

“A growing number of people are showing interest in Astronomy”

Floating Hubble

**Interview of Professor of AAZ Ahmed, Professor of Physics, BRAC University
Interview taken by Mahdin Mahboob**

The infinite skies and the mysterious universe have sparked interest in men since time unknown. The innumerable stars, planets and many other celestial bodies have always remained a great wonder to us. According to historical records, the pioneers of Astronomy and its studies lived in Greece and hence the place is known as the cradle of Astronomy. Scientists and philosophers like Galileo Galilee, Johannes Kepler and Nicholas Copernicus introduced Astronomy to the general people. Recent advances in science and technology and the invention of the telescope has revolutionized this study to a great extent.



The Bangladesh Astronomical Association, initiated by a group of enthusiasts in 1988 has been working relentlessly for the last 20 years to increase the awareness and enthusiasm about Astronomy and to provide guidance and teaching to those interested in the form of seminars, workshops and various other activities. The Association also organizes regular star-gazing sessions and sightings of solar eclipses and other rare astronomical occurrences. In an exclusive Interview with Star Campus, Professor Ziauddin Ahmed, Member of the Executive Committee of Bangladesh Astronomical Association(BAA) and Chairman of the Bangladesh Astro-Olympiad, talks about the different aspects of the Association.

Star Campus (SC): How did the Astronomical Association start and what were its motives? How did you get involved with the organization?

Prof. AAZ Ahmed (AAZ): The Astronomical Association started to fulfill the desire of the young people who were interested to know about Astronomy, and not by professional astronomers. They took interest and they were amateur astronomers in the sense that it was just the observation of skies, looking at the



planets and the stars. Then the formalization came and the Association was formed. I personally am associated with the Association since 1989 when I was the Chairman of SPARSO (Space Research and Remote Sensing Organization).

The BAA regularly holds workshops, once a year, sometimes twice every year and so they invited me to give a talk. I talked on satellites and that was my first interaction with the association and since then I have been giving speech on each of their workshops. Since 1988, BAA has arranged 15 workshops including two last year.

SC: Tell us about some activities of the BAA.

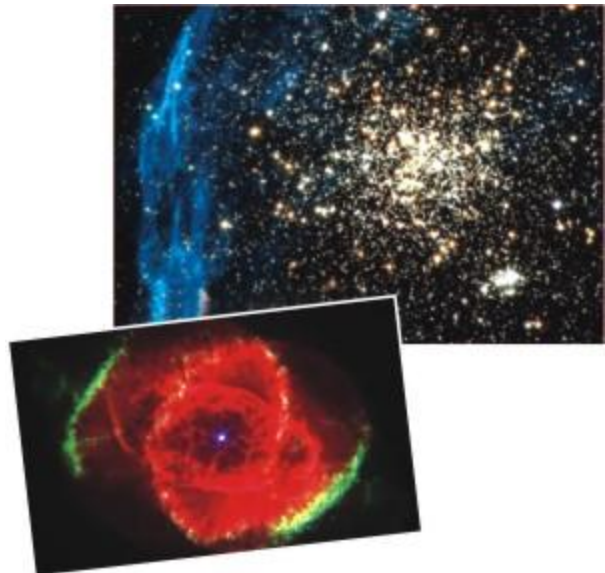
AAZ: Talking about the workshops, they usually last for three months and every week there are lectures on topics of Astronomy and Cosmology. Renowned professors including Prof. Dipen Bhattacharya (University of California) and Prof. Mofizuddin Ahmed (Head of MNS Department, BRAC University) also give speech in these workshops.

The workshop participants comprise of a very diverse population, school children to people over fifty years. So anyone interested is practically welcome to these workshops.

SC: What exactly is the Astro-Olympiad?

AAZ: In 2006 we arranged the first Astronomical Olympiad in Bangladesh and also organized it in 2007. The Olympiad was first held in the 6 divisional headquarters of the country participated by school children ranging from 14-17 years of age. It included quizzes, written exams with MCQs and other such events. In the national round, which was held in Dhaka, more than 200 students from different schools all across the country participated in the event.

We sent the top three students from this event to the International Astro-Olympiad held in Chiang Mai, Thailand last year where students from 21 countries in the world participated. We are also hopeful of sending students to the Olympiad in Indonesia this year.



SC: What other activities does the BAA have?

AAZ: We also regularly publish Mohakash Barta, the first national bi-monthly magazine on space science and astronomy and have organized Space Festivals in 1996, 1999 and 2000 in BUET. We had arranged for the observation of the Hell-bop comet in 15 districts of Bangladesh in 1997. And of course, we have regular star gazing sessions every Saturday in the Dhanmondi playground.

SC: What future plans does the BAA have?

AAZ: Our future plans include having our own building complete with a planetarium, library, auditorium and all other facilities needed to do scientific research in this field.

For those of you who are interested in two of these regular events of the BAA:

* Observing the night sky through telescope. In this regard the Association runs a sky observation camp from sunset to 8:30 pm at Dhanmondi Club Playground, Road-8, Dhanmondi R/A Dhaka-1215.

* People interested in registering for the workshop should contact : Moshurul Amin, General Secretary of

Bangladesh Astronomical Association,
75, Science Laboratory Road.
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