

Obaidullah Khan dead

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University in 1954. He did diploma in Public Administration from Magdole College of Cambridge University in 1959. He was also a fellow of the Centre for International Affairs of Harvard University and East-West Centre of the USA.

Khan joined civil service in 1957, securing second position in the CSS examination in the then Pakistan.

Khan served as secretary of Rural Development and Co-operatives Division from 1972 to 1974 and in the Agriculture Ministry from 1974 to 1982. He was Bangladesh's ambassador to the United States from 1984 to 1987 and Additional Secretary General of Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) from 1991 to 1997.

He is the author of a number of poetry books. His famous poetry books include 'Shatmani Har' (1955), 'Kokhono Rang, Kokhono Shur' (1970), 'Komoler Chokh' (1974), 'Aami Kingbodanter Katha Bolchi' (1981), 'Brishti-O-Shahoshi Purusher Janyo Prarthona' (1983), 'Aamar Samoy' (1987) and 'Aamar Sakol Katha' (1993).

Other important publications of Khan are Poverty Oriented Rural

Development and the United Nations Family: A Turning Point (1976), Yellow Sand Hills China Through Chinese Eyes (1974), Problems and Prospects in Bangladesh (1973), Cultural Revolution in a Chinese Commune (1972), Rural Development in South Asia (1980) and Political Commitment and Rural Development FAO (1979). He also had a number of short stories to his credit.

Khan got the prestigious Bangla Academy Award in 1979 and Ekushey Padak in 1985 for his outstanding contribution to Bengali literature.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has expressed her deep shock at the death of the noted poet and civil servant.

In a condolence message, she said the nation would remember with gratitude his outstanding contributions to Bengali literature.

She conveyed her sympathy to members of the bereaved family and prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul.

Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies also expressed deep shock at the death of Khan.

3 Europeans thank govt

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foreign secretary however prevented newsmen from asking several questions and supplementary questions.

The freed Europeans with a sense of relief mentioned the efforts of the government under the leadership of the Prime Minister and the Bangladesh Army for securing their freedom. Nils Hulgaard broke down in sobs while expressing his gratitude.

Asked about identity of the abductors and whether they had any political motive, Mikkelsen said, "We did not know if they had any political motive but immediately after our capture, one of the interpreters mentioned about United Peoples' Democratic Party (UPDF)."

The UPDF opposes the CHT peace accord.

However, Mikkelsen added that subsequently no mention of the organisation's name was made and the abductors always insisted on extracting ransom. On the first night, they demanded through US \$500 million taka for our release.

"It seems their main motive was money, and not political," he emphasised.

Asked why they did not have any escort on the day of kidnapping and went there a day ahead of schedule, he said, "We are engineers. And it is our company policy to work as per our needs and not under any restricted format."

In reply to a question, he said the abductors spoke in Chakma language and the interpreters spoke in English.

Mikkelsen said when the kidnappers presented briefly a "political façade, we tried to explain that our work was good for the people of the Hill Tracts."

He however said that four days after the abduction, the kidnappers insisted that they are not members of any political party.

When asked was their company, Kampsax, or any one else involved in the abduction for any reason, he replied, "Surely not. We have suffered. If you see our legs, you will understand our ordeal."

He said they were normally hidden in a dense jungle. Initially they were kept in a bamboo-made structure whose length and breadth were three metres each way. "This would serve as our bed and living room. However, during our captivity of 29 days, we were

moved to 15 or 16 locations. Our locations were changed at night when the abductors made us walk between two to six hours, crossing rivers and through dense forests."

They were given three meals a day. Breakfast comprised banana, tea or coffee and was served by 8 am, lunch comprised rice, vegetables and meat and was given by noon. Dinner was served by 6.30 pm, he said.

About the day they were rescued, Mikkelsen said, "We were made to walk from eight in the evening till five in the morning. Later, one shot was fired from the hostage takers' side and there were several gunshots from the other side. We immediately took cover. Later, we were rescued by the members of the Army."

Meanwhile, the three Europeans along with their families were due to leave Dhaka by a Singapore Airlines flight last night.

Sources in the missions concerned said they would fly to their respective countries from Singapore.

Ershad

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with the party."

A presidium member close to him commented that those unwilling to secure Ershad's release and protect the party's election symbol better leave the party.

"Departure of such betrayers will rather strengthen the party," he remarked.

Pointing finger at Manzur, the JP leader said it cannot be accepted that Ershad would continue in jail for anybody's personal interest.

However, it was evident from conversations with several JP policymakers that Ershad is promoting both the conflicting groups.

