.

Noticeably a non-communal

feeling has unabatedly worked in the minds of the students of the EC. They have launched various movements with Hindu and Muslim students hand in hand. To frustrate their movements sometimes the vested interests have tried to indoctrinate them with communal edicts. But the students have stayed not apart on communal pranks.

As customary the EC has faced numerous occasions of student unrests sometimes leading to armed clashes. But markedly none has emanated from communalism. There are religion-based parties amongst the students. But they could not strike root.

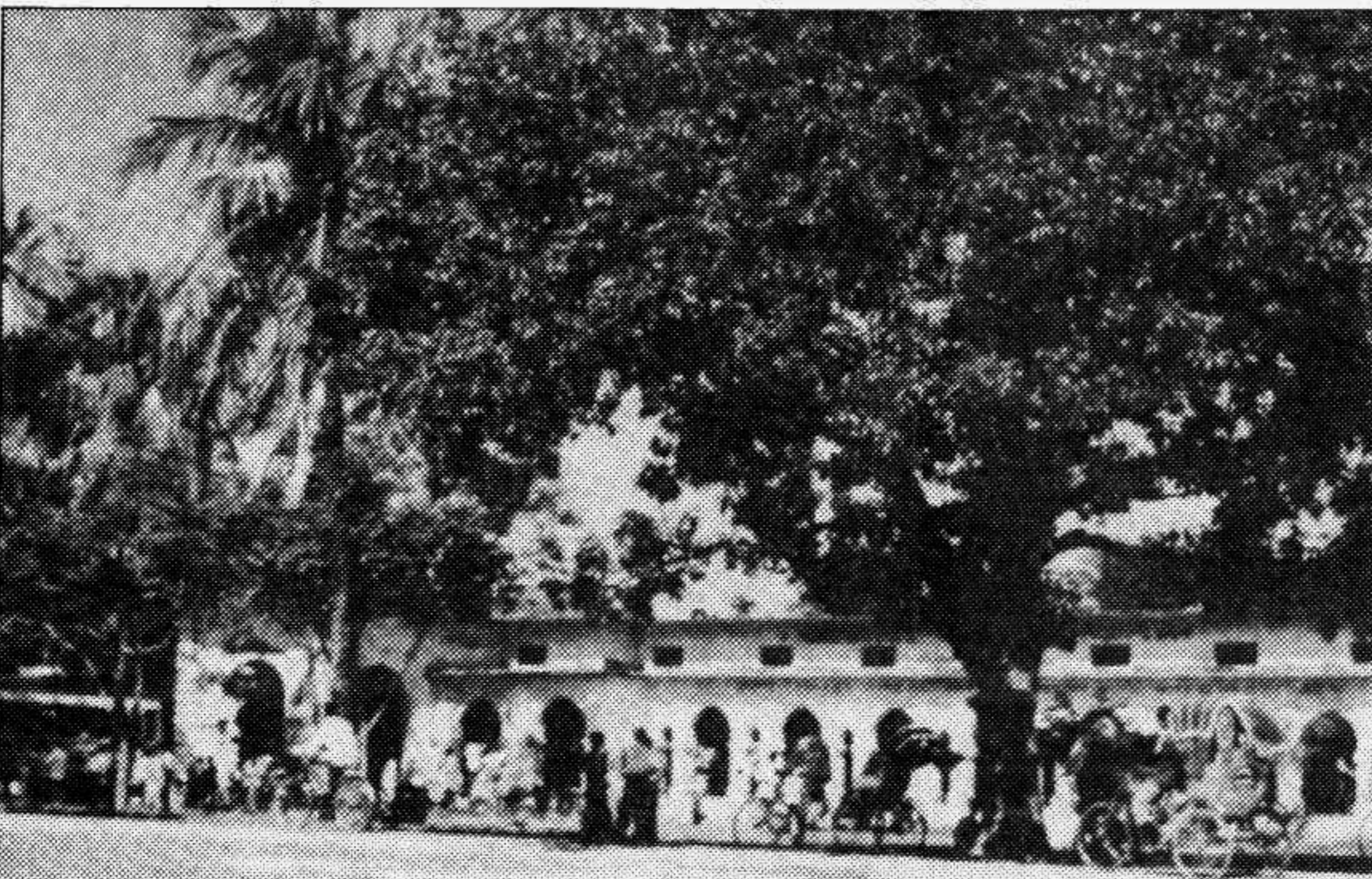
In the students unions of the EC there is many an instance of Hindu and Muslim students bipartisan leadership — Krishna & Azim (48-49), Anil & Muzaharul (49-50), Naba Krishna & Sirajul (51-52), Akhil & Kabir (70-71), Santosh & Moniruzzaman (97-98) — that proved fruitful to promote students' interests in a spirit of communal harmony.

