

# Little respect for the dead

FROM PAGE 16

Hours after the body was taken to the morgue, flies started to land on it. Pointing to them, a morgue staff advised Shahid, a day labourer, to bring some ice.

Shahid learnt that the required ice would cost him some Tk 1,500 which was quite difficult for him to afford. So, he went to a local fish market to buy some ice which is actually meant for storing fish.

However, buying that was not an easy job.

"I had to beg for the ice. It took me more than an hour to convince the fish traders there," he said, adding that it cost him Tk 700.

By the time Shahid returned with the ice, it was almost midnight and the body was apparently in a bad shape.

A forensic expert, wishing not to be named, said preserving bodies with ice chunks is not the right way. Sometimes, it ruins forensic evidence.

Applying ice can cause new bruises obliterating the older ones on the body. They can also change the shape of different parts of the body, he said.

Again, the morgue staff are not happy with the use of ice because it makes the floor wet and it becomes disgusting when it melts. "It attracts flies and mosquitoes."

A staff, requesting anonymity, said on an average, some 500 autopsies are done at the morgue every year and all the bodies were kept there for at least a couple of hours before and after the autopsies.

The staff said the corpses are brought to the morgue by the police stations at Dohar, Nawabganj, Keraniganj,



PHOTO: STAR

The freezer that has been out of order for more than two years at the morgue of Sir Salimullah Medical College. The photo was taken recently.

Kadamtoli, Shyampur, Demra, Jatrabari, Wari, Gendaria, Sutrapur, Kotwali, Bangshal, Chawkbazar, Lalbagh, and Kamrangirchar.

"Many of the bodies, especially the ones found in the river, are brought here in a decomposed state. Sometimes police bring the bodies at night even if they find them in the morning to avoid the daytime perennial traffic jam in old Dhaka," the staff added.

Requesting anonymity, a teacher at the Sir Salimullah Medical College said they also face trouble while teaching students due to the poor condition of the bodies.

Vice-principal of the college Prof AZM Shakhawat Hossain said there

was another cadaver freezer at the Sir Salimullah Medical College Hospital. However, the machine, which can store five bodies at a time, also went out of order over two years ago.

He said the college and hospital authorities wrote to the Directorate General of Health Services on several occasions about the situation but to no avail.

Contacted, Prof Abul Kalam Azad, who became the director general of the DGHs recently, said it would probably take months to buy the new freezers due to fund crisis.

Asked, he said he could not explain why prompt actions had not been taken earlier as he was new to the post.

# Goodbye El Comandante

FROM PAGE 1

US during a half-century of iron-fisted rule and surviving the eclipse of global communism.

His younger brother, President Raul Castro, announced the news shortly after midnight (0500 GMT yesterday) but gave no details of the cause of death.

Raul, who took power after Castro was hospitalised in 2006, announced the news on national television just after midnight Friday (0500 GMT Saturday).

"The commander in chief of the Cuban revolution died at 22:29 hours this evening," Raul said in a solemn voice. "Ever onward, to victory," he said, using the slogan of the Cuban revolution.

"In compliance with Comrade Fidel's expressed will, his remains will be cremated early in the morning" yesterday.

The government yesterday decreed nine days of mourning.

Castro's ashes will be buried in the southeastern city of Santiago on December 4 after a four-day procession through the country.

Cubans will likely forever remember where they were when Castro's death was announced. The music stopped across the dance-happy city and people rushed to awaken loved ones with the news.

Parties shut down and the bustling streets emptied after Raul made the announcement on state television.

"Everyone was stunned. It was a very sad moment," said Yaimara Gomez, who was working in a hotel at the time.

Unlike various occasions over the years, this time it was not a hoax: the man most Cubans grown up with as their country's leader had died.

'SYMBOL OF AN ERA' Before leading the 1959 revolution that propelled Cuba toward communism and onto the Cold War stage, Castro saw greatness in himself.

From an early age, he admired history's boldest figures, particularly Alexander the Great, and believed he and his rebels were part of that tradition.

"Men do not shape destiny. Destiny produces the man for the moment," he said in 1959.

Castro toppled the unpopular US-backed dictator Fulgencio Batista by uniting a disparate opposition and outsmarting a bigger, better-equipped Cuban military.

His alliance with the Soviet Union put him at the centre of the Cold War, most notably when the 1962 Cuban missile crisis took the world to the brink of nuclear war.

