

WHAT WE OWE THE MARTYRED INTELLECTUALS

The systematic killing of intellectuals in 1971—from the night of March 25 through to the war's final hours—was not merely an attack on individuals. It was an assault on the very foundations of a humane society: the capacity to think freely, to question authority, to imagine alternatives, and to dissent.

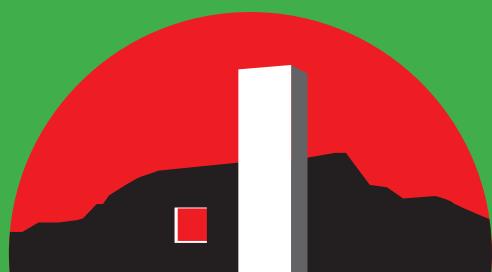
The Pakistani Army and their local collaborators did not simply wage a war; they sought to mutilate a nation at its core. Killing soldiers may weaken an army, but killing intellectuals cripples a people. The intention was chillingly precise: a Bangladesh without teachers, without doctors, without writers, without scientists—a country hollowed out even in the moment of independence.

The threats once faced by the martyred intellectuals have not vanished. Today, truth is easily drowned by orchestrated noise; misinformation metastasises faster than facts; mobs—digital and physical—can be summoned with frightening ease; and the freedom of press and thought remains vulnerable to both coercion and convenience. These are not new forces. They are the same pressures the martyred intellectuals confronted—sometimes with their writing, sometimes with their teaching, always with their conviction.

If we are to carry their work forward, we must build a society where truth matters, where courage is not punished, and where power—any power—expects to be questioned. Only then can we say their sacrifice continues to speak.

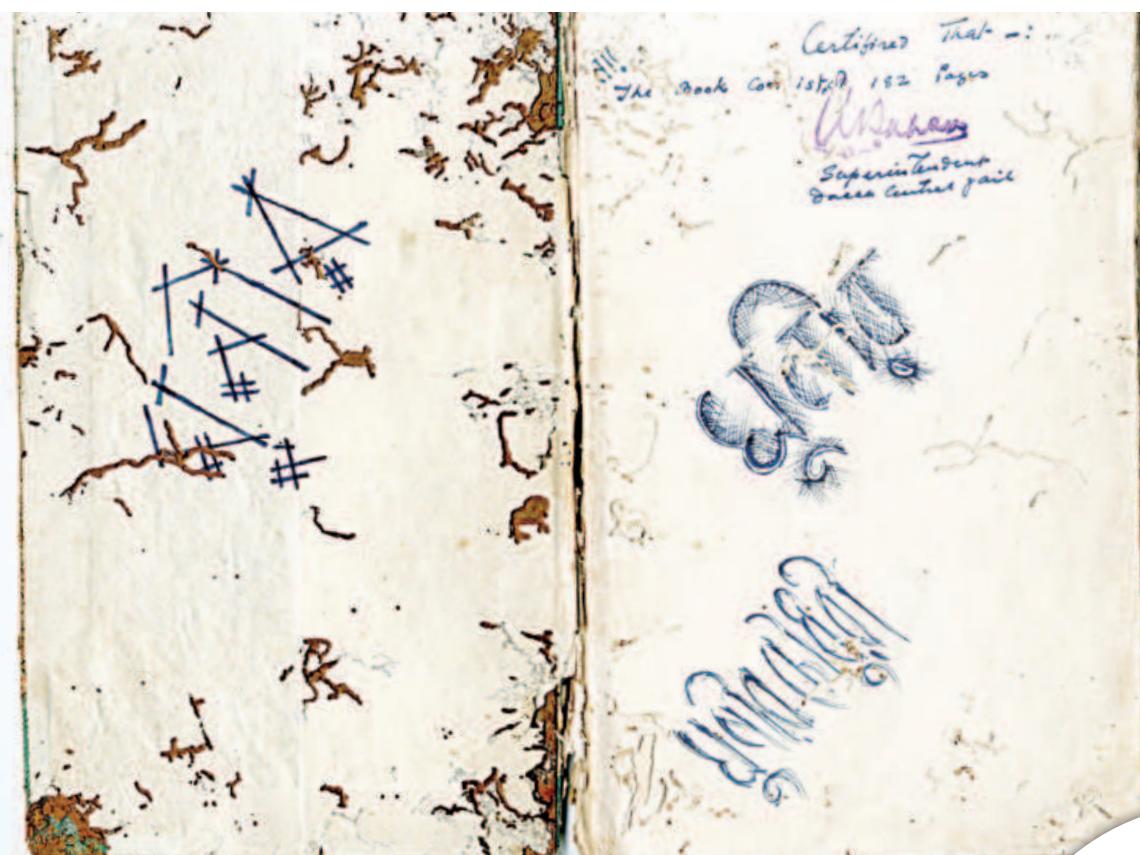
Mahfuz Anam
Editor & Publisher
The Daily Star





Munier Chowdhury with five of his sisters.

The spirit of shaheed **MUNIER CHOWDHURY**



A page from Munier Chowdhury's prison diary, 1949.

Munier Chowdhury's love for his siblings, his family, his colleagues, his students, and many others recirculates through endless repetitions. He converted his younger sister Nadera Begum into a communist in the 1950s, and she became a firebrand activist in her own right, going to prison during the language movement.

SHAWKAT HUSSAIN

The spirit of Munier Chowdhury has been with me for over 60 years. I first saw and heard him on BTV during his half-hour lectures on books. I used to listen to him spellbound, like everybody else. His mastery over language, his oratorical brilliance, his tone and his humour, his fluency, and even the texture of his voice had literally made him a legend. He was barely forty.

In 1967, when I became a student of Dhaka University, I had occasional glimpses of him zooming past in his Toyota Corolla, or walking along the corridors of the Arts Building with a slight stoop, wearing white khadi panjabi pyjamas, a tall, magisterial presence. My last sighting of Munier Bhai was right in front of the English Department, a great scholar and a public intellectual, a professor much loved and respected by his colleagues.

Not surprisingly, there were stories about him doing the rounds on campus. One such story that I heard from my friends in Mohsin Hall was that Munier Chowdhury was often seen near a restaurant in Nilkhet, opposite the petrol pump, buying paratha and kabab. They assumed that kabab paratha could only be eaten with beer or whisky (we did not know the

difference). Munier Chowdhury drinks, they concluded. The story disturbed me. To verify it, I asked Munier Chowdhury's youngest sister—then studying with me in the English Department, the youngest of his thirteen siblings—whether she knew anything about his habits. She assured me that she knew nothing.

Much later, older and more mature, it occurred to me that whether Munier Chowdhury drank beer or whatever was totally irrelevant to his reputation as the finest teacher of the Bangla Department, a great scholar and a public intellectual, a professor much loved and respected by his colleagues.

I had one single encounter with Munier Chowdhury in August or September 1971, and that has remained with me after all these years. After the March 1971 crackdown, Munier Chowdhury moved into his parental home with his wife and two sons (the eldest, Bhashon, had joined the Mukti Bahini). I would occasionally go to Darul Afia, the Central Road house, to meet my class friend Rahela. One

day I walked past the front door of the house and noticed a bookcase right under a stairway that went upstairs. I knelt down on the floor, browsing the book titles and waiting for Rahela to come. Munier Bhai saw me (he knew I had come to see his sister), went inside, came back with a mora, saying, "bosho." That single word was all I ever heard from him directly; that single act of kindness has remained with me after all these years, as a confirmation of all the stories of the goodness and kindness of his heart that I heard from his surviving brothers and sisters for more than fifty years.