The strict adherence by acts and deeds to secular approach through its thick and thin has assured learning at the EC to be free from bias and prejudice. It

has promoted full liberty to free thinking unencumbered by mindset of any sort. The learners have got encouraged to be committed to the welfare of man irrespective of caste and creed. Purity of heart has found scope to flourish.

There are scores of poets, litterateurs, philosophers, technocrats, bureaucrats, journalists, political leaders, social activists inside and outside the country who are ex-students of this college who possibly cannot deny the ennobling influences that the EC exercised in its formative stage. One singular characteristic that may not be allowed to go missing is that probably none of them can be branded as fanatic or fundamentalist. On the other hand, many can rightfully claim to be the harbingers of fraternity and peace that have become the terrible need of the present day society bedevilled by petty parochialism and mean bigotry. The secular outlook is a priceless treasure that the EC has grudgingly taken guard of throughout the century it has successfully gone past.

The writer is retired Principal, Govt Mohila College, Pabna



A partial view of the Edward College campus.

My Alma Mater

by Md Fakhru Islam

not built in a day ... And so, is the case with Pabna Edward College.

The college started its journey with Intermediate section only. With the passage of time, B Sc (Pass) course was introduced in 1921 and subsequently Edward College acquired enviable reputation in the field of science teaching all over undivided Bengal. It is a singular instance where science teaching was given utmost importance. In 1940, BA (Pass) course was introduced in the college. In the late fifties, Honours in Mathematics, Philosophy and Economics were introduced. Meritocratic students were admitted in Honours courses and many of them did well in examinations. At present, Honours courses have been introduced in as many as 14 subjects and a great number of students are enjoying the opportunity. But the painful thing is that real meritorious students often do not get chance for admission to Honours courses and the reason is

obvious. Now, a quota has to be kept fixed for the so-called student organisations and the result is that many unworthy students get admission depriving the better ones. The inevitable consequence is that a large number of Honours students perform badly in examinations. We could think that students appearing in honours examinations may adopt unfair means, but that also occurs now. What a pity!

Of late, Masters courses have been introduced in some major subjects. In respect of these courses, also there is reputation of the same story so far as admission is concerned. Where are we going? Whither quality and standard? How the nation will get best calibre in future? In a word, there is a mess everywhere.

However, in the past, Edward College produced a great number of eminent persons who established themselves and served in different fields of the society. Many of them are no more. Before independence of Bangladesh, the results of different examinations were enviable. Unfair means in examinations were few and far between. Now, this malpractice is a very common feature in Edward College. All students or at least most of them seem to be united on this single point — they want to pass by hook or by crook. The teachers are helpless on-look-

ers. Sometimes, we come across some sensational news in newspapers where some of our so-called teachers are found to be engage actively in the process of getting the students pass. And in the process they are devoid of any ethics, whatsoever.

Pabna Edward College has been a great name since 1898. In games and sports also this college was at the forefront and earned many laurels. But now, it is a thing of the past. In cultural activities, Edward College was very much distinguished — so many ex-students are still alive who have earned great names and fames in this arena. I am not attempting any list of names for want of space. Alas! now those days are gone. Students at present are more interested in 'band shows' than in our traditional fields of culture where they could have made their mark. In a nutshell, an undesirable vacuum is now prevailing in the field of art and culture not excluding this college campus. Rather, political slogans and muscle flexing are rampant now.

I am very much proud that I was a student of Edward College for two years from 1947 to 1949. I am all the more proud that I was a teacher of this illustrious college for long twenty-eight years from 1954 to 1984 with a short break of about two years. I am also proud for the fact that my late father, late elder brother and late younger brother — all happened to be students of this college. I still feel proud that my better-half was also a student there, and that my two sons and elder daughter were students of Edward College at the Intermediate level. As such, I can never forget Pabna Edward College and my memories centering the college will remain ever-green.