He was a global celebrity, his beard, military fatigues and big Cuban cigars making him instantly recognisable.

He owed his prominence in part to geography. Moscow helped him build socialism by giving him billions of dollars worth of aid and favourable trade, from oil to tractor parts.

But Castro also mined Cuban nationalism and Latin American pride, stirring resentment of US power and influence.

He managed to preserve his revolution despite constant US hostility even when Cuba reeled from the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, showing the vigour of a man who intended to die in office.

Instead, almost killed by a serious intestinal illness, he had to step aside in 2006 and he formally handed over to Raul in 2008.

In his final years, Castro wrote opinion columns for Cuba's state media but was rarely seen. His famously long speeches gave way to silence, at least in public, and comfortable track suits replaced the stiff black boots and crisp military attire.

On December 17, 2014, Raul cut a deal to restore diplomatic ties with the US. Six weeks later, Fidel offered only lukewarm support, raising questions about whether he approved of ending hostilities with his longtime enemy.

PERMANENT STRUGGLE

Known by the militaristic title of 'El Comandante,' in some ways Castro was always replaying the exhilaration of revolt, exhorting Cubans to fight one battle after another, from confronting US hostility to boosting potato production.

He survived numerous assassination attempts and outlasted nine US presidents in power, seizing control of Cuba while Dwight Eisenhower occupied the White House and stepping down during George W Bush's second term.

A magnificent orator who instinctively altered his cadence to fit the moment, he re-trod history and delved deep into detail about Cuban independence heroes, plans to "perfect" the revolution and the declared evils of US imperialism.

Tall and physically commanding, fastidious in his attire, he often built to a crescendo of indignation, gesturing firmly with long-fingered, well-manicured hands.

"We shall endeavour to be brief," he told the United Nations General Assembly in 1960, then set a record for UN speeches by talking for nearly 4-1/2 hours.

EARLY YEARS Born on August 13, 1926, Castro grew up as a privileged son on his father's plantation in the eastern village of Biran, where his playmates were children of impoverished workers living in thatched huts with dirt floors.

He attended the Jesuit-run Belen School in the capital and then studied law at the University of Havana. He took part in an aborted 1947 plan to overthrow Dominican Republic dictator Rafael Leonidas Trujillo and was at a youth conference in Colombia when riots broke out and some 2,000 people died.

After law school, he decided to run for Congress in 1952. When Batista staged a coup and halted the elections, Castro began plotting armed rebellion.

In 1953, he led a raid on the Moncada barracks in the eastern city of Santiago de Cuba. Dozens of followers died and he, Raul and others were captured and imprisoned.

"History will absolve me," he declared at his trial.

Pardoned in 1955, he went into exile in Mexico where he met Argentine revolutionary Ernesto "Che" Guevara. Together with Raul, they trained a rebel band that in 1956 returned to Cuba aboard an overcrowded yacht called Granma.

Ambushed at landing by government troops, only 12 of the 82 rebels on board made it to the rugged Sierra Maestra mountains.

Castro denied Batista's claims that he was a communist but decades later he told Spanish journalist Ignacio Ramonet in a book "100 hours with Fidel" that by 1952, "I was already a convinced Marxist-Leninist."

Whatever the evolution of his views on communism, he was determined to throw off American influence in Cuba. When US-supplied aircraft bombed his rebels in 1958, he vowed revenge.

US ENEMY Washington viewed him as a potential enemy even before his rebel army forced Batista to flee Cuba on New Year's Day, 1959.

It took just two years for the relationship to unravel as Castro nationalised swathes of the economy and introduced a broad agrarian reform. Thousands escaped the island, starting what became a bitter bulwark of opposition in Florida.

In April 1961, when his military crushed a CIA-backed invasion by Cuban exiles at the Bay of Pigs, he declared Cuba socialist and allied himself with the Soviet Union.

Moscow put nuclear missiles on the island in 1962, touching off a 13-day superpower showdown known as the Cuban missile crisis.

The US imposed its trade embargo on Cuba in 1962 and the CIA admitted trying to kill Castro in the early years of his rule.

Plots or plot ideas included trying to get Castro to smoke a poisoned cigar and taking advantage of his love of diving with an exploding seashell, or poisoning a diving suit.

Castro revelled in his status as an elusive target.

While the embargo was economically devastating, it allowed Castro to shift blame for chronic economic problems away from the system he built and onto the United States.

