

TRIBUTE

# Dr Shahida Akhter: A tireless physician, researcher and humanitarian

MATIUR RAHMAN and SHISHIR REZA

**P**ROFESSOR Dr Shahida Akhter, a well-known child health specialist, passed away prematurely from liver cancer at 59 years of age on May 1, 2021. She was soft-spoken, introverted, humble and beloved by many people.

The most appropriate portrait of Dr Shahida would be as follows—a person and physician endowed with high morals, a symbol of ethical medical practice, an ardent promoter of health rights and health equity, and an activist who fought against all kinds of malpractice in health, including indiscriminate use of expensive life-saving drugs, over-prescription of antibiotics to children, and the practice of unnecessary and profit-driven caesarian operations during child delivery. She was also an uncompromising activist who fought against the unholy alliance of the medical-health-pharmaceutical industrial complex and worked to establish the oft-ignored right to health of ordinary citizens. In a nutshell, Dr Shahida, in her 35 years of medical practice, was testament to the Hippocratic oath, which she conscientiously went above and beyond in following.

To students, junior colleagues, nurses and medical interneers, she embodied Florence Nightingale and Mother Teresa, guiding them as a sister and a great teacher. To her patients, both children and mothers, she was a symbol of great hope and relief.

Professor Dr Shahida Akhter was born in 1961 in Boalmari in Faridpur district. Her family members knew her as Anju. She was a high achiever in all public examinations—from school and college to medical college and FCPS. She obtained her MBBS degree from Sir Salimullah Medical College in 1984, where she was a student of the fifth

batch. She went on to successfully obtain an FCPS degree from the Bangladesh College of Physicians and Surgeons. She also received higher professional training later.

She was a Professor in the Department of Paediatrics at Ibrahim Medical College and Hospital, and Head of the Neonatal Unit at BIRDEM General Hospital. She had also worked in different hospitals across the country. Notable among them are Sir Salimullah Medical College and Mitford Hospital, Dhaka Shishu Hospital, IPGMR (now Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University), Dr Quasem's Clinic and Hospital, Kushtia, and Dhaka University Medical Centre.

Professor Dr Shahida Akhter was one of the most respected paediatricians in Bangladesh, who worked tirelessly with newborns and infants for over three decades. She was one of the pioneers of the Newborn Screening Test in the country. Newborn screening is a part of genomic medicine that tests certain hereditary diseases right after the baby is born, especially ones that can



Prof Dr Shahida Akhter (1961-2021)

be cured if treatment is started early. She also made exceptional contributions to the awareness-building programme in motivating lactating mothers towards feeding their children only breastmilk up to the age of six months.

Dr Shahida had an unparalleled thirst for knowledge in the complex and multifarious domains of acute respiratory tract infections (ARTI), asthma, breastfeeding practices, essential care for neonates, resuscitation at birth, advanced cardiac life support, helping babies breathe (HBB), pregnancy care, post-natal care, early childhood development (ECD), perinatal death audit (PDA), genetics and genomic medicine—not to mention

the need for safe and clean drinkable water using scientifically recognised and low-cost arsenic mitigation systems such as the Sono-filter (innovated by Dr Abul Hussam, a Bangladeshi professor in the US). All of this contributed to making her a physician of a different mould—one who was endowed with multidisciplinary knowledge, including a deep understanding of the poverty and inequality faced by her patients in society. This enhanced her professional and humane capabilities and paved a precise path for her devotion towards research that aimed to improve newborn and child health.

The memory of Professor Dr Shahida Akhter as a paediatrician-neonatologist will live on, not only because of the unusually high level of expertise she possessed in her field, but for her ever-smiling face, welcoming behaviour, and her understanding of patients' social and economic conditions. She worked tirelessly to transform their pains into the magical smiles of newborn babies. And she did this irrespective of caste, creed, religion, class, and social standing of their parents. What truly made her unique is that in these children, she did not just see patients, but rather tiny humans with huge potentials and bright futures. She counted each patient as equal, labelling them for hours, trying to understand their problems.

