

# Today, Amar Ekushey

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An especially important development after the tragedy of February 21 was the decision by the East Pakistan Muslim Students League to drop the term "Muslim" from its name and thereby turn itself into an inclusive and secular organisation. This step was taken in 1953. Earlier, from August 22 to 24, 1952, an East Pakistan Cultural Conference was organised in Comilla, its focus being the language issue. Eminent

literary personality Abdul Karim Shahityabisharod presided over the conference and in his remarks made it clear that Bangla was and would remain the language of the people of East Bengal. There was a clear snowball effect of the shootings of February 21, particularly in the educational institutions of the province. Elections to the halls of Dhaka University showed groups that had so long had the patronage of the government losing to progressive,

secular student bodies. On February 21, 1953, the first anniversary of the killings was observed in a peaceful manner, with reports suggesting that the authorities and the students had reached an agreement for the anniversary not to be marred by violence. But there were yet elements who refused to acknowledge the reality of Ekushey. Students at Eden College and Dhaka College ran into opposition from their teachers when they tried to

set up memorials in honour of the 1952 martyrs. The teachers also opposed their programmes, which included patriotic songs intended to be sung on the anniversary. In March 1953, the rising young poet Hasan Hafizur Rahman brought out a collection of poetry he called Ekushey Shonkolon. A ban was clamped on it almost immediately and the journal would not reappear until 1965 and then again in 1968.

# Govt needs more time to verify

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Rab Mokhlesur Rahman said more time would be needed to know whether the voice of the message was al-Qaeda chief's. However, security of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has been tightened and all the agencies are on alert following the disclosure of the message. Though posted in Jihadology.net on January 14, the audiovisual message has urged the Muslims in Bangladesh to wage an Intifada (popular uprising) to confront the "crusader onslaught against

Islam". It came under the media radar not until February 15. The government too reportedly failed to notice it earlier. On Tuesday, the Rab arrested Tangail student Rasel Bin Sattar Khan for spreading the clip through his Facebook page and blogs. The next day, he was placed on a 10-day remand in a case filed against him under the ICT Act. He is also facing sedition charge for publishing false and defamatory information and pictures

against the government and its head. The Rab DG said the clip was prepared outside Bangladesh and was later sent to Bangladesh for circulation. "Rasel maintained network with others through his facebook and blogs. Our investigation will reveal with whom he was connected." A student of Tangail Textile Institute, Rasel is now being interrogated by Tangail Model Police, reports our district correspondent. "Investigation is going on and more

people might be arrested. So we can't disclose anything about it," Hasibul Alam, additional superintendent of police in Tangail, told The Daily Star yesterday. He said a letter was sent to police high-ups seeking interrogation of Rasel by different other agencies. Meanwhile, Principal of Tangail Textile Institute yesterday said they have also formed a five-member committee to probe Rasel and his activities during his three-year study at the institute.

# Move on to save indigenous

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beauty and rhythm. People ignore their mother tongue giving importance to popular languages, which often leads to extinction of their own languages, Director General of the institution Jinnat Imtiaz Ali said. "Dialects are like mother and should not be disregarded. It will be a great loss if dialects and mother tongues die out," he added. With the completion of the ethno-linguistic survey, many native languages will get recognition. The documentation will also lessen the possibilities of their extinction. A 40-member committee comprising anthropologists and linguists has been conducting the survey. Researchers and field workers will also be engaged in collecting data

from native speakers. The anthropologists will work on the nature of ethnic groups, which will help linguists understand as to how they express their emotion, anger, happiness and other feelings in their own languages. Researchers will be sent to villages of indigenous people to learn their pronunciations of different words and the variation in those. Regarding the languages that do not have any written form, Jinnat said field workers would use voice recorders to learn pronunciation of a particular word. In case of variation in the pronunciation, they will collect several samples, and linguists with the help of local experts will give it an alphabetical shape. About the ethnic languages that

have written forms, he said their usage would be examined to identify grammatical errors. "It will be a great achievement even if we can complete work on at least four to five languages by the next February," the director general of the language institution said. Bangladesh Adivasi Forum General Secretary Sanjeeb Drong welcomed the initiative. He, however, requested for inclusion of indigenous people in the project from the beginning to pre-empt error and controversy. Back in 1952, students demonstrating for recognition of Bangla as a national language in the then East Pakistan were shot and killed on this day by police.