I had one more indirect, but crucial, interaction with Munier Bhai. In July 1971, when the 7th and 8th papers of our BA Honours were rescheduled after being postponed in December 1970, Rahela and I, along with a couple of friends from other departments, decided to boycott all exams held under the then-occupying Pakistani forces.

However, exams were held, results were published, and we were, predictably, at the bottom.

Rahela decided to request Munier Bhai to find out our marks for the six papers in which we did appear. As the Dean of the Faculty of Arts—a position he had reluctantly accepted—it was no problem for him at all. He reported that we had both done rather well in the six papers but had received zeros in the ones that we did not attend.

A few months later, when Bangladesh was liberated, our results were scrapped and then recalibrated on the basis of the six papers, and we came out on top. Poetic justice, at its best, I thought. Much later, I heard stories that Munier Bhai spoke well of me to others in the family, simply on the basis of my results. That "character certificate" from him paved my way to my subsequent marriage to Rahela.

I recently heard from Miti, a journalist and niece of Munier Bhai—who heard it from her mother—that on December 13, 1971, Kushal, Miti's youngest brother, had fallen on the floor and suffered a deep cut. Dilu Apa, Kushal's mother, took him to their Central Road house, where Munier Bhai volunteered to drive them to the

hospital. On their way back, he dropped them at their "Pukur Par" house nearby and was repeatedly requested by Dilu Apa to stay back in their house because curfew time was just minutes away. Munier Bhai would not listen. He had to go back home to Central Road, to his family waiting for him.

The next day, the Al Badr men came for him, and he was never seen again. Dilu Apa never fully forgave herself for not forcing him to stay. He would have been alive if he had stayed with his sister.

On December 14, 1971, there was curfew throughout Dhaka, but euphoria was in the air. We knew that liberation was just round the corner. I called Rahela at noon or a little after. She was crying on the phone and could not talk much. "They have taken Munier Bhai away," she said. I could not fully comprehend what had happened, but I understood that it was something dreadful.

Two days later, when victory was being celebrated throughout the country, a deep sadness had descended on Darul Afia. I went there in the morning and saw people milling around the front yard, talking in hushed whispers, with looks of despair on the faces of those inside. Rusho Bhai, a younger brother of Munier Bhai, was preparing to go to Mirpur with Zahir Raihan and others in search of the missing brothers.

I later heard the full story directly from Rahela, who was present when the abduction occurred. On December 14, around 11:30 in the morning, a group of masked young men came in a jeep, knocked on the door, and asked for Munier Bhai. Rusho Bhai opened the door and regretted the act all his life.

The Al-Badr men, pretending to be his students, said they needed to talk to him. Munier Bhai had just taken a shower and was clad in a lungi and genji. They would not let him dress properly, but Munier Bhai hurriedly put on a panjabi as he walked away. Poking a pistol against his back, they pushed him into the jeep. He was never seen again; not a trace of his clothes was ever found. Rahela was standing at the window, looking at Munier Bhai, when he turned back to look at her and told her to move away.

For days following the disappearance of her favourite son Munier, his mother would often look through the window towards the main door, as if waiting for him to come back. He never did. She would simply cry silently; drops of tears would roll down her eyes; she would sigh deeply and say, "Allah. Allah has taken away the best of all my children."

Munier Bhai's siblings, all thirteen

of them, were alive at the time of his abduction. For as long as they lived (now only three siblings survive), they told and retold stories about him—stories that they wrote about in newspapers and books, stories handed down to their children, who in turn passed them on to their offspring. It is through these stories that the spirit of Munier Chowdhury stays alive and will live on in the memories of generations to come.

There is a story of Munier Chowdhury's father, Abdul Halim Chowdhury, being accosted at a wedding by a man who asked him, "Are you Munier Chowdhury's father?" He was surprised but secretly pleased and proud. Coming back home, he lamented that now he was known as his son's father. There is no greater pride for a father than to be known for his son's fame.

Munier Chowdhury's love for his siblings, his family, his colleagues, his students, and many others recirculates through endless repetitions. He converted his younger sister Nadera Begum into a communist in the 1950s, and she became a firebrand activist in her own right, going to prison during the language movement; he initiated Ferdousi Majumdar into theatre, much against the conservative values of her parents, and she, through her innate talent, achieved stardom as an actress. His siblings, particularly his sisters, were usually the first rapt audience and critics of any new play that he had written. They would sit around him in Darul Afia while he play-acted every single role.

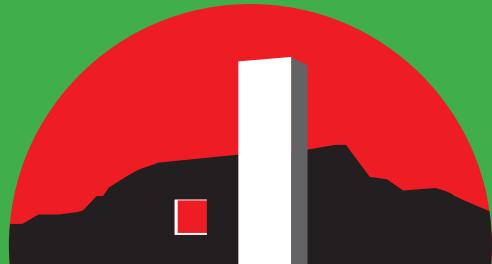
Besides these stories that live on through the memories of his siblings, the Theatre group commemorates his birth anniversary every year more formally and recognises Munier Chowdhury's contribution to drama through a memorial prize in his name. Munier Chowdhury's 100th birth anniversary was celebrated recently on November 27, organised by Theatre.

Professor Emeritus Serajul Islam Chowdhury spoke brilliantly about Munier Chowdhury, who was first his teacher and later a colleague at Dhaka University. Serajul Islam Chowdhury was my teacher and later colleague as well. I listened, mesmerised, as my teacher spoke about his teacher. As SIC Sir (that is what we called him), now 89, was leaving, he said to me, "I still miss Munier Bhai." We all miss him. The nation misses him.

Shawkat Hussain was a professor of English at Dhaka University.



Munier Chowdhury with his wife.



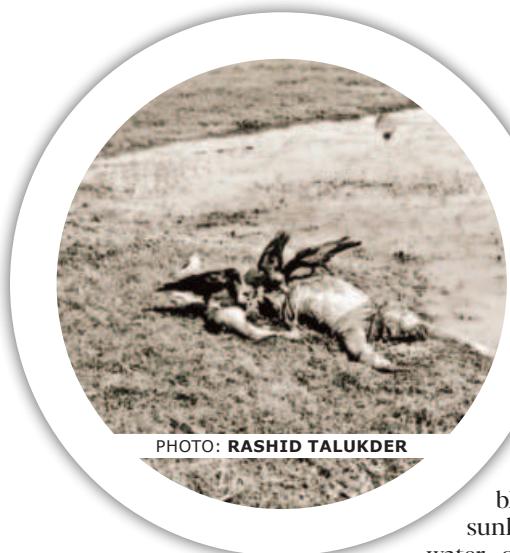
The face of an unidentified woman [Rayerbazar, Dhaka, 17 December 1971].



The body of Dr Fazle Rabbi [Rayerbazar, Dhaka, 18 December 1971].

PHOTOS: RASHID TALUKDER

The face of an unknown WOMAN AT RAYERBAZAR



A slain intellectual lying by the water's edge [Rayerbazar, Dhaka, 17 December 1971].

SHAHADAT PARVEZ

The afternoon after Victory Day. In the fading light, a sight in the a b a n d o n e d brick kiln of Rayerbazar froze Rashid Talukder's blood. A body lay sunken in the muddy water of a pit, most of it submerged. Breaking through the layer of soil and hard brick dust, the face of a woman had surfaced like a mummy. A bullet wound marked her chest. Her body bore signs of torture. The left eye had been gouged out; the right remained shut. Her mouth hung open. As he pressed the shutter of his

became one of the defining documents of the genocide in Bangladesh.