The JP leaders who believe that Ershad wants to get released with the blessings of the government are willing to be with the opposition alliance during the tenure of the caretaker government.

Against this backdrop, the JP lawmakers meet today to decide on the crucial issue of joining the parliament's coming session beginning on March 29.

Arms trade

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country which is higher than the number of guns available, as in most cases one gun is used by more than one person," he said adding that about 80,000 to 90,000 users operate under the patronage of political parties.

Reading out a paper, he said 30 to 40 incidents of armed violence take place across the country everyday killing 1000 to 1500 people every year. Seventy-five per cent died in direct gunfire, 20 per cent of whom are teenagers.

About 500 to 800 people become disabled in incidents of gun violence while between 50,000 to 100,000 persons, particularly women and children are trafficked from the country to India, Pakistan and Middle-East each year, the survey revealed. "About 300 to 500 people are picked up at gunpoint."

The paper also said that the crime groups under the patronage of mainstream political parties and their youth and student fronts constitute the largest user group of illegal small arms. Fundamentalist groups, left political parties in south-western region of the country and groups opposed to CHT peace accord also contribute a good number of illegal users of small arms.

Among others, executive director of BDPC Syed Nurul Alam and project director of the BDPC Abul Hossain spoke on the occasion.

Ode to Obaidullah Khan

One of the most exciting voices of contemporary Bengali poetry embarks on his eternal journey

ZIAUL KARIM

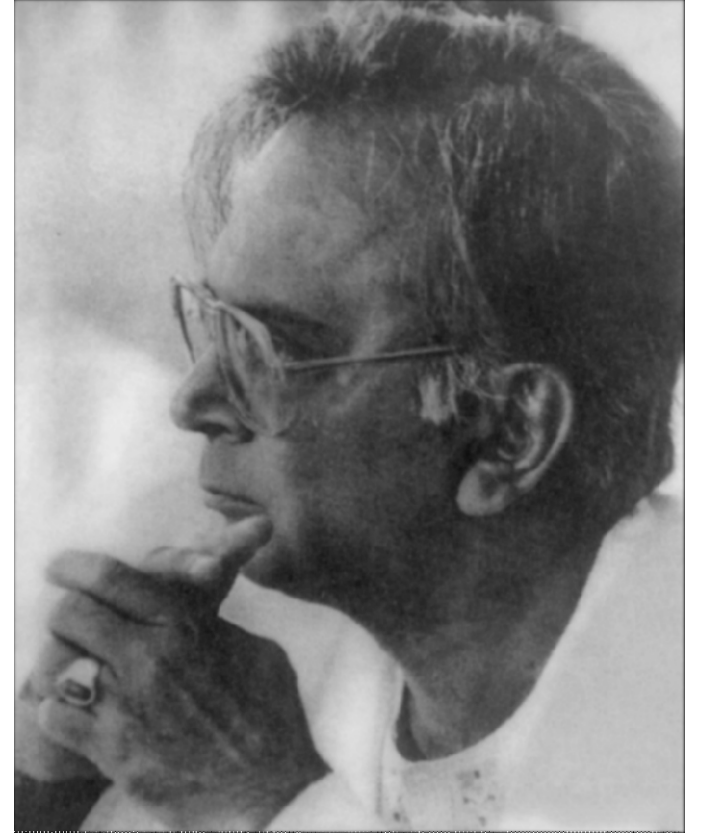
*It is legend that I speak about
I speak about my ancient fore-father.*

Fecund and sensitive poet AZM Obaidullah Khan, whose poetic canvas holds the aspiration of the nation and paints our cultural ethos in the lines of his memorable poems, has always been a treat to Bengali poetry lovers. Always at the thick of action, Obaidullah Khan possessed a Herculean energy to perform duties as a civil servant, do research work and then sleep into his depth to filter out poems garnished with passion and a deep sense of nationalism.

A voice *sui generis*, Obaidullah created his own diction by exploring traditional Bengali rhyme, and modern Bengali poetry found a new stream in Obaidullah when his first book of verse *Satnari Har* was published in 1955. His second book of poems *Kakhana Raang Kakhana Soor* that came out in 1970 established him as one of the exciting voices in contemporary modern Bengali poetry. His other major poetical works include *Kalamer Chokh* (1978), *Aami Kingbadanter Katha Bolchi* (1981), *Sahisnu Pratiskha* (1982), *Bristi-O-Sahashi Purusher Jannaya Prarthana* (1983), *Aamar Sakal Katha* (1993).