Besides medical services, Dr Shahida Akhter was a renowned researcher, conducting not just medical research but social research as well. She participated in many scientific conferences at home and abroad, including in the US, UK, Russia, Australia, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Taiwan, Sri Lanka, India, UAE, South Africa, Egypt, Thailand and many other countries where she presented original scientific research. She has also been published in national and

international journals.

Finally, she was a devoted social worker who stood by the side of the country's poor and helpless. She was the President-Elect of the Bangladesh Paediatric Association, Vice President of the Bangladesh Neonatal Forum, Life Member of the Bangladesh Medical Association, Member of the Executive Council of the Bangladesh Perinatal Society, and Member of the Executive Committee of the Paediatric Endocrine Society of Bangladesh. She was also involved with several philanthropic organisations that work to ensure the wellbeing of marginalised children. She was the Vice President of the Abul Barkat Peace and Progress Foundation and Member of the Governing Board of the Human Development Research Centre, to cite a few.

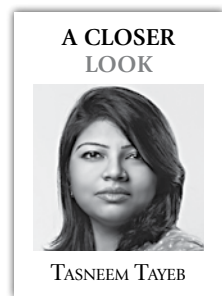
In her personal life, she married Abul Barkat, a renowned economist/researcher, and Professor of Economics at the University of Dhaka. In his recently published book *Padma Bridge with Own Finance: A Great Opportunity for National Unity*, he wrote the following dedication—"To my wife Professor Dr Shahida Akhter, who is the source of inspiration in my quest for knowledge".

It is always painful when a loved one leaves forever. After Professor Dr Shahida Akhter's untimely demise, hundreds of patients, students, well-wishers and institutions expressed their deepest condolences. Her death is a loss for the entire nation. People will remember her with utmost reverence for her humanity, her kindness and compassion, the strong values she held in all walks of life, and her indefatigable humanitarian-medical service.

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*Professor Dr Shahida Akhter was one of the most respected paediatricians in Bangladesh, who worked tirelessly with newborns and infants for over three decades.*

## How the world is failing Palestine



TASNEEM TAYEB

**M**AY 21, 2021, Friday, 2 AM Israeli local time: an Egypt-brokered ceasefire between Israel and Hamas went into effect, ending the recent 11-day Israeli bombardment of Gaza. All told, the attack on the besieged Palestinian strip claimed the lives of

248 Palestinians, including 66 children. The swift vengeful actions of the Israeli government only expose the flimsiness of their ceasefire with Hamas. And there is a reason why this truce is just a stopgap measure to put a band-aid over a wound that will only continue to fester below the surface: the apparent impunity of Israel's actions. Israel's staunchest ally—the US—could not muster a strongly worded message to condemn the atrocities committed during the recent bombardment of Gaza. Germany supported Israel's actions, calling it self-defence. But it is also true that at one point, the majority of the world leaders voiced their concerns over Israel's killing of civilians in Gaza, whatever their words might have been. For "rogue" nations such as Iran or North Korea, such deviation from globally acceptable behaviour would have resulted in arms embargo, sanctions and other forms of concerted actions from the international community. However, Israel just seems to be luckier than the others. Despite the recent atrocities committed by Israel in the name of self-defence, the US government has proceeded with an

revenge on the demonstrators. The revelation, many arms supplying countries including the UK and Spain announced reviews of their export of military equipment to Israel, but the US continued supplying further Hellfire missiles to Israel, a country that, for obvious reasons, stands accused of ethnic cleansing of Palestinians. Apart from proactive arms sales to Israel—despite Israel's history of human rights abuses—the US continues to provide the country with an annual USD 3.8 billion foreign

