

The day they killed Laden

Farida Shaikh goes back to an old question

No Easy Day touches criminality. The book is a first person account of the killing of an unarmed man at point blank range. The killer takes the man by surprise in a raid on 1 May 2011. If this was a game, it was foul, sans rules, to play the game. This was all wild!

"We just killed the number one terrorist in the world," writes ex-Navy SEAL Matt Bissonnette, using the pseudonym Mark Owen. The book describes the planning and execution of Osama bin Laden. It is a detailed account of the mission carried out by the man (criminal?) who confronted the (terrorist?) and witnessed its final moments. It was a special operation by the special welfare development group of the US navy, known as navy SEAL.

"The last thing we needed was our names attached to it. We simply wanted to fade back into the shadows." But then why did Mark Owen write this first hand account? Probably, as Owen said: The focus should not be on him but rather on the book. "I am not trying to be a hero. I am trying to tell the bigger story... is a tribute to hundreds of Americans, (sounds hypocritical!) who gathered intelligence, planned and trained in the 10 years pursuit of the world's most wanted man."

The book was released on the eleventh anniversary of the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon. Penguin has

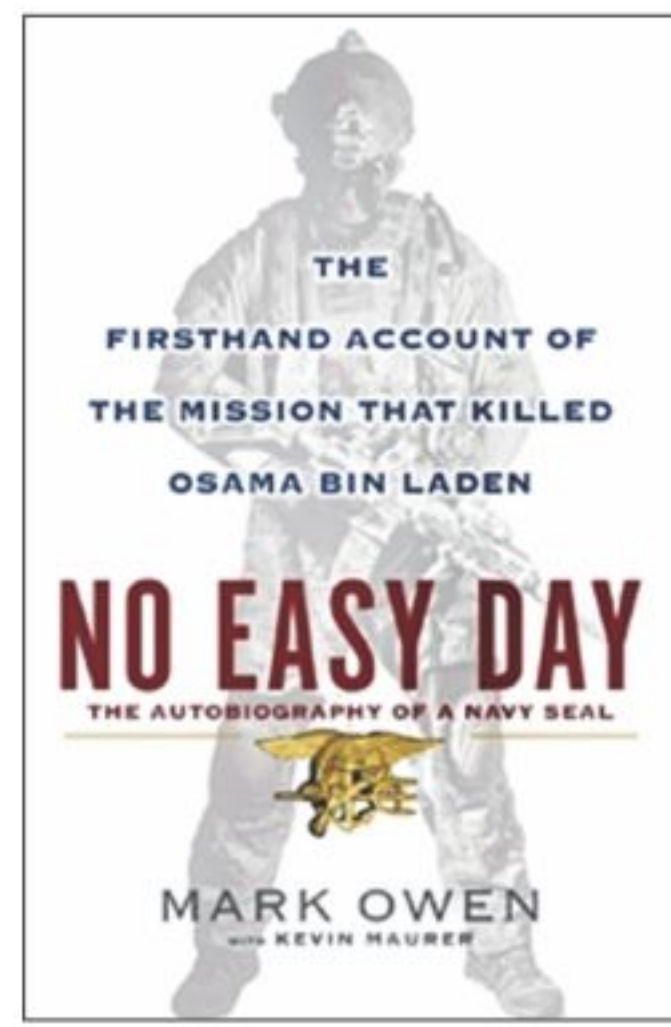
described the book as 'a blow by blow narrative of an assault by 24 hand picked men that made the team, starting with the helicopter crash to the radio message that Osama bin Laden is dead.' And the publisher's spokesperson said the book was '...a piece of living history.'

The book is a detailed account of America's on going war on terror, the selection and training process of the military. SEALs aim at a high level of mental and physical endurance. It is a chronicle on events after September 11, a true story of SEAL and many unreported operations. SEAL trained for the mission through using a full size replica of Osama bin Laden's compound. A dress rehearsal was held for the military top brass. The success of SEAL has been termed as the greatest victory in the war on terror.

