

# Martyred intellectuals

## Victims of a diabolical design

### Shahidullah Kaiser

Journalist and novelist, born on 16 February 1927 in Mazupur village of Feni.

After completing honours in economics from Presidency College in 1946, Shahidullah Kaiser enrolled for the Master of Arts in economics at Calcutta University, but could not sit for the final examination. He was a member of the provincial Communist Party of East Pakistan and also played an important role in the Language Movement in 1952. He suffered imprisonment several times.

Shahidullah Kaiser started his career in journalism in 1949 with the weekly *Ittefaq* in Dhaka. In 1958, he was appointed associate editor of the *Sangbad*, and continued to work there until his death.

Shahidullah Kaiser was also a novelist of note. He came into the limelight with *Sareng Bau* (The Captain's Wife).

### Santosh Chandra Bhattacharyya

Born on 30 August, 1915 in Nawabganj upazila of Dhaka district, Santosh Chandra Bhattacharyya graduated from Dhaka University in 1937 with Honours in History and obtained MA degree in 1938 from the same institution occupying first position in the first class in both the examinations.

He started his academic career as a lecturer in Jagnnath College in 1939 and worked there until 1949, when he joined the History Department of Dhaka University as a Senior Lecturer. A scholar in Sanskrit literature and ancient history of Bengal and India,

Bhattacharyya served Dhaka University as a devoted teacher and a scholar until his death (14 December, 1971) in the hands of the cohorts of the Pakistani army.

**Prof. Munier Choudhury**  
Born in 1925 at Manikganj, Dhaka. Hailed from Noakhali. Joined the department of Bangla as a lecturer in 1955, before that he was a part time teacher in the English department. He was an M.A. in English, but while he was interned at Dhaka Central Jail (1953-54) during the Language Movement he did his M.A. (first in first class) in Bangla also.

He became Reader in 1962 and Professor in 1970 and the Dean of the faculty of arts in 1971.

The members of the Al-Badr killed him at the dawn of our liberation. His dead body could not be identified.

### Mofazzal Haidar Chaudhury

Mofazzal Haidar Chaudhury, born in Noakhali in 1926, joined the department of Bangla of Dhaka University in 1955. He studied at London University for a couple of years in linguistics. He was awarded 'Sahitya Bharati' by the Visva Bharati University, Santiniketan. He became Reader in Bengali in 1970. His famous writings include Bangla Banan o Lipi Sanskar, Rabi Parikrama, Colloquial Bengali, Bhasa o Sanskriti, Sahityer Nava Rupayan etc.

He was picked up and killed by the Al-Badr on December 14,

1971.

### Rashidul Hasan

Rashidul Hasan, born in 1932 in Bhirbhum district of West Bengal, migrated to this part of the subcontinent then under Pakistani rule in 1949. He obtained BA(Hons.) and MA in English from DU in 1957 and 1958 respectively. He taught at various colleges including Narsingdi, Pabna Edward College and Krishna Chandra College of Bhirbhum in West Bengal. Finally, he joined the English Department, DU, as a lecturer.

He was a liberal democrat and a life long fighter against fundamentalism and communalism.

A close friend of Anwar Pasha, Rashidul Hasan was picked up together with his friend Anwar from the same flat within the DU campus.

### Anwar Pasha

Born on 15 April 1928 at Dabka village in Mursidabad, India. He did his MA in Bangla from Calcutta University in 1953. In 1958 he joined Pabna Edward College and then, in 1966, the Department of Bangla, Dhaka University.

Anwar Pasha was picked up from his university flat and brutally killed with other intellectuals. He was posthumously honoured with the Bangla Academy Award for his literary achievements.

### Dr. MAM Faizul Mahi

Dr. Faizul Mahi was born in 1939 in Feni. He was very much dedicated to the cause of the war of liberation that was going

on from March to December, helping the freedom fighters from within keeping a low profile. But he could not keep secret his real identity from the watchful eyes of the collaborators some of whom happened to be his colleagues within the IER.