aid, as part of a deal to provide USD 38 billion to Israel in military aid over a period of 10 years, inked in 2016 in the last days of the Obama presidency. And the US has been providing military aid and equipment to Israel for decades, especially since the 1967 war. During a conversation with Al Jazeera, Stephen Walt, an international affairs professor at the Harvard Kennedy School, suggested that arms sales has increased since the 1960s as a result of Washington's promise "that if Israel would withdraw from the Sinai and sign the peace treaty with Egypt, that [it] would basically guarantee a certain level of military aid every year." This US military "aid" to Israel remains unconditional. Recent attempts by some liberal senators to regulate the assistance have been met with vehement opposition by pro-Israeli groups, which say conditioning US military aid to Israel would diminish Israel's ability to defend itself. More than 300 US legislators signed a letter urging the US government to keep the "aid" unconditional. But the fact remains, Israel is using arms and aid provided by the US and other allies to commit war crimes against a suppressed people, whom they have displaced and dispossessed to create a land for themselves. The lack of global consensus against Israel means that state-of-the-art jets and smart bombs can be brought to bear against the civilian population of the Gaza strip. In the most recent bout of violence by Israel, the most effective weapons of the Palestinians were not the homespun rockets of Hamas, but the defiance of the civilians in their resilience in the face of a military attack. Perhaps the helplessness and resilience of the Palestinian people—or humanity in general—was best expressed by a video that went viral on social media showing a Palestinian woman, Maryam al-Affif, smiling after being attacked and arrested by Israeli police in Sheikh Jarrah. This act of defiance speaks of the plight of a stateless people, who found themselves on the wrong side of history through no fault of their own, and now smile stoically at their own fate. Yet, this is a people that refuse to fade away, despite overwhelming odds. Forever on edge, their path to survival remains as precarious as ever.

hold Israel and its allies accountable for the human rights abuses and war crimes committed against Palestinians. The road ahead is long and riddled with danger. But how long can the world continue to watch this gaping wound fester, before Palestine's time finally runs out?

Tasneem Tayeb is a columnist for The Daily Star. Her Twitter handle is: @tasneem\_tayeb

*The lack of global consensus against Israel means that state-of-the-art jets and smart bombs can be brought to bear against the civilian population of the Gaza strip.*

May 21, 2021, Friday, noon Israeli local time: Israeli police attacked Muslim worshippers at the Al-Aqsa Mosque who had gathered there for Friday prayers. It was done to prevent them from marching from Al-Aqsa Mosque to the Old City to celebrate the ceasefire. Stun grenades and gas bombs were used to disperse them.

May 23, 2021, Sunday: Israeli police in a written statement said that as part of "Operation Law and Order", "Large forces of police and border fighters, including the corps' reserve companies, will operate with high intensity and comprehensive deployment against anyone involved in the violent incidents



An elderly Palestinian man walks past a building destroyed by Israeli bombardment in Gaza City.

PHOTO: MOHAMMED ABED/AFP

that have befallen the State of Israel in the past two weeks."


The statement added that already, 1,550 arrests have been made since May 9, 2021, and more than 150 indictments have been filed against Palestinian citizens of Israel. In a statement sent to Al Jazeera, General Director of Adalah—The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, Hassan Jabareen, called the measure a "militarised war against Palestinian citizens of Israel", adding that it is being done to "intimidate and to exact revenge on Palestinian citizens of Israel—to settle the score" with Palestinians, in the Israeli police's own words—for their political positions and activities.

Given the tone of the Israeli police's statement, one cannot downplay the significance of Hassan Jabareen's comment. Israel's ruthless brutality against the Palestinians is nothing new, and one can only imagine the force that will be used to exact

arms sale of USD 735 million to Israel. The sale includes Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAMs) that can turn "dumb" bombs—also called unguided bombs—into precision-guided missiles. The Biden administration has approved the sale, which the US Secretary of State Antony Blinken defended saying Washington is "committed to giving Israel the means to defend itself."

And these armunitions that the US, Germany, UK and Italy, among other countries, sell to Israel are used in the suppression of the Palestinians, including even the killing of civilians. Any Middle East watcher would remember the Israeli missile attack on a UN school in Rafah on August 3, 2014—during the Israeli invasion of Gaza—that claimed the lives of 10 shelter seekers.

