

Abul Mansur Ahmad's 43rd anniversary of death today



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the 43rd death anniversary of Abul Mansur Ahmad, a renowned litterateur, journalist, and politician of the sub-continent. He died in 1979.

One of the greatest satirists of Bangla literature, he was also a pioneer of modern and progressive journalism. He worked for prominent newspapers such as Krishak, Nabajug, Sultan, and Mohammadi, and was editor of the Kolkata-based Daily Ittehad from 1946 to 1948.

He wrote about the language issue from early 1940s and contributed to the Language Movement as

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The death of a PLAYGROUND

Used as a field for 50 years, Tetultola now on way to becoming a police station

HELEML ALAM

At first glance it may not seem like much: a small piece of land, devoid of greenery or any sort of facility. But to locals, especially children, the Tetultola playground has always been a place to escape from the daily grind of life.

But the same place that was full of frolicking children even two months back, a place that has welcomed all for the last 50 years, is now surrounded by barbed wires.

On January 31, Dhaka deputy commissioner's office handed over the playground's land to Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) to set up an establishment for Kalabagan Police Station, which is currently located at a rented place on 30 North Road.

Amid a dearth of open spaces in the capital, this is yet another example of how the city dwellers are continuing to be deprived of playgrounds and parks.

However, residents refuse to give up hope to retain the playground.

For several months, they've been demonstrating with the demand to keep it as it is, for the sake of children.

Over the years, Tetultola playground, which covers around one bigha of land, has been in use in multiple ways. It has acted as a playground, an Eidgah, and a place for namaz-e-janaza.

"There is no other place for our children to play. We've been playing in the field for the last 50 years," said Syeda Ratna, coordinator of Tetultola Math Rokkha Andolon.

According to Kalabagan resident Masud Mahbub Shamim, a former engineer of DIT used to own the land. After he left the country, it was recorded as abandoned property through the then president's order, following the Liberation War. It then came under the housing and public works ministry.

After the place was announced abandoned, different people and

groups tried to grab the land using fake documents, but each of their ploys was foiled by locals, Shamim added.

On behalf of locals, Shamim even wrote a letter to the prime minister on January 20, 2014, requesting her to save the land from grabbers. Following the letter, the premier had directed authorities to look after the matter, he said.

Contacted, an official of the DC office said the land was never a

commissioner (Ramna division) of DMP, told The Daily Star that on Tuesday, Dhaka DC, the land's custodian and a representative of the government, handed over the land through the national land allotment committee. Police received the land after paying the necessary amount.

This was a government decision. As there is no permanent establishment for Kalabagan Police Station, they applied for the land, said another DMP

respectively, Habib said.

According to the playground, open spaces, parks and water bodies conservation act, no one can change the characteristics of a playground. As the place has been used as a playground for a long time, changing its characteristics will be illegal, he said.

According to a 2014 High Court judgement, there is a specific direction for the DC office to take action against any encroachment on open spaces or playgrounds, but the office is not taking any steps in this situation.

Urging city mayors to save the playground, Habib said according to the Local Government (City Corporation) Act 2009, city corporations can protect these kinds of playgrounds on an immediate basis.

Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela), said choosing a police station instead of a playground is the most "uncivilised" decision. By no standards of urban planning can this be justified. She said the plan must be scrapped, or law enforcers will come face to face with a generation that will never respect them.

Stressing the need to protect the playground, Adil Mohamad Khan, former general secretary of Bangladesh Institute of Planners, said ideally, a neighbourhood park is required for every 5,000 people, while a community park is necessary for 20,000-30,000 people in a ward. More than one city park is required for a large city.

Thirty percent of wards in Dhaka city

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PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

official.

Iqbal Habib, joint secretary of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon, said in the proposed Detailed Area Plan (DAP), Tetultola playground is not earmarked as a playground. But in sub-zone-17 (Dhanmondi, Zigatola, Kalabagan and Kathalbagan) there is a proposal to keep sufficient open space for the areas.

The estimated population of the areas would be around 2.65 lakh in 2025, and they will require 13.9 and 11.7 acres of land for playgrounds and parks,

playground; it was an abandoned property.