While studying at Edward College, I was the Magazine Secretary and the first Magazine editor after partition was published under my editorship. Some of my class-mates occupied very distinguished professional positions in Bangladesh and abroad. In the literal sense, we were student leaders but we never associated with any political party. We confined our activities to the welfare of the college and the students at large. On the 11th March, 1948, we brought out a big procession from the college campus violating Section 144 demanding Bengali as one of the state languages of the then Pakistan. We

were confined within the Pabna Thana campus from noon to evening for violating Sec. 144.

In games and sports, Edward College took a leading part. While I was student and teacher of the college, annual sports event was held with pomp and grandeur. In respect of cultural activities, as I told earlier, Edward College did never lag behind. In a word, we prevailed everywhere. We missed the illustrious Principal Mr R N Bose only for a few months. After partition, he left the college.

Prof. B L Bose was the Principal (off) when I got myself admitted. Mr B D Bose was my ideal teacher in all respects. Due to partition, many distinguished professors left the college and virtually there happened to be an abnormal vacuum in the Arts department. The students studying of science department were lucky enough because they got eminent teachers like Mr M L Chakravarty, Mr B K Ghose and Mr N R Roy. They were very devoted teachers and passed their whole life as teachers in Edward College till retirement.

Although my stay in Edward College as a student was short but as a teacher it was long (28 years). I have a lot of remembrances as a teacher of the college. I shall not go into the details for want of space. I joined Edward College as professor of Economics in July, 1954. I got my revered teachers Mr N R Roy, Mr M L Chakravarty, Mr B K Ghose and Mr T Hussain as my colleagues. A very happy coincidence for me — I was their student as well as their colleague. They loved me so dearly as they did while I was student. I very often felt embarrassed to sit by their side in different meetings and functions. I remember hundreds of incidents — most of them sweet and a few bitter — while I was teacher of Edward College. I got eight distinguished principals when I was a teacher. I had a very good relationship with them and all of them liked me very much.

The centenary ceremony of Edward College hopefully, will be celebrated in a very befitting manner. Expectedly ex-students of the college will attend the functions from different parts of the country and also from abroad. They will chew their old memories while themselves being present in the campus after so many years.

Ever live Pabna Edward College.

An Expo that Makes the Mind Boggle

by Fayza Haq

M.D. Rafiq Azam who won the 'Jawaharal Nehru Memorial Gold Medal' (SICC), India, at the age of 13, held his first solo architectural exposition at the Drik Gallery recently, to charm and amaze viewers from home and abroad. When an art expert from India, Anil Ghosh, at the recent 'Dui Bangla' came to see the record, that 'Bangladesh had nothing to show him to make his "heart leap up", one wished that he had had the opportunity to glimpse even briefly at Rafiq Azam's expo. This comprised installations, models, paintings, and sketches, along with massive colour photographs, and he answered all quizzes with the expertise of a whizz kid. Azam had matured into an incredibly knowledgeable and intensely dedicated architect, national and international architectural awards to his credit. Besides these, he has several gold, silver and bronze medals from home and abroad. Azam is an individual, who like most modern creative architects, artists, film-makers and writers, is totally seeped in the pursuit of the conservation of environment.

Talking about the reconstruction of his mother's single-storied house at Lalbagh in old Dhaka, which he designed as a 3rd yr. student of BUET, after his father's death, Azam explains how he has converted an old bungalow with its garden into something that is inspired by Moghul art, with a roof garden, contrived, designed and reconstructed with ingenious additions of furniture and artifacts accessories and beams so that the sun filters in, in a romantic manner. The sitting-room is renovated to and is subtly decorated with paintings and furnishings so that it looks like the home of some nawab. This is symmetrical, with use of black marble, with *parikha* (moat). It is both dynamic and modern. The symmetry of the work is more than merely Moghul architecture inspired. In conception it is three dimensional with a 21st century outlook. The old and new are thus subtly blended. I tried to capture the courtyard and the garden which was lost. Bric-a-brac and nature is preserved in it. This is a typical subcontinental style of living although it has its 'nuveau' approach with pots and plants and trees, along with the wooden bars adding the element of shadow casting. The planning was to remove any element of claustrophobia, and bring in nature.

