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People throughout the country observed Martyred Intellectuals' Day yesterday. Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus visited the Martyred Intellectuals' Memorial in Mirpur to honour the fallen heroes. Similarly, BNP and Bangladesh Mahila Parishad also laid wreaths at the same spot, paying tribute to those killed by the Pakistani army and its collaborators in 1971.

PHOTO: PID, STAR

HEALTH REFORM Priorities primary healthcare: experts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Primary healthcare must be placed at the centre of health sector reforms and health insurance should be introduced in a way that it ensures healthcare for all, said policymakers and health professionals at an event yesterday.

Strengthening secondary and emergency healthcare systems is equally critical, they said during a national dialogue, titled "Reform Pathways for the Health Sector", organised by the UHC Forum in collaboration with BRAC at the BRAC Centre Auditorium, marking Universal Health Coverage (UHC) Day 2024.

Speakers urged the government to grant hospitals financial autonomy to manage resources, including manpower, salaries, and allowances.

Md Saidur Rahman, Secretary of the Health Services Division, highlighted the role of collaboration, saying, "We must recognise the valuable contributions of NGOs and the private sector and support their efforts so we can all work cohesively under a unified framework."

Former Director General of the Directorate General of Health Services Dr Abul Kalam Azad said, "Healthcare in Bangladesh suffers from inequitable access and inadequate service delivery, leaving providers and patients dissatisfied. To address this, UHC must be prioritised."

He also stressed the need for comprehensive reforms across primary, referral, intermediary, and emergency care services to achieve an equitable and accessible healthcare system.

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Martyred Intellectuals' Day observed countrywide

BSS, Dhaka

The nation yesterday observed Martyred Intellectuals' Day paying glowing tributes to the intellectuals who were brutally killed by the Pakistani occupation forces and their local collaborators at the end of the Liberation War in 1971.

Sensing their eventual defeat, the occupation forces and their Bangalee collaborators carried out a systematic massacre to cripple the country's intellectual potential.

National programmes were observed yesterday, honouring the fallen heroes.

President Mohammed Shahabuddin and Chief Adviser Professor Dr Muhammad Yunus gave separate messages paying profound respect to the memories of the martyred

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Sweeping reforms must for gender equality

Says Naripokkho

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Naripokkho, one of the country's oldest feminist movements, has called for sweeping reforms to promote gender equality, including a demand that political parties nominate women for one-third of their electoral rolls.

At a press conference, titled "Women's Rights and Freedom: Expectations and Actions", held yesterday at Dhaka Reporters Unity, the platform also urged for direct elections to women's reserved seats, replacing the current practice of political parties selecting candidates. "Reserved seats for women must be kept in all 64 districts," they added.

Naripokkho further demanded the reinstatement of the "no-vote" option to allow voters to express a lack of confidence in an election.

The organisation also called for the separation of religion from the state, emphasising the need to make Bangladesh secular and humane.

Other key demands included amendments to the Uniform Family Law, the Inheritance Law, and laws on guardianship, compensation, and citizenship to ensure equal rights for

women in both family and public life.

Naripokkho urged the government to amend labour laws to recognise women's work in informal sectors such as domestic work and street vending. They also insisted that all Birangonas, including those working

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increase women's representation in parliament
- Direct polls for reserved seats
- Reinstate "No Vote"
- Ensure secular governance
- Amend family laws
- Recognise informal work

as sex workers, be accorded due respect and state benefits.

The platform called for the full implementation of the National Drug Policy 2016 and an update to the National Health Policy 2011.

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Indo-Bangla ties should be based on mutual respect

Says foreign adviser

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Narsingdi

Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain has emphasised Bangladesh's commitment to fostering cordial relations with India, based on mutual respect and shared interests, akin to its approach with all nations.

"The interim government is working towards this goal," he said during a meeting in Belabo upazila of Narsingdi yesterday.

Touhid underscored the government's primary objective of ensuring a fair and credible election. "Our first task is to restore stability in the country. We aim to organise elections while paving the way for fundamental reforms, ensuring no future government deviates from this path," he said.

He acknowledged the demands of those who ousted the oppressive regime, noting that reforms would take time. "We urge everyone to remain patient," he added.

Touhid also called on political parties to work towards a future where students no longer feel compelled to protest on the streets.

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A wreath being placed on the coffin of Helal Hafiz to pay him last respect at Jatiya Press Club yesterday. The poet passed away in Dhaka on Friday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Tribute paid to Helal Hafiz

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Best known as the poet of rebellion and love, Helal Hafiz was laid to rest with state honours yesterday at the Martyred Intellectuals Graveyard at Mirpur in Dhaka.

For a man who cherished solitude throughout his life, his final moments were anything but lonely.

State advisers, journalists, poets, writers, and people from all walks of life flocked to honour him one last time, adorning his coffin with flowers and shedding heartfelt tears.

The poet's body was brought to the Bangla Academy premises at 11:00am, where his first namaz-e-janaza took place.

Later in the afternoon, following a second funeral prayer at the National Press Club, his body was taken to the Martyred Intellectuals' Graveyard in Mirpur, where he was laid to rest.

Among those who paid tribute were Law Adviser Asif Nazrul, Cultural Affairs Adviser Mostofa Sarwar Farooki, and the Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam.

At the Bangla Academy, freedom fighter and Liberation War Affairs Adviser Faruk E Azam (Bir Protik) and Bangla Academy Director General

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Don't waste second chance to build nation

Says Asif Nazrul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The "second chance" to build Bangladesh, earned through the sacrifices of its youth, must not be squandered, Law Adviser Asif Nazrul said yesterday.

Speaking at the Martyred Intellectuals Memorial in Mirpur, Dhaka, on Martyred Intellectuals' Day, Nazrul told reporters, "The opportunity we have to build the nation, through the sacrifices of our youth, must not be wasted. This is our commitment today."

He reminded the nation that the spirit of the Liberation War, driven by the freedom fighters' love for the country, continued in the July mass uprising. "In July, students fought fearlessly for democracy, people's rights, and a society free from discrimination," Nazrul said.

The adviser also expressed his disappointment over Bangladesh's failure to achieve the dream of a prosperous and just nation. He attributed this failure to a particular mindset and shortcomings in political leadership.

"Despite the sacrifices of many in 1971, we have not realised the dream of a just, prosperous Bangladesh. Let us not allow this failure to repeat," he added.

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