Mark Owen is in disguise for his own security. What concerns him is that '... the enemy has a long memory.' Nearly four hours were spent by an artist changing the appearances of Mark Owen using shadows. His voice was altered for identity protection during the interview.

There are significant differences in major parts of the book and the White House's version on the same subject. The publisher moved the print number of the book to 575,000 and the release date to September 4. In the meantime, at the Pentagon, defence

department lawyers probably sent out a letter accusing the author of violating non-disclosure agreements. In reply, Bissonnette's lawyers have denied such charges on behalf of their client.



No Easy Day
The Autobiography of Navy Seal Mark Owen, with Kevin Maurer

Chief petty officer Owen was in the navy for 14 years. Since 9/11 he has been in 13 combat deployments in Afghanistan and Iraq and 'all over' (Pakistan?) Before retirement, Owen rose to a top position in SEAL.

According to the script released on 9 September 2012, in the helicopter that crashed into the compound, he was the second man in Laden's bedroom. He took pictures of the body that no one has seen. Owen

was awarded the Silver Star for valour and the Purple Heart for a wound he suffered. Al-Qaeda has threatened to kill the man who killed Osama.

While refuting charges that he was trying to make a political statement with *No Easy Day*, Owen said: "This was absolutely not a kill only mission. The training was not for an assassination. It was to capture him alive if possible. It was not for murder, but rather, 'Hey, kill or capture!' This was what he said in reply when he was asked in an interview if the mission plan was to kill or capture?"

Even though the Pentagon is displeased, many readers find the book thrilling. It is, as close as you can get, real life account of the battle in Abbottabad between a single unarmed man and a super-equipped many-member team.

The book in parts reads like a gripping novel written in polished prose, with Kevin Maurer (author of *Gentleman Bastard: On the Grounds in Afghanistan with American Elite Special Forces* and a second book on the *Valley of Death--- Memoir of the Korean War* (with Bill Richardson)) It is an intense read on the agonizing wait for the go-moment, the crash of the Black Hawk and the spine-chilling instance in front of bin Laden's lifeless body, bleeding; the reason for fighting during the past decade!

Marking this chain of event is

investigative journalist Richard Minitzer's new book

Leading from Behind: *The Reluctant President and the Advisers Who Decide for Him.*

The book is a character study in leadership, specifically on how and why Barack Obama makes the decision he does in the White House. Based on an interview, (only Democrats) Minitzer informs readers of a one noteworthy incident: the raid to get Osama bin Laden. Obama cancelled the mission to kill Osama bin Laden three times in 2011 and compromised further special operations on the mission and leaks on mission details. Minitzer also informs the readers of his book on the raging debate on the raid within the White House. The timing of the raid, whether it was necessary and what would be the political gain from such a military operation was also debated. The author claims that the Pakistan army informed the CIA on the whereabouts of bin Laden. Earlier Pervez Musharraf received the news.

Yet another book on the same topic is *Manhunt* by Peter Bergen of the New York Times. The writer gives circumstantial evidence of Osama bin Laden's presence within the compound of a three storied building in Abbottabad and it was a Pakistani courier that let out the news first.

FARIDA SHAIKH IS A CRITIC AND BOOK REVIEWER.

State and governance in ancient Bengal

Helal Uddin Ahmed reads of bygone administration

Compared to other branches of social science, books on the history and evolution of public administration in Bangladesh are quite few and far between.