The Beximco Pavilion at the recent Trade Fair has also been designed in such a manner that in its geometrical glass, metal and cement constructions, one feels that it is a cute and cuddly, two-winged pet bird from outer space that is about to take off. As Azam does not believe in lighting so much from within as from outside, he has designed the floodlights from outside, along with peacock-like fairy-lights, juxtaposed magically

from apparently nowhere. The architect believed in light coming from within rather than from outside. He aimed at making it appear, as he explains "like some bursting exotic star-cum-legendary bird that was to be seen elsewhere in the universe — perhaps in the galaxies such as the milky-way. It has been made with triangular and rectangular glass sheets. He adds, "The light creates shadows, while these are amalgamated with shadows in another plane. This 'symbolizes' the meteoric rise of company's business expertise at present." The architect muffled up his bitterness, incidentally, on the point of his financial backer being a poor pay-master.

A remarkable installation, that was included in the exhibit, comprised of large nuts and bolts, small wheels of chairs as

In other words, the effect should be sculpture-like. There should not only be geometrical forms, but aesthetically appealing to our sensitivity too", Azam elaborates.

Azam continues, "I have been trying for five years to create a relationship between elements like metal, non-metal and as in my next installation you see the skeleton of a radio-set with thick rubber-coated metal wires — both rusted and glossy metals have been used in it. Ornaments like broken bangles in reds and blues, a buckle, buttons — of different shapes and sizes — and rings, paint tubes too have been included, along with car-parts from junkyards. This has been mounted on a partex board, which has been layered with oil paint to give a cement-like effect. Pastel has been put over it to heighten

mobiles, which are more at the bottom and the forefront, nuts, bolts and tyres in my third installation," Azam continues, "I often do not include human beings in my architectural installations — mankind is left to the imagination of the viewer."

Speaking about his favourite architects in Bangladesh and giving reasons for his choice, Azam explains, "It's definitely Louis Kahn with the Parliament complex in Dhaka. I appreciate Moimul Islam's Shahid Minar too. I also like Mazharul Islam's works as he pioneered architecture in Dhaka with constructions like the FA Institute, DU building in the 50s (previously known as Art College), the National Jahangirnagar University."

keeping the "golden ghetto" aside. Azam says bluntly, "I want to cry from house tops that what RAJUK is doing at present is not enough. There are no proper laws of metropolitan constructions. Even the prevailing laws are not being maintained. I can only say that it is not friendly to environmental constructions. Their goals for the 21st century are up in the air. RAJUK authorities do not know themselves what they are doing. It should improve itself with repeated shuffles of its thinking members. More forward-thinking people should be included in it."

Questioned about the role of the architects, and asked if they found their hands tied, Azad says without hesitation,

laudable work in some places — but it remains to be a collective effort. This applies to comparisons with other SAARC countries too. Taken collectively, the impact is nothing to write home about. We have undoubtedly lagged behind in development compared to cities like New Delhi or Bombay or Islamabad or even Karachi. A few intellectually inclined architects of our country fail to create an impact on our entire society."

"In my travels, I've often worked with water-colours as and when I was in countries, such as Nepal, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Netherlands and USA (13 states from LA to Maryland, Washington DC, Houston, Dallas and what have you). However, my travels only added to my self-confidence — I

