STAR BOOKS REVIEW

Maladies and weaknesses in the bureaucracy

Niaz Ahmed Khan plumbs the depths of a new work

NTERESTS and dilations about civil service have seen something of an upsurge in the recent years. Although the debate on the role and performance of civil service continues unabated, both its admirers and critics agree on the crucial significance of the civil service as a key institutional determinant of the success or failure of fledging democratic states especially in the developing world. Notwithstanding this broad consensus on its significance, however, the mammoth contextual complexities, structural heterogeneity, and functional diversity render the modern civil services no easy subject of research and academic exploration. Dr. Rashid, a senior civil servant himself, has ventured to explore, usually with verve and insight, a number of major challenges and issues surrounding the operation of civil service in Bangladesh with a special focus on such crucial vigilant political leadership aspects as recruitment, training, selected through democratic performance and prospects.

Despite the growing emphasis and repeated attempts, ensuring an accountable, result-oriented, and people-friendly civil service that can foster and support democratic consolidation has thus far proved to be one of the most elusive goals for politics and administration in Bangladesh for that matter, in many parts of the developing world. A few other practising civil servants have embarked on academic studies specialized dimensions of the

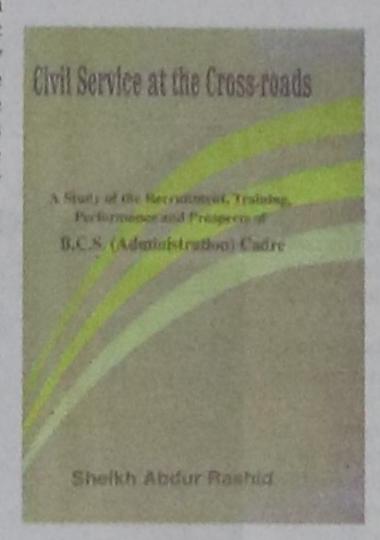
out for a number of reasons. Being an 'insider', the author proffers important insights into the functioning of the civil service. In doing so, however, he refreshingly maintains a distance from his professional identity, and takes on a relatively objective academic posture. The book contains many references and allusions to the maladies and weaknesses of the civil service. Some of the author's observations and suggestions are practical, down-to-earth; yet may not go very smoothly with his compeers in the civil service. One such example is the following:

The bottomline is that the civil servants have to live with the fact that, unlike two centuries earlier in this sub-continent when they were in charge of the whole public affairs, they are no more the ultimate arbiters of things in a modern democratic statecraft. They have to work under the surveillance and encouragement of a means (p.346).

The author's ability to maintain this impersonal, nonsubjective stance makes this work an interesting reading.

The author sets the scene by presenting the rationale of the study together with an overview the major secondary literature on various dimensions of the civil service in Bangladesh. After the general introduction, the subsequent chapters focus on a series of before. Dr. Rashid's work stands structure and operation of the

Bangladesh Civil Service (Admin- few exceptions, is generally istration) Cadre. These include: Bureaucracy and Civil service; Genesis of BCS (Administration) Cadre; Recruitment; Training; Functions and Forces; Utility and



Civil Service at the Crossroads: A Study of the Recruitment, Training, Performance and Prospects of the B.C.S (Administration) Cadre Sheikh Abdur Rashid Muktochinta Prokashona

Performance; and Prospects. The appendices contain rare governmental circulars, ordinances and other archival documents. The chapters are coherently arranged, and the flow of arguments, with a in ushering in a ... brighter

smooth (this book originates as a doctoral thesis at the University of

It is interesting to note the distinction the author proposes between the concepts of 'bureaucracy' and 'civil service':

The civil service is more than a government institution. It stands for a spirit essential to the success of modern democracy, and it is an ideal of a vocation in public officials who devote their lives to the service of the community. It is here that civil service differs from bureaucracy, which very often sounds as self seeking and selfcontrolled or an instrument of a narrow oligarchy" (p.12).

