

MUNEM WASIF/ DRIKNEWS

Justice for Democracy

Zillur R. Khan writes on social fairness and the political process

JOHN Rawls of Harvard University, a highly acclaimed political philosopher of the last century, defines justice as basic fairness in multi-dimensional interactions involving humans and their institutions, balancing democracy with the striving for security. (John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice.* Harvard University Press, 2003).

Thus the fairness principle contributes to societal stability and helps to create a common ground on which political communities, with the nation states being their highest expression, can build an ideology of understanding and cooperation. Bangladesh's success in charting out a close strategic relation with India, and Pakistan's failure to accommodate legitimate demands of the Bengalis, could be premised on this principle of fairness.

In this context, freedom and political autonomy become integral parts of justice that "specify the fair terms of cooperation they [citizens] give themselves when fairly represented as free and equal persons." (John Rawls, Ibid). The emergence of Bangladesh epitomised the dismal failure of Pakistan's leadership to understand and act on this fundamental human value of justice.

Justice has been the driving moral force that led to a "people's war", creating a sovereign democratic Bangladesh with immense possibilities. But without a deep commitment of the leadership to justice as the basic principle of fairness in both policymaking and policy implementing, i.e. gover-