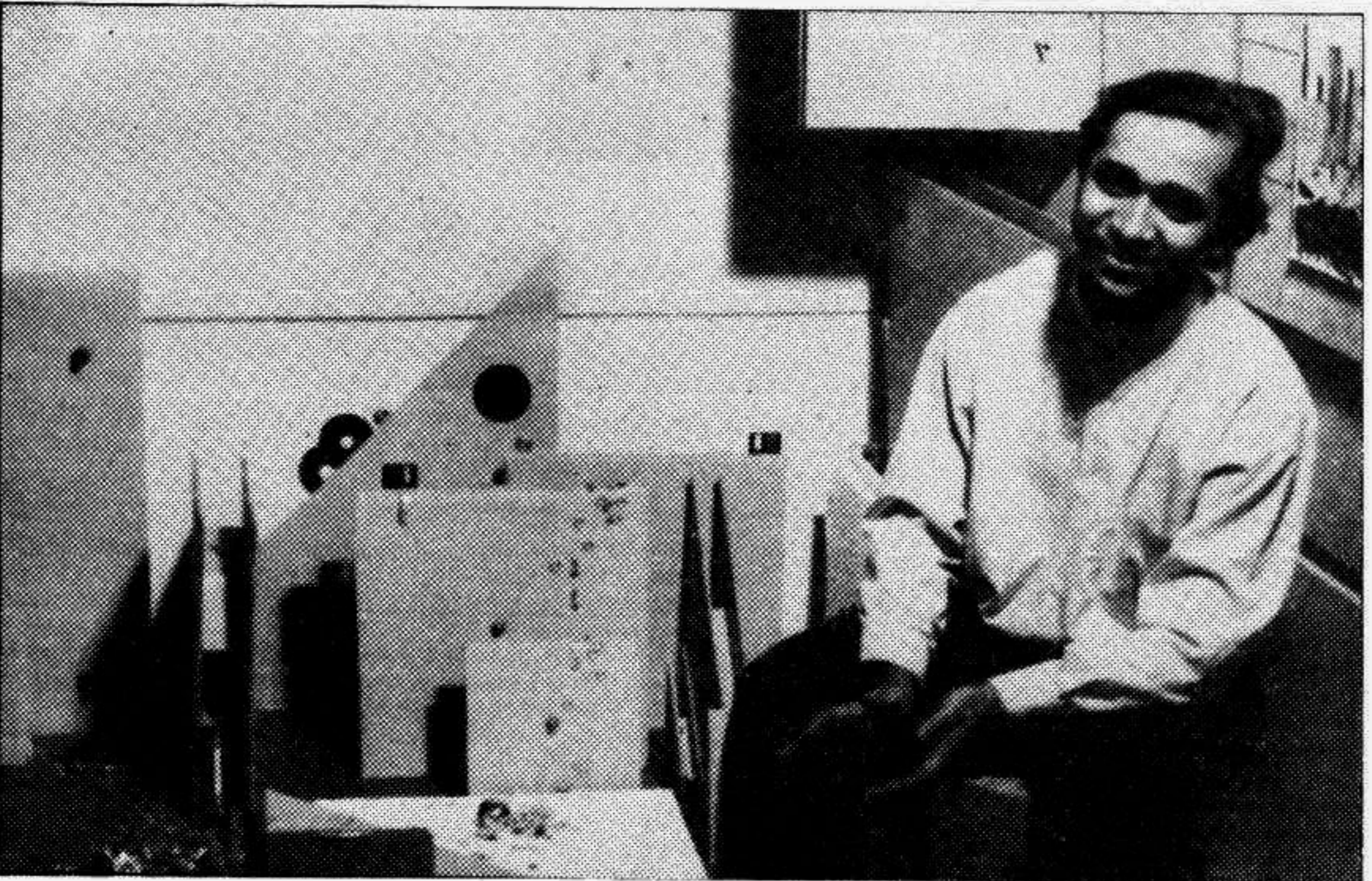
I've proceeded with such ventures for the last five years, and this has definitely helped in my architectural ventures at the same time", Azam adds thoughtfully. The architect continues, "My work in architecture is like mixed-media — where I use bricks, metals, wood, while the cement is the binding material. Side by side, one sees the glass-work. Thus I used about five types of materials at one go. The philosophy of many great architects, whom I've studied, is completely different. There is such a thing as 'new ism'. This is deconstruction rather than reconstruction. A large number of materials come into this form of architecture. My concept emanates purely from painting. One may see some similarities between the other architects

nostalgic dream — the architect elaborates." At one time, over the gallery there were bamboos, when today there are wooden trunks, six or seven inches thick. And this you find in the gallery itself, while the bamboos have been confined to the courtyard. This is to ensure that light filters in with horizontal sweeps, as if you were using strokes of a water-colour brush. My inspiration, again, is from sunlight. The metal supports in the gallery could have been a part of a collage. The red in the photographs are exhaust fans. Plants surround the entire construction. Light fittings had naturally to be included.

