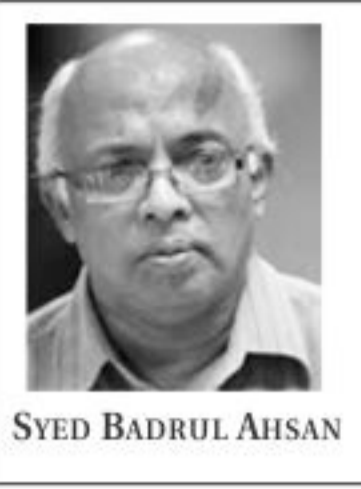


GROUND REALITIES

Suhrawardy's place in history



SYED BADRUL AHSAN

HUSEYN Shaheed Suhrawardy died a deeply disappointed man. And there were all the reasons behind this disappointment. His imprisonment by the Ayub Khan military regime came as a clear shock to him, indeed to people all across what

used to be East and West Pakistan. That an individual of Suhrawardy's stature could be hauled away to prison, could be humiliated by a man who to all intents and purposes was an upstart in Pakistan's increasingly chaotic politics was a reality no one had imagined could happen. Suhrawardy was not quite the same man after he was freed from jail. It would seem in hindsight that he was relieved, or almost, at being able to leave Pakistan rather than stay genuflect before the junta.

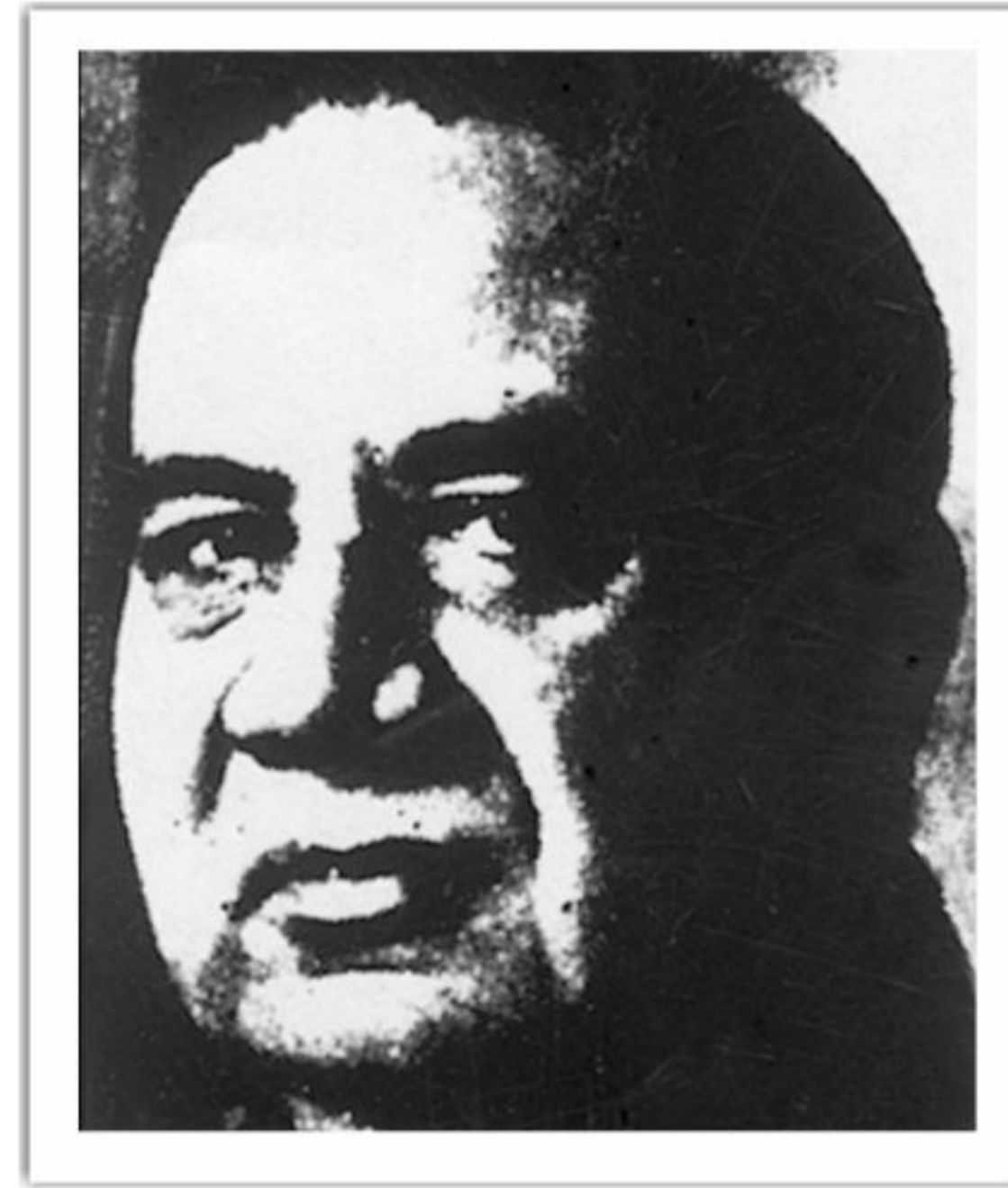
But then, around most politically important men, there are those questions which largely are not followed by responses, either because those men are dead or have gone beyond the stage where they had earlier taken huge interest. Even so, it is well to ask if politics in Pakistan would have been any different from what it later turned out to be had Suhrawardy not died in Beirut in December 1963. There are, to be sure, all those nagging questions about the manner of his death in a land far away from home. No one was with him when the end came. To what extent the Pakistan government had a hand in his death, if there was a hand at all, is a thought which has never gone beyond the region of conjecture. And so we leave this matter of Suhrawardy's death aside.

