

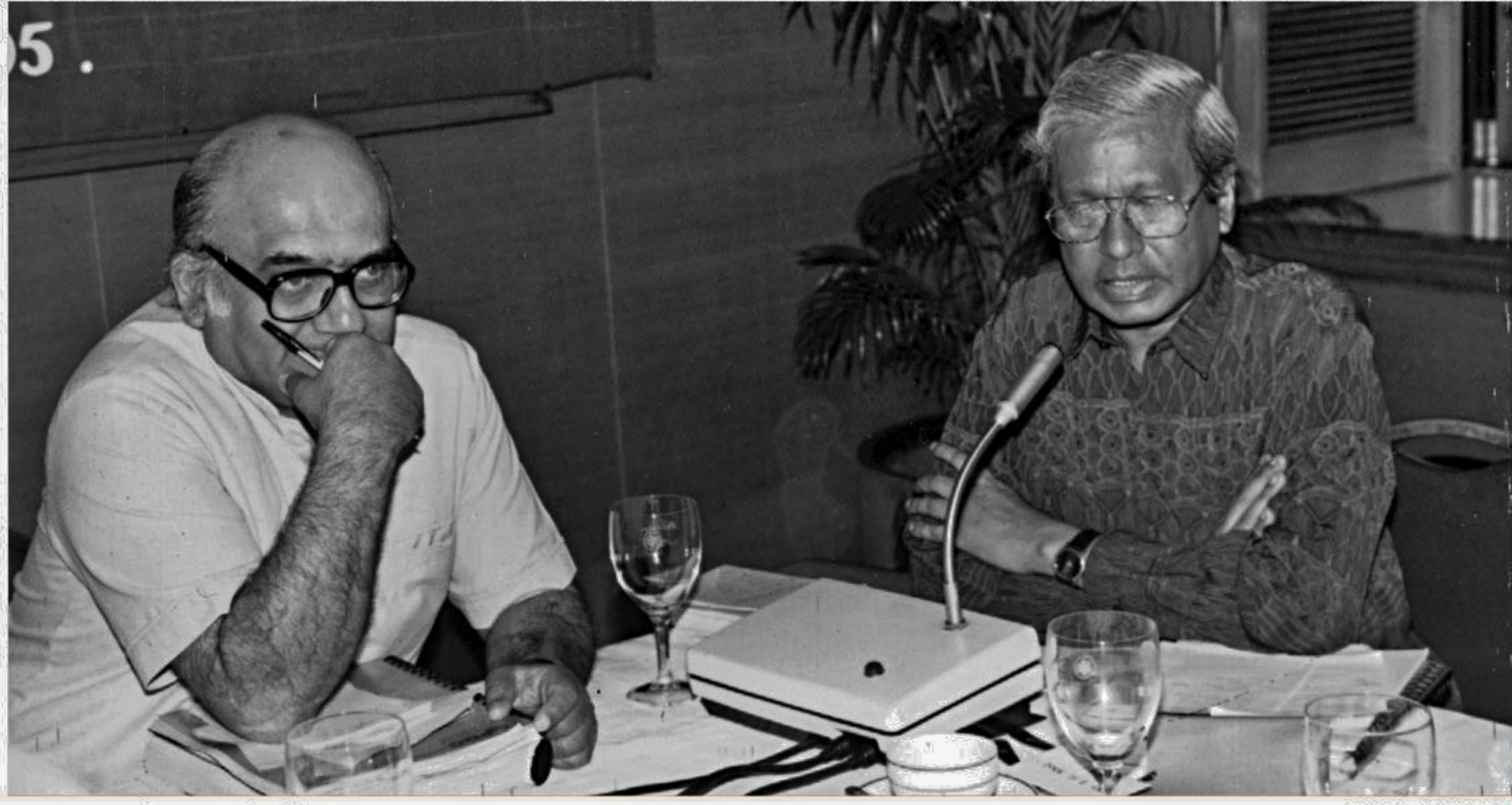
80TH BIRTHDAY OF SIR FAZLE HASAN ABED

A tribute to a champion of the deprived

REHMAN SOBHAN

I can think of few people who have done more for the world's deprived population than Fazle Hasan Abed. His contribution spans Bangladesh where BRAC, the organisation he founded in 1972, services close to 10 million of the country's underprivileged households. Through Abed's commitment to serve the world's deprived, BRAC has now extended its reach across the globe. It has invested its experience in rehabilitating the tsunami victims in Sri Lanka and the war-ravaged population in Afghanistan where two of its officials, working in high risk areas, were held hostage by the Taliban. BRAC is now reaching out on a large scale to serve the underprivileged populations in various regions of Africa. It has been actively engaged in Pakistan, Philippines, Tanzania, Uganda, South Sudan, Liberia and Sierra Leone. BRAC has even extended its reach across the Atlantic to Haiti.

BRAC's extraordinary engagement with the deprived has transformed it into the largest NGO in the world, with an annual budget which is approaching a billion dollars and a staff of over 111,000. BRAC's singular contribution to the world of serving its deprived communities has been its ability to take its programmes to scale so that they graduate from micro-welfare projects to the transformation of entire communities. It is now more than an NGO. Its scale of operations would suggest that it is now a corporation for the deprived. Its organisational capacity as well as its market recognition are comparable to any of the top international NGOs such as Oxfam, and have been recognised as management case studies in the best business schools. BRAC is now in



Dr. Rehman Sobhan with Sir Abed

PHOTO: COURTESY

a position to underwrite over 80 percent of its budget through operating one of the world's largest microfinance programmes. Its investments in a variety of socially-oriented commercial ventures, such as BRAC Bank, have further enhanced its internal income generating capacity, which has enabled it to expand its programmes to reach even larger numbers of the deprived.

The remarkable growth and reach of BRAC owes in large measure to the herculean

endeavours of Fazle Hasan Abed, its founder. Abed has combined extraordinary entrepreneurial and management skills with a genuine passion for public service which began with a commitment to the dispossessed of his own country, but has now extended to the deprived across the world. Abed, who began his professional life as a highly paid executive of a multilateral institution, went through the life-changing experience of direct involvement, first in one