The concluding chapter recapitulates the arguments about the significance of civil service as a time-tested institution, and provides some food for thought for possible improvement and reform. The author emphasizes the urgent need for a reconcilement of interests and ethos of the civil service and political leadership for smooth functioning of democracy, and very realistically concludes:

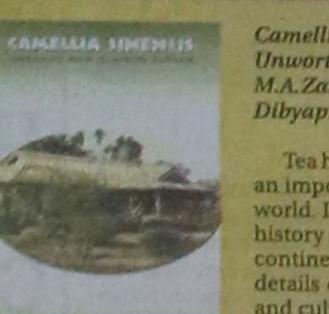
A fruitful twining of [the] two phenomena reorientation of administrative and political cultures combined with the inculcation of efficiency, neutrality, justness, transparency and accountability on the one hand and a forward-looking statesmanship on the other may prove its worth Bangladesh (p.346).

It is a pity that the study does not go deep enough to delve into the mindset, worldview and culture of the bureaucracy in its Bangladeshi incarnation. Considering the author's status as a senior member of the civil service, it would have been useful for the readers especially the ones interested in the structural and cultural traits of public management organizations - to have more insights into the value systems and practical work culture of the public officials in their day-to-day settings. The implications of the findings of the study for future research also remain unclear. The analysis although very worthwhile per se - does not locate the principal findings and observations of the study in the broader context of public affair research and practices in the developing

Overall, this engaging piece of work makes a substantial contribution to the current orthodoxy concerning role of civil service in modern socio-polity, and will be especially useful to graduate students, academics, researchers and activists in the broad fields of public affairs, politics, and development studies. This book thus deserves to be studied widely.

Dr. Niaz Ahmed Khan is Professor of Development Studies, University of Dhaka and Senior, Commonwealth Fellow, Queen Elizabeth House, University of

AT A GLANCE



Camellia Sinensis Unworthy Sons of Worthy Fathers M.A. Zaman Dibyaprakash

Tea has since British colonial times been an important part of life in this part of the world. In this excellent enumeration of the history of tea in Bengal, indeed in the subcontinent, the writer comes forth with the details of the affair, right from its planting and cultivation and going all the way to its marketing. It makes for a different kind of reading.

Bangladesh Police Issues and Challenges Muhammad Nurul Huda The University Press Limited

The writer should know all about the police and the way they have gone about conducting themselves. He has been at the top of the police hierarchy; and in these essays written for newspapers, especially The Daily Star, over a period of time, he gives readers an insight into the ways in which the police have worked, or faltered. And, of course, what should now be done.



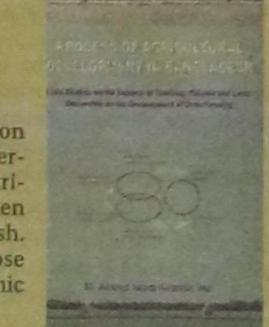
CRIME INDEX **BANGLADESH 2007**

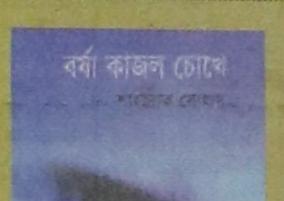
Crime Index Bangladesh 2007 Omar Faruk, Nurjahan Khatun Academic Press and Publishers Library

The work is certainly the first of its kind. The authors not only detail the various crimes that are generally committed in the country but also go into the background of those prone to criminality. A useful point of reference, it should be made available not only to government and non-government bodies but also to citizens in general.

Process of Agricultural Development In Bangladesh M.Aminul Islam Akanda Academic Press and Publishers Library

For a country which has based its life on agriculture, the book may seem rather superfluous. But it is not, for it explores all the intricacies of development that have so far taken place and are yet taking place in Bangladesh. It is surely a powerful reference book for those interested in agriculture as an academic pursuit. Read on.





Borsha Kajol Chokhe Shahadat Shohag Shikha Prakashani

What you have here is fiction with a difference. It is all about youth and the thousand and one aspirations it sets for itself. All too often, those aspirations do get derailed; and yet the young get back up and get moving again. There are those that help them come back to meaningful existence and life gets back on track.

REVIEW REPORT

A matter of human rights ...