But note that the man who was once prime minister of pre-partition Bengal and then served as prime minister of Pakistan for a year could not, once the Ayub martial law came, have the time to mount any significant degree of organised protest at this blatant seizure of power by the army. And yet for the regime he was a mortal threat, always. The army was acutely aware of Suhrawardy's hold on the masses. While it could afford to ignore men like I.I. Chundrigar, Choudhry Mohammad Ali, Feroz Khan Noon and the others, it could not avert its gaze from Suhrawardy. If any political figure could influence the people of Pakistan into opposition to the regime, it was Suhrawardy.

There were the many factors which portrayed Suhrawardy as a potential threat to Ayub Khan: Suhrawardy was a former prime minister and a founder of the increasingly popular Awami League. That apart, Suhrawardy belonged to a generation which had actively been associated with the events leading up to the partition of

India and the creation of Pakistan. He was part of history; and historical figures could easily upset the rickety carts of the false vendors of politics in the country.

And so it was that Suhrawardy was carted off to prison, from where he wrote a scathing letter to President Ayub Khan who, of course, did not answer. It was an ailing, disillusioned Suhrawardy who was eventually freed and permitted to go abroad. What if Suhrawardy had not died when he did? The clearest of responses here is that politics in Pakistan would be different. Had Suhrawardy survived, he certainly would



Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy

Suhrawardy's was a complex personality. And he was a formidable politician. Not until the rise of his protégé Sheikh Mujibur Rahman after his death would Pakistan -- and then Bangladesh -- find itself dominated by a larger than life political leader.

have played a leading role in mounting a challenge to the junta. With Ayub Khan having placed politicians in a straitjacket called the Elective Bodies' Disqualification Ordinance (EBDO) and then imposing on the country a constitution which effectively circumscribed pluralism through the Basic Democracy system, politics was set to atrophy.

And do not forget that the older generation of

politicians, progressive as well as reactionary, was dying out. Sher-e-Bangla A.K. Fazlul Huq died in April 1962. Khwaja Nazimuddin would die in October 1964. Had Suhrawardy lived, he would have become the focal point of democratic change. And that might well have been a departure from the reputation (he had informed Bengalis that the 1956 constitution had given them ninety eight per cent autonomy and he had dismissed the non-aligned movement as an addition of zeros that only led to a zero) Suhrawardy had carved for himself through the 1950s.

