



## Obaidullah Khan passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Renowned litterateur and former civil servant Abu Zafar Mohammad Obaidullah Khan died of heart attack after 13 months of 'semi-comatose state' at his Gulshan residence yesterday afternoon. He was 67.

He is survived by his wife Mahjabeen Khan, two sons - Partha and Titas, one daughter - Kakatua - and a host of relatives, friends, and admirers to mourn his death.

Khan was the second son of See related story on page 11.

Speaker of the then Pakistan National Assembly Abdul Jabbar Khan. Eminent journalists Sadeq Khan and Enayetullah Khan, politician Rasheed Khan Menon and businessman Shahidullah Khan are his brothers and former lawmaker Selima Rahman is his sister.

He had been in 'non-communicable stage' since February 14 last year following a brain haemorrhage. He was admitted to the Combined Military Hospital from where he was shifted to Singapore for treatment. But he never regained consciousness.

Family sources said the Namaj-e-Janaja of Obaidullah Khan will be held at Gulshan Central Mosque after Johr prayer today. He will be buried at Banani Graveyard.

Born on February 4, 1934 in Barisal, Khan obtained his MA degree in English from Dhaka See PAGE 11 COL 1

## AL activist shot dead in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

An Awami League activist was gunned down by terrorists at his residence at West Gatiadanga village under Saktania thana yesterday afternoon, police said.

Police said Mofizur Rahman, 56, was killed allegedly by Jamaat-Shibir cadres led by Ahmed alias Ahmadya He was wanted in several cases.

A gang of armed terrorists entered the residence of Mofiz and sprayed bullet on him when he was sleeping. They fled immediately, police said.

Mofiz could identify the terrorists before his death. They were Bashar, Nezam, Mansur, Selim and Ahmadya, police said quoting victim's family members.

Later, police sent the body to CMCH for autopsy.

A case was filed in this regard with Saktania thana.

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	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Mar 20		6.10pm
Mar 21	6-02 am	

## Prayer Timings

March 20		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fazr	5-20	5-50
Zohr	12-45	1-30
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-13	6-18
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation

# Power handover after Apr 17, election by June 12

## PM tells President at Bangabhaban

NAZMUL ASHRAF And REAZ AHMAD

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in a brief but exclusive discussion with President Shahabuddin Ahmad at the Bangabhaban last night informed him about her plan to hand over power to the next caretaker government after April 17 and her party's readiness to contest the next general election by June 12.

April 17 is the day when the country's first government was formed at Mujibnagar during the

War of Independence back in 1971.

During the talks lasting for about five minutes, the prime minister also preferred a dialogue with the opposition to defuse all election-related disputes before Awami League leaves office, sources said.

Details of the talks could not be known immediately.

The prime minister is expected to meet the president again in a couple of days to have a detailed discussion on the matters of early polls, an influential minister told The Daily Star late night last night.

In a similar development, BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Jatiya Sangsad Khaleda Zia has reportedly sought an appointment with the president to brief him about the opposition stance on the next polls, a competent source in the party said.

The discussion followed a dinner hosted by the president for the ministers and a select group of ruling Awami League leaders. The weekly cabinet meeting held at the Bangabhaban from 6:30 pm to 8:30

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## UPDF men behind abduction?

### 3 Europeans thank govt, army

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

The three rescued European hostages said yesterday they were grateful to Bangladesh government and the Army for their rescue 'in good condition' and 'without payment of ransom.'

They named a political group which had initially claimed responsibility for their abduction in Rangamati on February 16.

"We thank the Prime Minister, the government and the Bangladesh Army for our release," Torben Mikkelsen said in an opening statement at a press conference.

The three -- Danes Torben Mikkelsen, 48 and Nils Hulgaard, 62 and Briton Tim Selby, 28 -- staying at the Combined Military Hospital in the city since their rescue three days back in a lightning army operation were presented before newsmen at 4:25 pm at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They were clean-shaven and had their hair cut.

The press conference was also attended by Foreign Secretary Moazzem Ali, British High Commissioner David Carter, Danish Ambassador Finn Thilsted, Chief of General Staff of Bangladesh Army Ahsan Nazmul Amin and family members of the freed hostages.

The foreign secretary introduced the guests present while the Chief of General Staff presented CMH health certificates to the freed hostages.

The three replied to a number of questions from newsmen. The See PAGE 11 COL 3

## 2 activists of UPDF held in Rangamati

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

Search operation for nabbing extortionists and other anti-social elements continued in areas in Rangamati hill district cordoned off by army during the hostage drama, security sources said.