REVOLUTION

In a country that was prosperous by Latin American standards but riven by inequality and illiteracy and with an unsavoury reputation as a brothel and gambling-rich playground for Americans, Castro sought to build a socialist society.

His government trained thousands of doctors and provided free schooling, changes that have endured well into the 21st century, even as the state's role in the economy was reduced in recent years.

Those gains came at considerable cost to personal freedoms. Dissent was stifled in a one-party state with no free press, and the state's long arm reached deep into Cuban lives.

Throughout, Castro was a mentor to left-wing leaders and a friend to intellectuals such as Nobel laureate Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

He helped Marxist guerrillas and revolutionary governments around the world, sending troops to Angola in the 1970s to support a left-wing government over the initial objections of Moscow.

Cuba helped defeat South African insurgents in Angola and win Namibia's independence from South Africa in 1990, adding pressure on the apartheid regime.

After Nelson Mandela was freed from prison in 1990, he repeatedly thanked Castro. The Cuban leader was also a hero to Sandinista rebels who took power in Nicaragua in 1979.

COMMUNIST OUTPOST After the Soviet bloc collapsed in 1991, it seemed Castro's communist rule would not survive.

Cubans endured prolonged power cuts and shortages of food and basics such as soap. Ever stubborn, Castro implored them to endure the "special period" for the sake of the revolution.

He undertook some reforms, allowing foreign investment and mass tourism from Canada and Europe, and tapping exile dollars by allowing Cubans more contact with their relatives abroad.

He also let the most disgruntled leave in a chaotic exodus of makeshift boats that forced US President Bill Clinton to agree to more orderly migration.

Castro was quick to see a potential ally in late Venezuelan leader Hugo Chavez and courted him well before he won power. When Chavez took office in 1998, Castro had a new source of cheap oil, providing a huge boost to Cuba's economy. Little was known about his personal life.

He lived in a compound in western Havana and had nine children with five women including five sons with his common-law wife Dalia Soto del Valle, who lived with Castro at the end.

His eldest son Fidel Castro Diaz-Balart is a Soviet-trained nuclear scientist from the Cuban leader's only acknowledged marriage.

FROM PAGE 1

**Castro in his own words**

"A revolution is not a bed of roses. A revolution is a struggle between the future and the past."

"I reached the conclusion long ago that the one last sacrifice I must make for [Cuban] public health is to stop smoking. I haven't really missed it that much."

"Just imagine what would happen in the world if the socialist community were to disappear... if this were possible and I don't believe it is possible."

"We do not know anything about this. We, gentlemen, to tell the truth, do not even know what to charge."

"We have to stick to the facts and, simply put, the socialist camp has collapsed."

"One of the greatest benefits of the revolution is that even our prostitutes are college graduates."

"I realised that my true destiny would be the war that I was going to have with the United States."

"Here is a conclusion I've come to after many years: among all the errors we may have committed, the greatest of them all was that we believed that someone... actually knew how to build socialism.... Whenever they said, 'That's the formula,' we thought they knew. Just as if someone is a physician."

"I'm really happy to reach 80. I never expected it, not least having a neighbour, the greatest power in the world, trying to kill me every day."

"I will neither aspire to nor accept... the positions of President of the State Council and Commander in Chief... It would be a betrayal of my conscience to accept a responsibility requiring more mobility and dedication than I am physically able to offer."

[FROM REUTERS]

# Ershad

FROM PAGE 16

The JP's other demands are establishing a separate EC secretariat, passage of the new law by the present parliament, and determining certain qualities and experience of the probable election commissioners.

The potential commissioners should be politically inactive, impartial, honest, professionally qualified, physically and mentally fit, not hold any public office and have knowledge of electoral issues, added Ershad.

About the reform to electoral system, he said every political party will secure seats in parliament according to the proportion of votes received by them. "The party with highest number of votes would win the highest number of seats."

Every political party would prepare a list of its candidates, make it public and submit the list to the EC. Then they will go to polls in 300 constituencies with their respective electoral symbols, the former military ruler told journalists.

"If a political party bagged 50 percent of the total votes cast, it would secure 150 seats. Similarly, if a party won 1 percent of the total votes cast, it would get three seats," he added.

Ershad said an independent candidate would be elected as a lawmaker if he polled one more than half of the total votes cast in a particular constituency.

He pointed out that at least 13 countries, including Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden, France and Germany, follow the system of electing their representatives according to the proportion of votes polled.