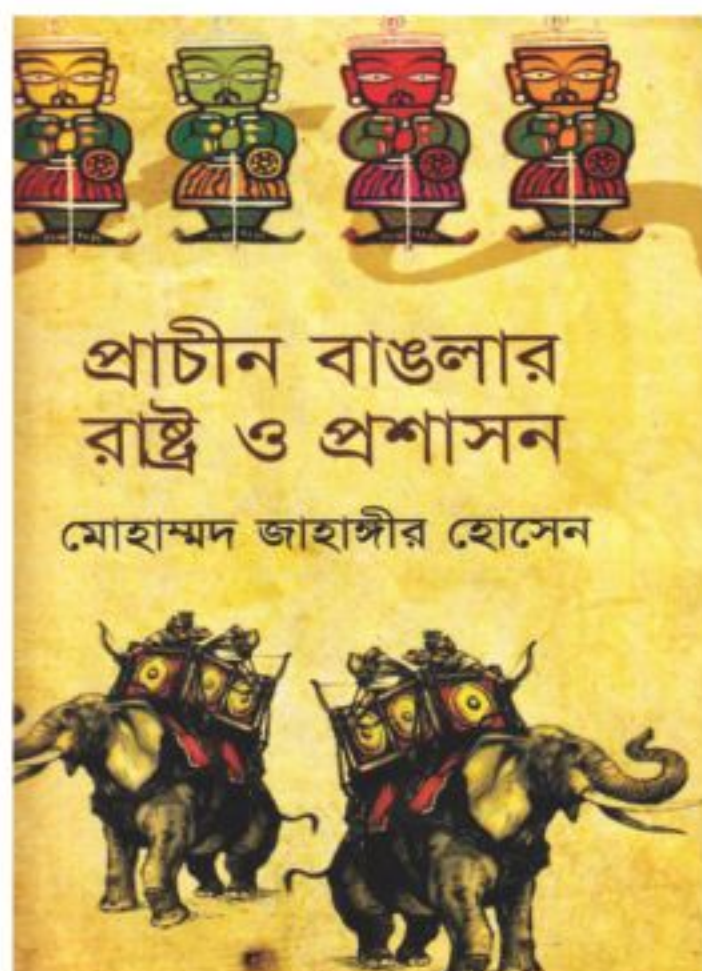
Against this backdrop, the book under review, *Prachin Banglar Rashtro O Proshashan*, by Mohammad Jahangir Hossain can be termed as a pioneering work on the evolution of state and governance in ancient Bangla, the territory of which included the country we currently inhabit.

In ancient times, the land of 'Bangla' comprised the territories of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. The Bengali-speaking people or Bengalees were the majority in that land. Its domination extended from Kamrup (Assam), Pataliputra (Patna) and Bhubaneswar (Orissa) up to the border with Iran. This was the ancient state-structure of Bangla which had evolved gradually since prehistoric times. This book by Dr. Jahangir retraces the lost footprints of the Bengalee nation's journey over time with the objective of finding out the roots of state formation in Bangla. It strove to bring to light the fos-

sils of the then statecraft and governance in this territory by linking up evidences from ancient literary sources as well as archaeological relics of the time.

The then state-system, administrative programmes, departments of central administration, civil and military bureaucracy, duties and responsibilities of the state employees, hierarchical levels in bureaucracy, their relationships and interactions with the masses, and relevant ingredients of ancient history have all been juxtaposed elaborately in this compact volume alongside highlighting findings from archaeological excavations in different areas. A sociological analysis was undertaken to identify the primary stages and characteristics of state formation and administrative framework of Bangla during the ancient era.

Side by side with elaborations on the administration of Bangla, the book also attempted to construct an administrative history of the region. Debates have been provoked deliberately while filling up the gaps between various episodes on the basis of literary



Prachin Banglar Rashtro O Proshashan
Mohammad Jahangir Hossain
Bangla Academy

and archaeological findings. The opinions, building-blocs and ingredients presented in the book will no doubt provide an insightful glimpse to the readership about the depth and originality of the administrative history and culture of Bangla.