Simple and meditative, Obaidullah's poems are an invitation to an energy field that casts a mystic feeling on his readers. He was moving gradually to an uncharted world of metaphysics. In his last book *Khachar Vitar Achin Pakhi* he seemed to exploring his inner self and gradually dealing with the theme of death.

Born at Girza Mahallah, Barisal on February 8, 1934, Obaidullah did his BA (Hons) and MA at Dhaka University in 1954 and Diploma in Development Economics and Public Administration from Magdalen College, Cambridge, UK in 1959. One of the enlightened minds of our time, Obaidullah was equally concerned with issues like self-development and effective development. His book *Creative Development* is a scientific enquiry



Obaidullah Khan

with a poetic insight on the understanding of poverty. Obaidullah argued in the book that development had to touch the creative chords of people. And that people had an inherent urge for being creative and purposeful in their day to day struggle for survival. He is also the author of *Poverty Oriented Rural Development* and *UN Family A Turning Point* (1976); *Three Great Struggles in the Chinese Countryside* (1977); *Yellow Sand Hills China through Chinese Eyes* (1974); *Rural Development: Problems and Prospects in Bangladesh* (1973); *Cultural Revolution in a Chinese Commune* (1972); *An Unfinished Story Rural Development in South Asia* (1980).

Prolific and having a great hunger for knowledge, Obaidullah was a walking encyclopaedia on a various fields of knowledge. He

was Senior Fellow, Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies between 1980-82, Fellow of Centre for International Affairs, Harvard University where he taught a course on China. He was also Poet -in-residence at East West Centre.

He was awarded the most coveted prize in literature the Bangla Academy Award for his contribution in poetry in 1979 and the country's highest civilian award the Ekushey Padak in 1985.

In the dedication of his *Collected Poems* published in 1999, Obaidullah wrote, "This is a request to my near and dear ones if I die let moonlight flood my body." His poems have been for us the shining moonlight for about a half-century and will remain so in the years to come.

BNP strategy

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said.

BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia chaired the meeting, held at her official residence.

The meeting discussed the Prime Minister's declaration at the holy city of Medina about holding of the next parliamentary election by June 12 and expressed the view that she has shifted from her stance.

"The meeting observed that she is staging a drama in the name of early election", a Standing Committee member who attended the meeting told The Daily Star.

The Standing Committee said it would have been wise for the government to resign on March 10 to give the caretaker government three months' time to hold the election.

But the government is delaying in resigning to give the caretaker government a very short time for holding the election without resolving some "vital issues", specially recovery of illegal arms, the meeting observed.

The meeting observed that it would not be wise for BNP to go for election till recovery of illegal arms because the ruling party has "distributed illegal weapons to its activists throughout the country".

Stadium-4

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killing and other nefarious activities for the sake of peace and stability necessary for smooth elections.

She also asked Khaleda to get involved in the process of elections, saying, "If the people vote for you, you shall definitely form the government. But for god's sake, don't inflict sufferings on the people in the name of movement."

Presided over by Dhaka City Mayor and President of Football Federation Mohammad Hanif, the meeting was also addressed, among others, by State Minister for Youth and Sports Obaidul Quader, Deputy Minister for LGRD and President of Cricket Board Saber Hossain Chowdhury and Youth and Sports Secretary Manik Lal Samaddar.

Bangabandhu

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ments yesterday reading out depositions of some witnesses tried to prove Justice Ruhul Amin's mistakes in discarding statements of some important witnesses thus acquitting Col Mohiuddin.

Hearings will resume at 10:30 am today.

WFP food aid

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through food-for-work in high food insecure areas. This component will gradually be phased out and its activities integrated into the IFS programme.

WFP has started functioning by opening field sub-offices in Rangpur, Khulna, Chittagong and Dhaka.

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2 UPDF activists

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two days from the Kalapahar area of Rangamati. The two were allegedly involved in incidents of extortion and other anti-social activities.

The arrested UPDF activists were identified as Amar Bikash Chakma and Rupayan Chakma, police sources said. They were handed over to Naniarchar thana police.

BSS adds: Rangamati police yesterday rescued Mintoo Chakma, 22, from Reserve Bazaar area of the town with head injuries after a group of people attacked him for his alleged involvement in a mugging incident.

Police said Mintoo and one of his tribal friends snatched Tk 47,000 from businessman Abu Shawdagar, 35, on his way from Rangamati to Bilaichhari, and left him high and dry on an island in Kaptai lake. But at around 11am yesterday, Abu identified Mintoo roaming in the Bazaar area, prompting immediate retaliation from Abu's friends.

