



AF Mujibur Rahman Ganit Bhaban
PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

A Gracious Gift

A spacious, modern building donated by a charitable organisation to Dhaka University has opened a gate of opportunities for Mathematicians

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Dhaka University, the largest and oldest university of Bangladesh, is the country's heartland of scholarship and intelligentsia. The then British Raj decided to establish the university in 1921 thanks to the whole hearted donation and contribution of the then Dhaka's Nawab family. Soon after its establishment, it gained the reputation as the Oxford of the East.

In the recent past, Dhaka University had lost much of its glory due to political turmoil and a lethargic attitude towards its development. But now it seems that the university has been reviving its past glory through the generosity of its well-wishers. A shining example of this comeback is the establishment of AF Mujibur Rahman Ganit Bhaban, an eight-storied, well equipped building to study and research different branches of mathematics. Established by AF Mujibur Rahman Foundation on the land donated by Dhaka University, it will house the university's Pure Mathematics department, Applied Mathematics department and will create immense opportunities for initiating long term research in mathematical sciences.

The structure is named after Abul Faiz Mujibur Rahman, a passionate mathematician and an eminent judge who served our people all through his life. Born on September 23, 1897 in Faridpur district of Bangladesh (then East Bengal) Rahman completed his earlier studies in Faridpur Zila School



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

AF Mujibur Rahman Foundation awarded nine students of DU's mathematics department with gold medal, prize money and certificate for excellence in mathematics.

- AF Mujibur Rahman was one of the first Muslim officers of ICS
- Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee, the Vice Chancellor of Calcutta University used to introduce Rahman saying, "This is the boy who broke my record (in mathematics)."

and graduated from Dhaka College. Then he moved to Calcutta University and achieved Masters' degree in Pure Mathematics in 1920 bagging the highest score in the history of Calcutta University. Although Rahman wanted to pursue higher studies in mathematics, he applied to join the prestigious Indian Civil Service.

After attending Balliol College, University of Oxford for pre-probationary studies, he joined the judicial service. Rahman, never liked to be a tool of British government against his own countrymen. It was Mujibur Rahman who opposed the death penalty of revolutionary Ambika Chakrabarti for

raiding Chittagong Armoury and the decision ultimately saved Chakrabarti's life. Upon request from Sher E Bangla AK Fazlul Huq, he voluntarily took the assignment of setting up the Land Acquisition Collectorate to ensure plots for hundreds and thousands of destitute Muslims of Calcutta's slum area. Just before completing it, he died suddenly of heart failure on May 12, 1945 at the age of 48.

But his passion for mathematics and love for his countrymen will live on. To disseminate Rahman's thirst for knowledge among many, his son Rezaur Rahman, FCA took a remarkable initiative. He formed the AF Mujibur Rahman Foundation, a charitable trust, in 1985 and donated the AF Mujibur Rahman Ganit Bhaban for the mathematics enthusiasts of Dhaka University.

This eight storied building of 80,000 square feet was handed over to the mathematics department of the university on December 6. Professor Dr Naila Kabeer, trustee of the foundation said, "It was my uncle's (Rezaur Rahman) dream to establish this building for the students and researchers of mathematics. With all those who worked for this huge project, I would like to thank Architect Anwar Hossain especially who came forward voluntarily to supervise this huge project and provided all kinds of supports absolutely voluntarily."

This huge contribution has been inspirational for the university's teachers and students. "We always encourage and welcome this kind of great contribution" said Vice Chancellor of Dhaka University Professor Dr AAMS Arefin Siddique in his speech. "Mathematics is one of the founding departments of Dhaka University. This immense contribution in this field of knowledge has created the opportunity of conducting fundamental researches on mathematical sciences."

The excitement among the teachers and students

of the department was palpable. Professor Amulya Chandra Mandal, Chairman of the Mathematics department of DU said: "With the inauguration of this building, we are going to launch a new department which is Applied Mathematics along with the original Mathematics department. From 2015 students will study mathematics in these two departments."

But the foundation did not end its contribution here. It has also been conferring AF Mujibur Rahman Foundation Awards for excellence in Mathematics on students for outstanding result and researches. On the same day nine brilliant students of Dhaka University's mathematics department received the award; a gold medal, 30,000 taka prize money and a certificate. "In Bangladesh the prospect of the students of mathematics has been increasing" said Farzana Islam, an award winner. "Mathematics is essential in every field of study. But



Abul Faiz Mujibur Rahman

- Rezaur Rahman, FCA is the doyen of accounting and auditing profession in Bangladesh
- He graduated from Dhaka University in early 1950s and went to England for higher education
- He was among the first Bengalis to become an associate of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of England and Wales
- Rahman formed A F Mujibur Rahman Foundation which has been providing educational assistances in all the prominent universities of Bangladesh



Rezaur Rahman

unfortunately it is the subject which we avoid most: sometimes because of our pointless fear and sometimes for our misconception about its career prospect. This kind of great initiative will contribute a lot to attract brilliant students to study mathematics." Out of the nine awardees six were women students.

Farzana's points were echoed by many of her friends and classmates. Md Kabir Ahmed, a third year student of the department commented, "When I was admitted to Mathematics department, many thought I will be a

school or college teacher. But in future I want to research on number theory, a subfield of pure mathematics."

This contribution to promote quality science education is remarkable and an example for many others. It is also a strong call to the government to promote science education and scientific researches through creating appropriate jobs and research facilities. The writer can be contacted at shahnawaz.khan@thedailystar.net