But then comes the matter of whether the state of Pakistan could have become a truly federal entity with Suhrawardy leading the movement for change. His Awami League was a secular political party and so was, without being explicit in stating it, in clear opposition to the communal foundations on which Mohammad Ali Jinnah had created Pakistan. Could Pakistan have repudiated the argument on which it had taken shape and reinvented itself? And to what extent would Suhrawardy, a staunch Muslim Leaguer in pre-partition India, change himself? Was he in a position to go for a dramatic change in course in the way his young disciple Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was able to in 1964, when the future leader of Bengali liberation revived a moribund Awami League and revitalised it, in 1966, through the Six Point programme of regional autonomy for the federating regions of Pakistan?

Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy's place in history rests on a couple of premises. The first relates to his role in the creation of Pakistan, with particular focus on what he did or would not do on the Direct Action Day called by Jinnah in August 1946. The second focuses on the ugly way in which Pakistan treated him after 1949 and the subsequent steps he took to assert himself in its politics. His worldview was centred on his enduring attachment to Western, especially American, understanding of geopolitics.

Suhrawardy's was a complex personality. And he was a formidable politician. Not until the rise of his protégé Sheikh Mujibur Rahman after his death would Pakistan -- and then Bangladesh -- find itself dominated by a larger than life political leader. Where Suhrawardy was a pragmatist, the future Bangabandhu was a radical. Suhrawardy would not dream of turning his back on Pakistan. In his times, Mujib grasped the critical truth -- Pakistan, having failed to deliver, could be dispensed with in East Bengal.

(Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy died on December 5, 1963 in Beirut).

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Violence marks Jamaat's hartal

This should have been avoided

TUESDAY'S Jamaat-e-Islami-enforced hartal came as a protest against what the party claimed the government's denying them permission to hold meeting the day before. The party said it sought permission from the government to hold a rally, while the home minister refuted it saying the party did not seek it. We are confused whether the situation was precipitated.

That said, we strongly condemn violent means Jamaat adopted on the previous day resorting to arson and smashing of vehicles. Such pre-hartal tactics of intimidation unmask the party's current approach to protest.

In the main, Tuesday's hartal took a violent turn. Shibir activists went for hit-run policy and carried out surprise attacks on moving vehicles, and law-enforcers. They carried out their vandalism at Mirpur, Tejgaon, Farmgate, Karwan bazaar, Jatrabari, Banani and burnt and smashed vehicles. Outside capital city, similar attacks on police and public vehicles were reported from Narayanganj, Savar, Brahmanbaria, Chittagong, Rajshahi and other parts of the country. Several persons were injured, while the day before one died in Dinajpur.

It is becoming increasingly clear that Jamaat is on belligerent course. But as an open and legally recognised party, it cannot simply engage in such violent activities like arson and vandalism. Two positions cannot go together.

Jamaat's agitation programmes and ruling Awami League's announcement for meetings that coincided with those threatened to create a law and order situation in different districts. This led to clamping of section 144 by the government in those areas.

Such behaviour is in not sync with democratic norms.

In this paper, we have been consistently opposed to hartal, because it causes tremendous public suffering and leads to huge loss to national economy apart from other deleterious impacts.

While Jamaat must desist from such a violent path, we urge the government should see the need for providing Jamaat with a democratic space.

How long will the two-state solution be stalled?

Israeli settlement ploy deals a severe blow to it

IN what appeared to be a backlash to the U.N. General Assembly's decision to upgrade the Palestinians' status in the world body from "observer entity" to "non-member state" on December 01, Israel has announced its intention to construct 3,000 more homes in East Jerusalem and occupied West Bank. The decision has brought widespread condemnation from the United States, the UK and a host of other European nations which view the move as particularly damaging to the prospects of establishing a two-state solution which would envisage East Jerusalem as Palestine's capital.

