



## Dr Humayun Azad's death anniversary today

DU CORRESPONDENT

Today is the second death anniversary of eminent writer Prof Dr Humayun Azad.

Different socio-cultural organisations and student bodies arranged various programmes to observe the day with due respect to the unconventional poet and writer, who was a teacher of Department of Bangla at Dhaka University (DU).

Several programmes have also been taken at his village at Rarikhal in Munshiganj district.

Prof Azad was found dead in an apartment in Munich in Germany on August 12, 2004 as he went there on a scholarship from Germany-based international body of writers, Pen International, on August 7 in the same year.

Earlier on February 27, 2004, unknown assailants brutally attacked Prof Humayun Azad in a bid to kill him in front of Atomic Energy Commission near Bangla Academy premises when he was returning from the Amar Ekushey Book Fair.

Prof Azad's family members claimed that his death was not an ordinary case. They reiterated that he was killed in a cunning way by the fundamentalist forces that oppose the spirit of the liberation war.

But the government is yet to take any action against the culprits who attacked him or who were involved in his mysterious death.

Dr Humayun Azad Foundation has organised a discussion at the RC Mojumdar Auditorium of DU.

Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique will preside over the discussion, while Dr Jafar Iqbal, Prof MM Akash, Prof Anu Mohammad, Prof Mohammad Samad and other important persons will speak.

Villagers and Azad's fans will hold a programme at Rarikhal High School where he studied, family sources said.

Prof Azad was born at Rarikhal in Munshiganj on April 28, 1947.

### NAVIGABILITY PROBLEM

## Vehicle owners asked to use Mawa instead of Aricha ferry ghat

BSS, Dhaka

The ferry movement between Aricha, Paturia and Daulatdia is facing serious problems due to navigability problem in the Padma, forcing vehicles to be stranded on both sides of the river.

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) officials asked vehicle owners to use Mawa Ferryghat as an alternative to Paturia and Aricha ghats to avoid the situation, a BIWTC release said here yesterday.

The BIWTC has already sent another ferry to the Mawa Ferryghat to take extra load of vehicles after the Aricha problem. Ferry movement is on with a few vehicles at Aricha and Paturia ghats due to the problem, the release added.

BIWTC Chairman Advocate Shamsur Rahman Shimul Biswas, Chairman of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) Dr Riaz Hasan Khandakar and Chief Engineer of Water Development Board yesterday visited Paturia-Daulatdia and Aricha ferry ghats.

Dredging is going on in full swing on Aricha-Daulatdia-Paturia routes, officials said.

Besides, the chairman of BIWTA and BIWTC had a meeting yesterday with Food and Disaster Management Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf to overcome the situation.

Kamal Ibne Yusuf, also minister in charge of Faridpur district, asked the law-enforcement authorities to deploy additional police force to maintain law and order at the ferry ghats.

He also assured the passengers of bringing back navigability in the river after quick dredging.

## Obituary

BSS, Joypurhat

Nurul Islam Chowdhury, chairman of Amdoi union and vice president of Joypurhat Sadar upazila BNP, passed away due to a cardiac arrest on Thursday afternoon at the age of 64.

He is survived by his wife, eight daughters and two sons.

He was buried at his family graveyard at Bakila village under Amdoi union yesterday after namaz-e-janazas at Joypurhat Eidgah and Bakila village.

# No election under 'shadow BNP govt'

## Say AL leaders

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League (AL) top brasses yesterday warned they will not allow the next general election to be held under a caretaker government that will virtually be "a shadow BNP government".

They said Awami League stands for free and credible elections and the government must ensure it in consultation with the political parties.

The AL leaders came up with the strong observations while speaking at a discussion at the Diploma Engineers' Institution auditorium.

Awami Sworchhasebak League organised the discussion to demand immediate execution of the court verdict in the Bangabandhu murder case.

Taking part in the discussion, Awami League presidium member Tofail Ahmed said the next caretaker government would be a shadow BNP government with BNP men in the offices of the presi-

dent and the chief advisor.

"We will not accept any elections under this shadow BNP government," he said, adding: "We will not allow such elections in Bangladesh even at the cost of our lives."

Tofail said the opposition would ensure free and fair polls through movement.

Another presidium member Amir Hossain Amu said constitution could not be an impediment on the way of greater national interest.

Citing constitutional problem in 1990, he said then Chief Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed could return to the bench after performing as acting President through a constitutional amendment on the basis of consensus.

Responding to criticism that AL sit idle at home, Amu said in metaphorical term, if AL sits at home, that is the greatest movement. There cannot be a greater movement than this.

"Our movement is to restore

non-communal political forces...our movement will not rest until our reform proposals are realised," he said.