The black-and-white photograph of this woman—brutalised by the Pakistani occupation forces and their local collaborators—still silences every human feeling within us. For generations born long after the war, the image evokes a visceral hatred of the perpetrators and a desperate urge to learn the history of Bangladesh's liberation. Through this one photograph, Talukder provided a stark visual backdrop to that collective yearning. His Rolleiflex bore witness to many other historic moments of the Liberation War, making it impossible to study the visual history of 1971 without encountering his gaze.

For at least the last decade of his life, I had the privilege of knowing him closely. We photographed many political events side by side across Bangladesh. He

attempted to record this tragic chapter of Rayerbazar.

At dawn on 16 December, Rashid Talukder set out to take photographs with Michel Laurent, an American photographer from the Associated Press. All day they captured scenes of gunfire and jubilation. Shahjahan, a young man who lived in his home, was killed by the occupation forces later that afternoon. The joy of victory turned to grief for Talukder. The next day at noon, he heard of the massacre of intellectuals. News spread that hundreds of their bodies lay in Rayerbazar, Katasur, and Basila. Word travelled from mouth to mouth with the speed of wind. Overwhelmed by the weight of the moment, he reached Rayerbazar after midday. In front of a deserted kiln known as KBS, he saw hundreds of corpses. Some were blindfolded, some with tied hands;

PHOTO: SAHADAT PARVEZ
Rashid Talukder [24 October 1939 – 25 October 2011].

Bengal has overshadowed them all."

That same day, Dainik Bangla published a searing report titled "In What Language Shall We Describe the Brutality of the 'Al-Badr' Beasts?" The reporter's name was not mentioned. He wrote: "Before reaching Katasur, Rayerbazar, and Basila wetlands on Saturday morning, I had never understood how shattering grief can be. After the great cyclone of November 1970, I saw processions of thousands of corpses. Nature's fury left me devastated then. But here, at this killing field, witnessing the savagery of the Pakistani forces and their collaborators Al-Badr and Al-Shams, I felt paralysed with sorrow. Many of us journalists had survived only because we fled our homes. In the sea of bodies of loved ones, I felt as though I could see our own shadows. This too was meant to be our killing field."

To understand the context and horror of the intellectual killings in Bangladesh, the report's concluding lines are essential:

"Bodies were scattered across the vast field. In some places, several corpses lay in heaps. Women were among them. Most appeared two or three days old. In one spot, parts of limbs protruded from two half-buried bodies—older, by several days. One corpse after another. Some beheaded. Locals who had fled earlier told us that hundreds more bodies had been found near the Saat Gombuj Mosque and the Shia Imambara to the west. That area was still inaccessible—they said gunshots continued. Suddenly I heard sobbing. Beside me was the Australian journalist Mr Finlay. He was crying. An Indian journalist was crying. I was crying. Many others were crying. Standing at the killing field, the world of our sorrow had become an ocean."

After reading that deeply moving report in Dainik Bangla, I became eager to know the name of the journalist who had written it. I shared the matter with Ahmed Noor-e-Alam, a distinguished journalist of the 1960s now living in the United States. He told me, "The widely acclaimed report on the killing of the martyred intellectuals was written by Hedayat Hossain Morshed. In my journalistic career, I have never seen another reporter like him. Unfortunately, in this country, talent is not recognised, and that is why he has been forgotten today."

Shahadat Parvez is a photographer and researcher. The article is translated by Samia Huda.



Bodies of martyred intellectuals with hands and faces bound [Rayerbazar, Dhaka, 18 December 1971].



The body of journalist Selina Parvin [Rayerbazar, Dhaka, 18 December 1971].

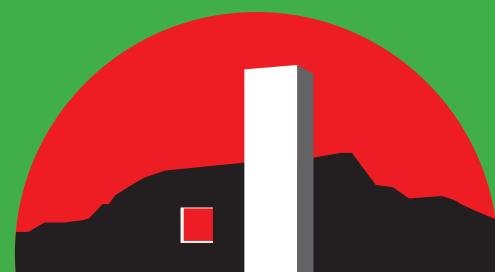
PHOTOS: RASHID TALUKDER

Rolleiflex, tears blurred Talukder's viewfinder. He wiped the glass with the handkerchief wrapped round his nose, then stepped into the muddy water, positioned the camera over her face, and took several vertical frames. Fifty-four years have passed. The identity of this unfortunate woman has never been found. Yet her anonymous face

lied riding pillion on my motorbike on our assignments. Between shots, he would share memories of his long career in journalism and the harsh years of the war. Through his camera, he spent his life searching for life itself. He wanted to make images that spoke of human experience. It is from those memories that I, the humbler one, have

some had eyes gouged out; parts of faces had been slashed; others had their stomachs ripped open. Many had already become food for crows, kites, vultures, and wild dogs. Some skeletons lay scattered at the edges of the wetlands. He photographed until dusk descended.