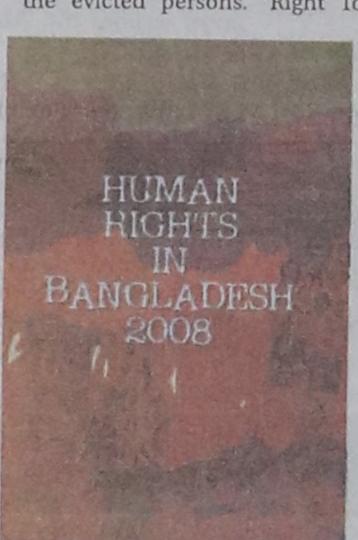
HE year 2008 began with freedom of assembly and workers' uncertainty and restlessness amongst everyone. The state of emergency had already entered its second year and there seemed to be no progress in the political landscape of the country to restore democracy. The end of the year was a climax of sorts as the national elections, which was termed as the most 'free and fair' election in in granting bail. 'Right To Fair Bangladesh to date took place Trial' addresses the fair trial with the highest number of voter turnout ever seen. What happened in between the months of January and December in terms of human rights violations is what is reported in 'Human Rights in Bangladesh in 2008', brought out Freedom From Torture And Illby human rights watchdog Treatment' reports on allegations organisation Ain o Salish Kendro of torture by law enforcement (ASK).

'Institutional Developments' examines how continuing restraints under the State of Emergency (SoE) affected the functioning of institutions of justice, including shifts in the direction of the anti-corruption drive as the impetus to the holding of elections gathered momentum. 'Legislative And Policy Developments' outlines new laws and policies adopted or proposed during the year, which impacted on human rights. 'Judgments On Fundamental Rights' examines judgments on the interpretation while severe restrictions continof the Emergency Powers Rules (EPR) in relation to the issue of liberty and fair trial, and then considers the few cases reported during the year on the right to life,

rights. 'Right To Life' describes the incidents of extra-judicial deaths by law enforcement agencies, including border forces, mob violence and in inter party conflicts. 'Right To Liberty' focuses on the stresses and strains put on the right to bail during the SoE and highlight the paradoxical approaches of the higher judiciary, protections afforded to individuals accused in criminal cases, particularly the right to a speedy and public trial by an independent and impartial court or tribunal established by law. 'Right To agencies and the absence of any corrective action. 'Right To Freedom Of Expression' examines the positive and negative implications of the Right to Information Ordinance, and discusses the constraints imposed by the State of Emergency (SoE). 'Right To Assembly And Freedom Of Association' examines the rollback of Emergency Rules to allow full political activity and trade union activity as well as the selective application of such rules to allow protests by religious right groups amongst a few others ued to apply to others.

'Right To Food' discusses the right to food situation of Bangladesh in 2008 including food security and food sover-

eignty. 'Right To Shelter' discusses key developments of 2008 relating to right to shelter including judicial development, demolition of slum and forcible eviction, alternative resettlement scheme for the evicted persons. 'Right To



Human Rights In Bangladesh Ed. Sara Hossain Ain O Salish Kendra

Health' examines measures taken by the Government regarding access to health care services, its regulatory role, and responses, etc. 'Right To Education' identifies the reasons for the poor quality of education due to inadequate budgets, poor and untimely textbook production in the primary

sector, low quality of secondary school teachers, corruption, lack of regulation in public and private universities, and bias in policy 'Rights Of Women' discusses

some significant measures taken with regard to framing of laws and policies on women' rights -- most notably on the restoration of the National Women's Development Policy, framing of laws on the right to freedom from violence and equality and on women's political participation. 'Rights Of Religious Minorities' reviews the latest situation regarding the continued application of the Vested Property Act (VPA) and efforts for further amendments of the law, as well as specific incidents of violence against individuals and property owned by religious minorities. 'Rights Of Indigenous Peoples' examines the situation in the CHT, then in the plains, focusing mainly on land rights, civil rights as well as socio-economic rights in each case. 'Rights Of Linguistic Minorities' discusses developments in 2008 in particular the recognition of the right to citizenship of the Urdu-speakers and consequently to vote, in the context of the history of this community in Bangladesh. 'Rights Of Workers' discusses the major events in the struggle of RMG and jute mill workers for their right during the year. 'Rights Of Migrant Workers' describes the unfair conditions faced by migrant workers in countries of the Middle East.