It could not yet be known when the cordon would be lifted although the three European hostages were freed on Saturday.

Some of the troops who fell ill while on duty in and around Kalapahar area of Rangamati, were however evacuated after the end of the abduction drama, security sources informed.

Meanwhile, two activists of United Peoples Democratic Front (UPDF), a forum of anti-peace treaty supporters, were arrested in the past

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Torben Mikkelsen (3rd L) makes an animated gesture during a press briefing at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday, as Tim Selby (L) of Great Britain, fellow Dane Nils Hulgaard (2nd L) and Foreign Secretary S Moazzem Ali (R) look on. Mikkelsen, Hulgaard and Selby, held hostage by tribal kidnapers since February 16 and freed Saturday morning, narrated their experience during the 29-day captivity in the hills of Rangamati.

## 10 industrialists in Khulna lobbying to contest polls

QUAZI AMANULLAH, Khulna

At least 10 industrialists in south-western districts of the country may seek nomination from Awami League and BNP to contest in the next parliamentary election.

They have already started lobbying with big shots of the parties and are making mass contact in their areas.

They have turned philanthropic, donating money for educational institutions, mosques and clubs.

They are often seen even in remote villages, meeting people and giving tips and gifts.

Sources said industrialist Kazi Shahed Ahmed will seek AL nomination from Jessore-3 constituency. He has already launched a hectic programme to meet the people. He has reportedly formed a big group of young AL workers and are giving various benefits to them.

Young industrialist TS Ayub may seek nomination from BNP from Jessore-4 (Abhoynagar-Bagharpara). He gave a big amount of money for holding the four-party alliance rally in Jessore in January, the sources said.

Another industrialist Abul Hossain Azad has started lobbying for BNP nomination from Keshabpur-Monirampur constituency. He is reportedly being backed by Begum Zia's son Tarek Rahman.

Noor-e-Alam Siddiqui and another young industrialist Shafigul Islam See PAGE 11 COL 2

## RU classes resume today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Classes of the Rajshahi University will resume today after 32-day unscheduled closure amid tight security.

Meanwhile, All Party Students Unity (APSU) of the university called a 72-hour strike on the campus beginning tomorrow.

APSU, student wing of the BNP-led four-party alliance called the strike to press home its three-point demand including security of the students and withdrawal of cases against its leaders and workers.

The residential halls reopened yesterday. The RU authorities asked the resident students to stay only in their respective halls. But the non-resident students would be allowed to stay in their respective halls as guests of the resident students with the permission of hall authorities.

The students have also been asked to keep their identity cards with them when they go to the campus. The hall gates will be shut down at 10.00 pm every day, RU sources said.



Friends and relatives mourn the death of Wahidur Rahman (left) and Abdur Rashed Sikdar Bachchu, gunned down near Panthapath and on the BUET campus in the city yesterday. Police recovered several spent cartridges (inset) from the spot where Sikdar, organising secretary of Lalbagh thana unit of Jubo League, was murdered. Wahid was president of Ward 50 unit of Jubo Dal.

## BNP discusses movement, polls strategy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP Standing Committee yesterday discussed the latest political situation, especially Awami League government's 'delay' in resigning and the Opposition's movement and election strategy.

The meeting discussed giving a deadline from the Opposition's March 21 public meeting in the city for the government's resignation within this month.

The meeting also discussed the government's resignation, hand-over of power to a caretaker government and dissolution of parliament on the same day.

But the decision about the deadline was not finalised at the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned and it will resume soon, meeting sources See PAGE 11 COL 1

## Three political activists shot dead in city

### Doctor allegedly pushed down from fourth floor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three political activists and a doctor were killed in separate incidents in the city yesterday.

A pro-BNP Jubo Dal leader, and a leader and an activist of ruling party-backed Jubo League were gunned down, while a post-graduate student of the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) was allegedly pushed down from the fourth floor of his dormitory building.

Wahidur Rahman, 40, president of the Ward 50 unit of Jubo Dal was reading newspapers pasted on the wall near his Al-Amin Road resi-

dence near Panthapath in the city's Dhanmondi area when four or five armed men, riding motorcycles, shot him point-blank.

According to police, Wahid came out at 9:30 in the morning as his wife looked on from their first-floor residence. As he stopped by to read newspapers pasted on the wall nearby, the unknown assailants rode in on motorbikes, shot him on the head and the chest, and quickly left the scene.