The UN later revealed that a US-made Hellfire missile was used by Israel to attack the school, meaning it was a US weapon that had the blood of children on it. In the aftermath of



### বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক

ডিপার্টমেন্ট অব কমিউনিকেশন এন্ড পাবলিকেশন  
প্রধান কার্যালয়  
ঢাকা

**বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংকের টেলিফোন নির্দেশিকা-২০২১ মুদ্রণের উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি**

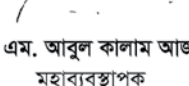
বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংকের 'টেলিফোন নির্দেশিকা-২০২১' এর ৮,২০০ কপি মুদ্রণের লক্ষ্যে নির্ধারিত দরপত্রের তফসিলে বর্ণিত ছক ও শর্তনুযায়ী খ্যাতমান মুদ্রণকারী প্রতিষ্ঠান হতে বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংকের ওয়েবসাইট ([www.bb.org.bd](http://www.bb.org.bd)) এ e-Tendering পদ্ধতিতে online এ উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে। এ সংক্রান্ত প্রয়োজনীয় তথ্যাদি নিম্নে বর্ণিত হলোঃ

১. টেলিফোন নির্দেশিকার সংখ্যা, সাইজ ও কাগজ	২ ফর্ম্যাট রিউনসহ মোট ৯০ ফর্ম্যাট (দরপত্র দলিলের শর্ত মোতাবেক) টেলিফোন নির্দেশিকা-২০২১ এর ৮,২০০ (আট হাজার দুইশত) কপি মুদ্রণ ও বাঁধাই। টেলিফোন নির্দেশিকার সাইজঃ ৯.৫০ ইঞ্চি x ৭.২৫ ইঞ্চি এবং কাগজঃ ৭০ গ্রাম ডাবল ক্রাউন অফসেট (উন্নতমানের পেপার)।
২. দরপত্রে অংশগ্রহণের উপযুক্ততা	ক) দরপত্রে অংশগ্রহণকারী মুদ্রণকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানসমূহকে উন্নতমানের পুস্তক মুদ্রণের ৫ (পাঁচ) বছরের অভিজ্ঞতা থাকতে হবে এবং প্রতিষ্ঠানের এরূপ মুদ্রণ কাজে অভিজ্ঞতা, ট্রেড লাইসেন্স ও অন্যান্য প্রমাণাদি উপস্থাপন করতে হবে; খ) মুদ্রণকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানকে উন্নতমানের মুদ্রণে সক্ষম ৯.৫০ ইঞ্চি x ৭.২৫ ইঞ্চি সাইজের পুস্তক ছাপার জন্য অফসেট প্রিন্টিং মেশিনসহ কাটিং মেশিন ও নিজস্ব অটো প্লেট মেকিং প্রসেস মেশিন থাকতে হবে; গ) টেলিফোন নির্দেশিকা বিধায় শতভাগ নির্ভুল কম্পোজের জন্য অত্যন্ত দক্ষ পর্যাপ্ত সংখ্যক জনবল (অপারেটর) ও নিজস্ব কম্পিউটারে কম্পোজের ব্যবস্থা থাকতে হবে। কম্পোজ শাখায় কোয়ার্ক, ইলাস্ট্রেটর ও ফটোশপসহ সকল উইন্ডোজ ভিত্তিক প্রোগ্রাম সফলিত কমপক্ষে ৩টি কম্পিউটার, ১২০০ ডিপিআই প্রিন্টার, স্ক্যানার ইত্যাদি থাকতে হবে এবং তার বিবরণ দাখিল করতে হবে; ঘ) যে কোন ধরনের প্রকাশনা উন্নতমানের বাঁধাই করার মত দক্ষ ও পর্যাপ্ত সংখ্যক কারিগর এবং দক্ষ ফ্রন্ট রিডার থাকতে হবে; ঙ) হালনাগাদ ট্রেড লাইসেন্স, টিআইএন নম্বরসহ হালনাগাদ আয়কর ও ভ্যাট সার্টিফিকেট, বাণিজ্যিক ব্যাংক কর্তৃক ন্যূনতম ২৫ (পঁচিশ) লক্ষ টাকার আর্থিক স্বচ্ছতার সার্টিফিকেট দাখিল করতে হবে। আর্থিক স্বচ্ছতার সার্টিফিকেট বিজ্ঞপ্তি প্রকাশের পরের তারিখের হতে হবে; চ) বিপত্ত ৫ (পাঁচ) বছরে মুদ্রণ কাজে বার্ষিক গড় টার্নওভার ন্যূনতম ৩০ (ত্রিশ) লক্ষ টাকা থাকতে হবে অর্থাৎ ৫ (পাঁচ) বছরের মোট ১.