of history's most devastating natural calamities, and then through his response to the genocide inflicted on the Bangalis in 1971. Abed's exposure to the human consequences of such acts of violence by man and nature persuaded him to invest the rest of his life in helping not just the victims of devastation but those whose entire life is engaged in coping with the uncertainties of nature and the injustices of society.

In responding to the challenge of

deprivation, Abed has demonstrated a renaissance vision, which equipped him to recognise its holistic nature in Bangladesh. He constructed a multi-faceted agenda for change which incorporated credit, healthcare, education and skill development so as to empower the excluded to stand on their own feet. His approach of transforming the poor from victims into masters of their own fate encouraged him to build an organisation which could graduate from aid dependence to fiscal self-reliance through building up the market competitiveness of its income-generating programmes. The growth and transformation of BRAC has made it a role model for other NGOs not just in Bangladesh but across the world. These achievements have been recognised in a plethora of awards and prizes which have been showered on Abed and BRAC, and given Abed access to global political leaders, heads of international institutions and CEOs of the corporate world.

Abed has invested 45 years of his life in serving the deprived at home and abroad. His humility and understated projection of his remarkable achievements conceal a quiet determination to let his actions speak louder than his words. As he enters the eighth decade of his life, his commitment to public service remains undiminished. Within Bangladesh, he continues to broaden and deepen his engagement with the deprived. But Abed will not rest until he has brought about genuine change in the lives of the deprived not just at home but across the world. May he continue in his quest to serve the deprived as long as he has the strength and will to do so.

The writer is the Chairman of Centre for Policy Dialogue.

WORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY DAY Protecting our uniqueness

Md. Sanowar Hossain, Registrar, Department of Patents, Designs, and Trademarks, Ministry of Industry, talks to Naznin Tithi of The Daily Star about the importance of Geographical Identification (GI) registration of our special products.

Why is it so important to do GI registration of our special products? What is the process?