Rangamati police said armed tribal extortionists yesterday evening forced a truck driver to pay Tk 2000 at Champatali in Kawkhali upazila and also stole different goods from a microbus before fleeing.

Khulna: Polls

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Apu are spending huge amounts of money for AL nomination from Jhenidah-2.

Shahatuz Jumma and Parveen Talukdar will seek AL nomination from Jhenidah-3 (Maheshpur-Kotchandpur) and Tofazzal Hossain Bablu from Jhenidah-4 (Kaliganj). The three made fortunes in the last five years.

Shrimp exporter and former president of BFFEA Kazi Shahnewaz and another businessman Mohammad Zakaria are trying their best to get nomination from AL and BNP respectively to contest in Narail-2.

Power handover

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p.m. also preceded the dinner.

In the cabinet meet, the prime minister also shared her plans with the ministers before having the discussion with the president, meeting sources said.

The BNP-led opposition alliance, however, is still averse to the AL idea.

A meeting of the BNP's highest decision-making body the National Standing Committee last night reiterated the party's position that the government resign immediately to pave the way for election in May.

The PM's move to involve the president in resolving the lingering political crisis over the timeframe of an early election came two days ahead of the opposition plan to issue an ultimatum to the government to hand over power to the next caretaker government.

So long, BNP had been seeking presidential intervention in resolving the political crisis while AL was reluctant to go for such an option. But as the AL now wants the president to act, BNP is opposing the

idea on ground that all issues related to the election should be dealt with by the caretaker government.

The ruling party prefers issues such as formation of the caretaker government and recasting of the Election Commission to be sorted out before the transfer of power.

Both AL and BNP are now talking about issues which are usually taken care of by the caretaker government. AL wants formation of caretaker administration and changes in the EC fearing that BNP might raise new demands and make the polls uncertain.

BNP, too, has raised the issue of recovering illegal arms and changes in the EC despite the fact the caretaker government usually resolves such issues.

Earlier, the cabinet approved a proposed amendment to the Civil Courts Act, 1887 for updating the law. It also approved another proposal for amendment of Local Government (Union Parishad) Ordinance, 1983.

Kader has joined hands

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High Commission yesterday issued a press release to categorically refute the allegation that an Indian diplomat had visited Ershad in jail. "This allegation is not based on facts," the press release said. "The High Commission regrets publication of such baseless and misleading reports."

Jailer of the Dhaka Central Jail Farman Ali also vehemently denied reports and said no such meeting ever took place.

Naziur said Kader has no legal source of income other than the salary he draws as a lawmaker. Kader's wife runs a boutique shop, yet he drives a Pajero V-6 wagon. He has accounts at the Standard Chartered Bank.

His another brother GM Morshed lives in US and has a foreign account with a bank at Uttara where a sum of US\$ 50000 dollars is being deposited every month. Kader's wife is the nominee for the account, Manzur said.

"Where does this money come from? Must be Indian money." The JP secretary-general

pointed out that the government was not only trying to destroy the four-party alliance, but also conspiring to give the election symbol of plough to the Anwar Hossain Monju-led JP faction.

Elaborating, he said, "Ershad is in jail and I'm in hiding. In such a situation if there is a move to take the party to the parliament through voting, it would not be hard for Monju to buy some MPs. In so doing, Monju can prove the majority of his faction and take away the plough symbol."

Manzur said if the Ershad-led faction can guarantee its majority in the parliament, then "I have no objection."

He said he intends to lie low in fear of arrest.

Asked who would lead the party while the JP chairman is in jail and the secretary general in hiding, he said, "As a leader in hiding, I'm more active than before."

Meanwhile, GM Kader denied all the charges slapped on him by Manzur. "I've three houses and I get rents. I don't have any account with the Standard Chartered Bank."

Three shot dead in city

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alleged involvement in establishing control over Mohakhali bus terminal, police said, adding that back in 1995 he was also nabbed with illegal weapon and released on bail later on.

Few hours later, away on the BUET campus, Abdur Rashed Sikdar Bachchu, 26, organising secretary of the Lalbagh thana unit of ruling party-backed Jubo League, was shot dead in front of hundreds of students near the university's central library.

Five young men, equipped with weapons, came in from the west of BUET power substation at around 1:00pm and chased Bachchu and his companion Babu Sikdar, witnesses said.

As Bachchu fell down, the gunman shot him twice on the head, once on the chest, once on the face and twice on the right hand. Babu also sustained bullet injury in his right hand.

The armed youths then ran away through the entrance near the university's Shaheed Minar and were whisked away on a white microbus, officer-in-charge of Lalbagh thana Rafiqur Islam said.