Mahi joined the Institute of Education and Research in 1968 after obtaining Ed.D (doctorate in education) and then soon became Senior Lecturer. He was a dedicated teacher.

The beastly Al-Badr group picked him up on 14 December from his residence.

### Ghyasuddin Ahmed

Ghyasuddin Ahmed was born in Narsingdi in 1935. He passed MA in History from Dhaka University in 1957. He joined Jagannath College in the History department as lecturer and later joined Dhaka University in 1958. He went to the UK with Commonwealth Scholarship in 1964 and obtained Honours degree in World History from London School of Economics.

Accused of helping the freedom fighters he was taken to Dhaka Cantonment for questioning. He was released after a few days. Then again on 14 December 1971 he was picked up from Mohsin Hall by the Al-Badr killing squad. On 4 January 1972 his clothes and mutilated body were identified in Mirpur area.

### Mohammad Fazle Rabbi

Dr. Mohammad Fazle Rabbi was born in Pabna in 1932. He was an activist during the Language Movement in 1952. He passed MBBS from Dhaka Medical

College in 1955 and received gold medal for securing top position in MBBS examination. In 1963 he joined Dhaka Medical College and Hospital as associate professor of medicine.

On 15 December midnight Dr. Rabbi along with some other intellectuals were taken in a truck from the Lalmatia Physical Training Institute to the Rayerbazar brickfield and murdered in a brutal manner. His dead body was identified on 18 December.

### Selina Parvin

Selina Parvin was born in Noakhali in 1931. She was a poet and a journalist. She had her primary education in Feni. She became an avid reader of Bengali literature. She took a job at weekly 'Lalana.' Then she started her own literary magazine 'Shilalipi.' She also began to write poems, short stories and essays. On 14 December 1971 she was murdered by Al-Badr.

### Nizamuddin Ahmed

Nizamuddin Ahmed was born in Munshiganj in 1929. He was a journalist. He passed MA in Economics from Dhaka University in 1959. Later he joined Pakistan Press International. He became the editor of PPI in 1969 and was promoted to the rank of general manager.

On 12 December 1971, Nizamuddin was taking his lunch when members of Al-Badr picked him up from his residence. His body was never found.

### Syed Nazmul Haque

Syed Nazmul Haque was born



From top left: Munier Choudhury, Serajuddin Hossain, Dr. Alim Chowdhury, Mofazzal Haidar Chaudhury, Shahidullah Kaiser, Dr. Fazle Rabbi. Second row: Nizamuddin Ahmed, Anwar Pasha, Syed Nazmul Haque, Syed Abdul Mannan, Dr. Abul Kalam Azad, Ghyasuddin Ahmed. Bottom row: Rashidul Hasan, Dr. MAM Faizul Mahi, Dr. MA Khair, Zahirul Haq, Selina Parvin, Santosh Chandra Bhattacharyya, ANM Mustafa.

in Khulna in 1941. He passed B.A. (Hons) and M.A. in Political Science from Dhaka University in 1963 and 1964 respectively. He took an active part in the anti-martial law movement in 1962. He was arrested for disrupting the convocation programme on the DU campus in 1964 where the then governor of East Pakistan Abdul Monem Khan was present.

He became the chief reporter of Pakistan Press International and Dhaka correspondent of Columbia Broadcasting Service. He prepared a full report on the proceedings of Agartala Conspiracy Case. He sent news items on the atrocities carried out by the Pakistani forces during the liberation war.

On 11 December 1971, he was picked up from his Purana Paltan house by the members of Al-Badr. His dead body was never found.

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identified him. They led him to a car waiting on the street with his handstied," said Hasina.

"On December 17, the landlady told me that all the intellectuals detained on the 13th and on the 14th were martyred," she said.

Hearing this she rushed to the Tikkatuli roundabout to buy a telegram bearing the news of the killings. Her brother, a freedom fighter, went to Rayer Bazar killing field to search for the body of Rafiq.