GI registration of a product is new in our country. While some special quality products produced in Bangladesh can be called GI products, there are some specifications that need to be met to fit this criteria. A GI product can include agricultural products, natural products such as Ilish (*Hilsa*), or handicrafts, such as Jamdani. This special quality product must have an economic value.

A special quality GI product has to be produced in a specific area, meeting the particular soil and climatic condition. The same product can be produced in other areas, but the quality will not be the same. For example, mangoes are grown best in Rajshahi; if the same mango tree is grown in any other area, the mangoes produced there will not have the same sweetness, size or quality. So, a GI product can't be imitated.

In summer, mango sellers from all across the country sell their produce as products of Rajshahi. This happens because there is no way to differentiate the mangoes of Rajshahi from the mangoes of other districts. Through GI registration, we will be able to know that it is a product of a particular area. There will be a label on each mango coming from Rajshahi district. Therefore, both consumers and producers will benefit from it. And our country can get international recognition for this particular product.

An association of producers or a concerned government organisation, which works for safeguarding producers' interests, can apply for GI registration of a product. Before



Md. Sanowar Hossain

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

applying, a journal or document should be prepared with historical proof that the product belongs to this place; old newspapers, stories, or a district gazetteer can be used as sources. Based on these documents, a producers' association can apply for GI registration of a product.

An elaborate description of a product, the climatic condition in which it is grown, soil quality, product quality, how it is manufactured, etc., should be mentioned in the journal. A map of the area where this product is produced has to be submitted to us as well. After all this work is done, we will give the association a registered proprietorship and declare its members as authorised users.

The association will then have to fix a logo. There will be a label on each product before they are marketed. If we can ensure proper branding, people will be ready to pay more

for these products. In Bangladesh, the GI Law was passed in 2013 for the registration and protection of our special products. The rules of this law were formulated later and a gazette was published in 2015. We started our work from September 2015.

India has already registered Jamdani, Nakshi Kantha and three varieties of mango (Fazli, Himsagar and Lakkhanbhog) as their GI products, although these were originally produced in our country. How did this happen? Why are we lagging behind India in this respect?

There is no scope for one country to imitate the GI product of another country. Of course, India's products and Bangladesh's products will be of different quality. There will also be labels on the products which will contain its country of origin. For example, mangoes grown in

Bangladesh will be labeled as Bangladeshi product, whereas those grown in India will carry their country's name. We have already published a journal to register Jamdani as a GI product of Bangladesh. It's not like an international organisation is responsible for the geographical identification of unique products of individual countries. Each country can register their products following their own laws. India passed the GI Law in 1999 and formulated the rules in 2002. We started working on the law in 2010, and by 2013, we were able to pass the law. We have also formulated the rules within a very short time. I won't say that we are lagging behind.

How does your organisation coordinate with World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO)?

WIPO has 188 member countries including Bangladesh. It works for the protection of intellectual property of its member countries. WIPO helps its member countries in formulating laws and rules and provides technical assistance and training. WIPO has several treaties to protect intellectual property. WIPO's member countries can apply for GI in other member countries. For example, if a Bangladeshi product has a large market in China, we can apply for its GI registration in China and it will be registered as a Bangladeshi product.

Have you prepared a list for potential GI products in Bangladesh? How many products have you registered so far?

The Patent, Design, and Trademark Directorate is a regulatory body. But since GI registration is new in

Bangladesh, we are providing guidelines to all our stakeholders. But it is the responsibility of producers' associations and other concerned government authorities to identify the GI products of an area. Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) applied for GI registration of Jamdani. It took us six months to get the journal ready. All the groundwork is complete. We will register Jamdani as our GI product in two months. The rule is that two months after the publication of the gazette, a product gets its GI status. The Directorate of Fisheries will apply for GI status of Ilish very soon while the Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI) has also applied for GI registration of *kalo jira* rice.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

