

## COVER STORY

"I knew that I was first but didn't know that I had made a new record in pole vault in the whole of Pakistan breaking all other previous records. I came to know about it from the newspapers the next morning." These are words from an ace athlete who has recently been recognised for his remarkable feats in sports. Qazi Abdul Alim is not only a legendary athlete but an expert in the field of physical training and also a writer. Recently the 70-year-old athlete received a UNESCO award and holds the title of being the first person to receive such an accolade in the south-east Asia and Pacific region. The UNESCO prize created in 2002, is attributed every two years to reward distinguished services to physical education and sport.

But the story behind this remarkable personality is a lot more intriguing.

Born on December 31, 1933, Alim is the son of Qazi Badri and Mahsuda Begum of Rokonpur in Old Dhaka. Alim's childhood was rather uneventful, limited to school and home and of course "a little bit of sports". He played traditional Bangali games like *gollachhut*, cock-fight, spoon race, etc. He went to St. Gregory's High School where he studied from Class I to IV and then moved to Jubilee School before finally settling in the Collegiate School from where he did his matriculation. It was after his matriculation that he decided to build up his career as a sportsman. He did not like cricket and neither did he have very sweet memories about his dabbling with football -- he broke his toe twice while playing the game. So he decided to be an athlete. "My father was a footballer. So, there was always a sporting environment in my

# An Enduring

SULTAN QUAMRUN NAHAR

family. Besides, time does not matter if one is determined and sincere to one's choice," says Alim about his rather unconventional decision.

Alim took admission at Jagannath College. Besides studies, he started to give more time to sports and trained hard, following a stringent daily routine. After Fazr prayers he would run around Bahadur Shah Park a few times before going to Kabi Nazrul field. After coming back from college, he went to the Dhaka University field or in some other field of Old Dhaka. Practice continued until evening. Before long, his hard work began to produce results.

It was in 1948 when Alim participated in 13 sporting events and became champion in Jagannath College's annual intra-university sports. The events were 100, 200, 400, 800-metre race, 2 relays, discus throw, shotput, javelin throw, high jump, long jump, pole vault. The following year he

repeated his feat-- Alim stood champion again in 1949. He was also the athletic secretary for his two years in the college. "Weight training is the best exercise for any athlete and I used to do it on a regular basis," says Alim.

With a bag full of trophies, Alim got admission into Dhaka University through the players quota in 1949. After BA he did his post graduation in two subjects -- International Relations in 1954 and History in 1956. His educational expenses for both the MA degrees were borne by the university. In 1956 he got an Asia Foundation scholarship to Oregon University in the US. It was here that he studied physical and health education, thus getting a proper grounding in his field. In addition, he completed another course on athletic injury and first aid from that university.

In Dhaka University, Alim practised in the university gymnasium and regularly cycled. Another place he was a frequent visitor to was Modhur Canteen, where he used to have his breakfast. At Dhaka University he soon excelled in sports events.



Qazi Abdul Alim