nance, the potentials for advancement would remain static.

Ensuring human rights and the due process of law -- the two most important dimensions of justice -- could transform the static into a dynamic state of just policies and good governance. In that context, the legal system, which still carries the baggage of colonialism, must be reformed.

Repealing the Special Powers Act, which blatantly violates the due, process of law, could be the top priority of reformers. Justice also demands giving everyone his due and therefore reparations are due to those who bore the brunt of liberation war and subsequent human rights violations. By the same token, punishment must be meted out through open court trials to those found guilty of committing what a former US consul general termed "selective genocide" (Archer K Blood, *The Cruel Birth of Bangladesh: Memoirs of an American Diplomat*, UPL, 2002).

Those found guilty as abettors but are repentant and seeking forgiveness could be considered for mercy. Upon the recommendation of a "Repentance and Mercy Commission" -- call it by any other name -- the president could exercise his/her constitutional authority to grant pardon.

Justice for democracy needs a basic structure of society where "main political and social institutions of society fit together into one system of social cooperation, and the way they assign basic rights and duties and regulate the division of advantages that arises from social cooperation over time ... political constitution with an independent judiciary ... the background social framework within which the activities of individuals and associations take place." (John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement. Ed.* Erin Kelly. Harvard University Press, 2003).

This "background justice" is needed for a well-ordered society where advantages (power and resources) can be divided and distributed fairly. Upholding this fairness principle would involve limits on power, preventing excessive concentration and resulting misuse by individuals, groups, associations and institutions. At a basic political level -- the local level of government -- decentralisation of administrative power addresses this issue. It can prevent misuse and as well motivate local people to engage in just cooperation to develop from bottom up.

Indeed, local "Home Rule" empowers local government to create/modify their charters and run their affairs without approval of central legislature or bureaucracy, subject to the constitution of the state. For example, the movement for devolution of power to local government culminating in the "Home Rule Act" following the American Civil War changed the destiny of the United States of America for better. It gave more power to local governments, e.g. village, city and county councils, school boards, municipalities and corporations, in choosing their form of governance relating to education, law enforcement, taxing and other substantive matters, which created a powerful force for self help and development. Checks on power involve not only decentralization but also empowerment of socio-political and economic institutions.

A good start for Bangladesh is to revive and strengthen local institutions, particularly local government. Empowering local government -- politically and fiscally -- through free and fair elections would reduce dependence on the bureaucracy, thereby helping the people at the rice-roots level to take initiative in defining and solving a myriad of local problems. The self-help and creativity thus engendered could become a major force of nation building. It could also lead to greater economic development in rural areas setting perhaps a new trend of reverse migration from urban to rural areas, significantly narrowing the urban-rural divide and the resulting socio-economic-political problems facing many of today's developing countries, including Bangladesh.

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For a just exercise of powers definable limits must be delineated by a legitimate structure and process. It can be done by the constitutional requirement of accountability and transparency in not only policy making of legislative and political institutions but also in the implementing decisions of judicial and bureaucratic leaders. The implementers must be administratively competent and politically neutral, demonstrating Neutral Competence.

It specifically applies to important regulatory agencies, such as Election Commission, Anti-Corruption Commission, Public Service Commission National Board of Revenue, and the newly created Truth Commission, among relevant others. Again, a deep commitment of top leaders to a delicate balance between security and freedom within a framework of justice and equity could give an acceptable shape to political neutrality and