The Israeli move reeks of a colonial mindset of a bygone era. It reminds us of apartheid and the message Israel is giving out to the rest of the world is one of pure negativity. A unilateral decision of this nature, should the government of Israel choose to pursue till the end will in effect, put a final nail in the coffin for a negotiated settlement of one of the longest running troubled spots of post-World War II history. Settlements in the "E1" zone have effectively been on hold for many years primarily due to opposition from the US, which happens to be the country's staunchest ally. Yet today, we see a belligerent Israel led by an equally belligerent Netanyahu brushing aside protestations by the world largest powers to commence what has been stated by U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon as "an almost fatal blow" to the two-state solution.

Not content with merely embarking on a housing programme, Israel intends to withhold US\$100 million in Palestinian tax revenues from the Palestinian Authority as a punishment. Needless to say, it is time for the international community to stand united in telling Israel "enough is enough". Such schoolboy shenanigans cannot be condoned, much less tolerated. The world's democracies have demonstrated in the past that they are willing to go the extra mile to hold rogue states accountable for their irresponsible actions. Will it be different for Israel?

NOELEN HEYZER

THE 2012 London Paralympics captivated the world's attention with the strength of the human spirit demonstrated by persons with disabilities. We were all moved by the determination and perseverance of the athletes to overcome the odds that defeat so many of us.

What we saw of the London Paralympics gives reason to pause and reflect on the everyday struggles of persons with disabilities. Here in Asia-Pacific, there are 650 million persons with disabilities. They account for 15% of the population, but are mostly unseen, unheard and uncounted.

Evidence indicates that persons with disabilities are among the most marginalised in society. The most common reasons are a lack of education and limited employment opportunities.

Having a person with a disability in a household increases the incidence of household and individual income poverty. Likewise, household poverty is more likely to limit the access that persons with disabilities have to basic services, education and financial support.

Many lack access to the physical environment, public transportation, knowledge, information and communication, which is a precondition for persons with disabilities to fulfill their rights in an inclusive society. All these factors together result in a greater likelihood of economic and social exclusion.

What other compelling reason makes it imperative for us to pay closer attention to disability? Asia-Pacific is experiencing unprecedented population ageing. By 2050, in much of East Asia, one in three persons will be aged 60 and above. In other parts of Asia-Pacific, it will be one in four persons. That means that there will be sig-

nificantly more older persons in our societies, and many of them are likely to have some form of disability. Indeed, it is projected that by 2050, 80% of the population of persons with disabilities will be older persons aged 60 and above.

That is why a month ago, governments of Asia and the Pacific gathered at an Escap conference in Incheon, Republic of Korea, to tackle the existing barriers that prevent the growing number of

able to track and measure progress in our efforts to improve the quality of life of persons with disabilities.

Referred to as the "Incheon Strategy to Make the Right Real for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific," the Strategy contains specific time-bound goals and targets, among others, to reduce poverty among persons with disabilities, improve their access to the physical and

ICT environments as well as education and employment opportunities.

Asia-Pacific is the region most adversely affected by disasters, and there is evidence that persons with disabilities are two to four times more likely to die than the general population when disasters occur. Thus governments also stressed the need to ensure that disaster risk reduction and management incorporates disability perspectives.

Finally, if we are to be able to measure progress in building disability-inclusive societies, it will be necessary for countries to improve their collection of statistics on the population of persons with diverse disabilities and their socio-economic status. This would enable policymaking to be evidence-based to support the realization of the rights of persons with disabilities.

It is time to give thought to how we can reshape our societies -- where we live, where we work and where we play -- to enable all of us to enjoy the same freedom of movement and access to all aspects of life.

On the occasion of the 2012 International Day of Persons with Disabilities, let us each do our part to ensure that persons with disabilities get counted to count.

The writer is Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP.

Building a disability-inclusive society in Asia and the Pacific



NOOR ALAM / DRINK NEWS

Having a person with a disability in a household increases the incidence of household and individual income poverty. Likewise, household poverty is more likely to limit the access that persons with disabilities have to basic services, education and financial support.

persons with disabilities from participating in economic, social and political life.

The governments launched a new Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities for the period 2013 to 2022. They also adopted a regional strategy to chart the course of the new Decade by adopting the world's first set of regionally-agreed disability-inclusive development goals. For the first time, the Asian and Pacific region will be