"The Victory Day left no imprint of happiness in my mind. How could it? When I had to search for the dead body of my husband," said Hasina.

"My elder son was traumatised for the rest of his childhood. For many years he could not stand sight of police or military personnel.

"How much were the martyrs evaluated? What were the means left for my children to live, grow up and continue their studies? When I look back into the past and think about these I feel distressed," said Hasina.

Litterateur Rafiqul Haider Chowdhury (Eshika) was born in the village of Sonakanda in Bikrampur on December 23, 1933. In 1949, he passed Matriculation from JC Bose Institute of Munshiganj and did post graduation in science in 1953 from Darjeeling. The Liberation War started while he was working on a novel Journal. In professional life he was an official of a life insurance company. His poems were published in different magazines.

"They held us at gunpoint and said 'Baat maat boliye goli mardenge' (do not utter a single word or you will get shot). "They took him to the veranda from where two other men standing on the street

# Three women

## Living with unbearable memories

### DURDANA GHIAS

**T**HE Daily Star correspondent talked with three women whose lives were shattered in December 1971 when the Al-Badr monsters were completing their ghastly mission of eliminating the most worthy sons of the soil. They have lived with the painful memories of their beloved husbands and family members being brutally killed by the cohorts of the Pakistani army at the fag end of the Liberation War, when victory was in sight. The victory turned out to be very costly for them... They narrate the tests and tribulations that they have been through since the dastardly crimes were committed.

It was a wintry night on

December 10, 1971. Serajuddin Hossain and Nurjahan Serajee lived on the ground floor of their residence at 5, Chamelibagh with their sons. Around 5 to 7 people came to the house at 3:00am in the morning. Nurjahan Serajee, wife of journalist and martyred intellectual Serajuddin Hussain, describes how her husband was kidnapped by the killers of Al-Badr.

"(Serajuddin) was wearing a lungi and genji. He just laid his hands on his Punjabi but could not wear it. They took him out and led him toward a car parked on the road. Curfew was on at that time. One of them came back and asked for his gamchha. I handed it to the man and he left. Then I lost my sense," said Nurjahan.

"After a few days we heard that over the last few days many prominent intellectuals were taken away," she said.

"I am still not entirely sure that my husband is dead," said Nurjahan when asked when she came to know that her husband had been murdered.

"When he left with the men we had only Tk 75 at the bank and I had eight little sons to bring up. My 18-year old eldest son was a freedom fighter. My youngest son was only three-year old," she said.

"After independence we were allocated a house in Eskaton by Bangabandhu as a Shaheed family. After Ziaur

Rahman came to power he sent us several notices to leave the house. Then after Ershad took power he sent a police force and evicted us from the house within one day," said Nurjahan.

Tawhid Reza Noor, youngest son of Serajuddin and a PhD student of JN University, India and also a member of the executive body of Projorno 71, had the following to say about his father.

"From the Dairy of General Rao Forman Ali we came to know that they arranged the killing in a planned way to cripple the nation intellectually from the very beginning so that this nation could not stand on its own feet again," said Noor.

"The killings were appreciated and endorsed by the parties like Jamaat-e-Islami. Forces like Al-Shams were created under the supervision of the Jamaat. Members of Islami Chhatra Shangha, student wing of the Jamaat, formed Al-Badr and Moulana Nizami was their chief. These people were well educated. Many of them were students of Buet, DU and Aliya Madrasa.

"There were two groups one for picking up the intellectuals and the other for torturing and killing them. The head of the second group was called jallad or operation-in-charge. "To move ahead a nation needs to know its glorious past and true history. But for decades we have created an information blackout. In the meantime the war criminals were rehabilitated. So now they are showing the defiance of denying the war," he said.