He said the land used to be under the housing and public works ministry, and following a land survey, it was acquired for Tk 24 crore and was handed over to the home ministry.

A gazette regarding this is waiting to be published, he added.

Md Shahid Ullah Khandaker, secretary of housing and public works ministry, said a police station is necessary at the location, but they will look into whether there were any flaws in the whole process.

Sajjadur Rahman, deputy

'A threat to freedom of expression'

Tech companies, rights bodies slam draft rules on social media

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The new draft social media regulation poses a threat to freedom of expression, said Global Network Initiative (GNI), a collective of top tech companies and rights bodies of the world.

The collective's members include Meta, Microsoft, Uber, Zoom, Telenor Group, Yahoo, Google, Nokia, Vodafone, Verizon, Human Rights Watch, Wikimedia, Committee to Protect Journalists and more.

GNI made these remarks in a letter sent to Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission on March 9.

"We are concerned by the very broad scope of the bill, from the companies and content it covers, to the significant, often-vaguely defined obligations and enforcement authorities, to potential 'traceability' and data-sharing provisions that may infringe on privacy rights," said the letter.

The statement expressed alarm at the fact that the regulation includes a "sweeping range of content and conduct that intermediaries

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Country observes birth anniversary of Bangabandhu

BSS, Dhaka

The birth anniversary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and National Children's Day were observed yesterday in a befitting manner with various socio-political and cultural organisations holding diverse programmes across the country.

Ruling Awami League and political and socio-cultural organisations placed wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu, and offered munajat seeking eternal peace of his departed soul.

People from all walks of life thronged Bangabandhu Memorial Museum at the capital's Dhanmondi, and made a vow to work together following Bangabandhu's ideals. The day was a public holiday.

On this day in 1920, the nation's architect was born in Tungipara of Gopalganj. Marking the

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Bangladesh should respond to UN concerns

Says HRW on human rights

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Human Rights Watch (HRW) yesterday urged the government to meaningfully respond to United Nations' concerns regarding grave allegations of torture, enforced disappearance, and extrajudicial killings in the country.

The US has already sanctioned the country's Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) under the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act for serious rights violations and should be excluded from UN peacekeeping deployment, the New York-based human rights organisation demanded in a report published on its website.

On March 3, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights urged the government to follow through on its commitment to respond to allegations of torture reported during a 2019 review of its obligations under the Convention against Torture.

That same day, during a meeting with UN Secretary-General António Guterres, Foreign

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On the occasion of Bangabandhu's birth anniversary, an art competition was held in front of Suhrawardy Udyan yesterday morning. With pen, pencil, paper and colour, children participating in the contest let their imaginations loose and were awarded for their efforts afterwards.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

'Not ready to let it end'

Curtain falls on Amar Ekushey Boi Mela

DIPAN NANDY

It was a bittersweet scene at the Amar Ekushey Boi Mela yesterday.

The last day of the 31-day long book fair was marked by both the joy of finally having a book fair after the difficult days of the pandemic and the sorrow that inevitably came with its conclusion.

This year's fair was the longest ever, which saw a significant volume of sales, as well as incessant attendance from booklovers, who said even 31 days were not enough for this much awaited occasion.

Even though the fair started at 11:00am yesterday, book purchases went on even when the stall lights were turning off at 9:00pm, seeming as though the readers wanted to stretch out the fair even longer.

"As a booklover, I look forward to this fair all year round," said Tariq Islam, a young reader. "The few days that the book fair go on are days that's spent in immense joy."

Eminent novelist Imdadul Haque Milon said the fair fared far better this year, since more than 3,000 books have been published. In the evening, the closing ceremony of the book fair, organised by Bangla Academy, was held at the main stage. There was also a cultural programme at Suhrawardy Udyan.

PRAYER
TIMING
MAR 18

	Fazr	Juma	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
Azan	5:00	12:30	4:30	6:14	7:45
Jamaat	5:35	1:15	4:45	6:18	8:15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

In Memory of Bushra Hossain, 1974-2020



You left in the spring, so we console ourselves
Each year when the flowers bloom