Chaired by Sworchhasebak League President Bahauddin Nasim, the discussion was also addressed by AL presidium member Abdur Razzak, Prof Nazma Rahman, Pankaj Debnath, Abdul Hannan, Nirmal Ranjan Guha and Matiur Rahman Moti.

On the question of implementing the court verdict in the Bangabandhu murder case, senior AL leaders called for installing a government to be headed by Sheikh Hasina for implementing the verdict.

They said the defeated forces of 1971 had taken "revenge" by killing father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. "We'll have to turn our grief into our strength to materialise the dream of Bangabandhu."



## BTTB officer missing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Inamul Haque Mohammad Al Mamun, chief assistant at the transmission region of BTTB, has been missing since Thursday morning.

Mamun, 52, went out of his house at 44/D Indira Road in Tejgaon, Dhaka, at around 7:30am for a morning walk but did not return home.

He was wearing a blue T-shirt, chocolate-coloured trousers, a khaki cap and black running shoes when he went out of the house.

He has been suffering from diabetes and other diseases.

Mamun's younger brother Julfikar Ali Manik filed a general diary with Tejgaon Police Station yesterday.

Anyone knowing his whereabouts has been requested to call his family on 9130656 or 0152364993.

## Body found in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police recovered the body of a man from an under-construction building at Kafrul in the city yesterday.

The dead was identified as Mostafa Kamal, 44, a carpenter, who was working at the under-construction six-storey building at Kafrul. He has been missing since Tuesday night.

Other workers of the construction smelled stink from a hole filled with rainwater and found the floating body of Mostafa when they were working yesterday morning.

On information, police went to the spot and recovered the body and sent it to Dhaka Medical College morgue for autopsy.

Morgue sources said the body bears injuries in the head.

A case was filed at Kafrul Police Station in this regard.

## Two get life for killing a youth

UNB, Mymensingh

A court here on Thursday convicted two young men and sentenced them to life term imprisonment for killing a youth in 1994.

Additional District and Sessions Judge Aminul Islam handed down the sentence on Masud and Ansarul Haque.

The convicts were also fined Tk 5000. They will have to suffer three months' more RI if they fail to pay.

However, four other accused were acquitted, as allegations brought against them could not be proved.

According to the prosecution, the convicts stabbed Shamsuzzaman Manik, 21, son of Abul Kalam Azad of Baluzuri village in Bhaluka, to death on July 12, 1994.



PHOTO: STAR

A nurse attends to ailing poet Shamsur Rahman at Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) hospital in the city yesterday. His condition improved a little bit yesterday.

## Brown lauds Bangladesh's economic performance

BSS, New York

Mark Malloch Brown, deputy secretary-general of the United Nations, has praised Bangladesh's economic performance in recent times and observed that the country "had reasons to be proud of such achievements".

He made the remarks at a meeting with the visiting Bangladesh Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman on Wednesday evening, a press release said yesterday.

Saifur Rahman briefed the UN Deputy Secretary-General on the measures being adopted to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and poverty alleviation in Bangladesh.

He cited statistics that demonstrated the successes "despite many and varied constraints."

Malloch Brown also lauded Bangladesh's constructive role in

the United Nations.

He expressed the hope that if called upon to do so, Bangladesh would be able to participate in any future peacekeeping or stabilisation operations in Lebanon.

He described the current crisis in Lebanon as "deeply critical" and underscored the need for a speedy diplomatic solution.

Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, ambassador and permanent representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations, who accompanied the minister, informed the UN Deputy Secretary-General that Bangladesh was following the evolving situation very closely and hoped to be able to discharge any responsibilities that it may be called upon to do.

Mahmudul Karim, economic minister at the Bangladesh Mission, was also present on the occasion.



PHOTO: STAR

Save the Environment Movement forms a human chain at Shahbagh in the city yesterday demanding strict enforcement of anti-tobacco law.

# Right-to-know law scares India's greedy officials

REUTERS, New Delhi

When 55-year-old house painter Nannu Lal lost his government ration card, feeding his wife and son suddenly became twice as expensive.

The card enabled him to buy his weekly rice, lentils and flour at discounted prices. He desperately needed a replacement.

But in India getting hold of something as simple as an official document often involves picking your way through a bureaucratic minefield, planted with corrupt officials who never miss an opportunity to demand a bribe.

Three months into a process that should have taken 10 days and after being shunted between offices, Lal got lucky: with the help of a local NGO, he filed an application under a new "right to information" law (RTI) seeking a progress report on his request for a ration card.

The next day, he was ushered into a top official's room, offered a cup of tea -- and handed his ration card.