Journalist Serajuddin

Hussain was born in March 1929 in Shorsuna village under Jessor district. In 1947 he passed BA from Islamia College of Calcutta. In 1947 he started his career as a journalist at the Calcutta-based Dainik Azad while he was still a student and gradually he became the News Editor of the daily. Among his contemporaries it was quite rare to become a news editor at such a young age.

He played a significant role in developing journalism and creating good reporters in the then East Pakistan.

Momena Khatun, elder sister of poet and martyred intellectual Meherunnessa:

"It is very hard for me to say how my sister, brothers and my mother were killed. Around 50 Biharis laid siege to our house in Mirpur-6 at around 11:00am on March 28, 1971. Meherunnessa was an active writer for Bengali nationalism, so the Biharis targeted our house. They entered the house and decapitated my sister Meherunnessa in one blow and hung the severed head from the ceiling fan. Then beheaded my brother Rafiqul Islam Bablu and played football with his head. Then killed my brother Shahidul Islam Tutu. Then my mother said 'Why are you leaving me alone?' Then they hacked her and left. She was alive till 11at night; Bihari children heard her voice. After a few days the Biharis brought drums, packed the bodies in those and threw the drums into the river behind the iron factory. I was at my in-laws house in Narsingdi at that time. After the killings, I first went to the

house in April, 1972. Later, the Biharis told my maternal uncle how they killed my mother, brothers and sister," said Momena.

Poet Meherunnessa was born in Kolkata in 1940. In 1950 the family came to Dhaka. She worked at the Bangla Academy as a copywriter. From 1956 to 1971 she wrote innumerable poems on the Language Movement and Bengali nationalism and actively participated in all the movements till her death.

Hasina Chowdhury, wife of litterateur and martyred intellectual Rafiqul Haider Chowdhury:

"Like other poets and litterateurs my husband was also indifferent towards family life," said Hasina.

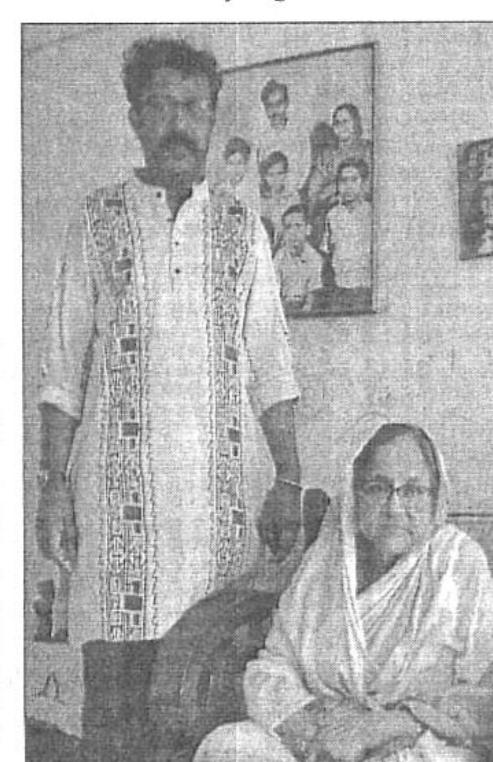
"On the night of December 12, 1971 he said, 'Just wait for a few more days then our country will be independent. Then there will be no distress anymore. Just after 10 hours he was gone, never to be found again,' she said.

It was the morning of December 13, 1971. They were tenants on the first floor of a house at 921, Shaheedbagh at Rajarbagh. Her eldest son was two years of age, second son was a little baby of two months and her only daughter was six years old at that time.

At 7:00 in the morning four men forced past the front gate into the house.

"They held us at gunpoint and said 'Baat maat boliye goli mardenge' (do not utter a single word or you will get shot).

"They took him to the veranda from where two other men standing on the street



Tawhid Reza Noor and Begum Nurjahan Serajee, son and wife of Serajuddin Hussain (left), Hasina Chowdhury, wife of Rafiqul Haider Chowdhury (top right) and Momena Khatun, elder sister of Meherunnessa (bottom right).

The writer is a reporter of Star City.