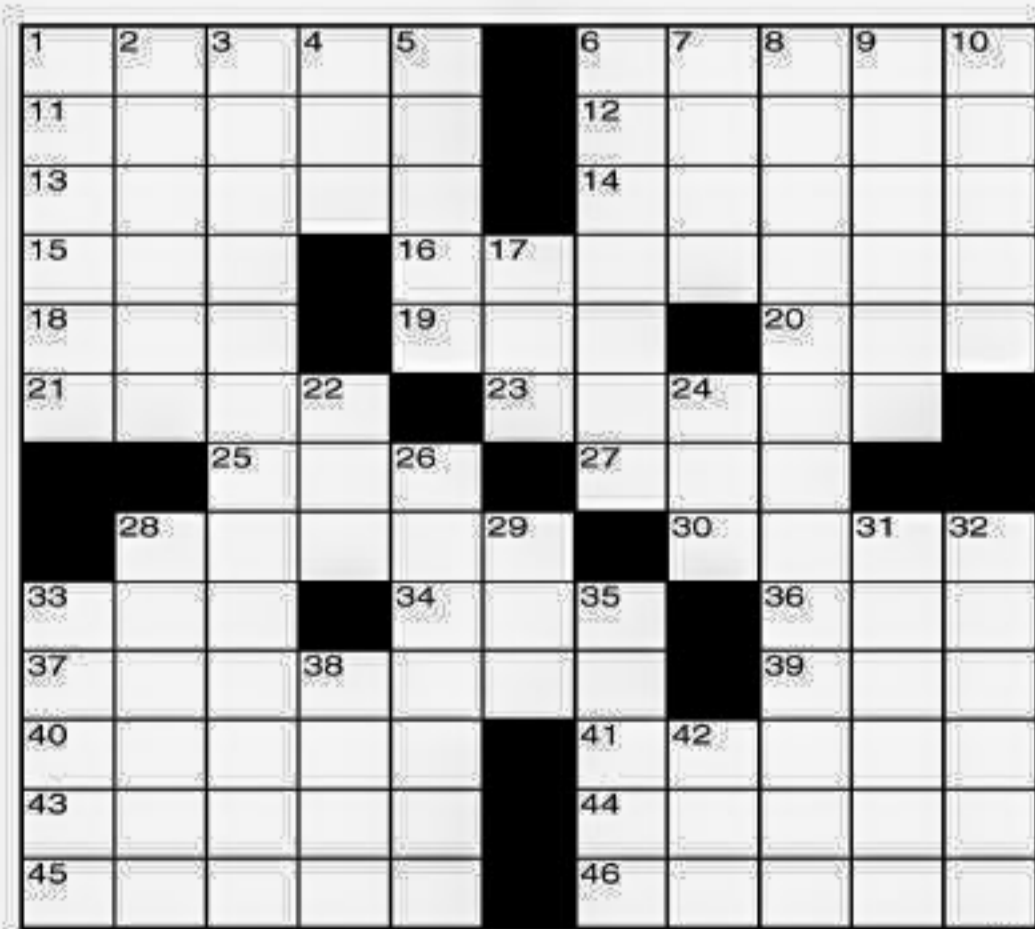
- 1 Palindromic address
- 6 Secret supply
- 11 Hopping mad
- 12 Singer Mel
- 13 Bare
- 14 Game host
- 15 Freud topic
- 16 Cry from a dupe
- 18 Nonsense
- 19 Target
- 20 Schedule C org.
- 21 Unseen problem
- 23 Oil paint buys
- 25 Craze
- 27 Grier of "Jackie Brown"
- 28 Copier need
- 30 Deep cut
- 33 Swamp
- 34 Hot dog holder
- 36 Role for Keanu
- 37 Way back when
- 39 Constant complainer
- 40 Verdi pieces
- 41 Cake cover
- 43 Bit of color

44 Following

- 45 Long tales
- 46 Moved laterally

DOWN

- 1 Gold diggers
- 2 Region of Spain
- 3 "Twilight Saga" costar
- 4 Put away
- 5 FCC concern
- 6 Fill with mist
- 7 Some cats
- 8 Father of Peyton and Eli
- 9 Campaign tactics
- 10 Listens to
- 17 Humorist
- 22 Opening
- 24 Chips buy
- 26 Cheapens
- 28 Illinois city
- 29 Floor cover
- 31 Spirit session
- 32 Didn't share
- 33 Musical symbols
- 35 Racket
- 38 Doty
- 42 El- (Spanish hero)



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