As the staff photographer of



Martyrs of Freedom

A list of martyred intellectuals as recorded in government gazettes

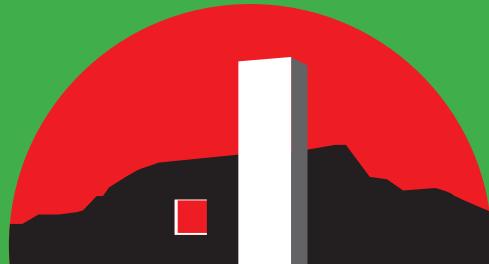
1. Dr. Anil Kumar Singha, Doctor
2. Anudvipayan Bhattacharya, Teacher
3. Abani Mohan Dutta, Teacher
4. Dr. Amulya Kumar Chakraborty, Doctor
5. Dr. A. A. Shamsul Haque, Doctor
6. A. K. M. Faruk, Dr. Captain, Doctor
7. Dr. A. Kh. M. Golam Mostafa, Doctor
8. Dr. Azharul Haque, Doctor
9. Ataur Rahman Khan Khadim, Teacher and Researcher
10. Dr. Atiqur Rahman, Doctor
11. A. N. M. Golam Mostafa, Journalist
12. Dr. Lt. Colonel A. F. Ziaur Rahman, Doctor
13. Dr. A. F. M. Abdul Alim Choudhury, Doctor
14. Dr. A. B. M. Humayun Kabir, Doctor
15. Dr. Abdur Rahman, Doctor
16. Professor Abdur Rahman, Teacher
17. Abdul Ahad, Lawyer
18. Abdul Wahab Talukdar, Teacher
19. Abdul Kader Mia, Government Employee (Police)
20. Dr. Abdul Gafur Ahmed, Doctor
21. Abdul Jabbar, Lawyer and Politician
22. Abdul Jabbar, Teacher
23. Abdul Jabbar, Lawyer, Politician and Social Worker
24. Abu Naeem Mohammad Munier Choudhury, Teacher and Writer (Playwright),
25. Dr. Professor Abul Kalam Azad, Teacher
26. Abul Kalam Shamsuddin, Government Employee
27. Engr. Abul Kalam Mohammad Shamsuddin, Engineer
28. Dr. Professor Abul Khair, Teacher and Researcher
29. Abul Bashar Choudhury, Journalist
30. Engr. Abu Saleh Mohammad Ershadullah, Engineer,
31. Abu Hashem Mia, Teacher,
32. Aminuddin, Politician and Lawyer
33. Dr. Ayesha Bedora Choudhury, Doctor,
34. Altaf Mahmud, Vocalist, Composer, Music Director, Cultural Organizer
35. Altaf Hossain, Engineer,
36. Ali Karim, Government Employee,
37. Dr. Ashraf Ali Talukdar, Doctor,
38. Indu Saha, Litterateur
39. Engr. A. A. M. Mozammel Haque, Engineer
40. A. H. Nurul Alam, Non-Government Employee
41. A. N. M. Muniruzzaman, Teacher,
42. A. Y. Mahfuz Ali (Jarrej Mia), Lawyer and Politician
43. Dr. Major A. K. M. Asadul Haque, Doctor,
44. Dr. Major A. K. M. Nurul Haque, Engineer
45. Professor A. K. M. Lutfar Rahman, Teacher,
46. A. K. M. Shamsul Haque Khan, Government Employee
47. A. T. M. Alamgir, Pilot,
48. Dr. Enamul Haque, Doctor
49. A. B. M. Abdur Rahim, Lawyer
50. A. B. M. Ashraful Islam Bhuiyan, Teacher
51. M. A. Sayeed, Journalist, Politician and Culture Activist
52. S. M. Nurul Huda, Teacher
53. Professor S. M. Fazlul Haque, Teacher
54. S. M. A. Rashidul Hasan (Sheikh Mu. Abdur Rashid), Teacher and Writer,
55. S. M. Fazlul Haque, Teacher
56. S. B. M. Mizanur Rahman (Saif Mizanur Rahman), Deputy Magistrate
57. Qasimuddin Ahmed Maulana, Teacher
58. Dr. Qasiruddin Talukdar, Doctor
59. Kazi Ali Imam, Non-Government Employee and Cultural Activist
60. Dr. Kazi Md. Obaidul Haque Siddiqui, Doctor
61. Dr. Kaiser Uddin, Doctor
62. Dr. Second Lieutenant Kh. A. Z. M. Nurul Imam Turki, Doctor
63. Khandkar Abul Kashem, Teacher
64. Khwoja Nizamuddin Bhuyan, Bir Uttam, Politician, Cultural Activist
65. Engr. Khurshid Alam, Engineer
66. Khondkar Abu Taleb, Journalist
67. Ghyasuddin Ahmed, Teacher
68. Dr. Professor Govinda Chandra Dev, Teacher
69. Golam Mostafa, Teacher
70. Dr. Golam Sarwar, Doctor
71. Golam Hossain, Additional Superintendent of Police
72. Shah Chisti Helalur Rahman, Journalist and Student Politician
73. Zahir Raihan, Litterateur and Filmmaker
74. Zahirul Islam (Sayed Zahiruddin Islam), Litterateur, Politician and Cultural Activist
75. Dr. Zikrul Haque, Politician and Doctor,
76. Jnanananda, Buddhist Monk
77. Dr. Professor Jyotirmoy Guhathakurta, Teacher
78. Timir Kanti Deb, Teacher
79. Dhirendranath Datta, Politician and Lawyer
80. Dr. ANM Faizul Mohee, Teacher and Writer
81. Dr. Major Noymul Islam, Doctor
82. Engr. Nazrul Islam, Engineer
83. Dr. Narendra Nath Ghosh, Doctor
84. Dr. Nazir Uddin, Doctor
85. Nizamuddin Ahmad, Journalist
86. Nityananda Pal, Teacher
87. Dr. Lt. Colonel Nurul Absar Mohammad Jahangir, Doctor
88. Nutan Chandra Singha, Social Worker and Education Patron



The mausoleum at the Martyred Intellectuals' Graveyard, Mirpur, Dhaka.

PHOTO: STAR

89. Nurul Amin Khan, Government Employee
90. Purnendu Dastidar, Litterateur and Politician
91. Dr. Lt. Colonel Fazlur Rahman Khan, Teacher
92. Fazlul Haque Choudhury, Government Employee
93. Faizur Rahman Ahmed, Government Employee
94. Ferdous-Daula Khan Bablu, Poet and Actor
95. Dr. Lt. Colonel Badiul Alam Choudhury, Doctor
96. Dr. Captain Badiul Alam Choudhury, Doctor
97. Baser Ali, Cultural Activist and Drama Artist
98. Birendranath Sarkar, Lawyer and Journalist
99. Dr. Maqbul Ahmed, Doctor
100. Dr. Mansur Ali, Doctor
101. Dr. Mansuruddin, Doctor
102. Dr. Mansur Kanu, Doctor
103. Mafizuddin Khan, Doctor
104. Momtaz Hossain, Doctor
105. Engr. Mohsin Ali, Engineer
106. Mohsin Ali Dewan, Teacher, Journalist and Writer
107. Mohiuddin Haidar, Government Employee
108. Mamun Mahmud, Government Employee
109. Mahbub Ahmed, Government Employee
110. Engr. Mahmud Hossain Akand, Engineer
111. Mizanur Rahman Miju, Cultural Activist (TV and Stage Artist
112. Dr. Mihir Kumar Sen, Doctor
113. Mir Abdul Qayyum, Teacher; Lecturer
114. Mujibul Haque, Government Employee
115. Munshi Kabir Uddin Ahmed, Government Employee
116. Muslim Uddi Mia, Teacher
117. Muhammad Akhtar, Journalist and Literature-Culture Enthusiast
118. Mehrunnesa, Poet
119. Engr. Mozammel Ali, Engineer
120. Engr. Mozammel Haque Choudhury, Engineer
121. Professor Mofazzal Haider Chaudhury, Teacher and Writer
122. Engr. Lt. Commander Moazzem Hossain, Engineer
123. Mohammad Anwar Pasha, Writer, and Teacher
124. Lieutenant Mohammad Anwarul Azim, Government Employee
125. Mohammad Afsar Hossain, Engineer
126. Mohammad Aminul Haque, Lawyer and Politician
127. Mohammad Abdul Gafur, Vocalist and Musician
128. Dr. Mohammad Abdul Jabbar, Doctor
129. Mohammad Abdul Muktadir, Teacher
130. Dr. Mohammad Aminuddin, Researcher (Chemist) and Litterateur;
131. Mohammad Amir, Government Employee
132. Professor Mohammad Araz Ali, Teacher and Philosopher
133. Dr. Mohammad Khurshed Ali Sarkar, Doctor (Homeopathic)
134. Mohammad Taslim Uddin, Lawyer
135. Mohammad Nazmul Haque Sarkar, Politician and Lawyer
136. Engr. Mohammad Nur Hossain, Engineer
137. Engr. Mohammad Fazlur Rahman, Engineer
138. Dr. Professor Mohammed Fazle Rabbee, Doctor
139. Mohammad Moshirul Rahman, Politician and Lawyer
140. Professor Mohammad Moazzem Hossain, Teacher
141. Dr. Muhammad Murtaza, Doctor and Writer
142. Dr. Mohammad Shafi, Doctor (Dental Surgeon)
143. Engr. Mohammad Shafiqul Anowar, Engineer
144. Mohammad Shahidullah, Government Employee
145. Mohammad Shamsuzzaman, Engineer
146. Dr. Mohammad Shamshad Ali, Doctor
147. Mohammad Salimullah, Cultural Activist and Social Worker
148. Dr. Mohammad Sadat Ali, Teacher
149. Mohammad Sadek, Teacher
150. Principal Jogesh Chandra Ghosh, Teacher and Ayurvedic Scholar
151. Ranada Prasad Shaha (R. P. Shaha), Social Worker and Philanthropist
152. Professor Rafiqul Islam, Teacher, Journalist and Litterateur
153. Rafiqul Haidar Choudhury (Ishika), Litterateur and Non-Government Employee
154. Dr. Rakhal Chandra Das, Doctor
155. Ramranjan Bhattacharya, Lawyer
156. Dr. Major Rezaur Rahman, Doctor
157. Latifat Hossain Joardar, Teacher
158. Lutfunnahr Helena, Teacher and Politician
159. Sharafat Ali, Teacher
160. Shahid Saber (A. K. M. Shahidullah), Journalist and Litterateur
161. Shahidullah Kaiser (Abu Naeem Mohammad Shahidullah Kaiser), Litterateur and Journalist
162. Dr. Professor Shamsuddin Ahmed, Doctor
163. Shah Abdul Majid, Government Employee
164. Shib Sardan Chakraborty, Journalist
165. Shibendra Nath Mukharjee, Lawyer, Journalist and Cultural Activist
166. Sheikh Abdul Mannan (Ladu Bhai), Journalist;
167. Sheikh Abdus Salam, Teacher and Politician;
168. Sheikh Habibur Rahman, Lawyer and Journalist;
169. Dr. Shailendra Kumar Sen, Doctor and Politician;
170. Dr. Syamal Kanti Lala, Doctor;
171. Professor Santosh Chandra Bhattacharya, Teacher; Professor
172. Dr. S. M. Mansur Rahman Sarkar, Doctor;
173. Sayedul Hasan, Politician, Social Worker, Cultural Activist, Trade Commissioner
174. Dr. Saleh Uddin Ahmed, Doctor;
175. Dr. Siddique Ahmed, Scientist and Researcher
176. Sirajuddin Hossain, Journalist;
177. Dr. Sirajul Haque Khan, Teacher
178. Sukharjan Samaddar, Teacher and Vocalist
179. Sunohar Ali, Lawyer, Politician and Journalist
180. Engr. Sultan Uddin Ahmed, Engineer
181. Dr. Suleman Khan, Doctor,
182. Dr. Sushil Chandra Sharma, Doctor
183. Selina Parvin, Journalist and Poet
184. Dr. Colonel Syed Abdul Hai, Doctor
185. Syed Akbar Hossain (Bokul Mia), Lawyer and Politician
186. Syed Atar Ali, Politician
187. Syed Nozmul Haque, Journalist
188. Professor Habibur Rahman, Teacher
189. Dr. Harinath Dey, Scientist (Biochemist) and Researcher