"RTI is a magic wand for me," says Lal, who earns up to 200 rupees (\$5) a day and lives in a slum in New Delhi.

"Had it not been for RTI, I would have never got my card. The officials were asking for a bribe of 100 rupees, which I refused to pay."

The new law, which came into effect last October, is helping thousands of Indians fight back against the nation's army of lazy bureaucrats, colloquially known as "babus".

"This law has instilled a fear among the officials," says Manish Sisodia, a campaigner with Parivartan (Change), one of the organisations that fought for the law.

"In a democracy, we say the common man is the master but it is rarely so," he says. "RTI gives them this power -- to open any file, any document and any door. It's proving to be a very effective tool to fight corruption, though corruption can never go from India."

**GOVERNMENT BACKTRACKS?**

The legislation gives Indians the power to ask officials about almost anything, except issues of national

security, cabinet papers and information protected by the courts.

For a fee of 10 rupees, officials have to deliver reports on the progress of applications for a passport, driving licence, voter's ID card, water and electricity connections.

If a reply to an RTI application is not given within 30 days, an appeal can be filed. After another month with no information, the concerned official can be fined 250 rupees per day, up to a maximum of 25,000 rupees.

The money is deducted from the official's salary, and if false or incomplete information is given, a penalty of up to 25,000 rupees can be imposed -- equal to the monthly salary of the most senior government official.

The law has proved too much for officials, say activists, with the government now considering an amendment that would prevent some applicants from seeing comments scribbled on files, so-called "file notings".

Officials and NGOs differ on the scope of the amendment but activ-

ists fear vague definitions of just what can and cannot be released will be used to seriously dilute the law's power.

"File notings are the reasons given by officers for rejecting or approving anything," says Arvind Kejriwal, who founded Parivartan.

"They are integral to any official document. If someone wants to know why his passport was not given, he would never know if the notings are not shown."

For his right-to-information grassroots campaign, Kejriwal was among this year's winners of the Manila-based Ramon Magsaysay Award.

**RAGS TO RICHES**

According to global corruption watch-dog Transparency International, India ranked 88 out of 158 countries in the group's "corruption perception index" in 2005.

A Transparency survey the year before placed India alongside Indonesia and Mexico in terms of corruption, with up to 20 percent of families saying they had paid a bribe at least once in the previous 12

months.

Since 2003, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), India's top crime-fighting agency, has launched special drives to weed out corruption: until June this year, the agency had registered nearly 3,000 cases.

"The number of cases is not important," says Kejriwal. "What is important is how many of these people get convicted. The conviction rate in India is less than five percent. This is more dangerous."

Armed with the new law, about 700 pressure groups and charities came together in early July to launch a nationwide campaign to make people aware of their rights.

About 1,500 volunteers set up information centre camps at key government offices in 47 cities, resulting in more than 14,000 RTI applications being filed.

"Now it has come to a stage that officers beg us not to file an RTI, promising they will do the work immediately," says Santosh Kumari, a 22-year-old campaigner for Parivartan.

## DHAKA TODAY

### Discussion

Dr Humayun Azad Foundation will organise a discussion to mark the second death anniversary of Prof Humayun Azad. Venue: RC Mojumdar auditorium, Dhaka University.

### Poetry recitation

Shanan organises a poetry recitation ceremony entitled 'Barsha theke fire ek pashlay'. Venue: Experimental Theatre Hall. Time: 7:00pm.

### Human chain

Save Environment Movement will form a human chain protesting the felling of an ancient tree. Venue: Mintu Road. Time: 11:00am.

### Seminar

Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (Bapa) will organise a seminar on 'Actions to combat global climate change and Bangladesh perspectives'. Venue: Dhaka Reporters Unity auditorium. Time: 3:00pm.

### Discussion

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal will hold a discussion to mark the 31<sup>st</sup> death anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Venue: Colonel Taher auditorium. Time: 5:30pm.

### Meeting

A meeting of the advisors of 'Health in PRSP' Monitoring Committee will be held. Venue: Dorp auditorium. Time: 11:00am.

### Cooking competition

The final round of 'Monitor Totalgaz Chef of the Year Competition 2006' will be held. Venue: Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel. Time: 7:00pm.

### Science event

British Council (BC) organises a science event entitled 'Demonstrating Biotechnology'. Venue: BC auditorium. Time: 10:00am.

### Youth convention

Youth Convention of Bangladesh Jubo Moltly will be held. Venue: Engineers' Institution. Time: 10:30am.

### Weekly meeting

Regular weekly meeting and installation ceremony of Board of Directors 2006-2007 of Rotary Club of Dhaka Central will be held. Venue: Hotel Sheraton. Time: 7:30pm.