The book has been divided into six chapters. The first chapter dwells on the society and habitat

of Bangla during prehistoric times as well as the role of bureaucracy and communications in the state apparatus. The second chapter describes the governance system of community-based alliances and people's state in ancient Bangla. The third chapter traces the emergence of the concept of state and governance in Bangla mainly based on literary and archaeological evidences. The fourth chapter elaborates on the theme of a common ancestry of Bangla and Magadh in the context of historical evolution of the Indian subcontinent. The fifth chapter dwells on the Magadh cum Bangla-centric administration in ancient India starting with the Mauryan and Gupta era. The sixth chapter highlights the elements of governance and administrative philosophy contained in Kautilya's famous book 'Arthashastra'. The seventh chapter dwells on the period of 'Matshyanay' (total anarchy) in Bangla during the 7th and 8th century, the advent and flourishing of Buddhist rule in the form of Pala dynasty and the collapse of the Sena dynasty during 12th-13th

centuries in the face of Muslim invasion. The organized governance structure in ancient Bangla has been summarized in the eighth chapter while the ninth and concluding chapter recapitulates all materials in the book in a nutshell.

The book has been presented in a very lucid and free-flowing language by an author, who had won the national TV debate championship back in 1982 while a student of Jahangirnagar University, earned PhD in mass communication and journalism from the University of Dhaka in 2005 and served as the Director General of Bangladesh Film Archive and Department of Films and Publications. This pioneering work on public administration of ancient Bangla by Dr. Mohammad Jahangir Hossain undoubtedly deserves favourable responses and attention from both academics and history enthusiasts alike.

DR. HELAL UDDIN AHMED, A SENIOR CIVIL SERVANT, IS AN ESSAYIST AND POET. HE CAN BE REACHED AT HAHMED1960@GMAIL.COM

A lonely woman in exile

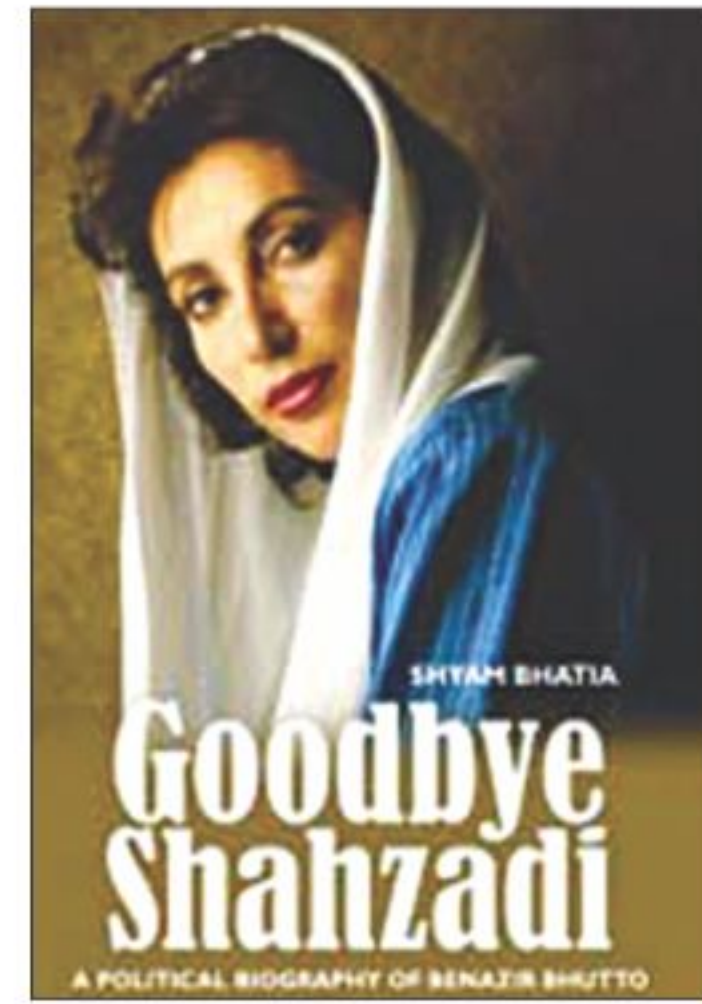
Syed Badrul Ahsan goes back to Benazir Bhutto

Benazir Bhutto's was a life lived in struggle, wallowing in misery and ending in sudden death. Shyam Bhatia, an old friend of hers from their days as students at Oxford, brings into this narrative touching glimpses of a woman who quite did not have the opportunity of going through a normal life. Her early ambition, in the days when her father presided over Pakistan's fortunes, was to be part of her country's foreign service someday. That was the impression she gave newsmen in Simla, where she accompanied Zulfikar Ali Bhutto on his critical trip for talks with Indira Gandhi.