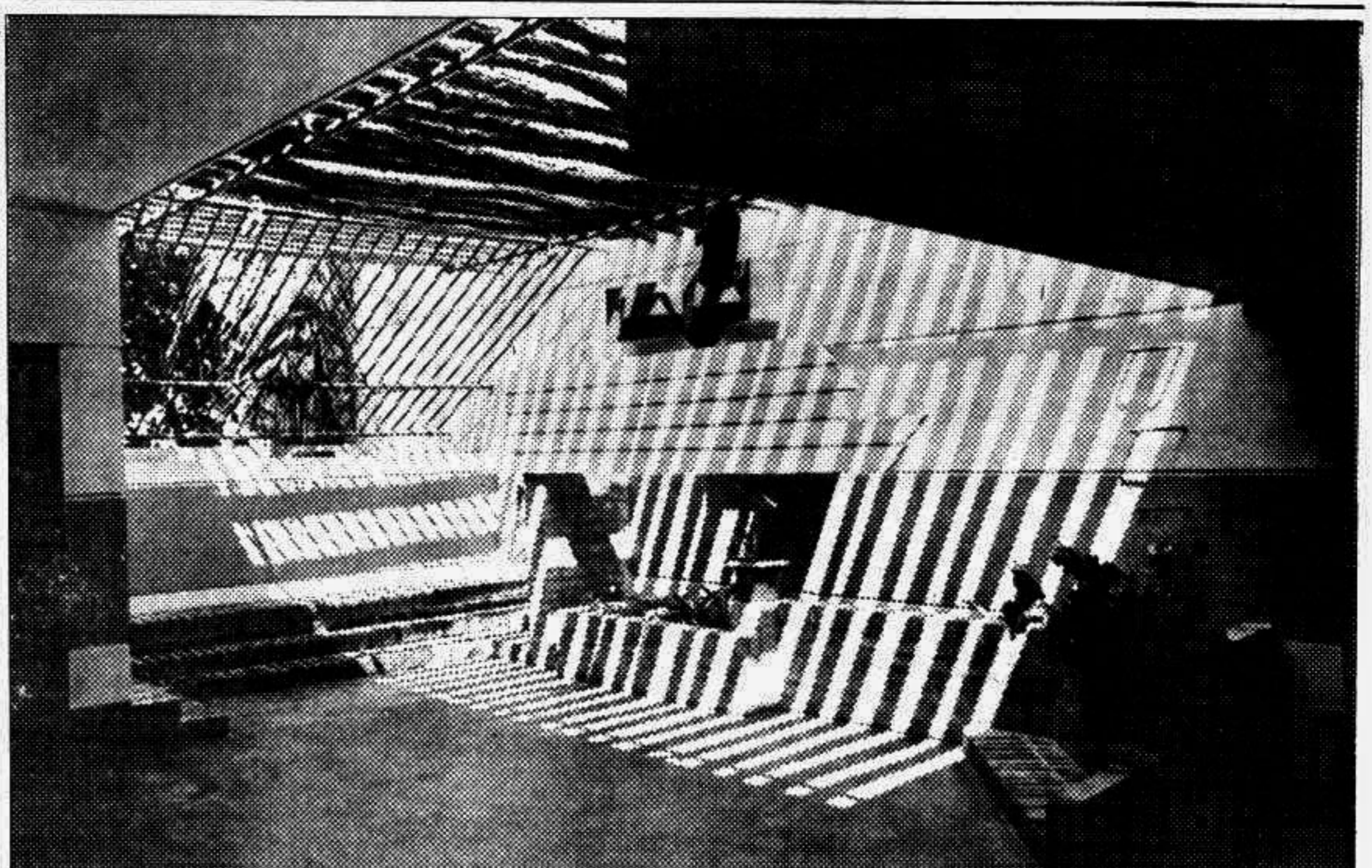
"According to the plan which you can see, the Drik gallery includes a courtyard, studio, picture-library, two dark-rooms, a chemical-room, a store-room etc. A canteen and a book-library are also included. In all, there are 10 rooms over a covered area of about 3,000sq.ft. This is basically a renovation work because there was an old basic wall to hold the construction from before."