# IMF, Britain warn rising economies

AFP, Sydney  
IMF chief Christine Lagarde and British finance minister George Osborne yesterday demanded emerging economies get their own houses in order, after some attacked US monetary policy in the run-up to G20 talks this weekend. While Lagarde also cautioned the US Federal Reserve to be "mindful" of the impact of its stimulus exit on major developing players, Osborne urged emerging markets to refrain from "finger-pointing and distractions" at the Sydney meeting of G20 finance ministers and central bankers. Countries including Argentina, India, Russia, South Africa and Turkey have suffered sharp losses to their currencies as a by-product of the Fed's "taper" -- the ending of a mammoth stimulus programme that is seeing capital flows switch abruptly away from the developing world. Lagarde said "just a hint of tapering" in May last year had sent ripples through the markets and the International Monetary Fund had

asked "the US authorities, particularly the Fed, be mindful of what's happening elsewhere when you do what you have announced". "Don't go too fast and explain what you are doing," the IMF chief said in a public question-and-answer session recorded for ABC television in Sydney, describing the issue as "high on the agenda" this weekend. But she said a "mind the shop at home" message also applied to the developing economies. "In other words, emerging market economies, you need to look after your various equilibriums. "You need to look at your fiscal policy, you need to look at your monetary policy, you need to have the house in order to resist the volatility that can be induced from the tapering of the US Fed, in particular, at the moment." Lagarde's remarks were echoed by Britain's finance minister, who said it was "neither accurate nor useful" to blame Western monetary policy for shaky currencies or high deficits in emerging markets.

# 'Ill' Mannan

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according to his wealth statements submitted to the Election Commission before the 2008 and the immediate past January 5 elections. In the statements, he, however, did not mention the value of his ancestral property. Mannan's statements also indicate that his annual income has soared over the years. Five years back, his yearly income was over Tk 1.85 lakh, which increased to over Tk 1.51 crore last year. Meanwhile, a top ACC official said ACC Deputy Director Ahsan Ali, who is probing the allegation of illegally amassing wealth by ruling party lawmaker Abdur Rahman Bodi, had submitted his report to the commission yesterday stating that there were discrepancies in Bodi's wealth statements. Ahsan had sought the commission's permission to serve notice on Bodi and to ask him (Bodi) to submit wealth statement in an ACC prescribed form, the officer added. On February 16, the commission grilled Bodi over the allegation that he amassed wealth illegally. His property value rose to Tk 2.88 crore from Tk 47.78 lakh in the last five years, according to his wealth statements submitted to the EC before the 2008 and the January 5 elections. Five years back his yearly income was only Tk 2 lakh, which increased to Tk 15 crore last year. Following newspaper reports, the ACC on January 22 launched preliminary probes into corruption allegations against seven ministers and lawmakers of the 9th parliament including the duo.

# ICT asks

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appropriate for it to have dealt with the issue of the number of dead in a more judicial manner -- rather than repeating a mantra that has little or no factual basis." Filed by Supreme Court lawyer Abul Kalam Azad, the petition sought contempt of court proceedings or any necessary step for the write-ups. Petitioner's counsel Mizan Sayeed told the tribunal that the way Bergman was making and circulating derogatory comments through the articles cannot be taken as "fair criticism"; rather these amount to "high grade of contempt". During the hearing, the three-member tribunal, led by Justice Obaidul Hassan, said the number of three million deaths is a fact and common knowledge. Yet, attempts were on to call it into question. Bergman, special correspondent of English daily New Age, was seriously cautioned by the Tribunal-1 in 2011 for one of his reports. He was, however, exonerated from contempt of court proceedings. In the blog bangladeshwarcrimes.blogspot.com, the journalist yesterday posted an article titled "Ten key things to know about the contempt application". He claimed that in the post on Sayedee, there is simply nothing, which could by any reasonable interpretation be deemed contemptuous of the tribunal. Regarding his analysis on the Azad verdict, he said the posts contain fair, accurate and constructive comments on the tribunal judgment. In its maiden judgment on January 21 last year, the International Crimes Tribunal-2 sentenced Abul Kalam Azad to death for genocide and crimes against humanity during the war. On February 28 that year, the Tribunal-1 handed down Sayedee the capital punishment for murder, abduction, confinement, torture, rape, persecution, and abetment of torture, looting, forceful religious conversions and setting homes ablaze in rural areas of Pirojpur in 1971.