৫ (দেড়) কোটি টাকার টার্নওভার থাকতে হবে (প্রমাণপত্র দাখিল করতে হবে); ছ) দরপত্র দলিলের টেন্ডার ডাটাশিটের অন্যান্য শর্তাবলী প্রযোজ্য হবে।
৩. টেন্ডার সিকিউরিটি মানির পরিমাণ	৮৫০,০০০.০০ (টাকা পঞ্চাশ হাজার) মাত্র (ফেরতযোগ্য)।
৪. টেন্ডার সিকিউরিটি মানি জমা দেয়ার বিবরণ	টেন্ডার সিকিউরিটি মানি হিসাবে মহাব্যবস্থাপক, এন্ডপেজিটার ম্যানেজমেন্ট ডিপার্টমেন্ট-২, বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক, প্রধান কার্যালয়, ঢাকা-এর অনুকূলে বাংলাদেশে অবস্থিত যে কোনো ব্যাংক থেকে ৮৫০,০০০.০০ (পঞ্চাশ হাজার) টাকা মাত্র (ফেরতযোগ্য) ব্যাংক ড্রাফট/পে-অর্ডার স্ক্যান করে pdf ফরমেটে online এ প্রেরণ এবং মূলকপি দরপত্র খোলার (ডাউনলোড) নির্ধারিত তারিখের পূর্বে নিম্নস্বাক্ষরকারীর অফিস কক্ষে রক্ষিত টেন্ডার বাল্লী দাখিল করতে হবে।
৫. সিডিউল প্রাপ্তি, দরপত্র গ্রহণ, খোলার ঠিকানা ও সময়	বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংকের ওয়েবসাইট ( <a href="http://www.bb.org.bd">www.bb.org.bd</a> ) এ আগামী ২৩/০৬/২০২১ তারিখ সকাল ১১.০০টা পর্যন্ত e-Tendering পদ্ধতিতে উন্মোচিত আর্থিক প্রস্তাব সফলিত Form পূরণের মাধ্যমে online এ দরপত্র দাখিল করতে হবে এবং একই তারিখ সকাল ১১.৩০ মিনিটে উপস্থিত দরদাতা অথবা তাদের প্রতিনিধির উপস্থিতিতে (যদি কেহ উপস্থিত থাকেন) ডিপার্টমেন্ট অব কমিউনিকেশন এন্ড পাবলিকেশন এর (৩০ তলা ভবনের ২৭ তলায় পশ্চিম পার্শে) মহাব্যবস্থাপকের অফিস কক্ষে online এ প্রাপ্ত দরপত্রসমূহ খোলা হবে।

প্রয়োজনে বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংকের দরপত্র মূল্যায়ন কমিটি মুদ্রণ প্রতিষ্ঠান পরিদর্শন সাপেক্ষে মুদ্রণকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের উপযুক্ততা যাচাই করবে। এক্ষেত্রে অসত্য তথ্য প্রদান করলে তাদের দরপত্র বিবেচিত হবে না। বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক যে কোনো বা সকল দরপত্র কোনো প্রকার কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকে গ্রহণ কিংবা বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করে।

ব্যাংকিং ও আর্থিক সেবা পেতে হয়রানির শিকার হলে কিংবা কোনো অভিযোগ থাকলে ১৬২৩৬ নম্বরে ফোন করুন।

ডিউসিপি: ৪৮/২০২১-১৬৩২  
তারিখ: ২৫/০৫/২০২১  
জিডি: ১০৬০

  
**জি. এম. আবুল কালাম আজাদ**  
 মহাব্যবস্থাপক  
 ফোন: ৯৫৩০১৪১