MARTYRED INTELLECTUALS DAY 2025

The Daily Star

DHAKA SUNDAY DECEMBER 14, 2025
AGRAHAYAN 29, 1432 BS

S5

283. Muhammad Akhtar, Journalist
284. Eng. Mokarram Hossain Mukul, Engineer
285. Dr. Mozammel Haque, Doctor
286. Eng. Mohammad Aftab Hossain, Engineer
287. Mohiuddin Khan, Lawyer
288. Eng. Lt. Col. Mohammad Abdul Kader, Engineer
289. Mohammad Abdul Bari Mia, Actor
290. Mohammad Abdul Hafiz, Lawyer
291. Mohammad Aminuddin, Lawyer
292. Dr. Lieutenant Mohammad Aminul Haque, Doctor
293. Dr. Mohammad Alamgir Mia, Doctor
294. Mohammad Khabiruddin Miah, Teacher
295. Eng. Mohammad Golam Sarwar, Engineer
296. Dr. Mohammad Motiur Rahman, Doctor
297. Mohammad Moazzem Hossain, Teacher
298. Mohammad Rostom Ali, Agriculture Officer
299. Mohammad Shahar Ali, Teacher
300. Dr. Mohammad Shakhawat Hossain, Doctor
301. Mohammad Sekandar Ali, Government officer
302. Jatindra Kumar Vatra, Lawyer
303. Dr. Rafik Ahmed, Doctor
304. Dr. Rabul Haque, Doctor
305. Dr. Rabi Basak, Doctor
306. Romoni Kanto Nandy, Doctor
307. Dr. Romoni Mohan Das, Doctor
308. Ramranjan Bhattacharjee, Lawyer
309. Eng. Rafiquddin Ahmed Bulbul, Engineer
310. Ramkrishna Adhikari, Teacher
311. Dr. Reboti Kanta Sanyal, Doctor
312. Lalitkumar Bol, Lawyer
313. Shafiqur Rahman Bhuiyan, Teacher
314. Eng. Shafikul Anowar, Engineer
315. Shashanka Pal, Writer and Journalist
316. Dr. Shah Abdul Aziz, Doctor and Politician
317. Dr. Shah Amin Hossain, Doctor
318. Shikdar Hedayetul Islam, Teacher and Government officer
319. Dr. Shudhangshu Mohan Saha, Doctor
320. Eng. Shamsuzzaman, Engineer
321. Santosh Kumar Dash, Teacher
322.....
323. Sofiuddin, Lawyer and Politician
324. Saroj Kumar Nath Adhikari, Teacher
325. Dr. Sayeed Mohit Imam, Doctor
326. Dr. Sujauddin Ahmed, Doctor
327. Sudhir Kumar Ghosh, Writer and Social Worker
328. Sudhir Kumar Chakraborty, Lawyer and Politician
329. Dr. Sunir Kumar Guha Roy, Doctor
330. Sumangal Kumar Kundu, Lawyer
331. Eng. Sekandar Hayat Chowdhury, Engineer
332. Syed Akbar Hossain Bokul Miah, Lawyer
333. Dr. Hasibur Rahman, Doctor and Politician
334. Dr. Hemchandra Basak Bolai, Doctor
335. Dr. Hemanta, Doctor
336. Anil Mohon Saha, Lawyer
337. Ashim Santi Roy, Teacher
338. Oliur Rahman, Writer and Teacher
339. Ashwini Ghosh, Social Worker and Sports Organizer
340. Olibhusan Saha, Teacher
341. Dr. Ashok Chandra Roy, Doctor
342. Abinash Kumar Nag, Teacher
343. Abul Hashem Sarkar, Teacher
344. Aminul Huq, Politician
345. Abdul Quader, Teacher
346. Abu Faruk Chowdhury, Lawyer
347. Dr. Ahad Ali Sardar, Doctor
348. Abdul Malek, Teacher
349. Aiz Uddin Molla, Social Worker and Education Enthusiast
350. Abdus Samad, Teacher
351. Abdur Rashid Mazed, Politician
352. Atiar Rahman, Teacher
353. Abu Bakkar Siddique, Teacher
354. Amjad Hossain, Teacher
355. Abul Kashem Sardar, Teacher
356. Afsar Molla, Journalist
357. Akbar Ali, Teacher