It was an ambition soon to be overtaken by events, precipitated of course by the increasingly harsh rule of her father. But then, Benazir never for a moment, as long as she lived, believe that her father could do wrong. A glaring instance of her near-blind idea of Z.A. Bhutto as a truly heroic figure for her came early on in her Daughter of the East, where she notes her conviction that her father's missives to her on the

Bangladesh situation in 1971 were more credible than what the global community was trying to project. Those who remember her from her days as a student abroad (and among them Bhatia is one) recall with clarity the feistiness with which she defended Pakistan and the deliberate way in which she ignored the genocide of Bengalis.

What is appealing about Shyam Bhatia's observation of Benazir Bhutto is that it comes without fawning and at the same time without bitterness. There are moments, and they come in plenty, where Bhatia makes it clear that he and Benazir disagreed on many of the issues they tended to reflect on. He also makes it a point to give readers the impression that despite their differences they could sit down and have a decent conversation. How else does one explain the closeness that developed between the two despite the role Bhatia played in the early 1970s to have Oxford University desist from conferring an honorary degree on Z.A. Bhutto? Benazir was furious, but in time she



Goodbye Shahzadi
A Political Biography of Benazir Bhutto
Shyam Bhatia
Roli Books

got over it, enough to have Bhatia in her later years in exile in Dubai and London drop by for dinner and quiet chats.

Goodbye Shahzadi is not a run of

the mill work you come across about politicians anywhere. It bores into Benazir the woman, the restless student looking for excitement at Oxford and Harvard. She is suave, the very model of sophistication among her friends. And yet, back home in Larkana on home visits, she swiftly dwindles into the insensitive daughter of a traditional feudal clan. As a friend from her days at Lady Margaret Hall recounted to Bhatia in 1974 (and she had been to the Bhutto home in Larkana with Benazir), 'I'm never going back there. When Pinkie loses her temper... she throws ashtrays like flying saucers at the servants.' And then came the self-satisfying. At Simla, thought the young Benazir, Indira Gandhi did not like all that 'free and favourable publicity I was getting in the Indian press.' At Oxford, as Bhatia tells us, Benazir fell 'madly in love with two extremely handsome Pakistanis.' Inquiries about the possibility of marriage with any one of them were made on her behalf. She ended up being rebuffed. Asif Zardari, says Bhatia, 'came a very poor third in

the scale of her lifetime's needs and desires.'

Benazir was a lonely woman in exile. She had been hounded by Nawaz Sharif and then by Pervez Musharraf. She had suffered solitary confinement in the dark years of Ziaul Huq. When she managed to scrape an electoral victory in 1988, President Ghulam Ishaq Khan and army chief Aslam Beg did all they could to prevent her from taking office as prime minister. Within two years, she was dismissed from office. She came back in 1993. And then it was her handpicked president, Farooq Leghari, who threw her out. He was piqued that she would not act against her corrupt husband.