# Hajj pilgrims

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and Justice Md Habibul Gani gave the verdict after hearing a petition that had challenged the legality of the decision. Abdul Kabir Khan, vice president of Hajj Agencies Association of Bangladesh, and a hajj pilgrim, Rezaul Islam, filed the petition on July 29 last year. The HC on that day ruled that the hajj pilgrims could pick any airline

while going to Saudi Arabia. On the same day it also issued another rule upon the government to explain why the decision should not be declared illegal. Later, the Supreme Court stayed the HC order responding to an appeal filed by the government seeking a stay on the rule. However, after yesterday's HC verdict the pilgrims could choose

any airline, said petitioners' counsels Mahbub Shafique and KM Hafizul Alam to The Daily Star. The stay order of the SC was not in force following the HC verdict, they added. Deputy Attorney General Mokhlesur Rahman said the government was to decide whether it would move an appeal before the Supreme Court against the HC verdict.

# Turnout 62pc

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returning officers yesterday. Candidates supported by the Jamaat-e-Islami, a key component in the BNP-led alliance, won 30 vice-chairman posts, while supporters of the Jatiya Party, the main opposition in parliament, bagged eight. Of the 97 chairman posts, the BNP-supported candidates won 41, the AL 34, Jamaat men 12, and the Jatiya Party one. Supporters of regional parties Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity and United People's Democratic Front, rebels and independent candidates won nine chairman posts. Each of the 97 upazila parishads has two vice-chairman posts, including one reserved for women in each upazila. Election results for two vice-chairman posts in Sonatola upazila of Bogra remained suspended, as re-polling will take place in five centres in the upazila. Of the 96 vice-chairman posts (general), BNP-supported candidates won 34, AL favourites 27, Jamaat men 21, Jatiya Party supporters four, independent candidates five and others five. Women candidates backed by the

BNP secured 38 vice-chairman posts reserved for women, AL favourites 36, Jamaat supporters nine, Jatiya Party men four and others nine. BNP favourites won all three posts of chairman and vice-chairman in 11 upazilas, while AL supporters emerged victorious in 10 and Jamaat men in three upazilas. BNP and Jamaat men together won all three posts in another 12 upazilas. Meanwhile, the Election Commission yesterday announced the schedule for the fifth phase of upazila polls to be held in 74 upazila parishads on March 31. Elections in 117 upazilas will be held in the second phase on February 27, 83 upazilas in the third phase on March 15, and 92 upazilas in the fourth phase on March 23. The first phase of upazila polls was held one and a half months after the January 5 parliamentary election boycotted by the BNP-led alliance. However, all parties unofficially took part in yesterday's election. Though non-partisan in nature, the upazila elections have become a prestige issue for both the parties. The election results will encourage

BNP's grassroots leaders and supporters to perform well in the remaining phases of the election to around 400 upazila parishads, according to BNP sources. In the municipality election in January 2011, BNP-backed candidates edged past their rivals from the AL. BNP favourites won 92 of 236 mayoral posts while AL-blessed contestants bagged 88. BNP-blessed candidates defeated their rivals supported by the AL in five city corporation elections held in the middle of last year. AL leaders are also happy with the results of Wednesday's election. In their view, party-backed candidates did well in the battle of ballots. **VOTER TURNOUT** More than one crore of the 1.62 crore voters exercised their franchise in Wednesday's election to 97 upazila parishads, according to an estimate by officials at the Election Commission Secretariat. They made the calculation on the basis of votes cast for chairman posts. A voter was entitled to cast three votes for the same number of posts -- one of chairman and two of

vice-chairmen. The highest number of ballots was cast in Nachol Upazila of Chapainawabganj with a turnout of 81.62 percent. It was followed by Atoary upazila in Panchagarh and Mohonpur upazila in Rajshahi. The two upazilas saw a voter turnout of 81.15 percent and 80.42 percent. Voters in Jajira upazila appeared less interested in electing their local representatives. Voter turnout in the upazila was only 37.20 percent, the lowest among the 97 upazilas. In the last election to upazila parishads on January 22, 2009, voter turnout was 68.32 percent. The polls were held three weeks after the December 29 national election that saw a record voter turnout of 87 percent. But the picture was different in the January 5 polls. Turnout in the parliamentary election was low with around 40 percent voters casting ballots in 147 constituencies. **FIFTH PHASE** Elections to 74 upazila parishads in 35 districts will be held on March 31 in the fifth phase, Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Rakibuddin

Ahmad announced yesterday. The last date for filing nomination papers is March 2, he said at a press briefing at the media centre of EC Secretariat in the capital. The papers will be scrutinised on March 5, and the last date for withdrawing nomination is March 12, he said. Returning officers will allocate the candidates electoral symbols on March 13, and the contestants will be allowed to start electioneering the same day, he said. The CEC also said election to Dhamrai upazila in Dhaka will be held on March 23 along with other 92 upazilas in the fourth phase of the polls. The deadline for filing nomination papers in Dhamrai is February 25. The papers will be scrutinised on February 26, while the last date for withdrawing nomination is March 6. The commission has completed preparations for holding elections in most of the upazila parishads, said the CEC. "The tenure of some upazila councils will expire between August and September. Moreover, some upazilas have problems relating to demarcation of area. We will hold elections to those upazila parishads later," he said.