policies, and judicial decisions to protect child rights and assesses the actual situation of child rights in Bangladesh in 2008. 'Rights Of Persons With Disabilities' discusses the discriminatory policies and practices that stand in the way of equal opportunity for persons with disabilities. 'Rights Of Sexual Minorities' begins to articulate the rights of sexual minorities in Bangladesh in mainstream human rights discourse by mapping some of the problems faced by the MSM and Hijra communities. 'Rights Of Prisoners' describes how little has changed in the conditions of ordinary prisoners and documents how an unusual number of high profile inmates were able to access special privileges and violating the rules and regulations. There is a set of recommendations by the

'Right Of Children' examines

the progress in national laws,

authors along with all the issues. The book is edited by Sara Hossain and the writers are ATM Morshed Alam, Abdullah Al Faruque, John Asit Das, Shah Alam Faruk, Mozammel Haque, Hameeda Hossain, Millat Hossain, Sara Hossain, Annu Jalais, Khushi Kabir, Mizanur Rahman Khan, Naeem Mohaiemen, Shah Afroditi Panna, Faustina Pereira, Hana Shams Ahmed, Rezanur Rahman, Shohana Shabnam, Md. Shahiduzzaman, Tanim Hossain Shawon, Dina M. Siddiqi, and Sontosh Tripura.

Imagination and crude reality

ZAM Khairuzzaman appreciates a bunch of poems

URUNNABI Chowdhury presents forty-six poems in his anthology, Torhitahata Juboker Mrittu.

The poems in the book are based on common issues regarding life. The styles employed in the poetry in this collection mirror his profound knowledge and certainly arouses admiration for his poetic artistry. His writing style comes across in a clear manner so that an average person seeking poetic knowledge can readily comprehend it with no problem. He writes the book with clarity and brevity.

The author has dedicated the book to Dr Dilruba Hani and at the same time has expressed his gratitude to poets Shihab Sarker and Arifa Sultana Lipi.

From the very onset, the readers of this book get to know of the chilling mesmerization that balances the poet's intricate balancing of imagination and crude reality with which he weaves the thoughts in the poems. The poems are interesting and evoke a sense of beauty. They have the beauty of harmonic systems coming to balance our mind with emotional words. The aroma of his poems is based on this connection of emotion and rationality, the subjects on which real art is made. Readers may renew old emotions of the past by reading the poems.

Among the poems, 'Torhitahata Juboker Mrittu, ''Pitamaher Kabore,' 'Adhipattobad Nipat Jak,' 'Katha Chhilo Jibon Habey Sundaram,' and 'Pitar Sajjaparshey' clearly paint the poet's deeper feelings. His poetry also explores the wilderness of human minds.

Nurunnabi is an accomplished poet who demonstrates his leadership in this arena through his book. His poems are a treasure and definitely saturate the readers' Torhitahata Juboker Mrittu is an journalist. E-mail: khairz@yahoo.com

invaluable addition to the field of poetry and is an outstanding contribution by the poet towards a nourishment of thoughts for readers of all ages.

In the final sense, this work is a thoughtful poetic text to be gone through. Any individual who reads and enjoys his writings will truly know about the essence and the art of poetry.

Having done his Masters with



Torhitahata Juboker Mrittu Nurunnabi Chowdhury Nabojug Prokashoni

Honours in English, Nurunnabi Chowdhury started his career as a journalist. He then moved on to being a college teacher. He went to the United States of America in the 1980s. At present, he is a working journalist at The Palm Beach Post published from the US. He is also involved in real estate business.

hearts with emotion. Undoubtedly, ZAM Khairuzzaman is a working

A tale that twists and turns

Efadul Hug revisits some old fiction

grossly large and marred by birthmarks that people remember him years after having last met him, Saleem Sinai is the not-so-handsome hero of Midnight's Children, a story of epic proportion told by Major Zulfikar, the son-in-law. Rushdie, a teller of exaggerated tales. On opening the book, you'll end up sitting in front of Saleem writing about his fantastic past and reading the first-drafts of his memoir to a fussy woman named of money is stolen by a naughty Padma who despite being illiterate criticizes Saleem's authorship from all angles.