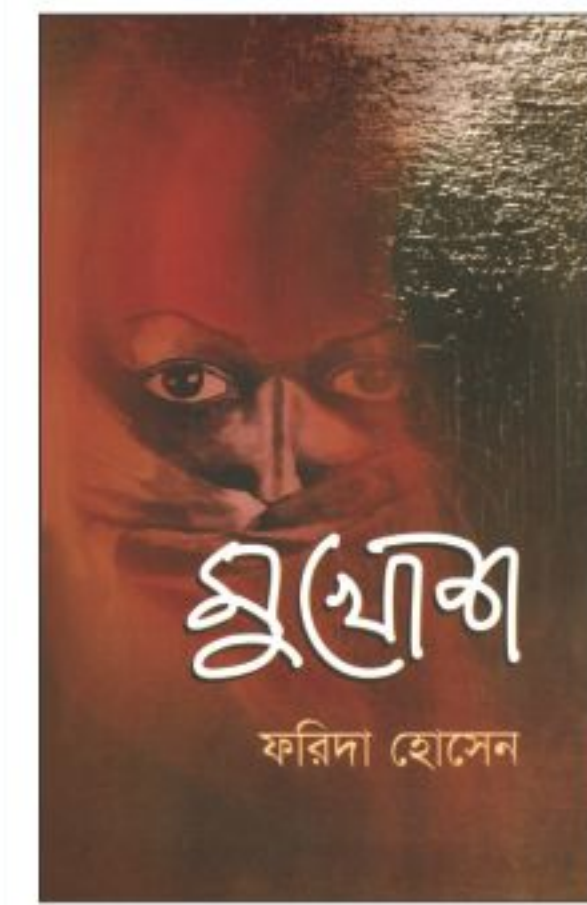
And that expensive necklace she was alleged to have purchased with corrupt money from London's fashionable Knightsbridge? Benazir's response was poor, unconvincing. She is reminded of Marie Antoinette, of the seeming helplessness of the eventually hapless empress of France.

SYED BADRUL AHSAN IS WITH THE DAILY STAR.

BOOK choice



Rashtrionayak Sheikh Hasina'r Darshan
Bangladesh Awami Jubo League
Joyeeta Prokashoni



Mukhosh
Farida Hossain
Ankur Prokashono

Ekjon Farida Hossain
Ed M. Rafiq
Shilpotoru Prokashoni



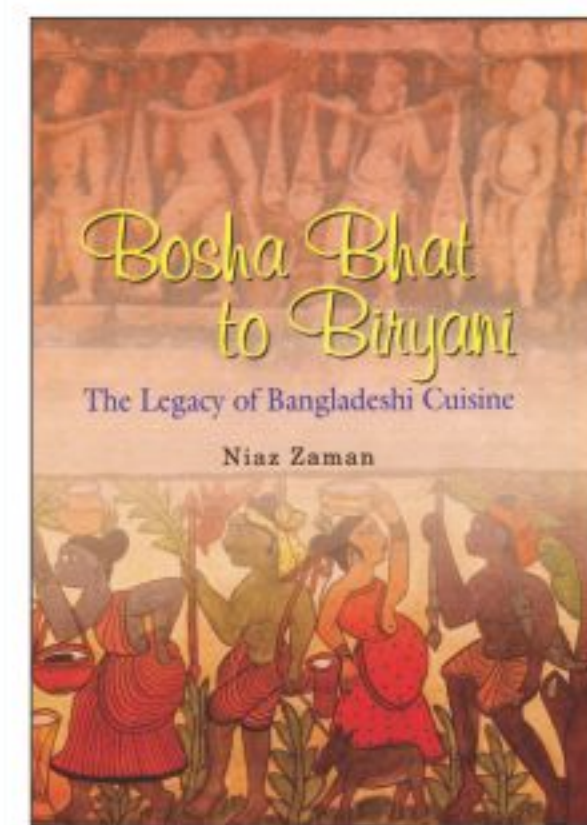
Rong Shong Bango
Bang
Mahiur Rahman Rahi
Botomul



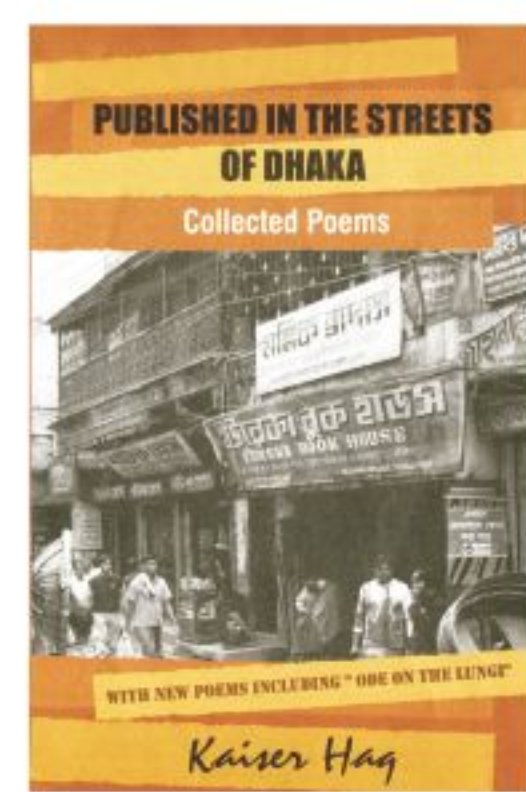
Jolonto Bhrun
Junan Nashit
Adorn Publication