Local people took Wahid, father of two, to the nearby Samorita Hospital where the attending doctors declared him dead. Later police sent the body to the Dhaka Medical

College Hospital (DMCH) morgue for autopsy.

Wahid's wife Marzina Begum, who later filed a case with the Dhanmondi Police Station, suspected political rivalry behind the killing of her husband.

Wahid, who had control over Mohakhali inter-district bus terminal during the BNP regime and were implicated in a number of cases including the one for firing shots at the then opposition leader Sheikh Hasina in 1991, sources said. He was a prospective candidate for the post of Ward 50 Commissioner.

Wahid was earlier arrested for See PAGE 11 COL 3

## Kader has joined hands with govt, says Manzur

STAR REPORT

Naziur Rahman Manzur, Secretary-General of a faction of Jatiya Party who is now in hiding, told The Daily Star over telephone last night that party Chairman HM Ershad's younger brother GM Kader MP is working for the government.

Manzur also said he was only obeying the orders of Ershad.

"Ershad's brother GM Kader is working for the government and is trying to take Jatiya Party to the parliament bypassing Ershad's decision by consulting an intelligence official of the Indian High Commission and the Palestine Ambassador. How can they meet Ershad in jail? This is a foreign interference in local politics," he said.

The secretary-general claimed that the Indian High Commission official and the Palestine envoy had a behind-the-bars meeting with former president Ershad.

Demanding ouster of these two diplomats from Bangladesh, he said, "How can a person be the Palestine ambassador to Bangladesh for 20 years?"

However, following news reports in some Bangla dailies the Indian See PAGE 11 COL 3

## Ershad keeping 'contact' with both govt, Opposition

ZAYADUL AHSAN

Jailed former president HM Ershad is now playing a dual role from inside the Dhaka Central Jail, backing one JP faction's plan to toe the government line and join the upcoming session of the Jatiya Sangsad, while urging the other to maintain relations with the four-party opposition alliance.

According to political observers, the JP chairman is trying to maintain contact with both the government and the opposition to ensure his release from jail.

The faction led by his younger brother GM Kader that wants the party lawmakers to join the next parliament session is meeting the party chief in jail while JP Secretary General Naziur Rahman Manzur-led group is keeping in touch with Ershad through exchange of written messages.

JP sources fear that the feud between these two factions may result in further split in the party.

Sunday night's shooting incident outside the party's central office at Kalabagan while a presidium meeting was on was a sequel to the

dispute between the two factions, sources said.

In March 1999 Communications Minister Anwar Hossain Manju and lawmakers loyal to him decided to continue with the coalition with the ruling party despite Ershad's opposition, which resulted in a split. Besides, Kazi Zafar Ahmed and Dr Abdul Matin earlier led two JP factions.

According to JP sources, there is a move under the leadership of Dr Matin and Manzur to cause yet another split.

"Chronology of events will only say if there is any chance for another split in the JP," Dr. Matin told The Daily Star last night. "Those who are

differing with party decisions have the right to form a new faction."

Dr. Matin, however, said he would not abandon the four-party alliance, although he has a track record of changing parties.

Contacted by mobile phone, JP's absconding Secretary General Naziur Rahman Manzur claimed that Ershad was very much with him.

"Anybody wishing to quit the party can do so," he said. "Many collaborators of the government earlier left the party, but JP existed nevertheless."

Meanwhile, Kader said, "Ershad is Jatiya Party. Whoever is with him is

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## Liaison body decides JP can meet Speaker for 'plough' if they don't join JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP-led opposition alliance has allowed Jatiya Party (Ershad) to meet the Speaker and seek "division vote" of party MPs to get back its election symbol "plough" on assurance from the party that it would not attend parliament proceedings.

The Central Liaison Committee (CLC) of the alliance took the decision at a meeting yesterday at the official residence of the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament, BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan chaired the meeting.

According to sources concerned, four Presidium members of JP informed the meeting the party Presidium's decision to seek division vote to get back "plough" symbol as the Election Commission

(EC) has suspended distribution of this symbol.

The EC took the decision as both the factions of JP one led by former president H Ershad and the other by Communications Minister Anwar Hossain Manju demanded the symbol "Plough".

Briefing newsmen later, Mannan Bhuiyan said JP was allowed to meet the Speaker to seek division vote for "plough" symbol.

JP leaders will first meet the Speaker at his chamber and seek division vote and the Speaker will act as per Constitutional provisions. The party's lawmakers will go to the House if the Speaker refuses to conduct the voting in his chamber, See PAGE 11 COL 6