The journey begins in Kashmir, the earthly paradise, when Saleem's grandfather, an Oxford graduate in medicine, is requested by a wealthy landowner to examine his daughter. Doctor Adam Aziz is not allowed to look at the patient and for months he treats her different body parts through a hole in a sheet held between them. Love ensues.

behind the hole, becomes Saleem's grandmother and the newly wed couple move to Amritsar on April 13, 1919, another historic allusion where Doctor Aziz avoids being killed in by British troops, only by bending

troops fire.

1942, portrays the family of Adam and Naseem with all it's colour; the suspicious mother who guards her kitchen, the confused father, the jealous sister, Mian Abdullah, a social activist, Nadir Khan, an anti-British poet and Some relationships break and some are born. Saleem's parents, Amina and Ahmed, are married. Fortune smiles as Amina becomes pregnant. But when a suitcase full monkey, Ahmed's warehouse burns down and the family moves to Bombay. The baby is finally born, at the

stroke of midnight on August 15, but the midwife, Mary Pereira, in authentic Bollywood fashion exchanges the Sinai child with the child of Vanita, the wife of a street musician named Wee Willie Winkie. The misplaced child is celebrated as the symbol of India's independence becoming the headline of the newspaper Naseem Ghani, the lady and receiving a letter from Prime Minister Nehru.

To cut a long story short, though I feel terribly sorry to do so, telepathic ability is discovered as a side-effect of a fatherly beating; an organization comprising a massacre of Indian nationalists of all the superhuman children born at midnight of August 15, over as he sneezes when the 1947 is formed including a boy who can travel through mirrors Saleem's narration, leaping to and a girl who is so deadly beauticooked. Midnight's Children is, at its

HOUSE OF THE BOXINGS PRACE midnight's children

> Midnight's Children Salman Rushdie Jonathan Cape

ful that anybody who looks at her dies; a blood test reveals the truth and Shiva, the real Sinai son comes into focus though is not enthroned into his rightful status; the tale continues to twist; magical sense of smell replaces telepathic ability, Pakistan sees Saleem roaming around with amnesia and Parvati-the-witch and Picture Singh, the snake charmer jump into the novel.

There are more babies to come narration technique masterfully and a nasty war is to be fought side by side with the war between India and Pakistan; the Sunderbans is to be visited and an old relative is to be rediscovered; not to forget the world-class pickles that are to be

core, a rough allegory of the Indian subcontinent. Saleem's life closely follows the life of India before and after its birth and goes much ahead in showing the identity crisis that Saleem as well as his country feels on being suddenly released from chains of colonial ism. Who knows the sheet with a hole might just be a symbol of the large empire which has been holed into three major dysfunctional divisions? But then, the novel also symbolizes the strength and promise of the new India and its broken parts in showering the children of Midnight with superqualities among whom Saleem is the leader.

Midnight's Children has so many offshoots that varied interpretations by critiques and lay readers are inevitable. Maybe that is what is at the heart of making this great novel which has won the Booker of Bookers in its first 25 years of publishing and still continues to be studied at universities and has been made into a stage

Rushdie tackles the first person

Efadul Hug is at the Department of Architecture, BRAC University.

and uses Shiva to act as a reverse mirror for Saleem, that is to say, Shiva represents Saleem's weaknesses as well as his strengths. Rushdie craftily puts forward uncountable absurdities to portray his personal thoughts which otherwise would have been illogical. Say for an example, Morarji Desai is the man who drinks his own urine, Sanjay Gandhi is out on a mission to snap testiculartubes and Indira Gandhi is the widow whose bicoloured hair represents the black and white sides of her controversial rule.

With an assortment of wordplay, abundant symbolism, humorous name callings, incisive sarcasm and thought provoking dialogues, Midnight's Children is a landmark in the Indianized-English literature. By its theme this novel is a forerunner of Amitav Ghosh's The Shadow Lines and in style it is a precursor of Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things.

Magic realism is blended with high-school history, Indian mythology, and the norms of diverse races, cultures and religions so well, that Midnight's Children is an unforgettable literary 'chutney' you can't refuse.