



4 to die for killing Humayun Azad

Dhaka court pronounces verdict after 18 years, calls the murder 'shameful for entire nation'

ZYMA ISLAM and CHAITANYA CHANDRA HALDER

Four members of banned militant outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) were sentenced to death yesterday for killing Prof Humayun Azad 18 years ago.

In his observation, Judge Al Mamun of Dhaka's Fourth Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court said the murder of the acclaimed author was "shameful for the entire nation".

He also said militants carried out such attacks on people promoting free speech only to destabilise the country.

None from the family of the former Dhaka University academic nor his friends, followers, or colleagues was present in the courtroom yesterday. Neither were the family members of the convicted extremists.

The court also fined the four convicts Tk 50,000 each.

They are Salehin alias Salahuddin, Anwarul Alam alias Shahid, Mizanur Rahman alias Minhaz, and Nur Mohammad alias Shamim.

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Whose pen was mightier than sword

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

If there is one thing that Humayun Azad embodied, it was the secular ethos of an independent nation. Hence his life and works could be summed up as a man's struggle against religious extremism.

A torchbearer of freethinking, he was targeted by bigots for his iconoclastic writing against communal and anti-liberation elements but he never gave up the fight against these forces of darkness.

His unconventional writing and speeches struck at religious excesses, patriarchy and all forms of social injustices. He had to pay with his life after being dubbed a murtad (apostate) by zealots.

Humayun Azad, a Dhaka University Bangla professor, wore many hats – he was an academic, a linguist, a poet, a novelist, a writer for the teens, a critic, and a columnist. His ideals and sense of humanity will remain an inspiration to all defending the right to freedom of expression.

"He championed the cause of freethinking. Nowadays, the practice of freethinking is eroding due to some obstacles as well as self-censorship. If everyone cannot speak his or her mind, our society will turn into a closed one. This is not acceptable," says academican Prof Syed Manzoorul Islam.

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Govt cautious about loans for mega projects

PM says in address to nation on Pahela Baishakh eve



UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday reaffirmed that her government remains cautious so the loans do not become a burden.

"Once these (mega) projects are implemented, the face of our economy will change. We're taking loans from domestic and foreign sources. However, we've a careful eye so that they do not become a burden," she said in an address to the nation on the eve of Pahela Baishakh.

About the mega projects, Hasina said the Padma bridge is being constructed with own funds. Other mega projects were undertaken through economic studies by local and foreign

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Baishakh gets back colours after two years

DIPAN NANDY

With the first rays of the morning sun, the nation, after two long years, is set to usher in Pahela Baishakh, the first day of Bangla New Year and the biggest secular festival for Bangladeshis.

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HOLIDAY NOTICE

The Daily Star offices will remain closed today on the occasion of Pahela Baishakh. Therefore, the newspaper will not come out tomorrow.