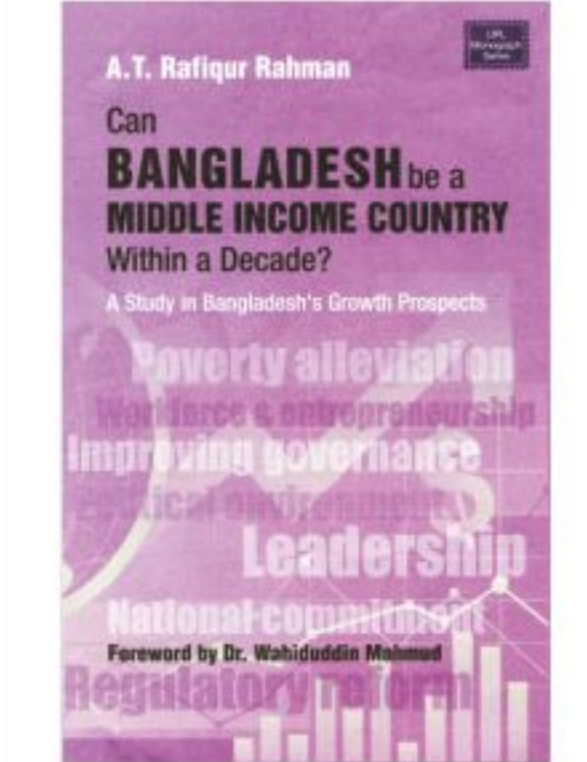
Published in the Streets of Dhaka
Collected Poems
Kaiser Haq
The University Press Limited



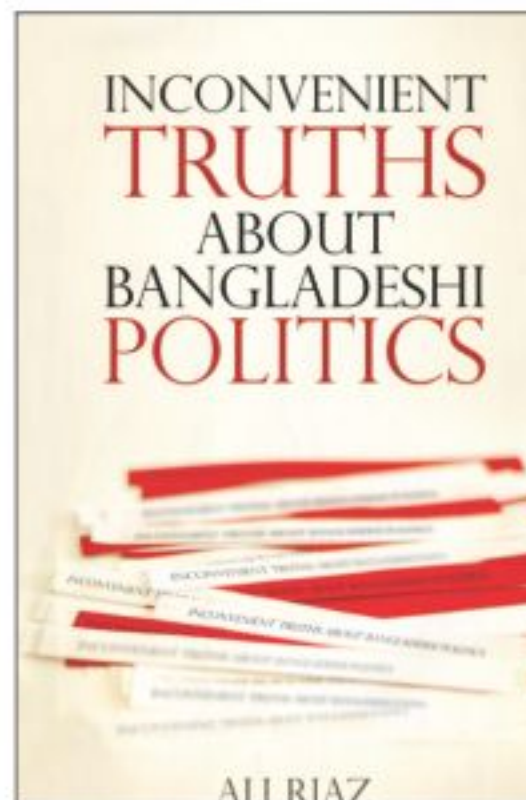
Bosha Bhaat to Biryani
The Legacy of Bangladeshi Cuisine
Niaz Zaman
The University Press Limited



Inconvenient Truths About Bangladeshi Politics
Ali Riaz
Prothoma



Can Bangladesh Be a Middle Income Country Within a Decade?
A.T. Rafiqur Rahman
The University Press



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