358. Ismail Hossain Master, Teacher
359. Ishaq Chowdhury, Journalist
360. Uttam Kumar Pal, Musician
361. A.K.M. Rafiqul Islam, Teacher
362. S M Zobayed Ali, Teacher
363. M A Aziz Sarkar, Government Employee
364. AB Mohiuddin Ahmed (Golam Maola), Teacher
365. Professor Wahidur Rahman Chowdhury, Teacher
366. Osman Gani Mondol, Teacher
367. Osman Ali Molla, Teacher
368. Kazi Md. Sadek, Politician
369. Kazi A. Jabbar, Teacher
370. Kazi Azizul Islam, Government Employee
371. Kedar Roy Chowdhury, Lawyer
372. Dr. Khagendra Chandra Majumdar, Doctor
373. Khandaker Mohammad Elahi Box, Teacher and Writer
374. Khademul Islam, Teacher
375. Golzar Rahman, Teacher
376. Ganapati Chatterjee, Teacher
377. Golam Sarwar, Engineer
378. Chittaranjan Roy, Teacher
379. Jitendra Nath Sarkar, Teacher
380. Tozammel Hossain, Teacher
381. Durgadas Saha, Teacher
382. Debendra Pandit, Teacher
383. Dinesh Chandra Roy Mouluk, Teacher
384. Dhirendra Chandra Sarkar, Teacher
385. Nabin Chandra Ghosh, Teacher
386. Nafiz Uddin Ahmed Sarkar, Teacher
387. Dr. Pramathanath Pal, Doctor
388. Pradip Kumar Das, Teacher
389. Fahim Uddin Sarkar, Politician and Social Worker
390. Bagmishwar Barua, Teacher and Politician
391. Babu Motilal Chowdhury, Politician
392. Dr. Badiuzzaman, Politician and Doctor
393. Bahaj Uddin Akanda, Organizer and Social Worker
394. Badrul Haque Chowdhury, Teacher
395. Badiuzzaman Mukta, Teacher
396. Birendra Nath Baroi, Teacher
397. Mohammad Hanif, Government Employee and Cultural Activist
398. Madhusudan Dhar, Teacher
399. Mohammad Hazrat Ali, Teacher
400. Md. Mominal Haque, Teacher
401. Moulvi Jafar Ahmed Bhuiyan, Teacher
402. Manik Kishore Nanyasi, Musician and Teacher
403. Mokhlesar Rahman Chowdhury, Teacher
404. Mohammad Ismail Hossain, Teacher
405. Mohammad Ibrahim, Teacher and Politician
406. Mohammad Solaiman Ali Molla, Teacher
407. Dr. Maulana Oliur Rahman, Doctor
408. Mohammad Sahid, Social Worker and Politician
409. Mohammad Echob Ali Dewan, Cultural Activist
410. Mojibur Rahman Kanak, Engineer
411. Mojibur Rahman Kanchan, Social Worker and Drama Artist
412. Mohammad Ilias, Teacher and Politician
413. Mostak Hasan Ahmed, Teacher
414. Mofiz Uddin, Teacher
415. Mohammad Shahidullah, Teacher
416. Mohammad Lutfar Rahman, Teacher
417. Motilal Ghosh, Teacher
418. Mohammad Yakub Ali Molla, Teacher
419. Radha Gobinda Sarke, Teacher
420. Ramesh Chandra Das, Teacher
421. Riyachat Ali, Teacher and Writer
422. Father Lukash Marandi, Educationist and Social Activist
423. Lalit Kumar Bol, Lawyer and Politician
424. Shahnawaz Bhuiyan, Social Worker, Politician and Cultural Activist
425. Sheikh Mohammad Tahazzed Hossain, Teacher
426. Shamsul Haque Chowdhury, Playwriter
427. Shamsuddin Ahmed, Teacher
428. Sheikh Mohammad Shamsuzzoha, Teacher
429. Siraj Uddin Ahmed, Teacher

430. Satish Chandra Sarkar, Musician
431. Sushil Chandra Paul, Lawyer
432. Subrata Ali Mandal, Social Worker
433. Siraj Uddin Ahmed, Teacher
434. Sarojkumar Adhikari, Teacher
435. Samsul Huda, Teacher
436. Sekendar Ali Bhuiyan, Teacher
437. Siddikur Rahman, Politician and Social Worker
438. Satish Chandra Deb, Teacher
439. Harun-Al-Rashid, Teacher
440. Hirendra Chandra Majumder, Teacher
441. Hitendranath Chandra, Teacher
442. Harez Ali Mandal, Social Worker and Organiser
443. Haralal Saha, Teacher
444. Anil Chandra Deb, Teacher
445. Abinash Roy, Village Doctor
446. Dr. Ajit Kumar Chakrabarti, Doctor
447. Abani Kumar Roy, Social Worker
448. Atul Krishna Saha, Service Holder, Actor and Social Worker
449. Amal Krishna Som, Stage Actor and Social Worker
450. Arun Krishna Som, Stage Actor and Social Worker
451. Engr. Ahsan-Ul-Habib, Engineer
452. Aminul Islam, Scientific Officer
453. Abu Ilias Mohammad Alauddin, Service Holder
454. Abul Bashar Khan, Village Doctor and Folk Musician
455. Abdur Rouf, Litterateur and Researcher
456. Abdur Rashid, Lawyer
457. Abdur Rahman Khan Kashem, Politician and Social Worker
458. Abdur Rahim, Language Movement Activist
459. Maulana Abdul Aziz, Clergyman (Imam) and Social Worker
460. Abdul Gafur Biswas, Teacher
461. Abdul Jabbar, Cultural Activist and Assistant Director
462. Abdul Latif Khan, Writer, Artist, Politician and Social Worker
463. Abdul Hamid, Cultural Activist and Politician
464. Ahsan Uddin Manik, Politician and Organizer
465. Abu Hossain, Teacher
466. Dr. Abu Bakkar Akanda, Doctor
467. Achab Uddin Sarkar, Teacher
468. Amirul Huda Zinna, Musician
469. Abdul Khalek, Teacher
470. Abdul Hamid, Teacher
471. Abdul Hamid Sheikh, Public Representative and Politician
472. Abed Ali, Teacher
473. Ayub Hossain, Service Holder
474. Maulana Abdul Latif, Imam and Teacher
475. Munshi Ali Azim Khan, Imam and School Teacher (Madrasa)
476. Abdul Aziz Bhuiyan, Teacher
477. Year Mohammad, Teacher
478. Yakub Ali, Writer and Social Worker
479. Umesh Chandra Saha, Service Holder and Social Worker
480. A.Z.M Ziauddin, Service Holder and Cultural Activist
481. Waliur Rahman Paru, Cultural Activist and Social Worker
482. Kalicharan Namashudra, Teacher
483. Kaliprasanna Roy, Teacher
484. Kazi Ayub Hossain, Teacher and Politician
485. Kamini Kumar Chakrabarti, Teacher
486. Khawaja Abdus Sattar, Teacher and Labor Leader
487. Golam Mostafa, Teacher
488. Gobinda Chandra Das, Artist
489. Gobinda, Teacher
490. Chittaranjan Basu, Lawyer and Politician
491. Dr. Chittaranjan Saha, Doctor
492. Maulana Safir Uddin Munshi, Imam and Teacher (Madrasa)
493. Jagatjyoti Das (Bir Protik), Teacher
494. Jagabandhu Saha, Gana Samgitsilpi (Musician)
495. Joynal Abedin, Teacher
496. Joynal Abedin, Teacher
497. Tofel Uddin Ahmed, Village Doctor and Politician

Why is the martyred intellectuals' list still incomplete?

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

They were teachers who shaped young minds, doctors who healed the sick, writers who gave voice to a people, and scientists who dreamed of a brighter future. During the Liberation War of 1971, they were taken from their homes, not only for what they had done, but also for what they represented.

What unfolded in 1971 was genocide. The Pakistani Army and their local collaborators did not merely fight a war; they attempted to amputate a nation. Killing soldiers may weaken an army, but killing intellectuals cripples a nation. Their intent was chillingly clear: a Bangladesh without teachers, without doctors, without writers, without scientists — a Bangladesh left empty even if independence was won.