# Salute to language heroes

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The day is also observed as International Mother Language Day worldwide. The February 21 anthem Amar Bhaier Rokte Rangano Ekushe February would be sung in 193 countries. The president placed wreaths at the Central Shaheed Minar in the capital at 12:01am. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina followed him a few moments later. They stood there in silence for a minute in honour of the language heroes. Hasina, also president of the ruling Awami League, placed wreaths along with her cabinet and party colleagues. She was followed by the speaker and deputy speaker of parliament, the ruling party chief whip and leaders of the ruling 14-party alliance. After them, opposition leader in parliament Rawshan Ershad led her party leaders to pay tribute to the martyrs. After her, the chiefs of the three services, the attorney general, diplomats, Dhaka University Teachers Association, Sector Commanders Forum, wounded freedom fighters, other political parties and their wings paid homage to the martyrs.

The Central Shaheed Minar and its adjacent areas on Dhaka University campus were a different look with street paintings and graffiti with Bangla alphabets on the walls. Thousands of people from all walks of life and ages walked barefoot to the Shaheed Minar to pay tribute to the Language Movement heroes. BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia along with her party leaders placed wreaths at the Central Shaheed Minar at 1:03am. Maruf Kamal Khan, press secretary to the BNP chief, however, claimed that the law enforcers had earlier delayed Khaleda's start from her Gulshan residence to Shaheed Minar. He told The Daily Star that the BNP chairperson took all preparations to go to Shaheed Minar at 11:45pm, but the police asked her to start after sometime. Foolproof multi-layer security measures were taken in and around the Central Shaheed Minar. Millions of barefooted people from all walks of life converged at shaheed minars across the country to pay homage to the martyrs. On this day in 1952, students and

people from all strata of society took to the streets in Dhaka to protest the then Pakistan government's refusal to recognise Bangla as one of the state languages and its attempt to impose Urdu as the only official language of Pakistan. Salam, Barkat, Rafiq, Shafiur, Jabbar and a few other brave sons of the soil sacrificed their lives to establish Bangla as a state language of the then Pakistan. The day of February 21 has since been observed as the Language Martyrs Day and the Unesco in November 1999 declared it as the International Mother Language Day. Countries across the globe on this day vow to promote linguistic diversity and multilingual education and raise awareness of cultural traditions based on understanding, tolerance and dialogue. The Language Movement is considered as the most decisive episode and a turning point in the history of Bangalees as its spirit led to the independence of Bangladesh. The day is a public holiday. The national flag will fly at half-mast at all government, autonomous and private buildings.

# Nepal to host

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Cooperation (Saarc) summit. "During the meeting, the council welcomed the offer of Nepal to host the summit. Nepal also proposed to host the preceding meetings in the month of November," according to a message received from Maldives. The meeting also appointed Arjun Bahadur Thapa, former foreign secretary of Nepal, as the next secretary general of Saarc. Arjun will be the 12th secretary general of Saarc for a period of three years commencing from March 1, 2014. The incumbent Secretary General from Maldives, Ahmed Saleem, is retiring at the end of this month after completion of his tenure. Nepal should have hosted the summit much earlier but due to political instability, lack of logistic preparation and other regional reasons, it got delayed. The 17th summit was held in the Maldives in 2011 and Nepal is holding the next after a three-year hiatus. President of the Maldives Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom inaugurated the meeting, where State Minister for

Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam led the Bangladesh delegation. Shahriar in his speech at the meeting reiterated Bangladesh's commitment to move the Saarc process forward for the benefit of peoples in the region. He also underscored the key areas of cooperation such as trade, connectivity, energy, transport and poverty alleviation. The meeting of the foreign ministers took decisions to further enhance regional cooperation under Saarc, said a foreign ministry press release. On the sidelines of the meeting, Shahriar held talks with Indian External Affairs Minister Salman Khurshid, Foreign Minister of the Maldives Dunya Maumoon and External Affairs Minister of Sri Lanka Prof G L Peiris. During his meeting with Khurshid, Shahriar raised a number of issues, including the hurdles in obtaining Indian visa, ratification of Land Boundary Agreement, Teesta water-sharing deal and border. He also requested the Indian minister to expedite the issue of import of 100