The tenure of the current EC will expire in February next year.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia recently presented proposals to form the next EC on the basis of "consensus" among all political parties.

The ruling Awami League, however, said BNP's proposals were "hollow and a mockery before the nation".

# A joyous day

FROM PAGE 16

opportunity for seeing varieties of fancy birds and pigeons in one place."

Emon Chowdhury, a student of Premier University, and his two friends were among the hundreds of bird lovers who thronged the day-long exposition with their family and friends.

"We didn't want to miss this chance of seeing so many beautiful birds at the same time," Emon said in between taking photographs and selfies with his friends and the colourful birds.

Shamsul Arefin, deputy commissioner of Chittagong, told reporters at the exhibition, "Never before have I seen such a large number of birds at one place."

Chief patron of the exhibition, CVASU Vice-Chancellor Prof Goutam Buddha Das, said, breeding of pet birds needs to be encouraged to save wild birds and such breeding of birds could "generate income as well".

Near about 50 species of 150 fancy foreign birds and 100 species of around 200 pigeons were on display as well as on sale during the event, said Dr Saddam Hossain, executive secretary of Association of Avian Veterinarians, Bangladesh.

Budgerigar, Cockatiel, Lorikeet, Goldfinch, Eastern Rosella, Western Rosella, Sun Conure, Blue Crowned Conure, Love Bird, Long-tailed Finch and White Finch were a few to name among the fancy birds displayed at the show.

A few noteworthy varieties of pigeons were Jacobin, American Fantail, Bokhara, Potter and Shakar.

# Drug peddlers assault SI in Rajshahi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

An on-duty plainclothes police officer was assaulted by drug peddlers in Dharampur-Khojapur area of the city yesterday afternoon.

Sub-inspector Samiul Islam of Motihar Police Station was admitted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital around 6:00pm with injury to his head and bruises on different parts of his body, said Amir Zafar, deputy commissioner of Rajshahi Metropolitan Police.

His head wound required several

stitches, but he was out of danger, he added.

Drug peddlers attacked SI Samiul when he went to that area to locate houses of a few warranted accused. He was later rescued by the police after locals informed them of the incident, DC Amir said.

Since he joined the police station on November 8, Samiul arrested several drug peddlers from that area and when he went there by himself in plain clothes yesterday, they ambushed him, he said, adding that Samiul was able to identify the perpetrators of the attack.

# Voters upbeat

FROM PAGE 1

much-talked about seven murders.

"There is a positive change in the elections as the major two contestants are good and have strong position against terrorism and criminal activities," Sohel Khan, a trader of Tanpara area in Narayanganj, told The Daily Star on Friday.

The campaigns are yet to get their momentum since the runners have not gotten their electoral symbols. They will get them on December 5.

For the first time, the Narayanganj City Corporation election is going to be held along partisan lines. The Awami League nominated former mayor Selina Hayat Ivy and BNP nominated Shakhawat Hossain Khan for the mayoral race.

Echoing trader Sohel, businessman of Chashara Saiful Islam said, "This time the election atmosphere will be different as the two major contenders do not have any muscle power, which could ruin the atmosphere."

In the last mayoral elections, in 2011, Ivy ran and won against Awami League-backed Shamim Osman by around 1 lakh votes as an independent. The BNP-backed candidate Khandaker Taimur Alam had withdrawn at the eleventh hour.

The main challenge for Ivy now is to bring the Awami League leaders and activists under her umbrella and make them campaign for her. There is a distance between local leaders and Ivy which has not reduced even after she met Awami League President Sheikh Hasina with the district AL leaders, party sources said.

Local AL sources said Ivy went to submit her nomination paper taking Santrash Nirmul Mancha convener Rafiur Rabbi and with no AL leaders. They said it upset grassroots AL leaders and activists as Rabbi is not a ruling party man.

They, however, hoped that the Awami League leaders will work together when the campaigning starts.

"There are still many differences of opinion within Narayanganj Awami League and we are trying to bring everyone under one roof," district AL president Abdul Hai told The Daily Star yesterday. "Our initiatives are under process and we are hopeful that we all will unite for Boat."

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina asked the district leaders to work together to ensure victory for Ivy. However, there have not been visible efforts on the ground to this end.

Party insiders said although Hasina had asked all to work together, it is difficult. "Oil and water don't mix,"

one of them said.

Ivy's main challenger Shakhawat, who is better known as a lawyer rather than a politician, has the tough job of making himself known to voters.