The photograph of the gallery appears like some painting which includes jet-black and mauve with vertical strips coming from the roof-falling to the walls and moving on to the ground. Little checkered patterns are included. The basic colours appear both vertical and horizontal. Strips of different variations of length and varied colours are also to be seen. The palm leaves sweeping in from outside add to the ultimate exotic effect. The tiled staircase and the potted plants lend romanticism to it. By itself, seen from afar, it appears like some modern recreation of a zebra, Azam's preoccupation with play of light and shadow during the day-time and the night has been cleverly included in this.

Azam won the 'Shaheed Smriti Award' in '78 for the contribution in the field of art in Bangladesh. The same year he got a silver medal from Shankar's International Children's Competition (SICC), India. In '77 he got the SICC bronze medal from India as well as the first prize in the 'National Children's Television Award', Bangladesh and in '76 he got the 'Jawaharal Nehru Memorial Gold Medal' (SICC), India. Later, he held a solo painting exhibition in Nepal in '95' and participated in Asian Art Biennial, Bangladesh, in '93', '86 and '85. As an architect, he was nominated for the 'Agha Khan Award for Architecture' in '92' — apart from winning the 2nd award for 'Independence Monument Design' in '97. He won the Mimar International Design competition V, London in '91' and got the first award in an architectural competition organised by MIT, Harvard University, USA and Chetna, Dhaka. The expo at Drik Gallery has been held earlier at the George Billis gallery at New York, USA in October '98.



The architect Md. Rafiq Azam and his creations



well as a diskette. In this creation one finds a contrast of brown, black, white and silver, put together with care and precision. The purpose of this creation, Azam explains, "is that architecture is three-dimensional which deals not only with volume, but the spatial expanse which is a must to be kept in mind. The 3-D composition also creates space, with play of light and shadows. Spots of light are highlighted to enhance the importance of the necessity of the sunlight or moonlight for our planet earth." Planes, walls, columns, and sunlight comprise architecture.

"I want to relate materials that are metal, non-metal, glossy and non-glossy and assemble them in an artistic manner. This again has the post-modern outward 3-D effect. Thus I have done with rusted bars and spokes of auto-

Asked to explain how he planned his works in order to preserve the environment, Azam elaborates, "I am trying to derive ten postulators to maintain the harmony and cleanliness of our environment. Without greenery we cannot survive and therefore we must create space in architecture for this green element in order to preserve and improve our environment. This can only be done with proper designing, both in-built and open areas. Oxygen is built for us and the trees with their leaves can provide this with ease. As an architect, I cannot single-handedly reach this ultimate goal of preservation of nature. Diverse thoughts alone can maintain nature around us."

"An individual cannot change things — other policies do confine him. Building up the Dhaka metropolis should be a collective approach. The number of engineers and architects, as you have pointed out, is very limited — the architects do not exceed 600 in number. Even putting their heads together, they cannot change the government policies. City development is a long and arduous process. After all, 'Rome was not built in a day.' Again, there is the political platform to contest with. The repeated political upheavals hardly help a peaceful metropolitan growth."

Talking about if he has lagged behind in architectural development in Bangladesh vis a vis the rest of the subcontinent, Azam says spontaneously, "Taking it individually, our architects are doing

did not aim at learning from someone else. Seeing modern constructions in life, as you point out, did help me, nevertheless. The experiences added to my guts and go. Yes, I can improve on myself — I'm sure I'm in the right track. Yes, sometimes I miss the environment of my own roots. My own tradition should dominate my work. I don't aim at mere international recognition. I need the vertical movement of my origins along with the horizontal communication with the rest of the universe. Thus my movements and directions should be two dimensional, as I can see it. There must be a going-forward-looking vision without losing the rich treasure-trove of my origins."

During my travels, I often do mixed-media works, such as pencil, pastel, crayon, ink etc.

and those like myself, but actually our driving force, the philosophy, is very different from those who aspire for deconstruction, aesthetically, as you point out. They are more mechanised, whilst those like myself are going in the reverse direction. I'm trying to combine our agricultural past with industrialization and mechanisation. I don't want to lose the human quality at any cost — that is my ultimate vision."

Asked to explain the unique quality of the Drik Gallery, which is also Azam's conception and creation — the photograph of which are accompanied by a painting done with swift strokes. Accompanying the delineation of the Drik creation one sees birds, water and land, with soft greens and browns, which blend gently like some idyllic and