Since 1971, successive governments have repeatedly pledged to compile a complete list of martyred intellectuals. Yet each promise has ended in failure, with the most recent attempt also falling by the wayside.

The Ministry of Liberation War Affairs has stalled its effort to compile a comprehensive list of martyred intellectuals — an initiative launched in 2020 to address the absence of a complete record. The work was originally scheduled for completion by December 16 of last year.

Since its inception, the ministry has issued four gazettes naming 560 intellectuals, based on recommendations from a national committee and its sub-committee. However, progress has come to a standstill, as both committees have remained inactive since March and July of last year.

One committee member, requesting anonymity, remarked: "Since then, there has been complete silence. I fear this initiative may never see the light of day again."

Ishrat Chowdhury, secretary of the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs, acknowledged that the process of preparing a comprehensive list of martyred intellectuals has stalled.

She explained that they have already published gazettes containing the names currently in their possession.

When asked if the initiative had ended, she said: "At the moment, there is no such work going on. That doesn't mean we won't do it; it just means we are not doing it right now."

She added that the committees formed to oversee the task are no longer active. "Since there is no initiative, the committees are not functioning," she noted.

THE UNANSWERED QUESTION
Even after 54 years of the country's independence, in the absence of a proper and comprehensive list, it is still unclear how many intellectuals embraced martyrdom.

A committee member said that the names of martyred intellectuals can be found in the Shaheed Buddhiji Koshgrantha, the 1972 government documentary Bangladesha, Banglapedia, and on postal stamps.

Shaheed Buddhiji Koshgrantha listed 328 martyred intellectuals, but noted that

the list was not complete.

The documentary Bangladesh stated that 1,109 intellectuals were martyred.

Banglapedia estimated that 1,111 intellectuals were killed — including 991 academics, 49 physicians, 42 lawyers, 13 journalists, nine litterateurs and artists, five engineers, and two others.

Many researchers, however, believe the total number of martyred intellectuals could be much higher. Members of the Buddhiji Nidhan Tathayusandhan Committee, set up in 1972, had made a primary list of 20,000 intellectuals who were killed.

THE 2020 INITIATIVE

On November 19, 2020, the then government formed an 11-member committee comprising freedom fighters, researchers, and officials to finally assemble a complete list.

The committee's first meeting in December 2020 approved 1,222 names for the primary list. Of them, 1,070 were names

the ministry already had, and 152 were obtained from postal stamps issued in the names of martyred intellectuals at various times.

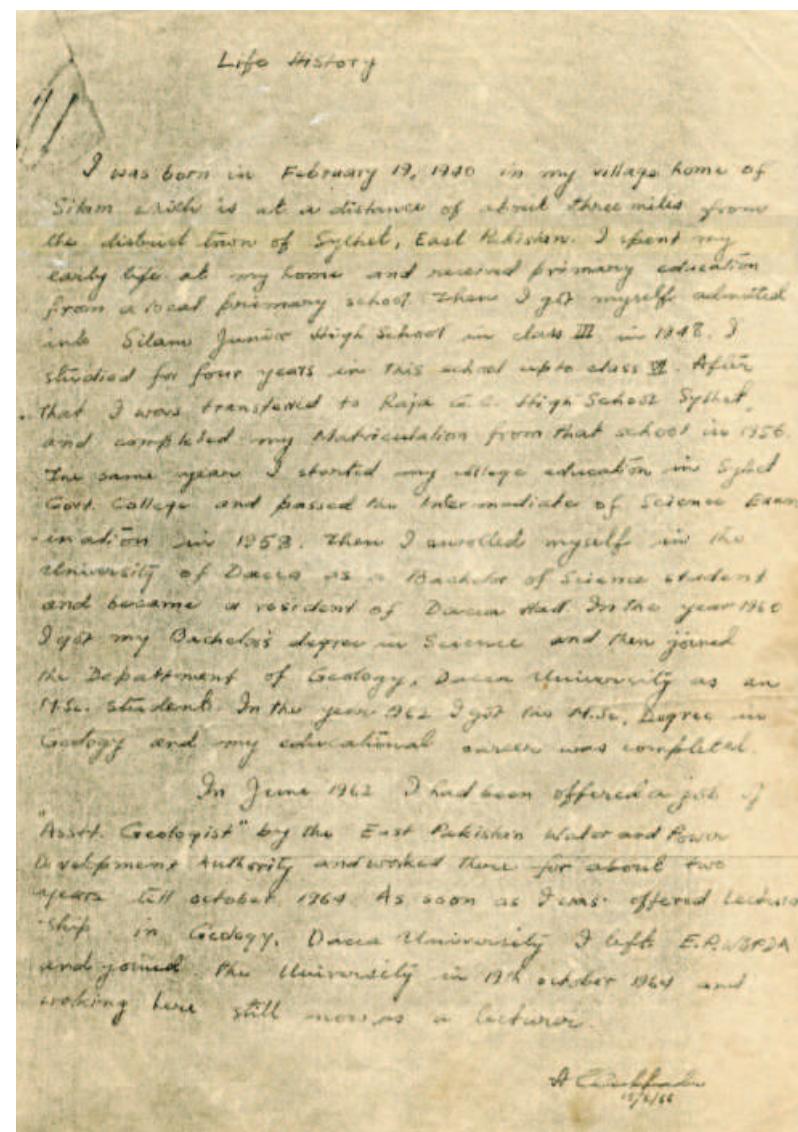
Littérateurs, philosophers, scientists, artists, teachers, researchers, journalists, lawyers, physicians, engineers, architects, sculptors, government and non-government employees, politicians, social workers, cultural activists, musicians, and people involved in film-making, theatre, and the arts who were killed by Pakistani forces or went missing between March 25, 1971, and January 31, 1972, are being defined as martyred intellectuals, several committee members said.

Following the committee's recommendation, the government published the names of 191 martyred intellectuals in May 2021; 143 in May 2022; 108 in February last year; and another 118 in March last year.

Mohiuddin Alamgir is a senior reporter at The Daily Star.

AN ARCHIVE
OF ABSENCE

These memorabilia, preserved by the Liberation War Museum, bear witness to lives and ideas violently cut short in 1971. Together, they form an archive of memory—documenting loss, resistance, and the enduring absence left by the martyred intellectuals.



Abdul Muktadir's handwritten short autobiography, 1966.

ABDUL MUKTADIR (1940–1971)

A life in geology,
interrupted

Abdul Muktadir was a gifted geologist and a deeply admired teacher at Dhaka University, whose life was shaped by learning, teaching, and an unwavering commitment to his students. Born in Silam village in Sylhet, he completed his Master's degree in Geology from Dhaka University in 1962 and soon joined the university's Geology Department as a lecturer. His academic distinction later took him to the United Kingdom to pursue a PhD, and he was preparing to continue advanced research in the United States—ambitions abruptly extinguished by the violence of 25 March 1971.

At dawn, while preparing for Fajr prayers, he responded to a knock at his door. He was seized by soldiers and shot on the spot. His body was later recovered by relatives and buried near a mosque in Purana Paltan.



Abdul Muktadir's pen.



The torchlight that belonged to Abul Hashem Mia.

ABUL HASHEM MIA (1940–1971)

A life lit by courage

Abul Hashem Mia was a scholar of Political Science and Law, having earned his degrees from Dhaka University. During the Liberation War, he took up arms and fought under Major A.T.M. Haider in Sector 2, combining intellectual commitment with active resistance.