Shakhawat, who had been the president of Narayanganj District Bar Association twice, came into limelight for his strong leadership role in the Narayanganj seven-murder case.

"Shakhawat is a good soul but he is not a known face. He is a known face on the court premises but not in politics. In court, there is politics with 1,000 lawyers... in the city corporation polls there are around five lakh voters. So, it would be a great challenge for him to reach out to the voters," said Mohsin Ali, a student of Tolaram College.

Shakhawat, however, denies that he is not known to the voters. He said he has been involved in politics since college and in more or less every ward he has a client.

As this election is going to be along party lines, the party symbol will play a crucial role in deciding the fate of the mayor runners.

Narayanganj AL leader Abdul Hai said national issues along with the local issues will come to the fore.

Shakhawat said, "... people have been deprived of their right to cast their votes for a long time... certainly national issues will dominate the campaign."

# Don't drive

FROM PAGE 16

started offering the discounts via a tie-up with a local restaurant chain.

Elderly drivers who give up their permits will receive a certificate from police which they can present when ordering the noodles to see the price reduced from 590 (\$5.20) yen to 500 yen, an Aichi police spokesman told AFP.

Last month, a six-year-old boy died and 11 others were injured after an 87-year-old driver's pickup truck hit elementary school children walking to school on a street in Yokohama.

The country is introducing a new rule in March under which drivers aged 75 or older must pass cognitive tests when renewing their licences.

Aiming to set an example, a 97-year-old high-ranking Buddhist priest last week returned his driver's licence, calling on his elderly compatriots to do the same.

"It's stupid to try to maintain your licences just out of pride," said Taa Shinen.

Daughter Alina Fernandez, whose mother was a Havana socialite who Castro had an affair with while underground in the 1950s, escaped from Cuba disguised as a tourist in 1993 and she is a vocal critic of her father.

Castro never allowed statues of him to be erected or streets to be named after him, saying he did not want a cult of personality. Nevertheless, the cult was everywhere. His image and words were posted on billboards and his name was invoked at every public event.

Castro, who always prickled at suggestions of cruelty, rejected the term. "I am a kind of spiritual leader," he said. [From Reuters, AFP]

# Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 16

representation in the House of Representatives of the country.

In Vietnam's National Assembly, which is the highest representative body of the people and the highest State authority in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, women representation is 24 percent.

Lao People's Democratic Republic bordering Myanmar, Cambodia, China, Thailand, and Vietnam is not far behind other countries of the region. The proportion of seats held by women in National Assembly of the country is 25 percent.

The percentage of women in Singapore Parliament has improved in past one decade. As per latest data, women occupy 23 percent seats in the parliament of the country, while in China it is 24 percent. Although, in 2014, 23.4 percent of parliament seats in China were held by women highlighting a slight improvement.

Pakistan has 21 percent seats for women in the country's Senate.

Since 1996 India has been trying to adopt a constitutional amendment to reserve 33 percent seats for women in the Lower House of the Parliament but political parties do not have a consensus about the issue.

India has only 12 percent representation of women in the parliament.

# Anindo's tabla

FROM PAGE 16

presenting a composition in *Raga Kafi*. Their teacher, noted sarodia Pandit Tejendra Narayan Majumdar, confidently promised at the end of the performance to produce at least one or two national-level sarod artistes from this crop of students in the next five years.

Grammy-nominated flautist Shashank Subramaniam then gave his maiden performance at the festival. The prodigious musician specialising in Carnatic (South Indian) played *Raga Purvi Kalyani* in a demonstrative, technical yet soulful manner. He also performed a famous Kannada song "Krishna Nee Begane Baaro", and a folk dhun.

Dr Prabha Atre, another shining star in the world of classical music, then made her debut on the stage of the world's biggest festival of classical music. The 84-year-old artiste performed an evocative *khayal* in *Raga Shyam Kalyan*, and then performed a *dadra* "Basanti Chunaraya" and a *Raga Bhairavi* before Anindo Chatterjee's performance.

Noted vocalist Pandit Uday Bhawalkar presented *dhrupad* in his typical presentation style -- on *Raga Abhogi*.

The next performer at the festival was Pandit Sanjoy Bandopadhyay on *sitar*, with the iconic vocalist Ustad Rashid Khan being the final performer. *More coverage on the Bengal Classical Music Fest on Arts & Entertainment page (Page 9)*