The OC led a police team to the spot immediately after the incident and recovered eight spent cartridges.

An army vehicle, which had come to the BUET to pick up their students, took the victim to the nearby DMCH where attending doctor at the emergency declared Bacchu dead, students those witnessed the incident said. Babu

was also admitted to the DMCH. Bachchu's car, a blue sedan, was kept under lock and key in front of the BUET cafeteria where hundreds of students were in queue to catch homebound buses. Police seized the vehicle from the area.

Bachchu, son of Nurul Islam Sikdar, was a resident of 12/1 Duriangul Lane of Katamasjid at Azimpur.

Naser Sikdar, the victim's elder brother, said some enemies of his brother might have killed him but he declined to elaborate.

Bachchu, a M. A. final-year student of political science at Jagannath University College, was a contractor listed with the Facilities Department.

Frightened students, some of whom were studying at the library while others came out of their classes and cafeteria, ran pell-mell during the armed attack on Bachchu and Babu.

Some students, who witnessed from the library building, told The Daily Star that they saw a young man get out of a car and sit on a wall in between the library and cafeteria. He looked upset, one of the students said. After the incident, they came to know that the young man was Bachchu, was shot dead reportedly as a sequel to a dispute over sharing of profit from a cattle market at Lalbagh.

Haji Mohammad Selim MP of Lalbagh constituency went to the DMCH at about 3:00pm yesterday to have a look at Bachchu's body.

In another incident, Sheikh Abu

Sayed Abdullah, a 40-year-old Jubo League activist who is also a contractor, was shot dead near his residence at Haji Nasir Khan Road of Paikpara in the city's Mirpur area.

Some unknown gunmen shot Abdullah point-blank as he was returning home with his six-year-old daughter, Safa, from his father-in-law's nearby.

Abdullah was shot thrice in his chest and abdomen. Fatally injured Abdullah was rushed to the DMCH by relatives where the attending doctors declared him dead.

Past feud may have been the reason behind his killing, police said quoting relatives.

Mirpur police arrested two persons - Iqbal Hossain and Hassan - in this connection.

Meanwhile, Farhad Hossain, 30, a post-graduate student of BSMU, was allegedly pushed down from the roof of his five-storey dormitory at Paribagh in the city.

Kartik and Biplob, the victim's roommates on the fourth floor, told police that they had heard something heavy fall on the porch and found Farhad unconscious there.

In a critical condition, Farhad, son of Abdul Hanif, was sent to the BSMU Hospital and later transferred to the Intensive Care Unit where he died at about 2:00am yesterday.

The body of the victim was sent to the DMCH morgue for autopsy. An unnatural death case was filed with Ramna police station in this regard.

JP can meet Speaker for plough

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at the lobby or any other room at the Sangsad Bhaban but they will not take part in parliament proceedings, Bhuiyan said.

"They (JP) have assured us that their move will not affect unity of the alliance and will also not create any confusion. They have further assured that they will not create any split in the alliance and will maintain its unity at any cost," he said.

JP Presidium member Kazi Firoz Rashid, who attended the CLC meeting, said at the briefing, "We have given commitment and assurance to the alliance that we will go to parliament only to protect our election symbol but will not take part in parliament proceedings." JP is determined to maintain unity of the alliance at any cost and will contest the coming general election unitedly

so that component parties of the alliance can form the next government.

Another JP Presidium Member, Saifur Rahman, said JP does not want a split in the alliance because it would not benefit the party.

Quoting press reports, Mannan Bhuiyan said two diplomats met Ershad at Dhaka Central Jail and pressed for reaching an understanding with the ruling party. He condemned this and said diplomats must not do so.

The CLC meeting strongly protested arrest of JP Secretary General Nazirur Rahman Manzur's brother and "harassment" of Mazjur. He demanded an end to harassment and repression on opposition leaders and activists.

He reiterated the demand for

immediate release of JP chief Ershad, IOJ Chairman Azizul Haq, Secretary General Fazlul Haq Amin and other arrested leaders and activists as well as withdrawal of all 'false cases'.

Bhuiyan condemned the killing of Dhanmondi thana Juba Dal President Wahid and demanded immediate arrest of the killers.

The CLC meeting was attended by BNP leaders Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, M Shamsul Islam and Anwar Zahid, JP leaders Kazi Firoz Rashid, ABM Golam Mostafa, Mostafa Jamal Haider and Saifur Rahman, Jamaat leaders Ali Ahsan Mujahid, Mohammad Kamaruzzaman, Abdul Qader Mollah and ATM Azharul Islam and IOJ acting Secretary General Ahmed Abdul Qader.