

Abu Sadat Mohammad Sayem– First Chief Justice of Bangladesh



Justice **Abu Sadat Mohammad Sayem** (March 29, 1916 – July 8, 1997) was a Bangladeshi jurist and statesman. He was first Chief Justice of Bangladesh from 1972 to 1975. He became the fifth President of Bangladesh in the aftermath of counter-coups in November 1975. He was made Chief Martial Law Administrator. Sayem presided over a cabinet headed by the three chiefs of the armed forces. The cabinet included civilian technocrats and politicians. Sayem resigned on grounds of ill health in April 1977, and was replaced by President Ziaur Rahman.

Early life and education

Sayem was born to reputed Muslim family in the district of Rangpur in the Bengal Presidency in British India on 29 March 1916. He attended the Rangpur District School and Carmichael College. He later attended Presidency College in Calcutta and graduated from the University Law College of Calcutta University.

Early career

He became a law graduate from the University Law College, Kolkata. He was enrolled as an advocate of the Calcutta High Court in 1944. After partition of India in 1947 and setting up of a High Court in Dhaka he shifted his practice to the Dhaka High Court and worked as a junior of veteran advocate Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazlul Huq.

Political career

Sayem was elected secretary and subsequently vice president of the Dhaka High Court Bar Association. He was a sponsor member of the East Pakistan Lawyers' Association and was elected secretary, general secretary and vice president of the said organisation for different terms. He was also elected a member of the Local Board of the State Bank of Pakistan, Dhaka. He was a member of the East Pakistan Bar Council till his elevation to the Bench.

Before liberation

On 3 July 1962, Sayem was appointed a judge of the High Court of judicature in East Pakistan. In 1967, he was appointed a member of the Commission of Enquiry for finding out the causes of exodus and eviction of the members of the minority community. He was again appointed a member of the new Enquiry Commission formed for the same purpose. He was a member of the Delimitation Commission (1970) for delimitation of the constituencies, and had subsequently been a member of the Election Commission.

After liberation

Following the independence of Bangladesh, Justice AM Sayem was appointed the Chief Justice of the High Court of Bangladesh on 12 January 1972, and after the formation of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh on 17 December 1972 he was appointed the Chief Justice of Bangladesh.

Presidency

Justice Sayem assumed the office of President and Chief Martial Law Administrator on 6 November 1975, appointed by self installed Brigadier General Khaled Mosharraf. He relinquished the office of the Chief Martial Law Administrator on 29 November 1976 by lifting it and later the office of the President on 21 April 1977 after a national referendum vote.

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