On 7 December 1971, following the liberation of Majidee in Noakhali, he joined a victory rally celebrating freedom. It was there that a sniper's bullet, fired by a Razakar, ended his life. He was killed at the very moment independence was being realised.



JYOTIRMOY GUHATHAKURTA (1920–1971)

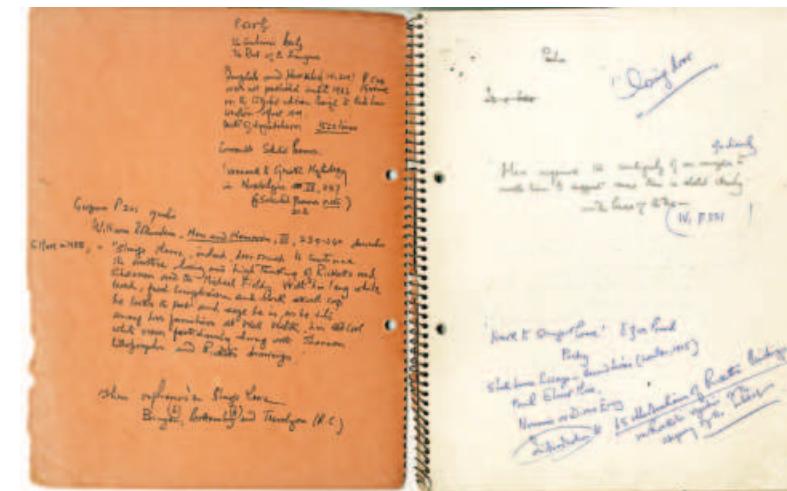
A deeply committed
humanist

Dr Jyotirmoy Guhathakurta was among Dhaka University's most distinguished educationists—an intellectual shaped by liberal, secular, and humanist ideals. Born in Mymensingh to a family of teachers, he demonstrated exceptional academic promise, graduating first in his class from Dacca University in 1942. He joined the Department of English in 1949 and soon became a guiding force within the university community.

Throughout the 1950s, he co-edited the journal *New Values*, championing rational thought, ethical humanism, and cultural openness. After completing his PhD at King's College London in 1967, he returned to Dhaka University as a dedicated teacher and scholar, later serving as provost of Jagannath Hall.

On the night of 25 March 1971, Pakistani soldiers dragged him from his flat at 34/A in the university residential quarters and shot him repeatedly in the back. Left bleeding under curfew, he lay waiting for death. His wife and young daughter managed to drag him back into their home, but his wounds could not be treated. The following day, students—risking their lives—took him to hospital, where he died on 30 March 1971 from severe loss of blood.

Deeply engaged with international humanist circles, Dr Guhathakurta represented Bangladesh's intellectual spirit abroad, participating in global conferences and writing essays in both Bangla and English. His commitment to critical inquiry and artistic reflection extended into his private life, revealing a mind constantly engaged with culture and ideas.



A notebook in which Jyotirmoy Guhathakurta reflected on Men and Memories by William Rosenstein, exploring themes of nineteenth- and twentieth-century British art and society.



The panjabi worn by Giyasuddin Ahmad.

GIYASUDDIN AHMAD (1933–1971)

A historian of courage
and conscience

Professor Giyasuddin Ahmad's life was inseparable from the values he taught. Born in Narsingdi in 1933, he grew into one of Dhaka University's most beloved teachers, admired for both his intellectual rigour and personal warmth. After completing his MA in History, he joined the university as a young lecturer in 1958, quickly earning a reputation for excellence in the classroom.

A Commonwealth Scholarship later took him to the London School of Economics, where he specialised in International History. He

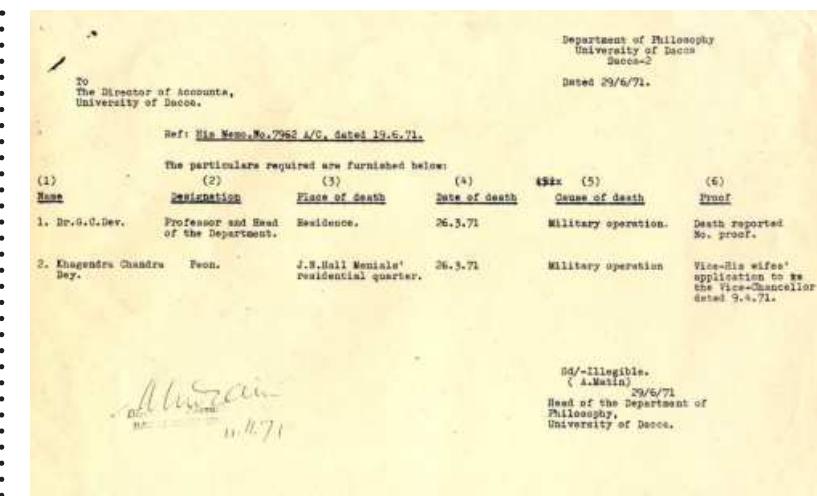
returned to Dhaka University in 1967 with deepened scholarship and the same unassuming humility that endeared him to generations of students and colleagues.

Though not a political activist in the conventional sense, Professor Ahmad was a figure of quiet courage—outspoken when principles were at stake, and deeply committed to human dignity. During the Liberation War, he discreetly raised funds for the families of martyred colleagues, helped arrange medical care for injured freedom fighters, and stood steadfastly beside students and co-workers during the darkest days of 1971. Twice, he was taken in by the Pakistani army for interrogation. Twice, he returned unbroken.

In the final hours, however, there was no escape. On December 14, 1971, Al-Badr men abducted him from Mohsin Hall. Weeks later, his body was recovered from Rayerbazar. He died as he had lived—brave, compassionate, and resolutely unwilling to bow to fear.



A money bag belonging to Giyasuddin Ahmad.



A letter dated 29 June 1971 from the Department of Philosophy, Dhaka University, formally confirming the death of Dr Gobinda Chandra Deb during the military operation.

GOBINDA CHANDRA DEB (1907–1971)

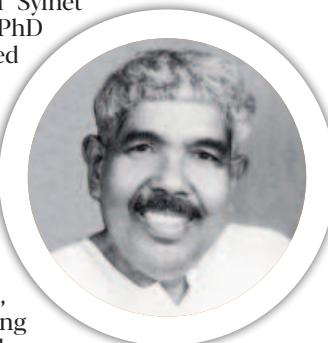
The silencing of a
philosopher

Dr Gobinda Chandra Deb was among the finest philosophers produced by Bengal, a thinker whose life was guided by profound humanism, ethical reason, and compassion. Born in Sylhet and educated in Calcutta, he earned his PhD from Calcutta University in 1944 and joined the Department of Philosophy at Dhaka University in 1951. A scholar of pragmatic idealism, he believed deeply in intellectual freedom and the inherent dignity of all human beings.

Known for his gentle, ascetic way of life and lifelong bachelorhood, Dr Deb was often regarded as a sage within academic circles. He opened his home to students, many of whom he embraced as family, offering not only intellectual guidance but personal care and moral support. His classroom and his home alike were spaces of dialogue, tolerance, and trust.

On the night of 25 March 1971, as the Pakistan Army launched its assault on Dhaka University, Dr Deb was in his campus residence with his adopted daughter Rokeya Sultana and her husband, Mohammad Ali. The house came under heavy gunfire throughout the night. When soldiers arrived at the door, Mohammad Ali opened it while reciting from the Quran. It did not spare him. Both Ali, a Muslim, and Dr Deb, a Hindu, were shot dead on the spot. Their bodies were later taken to the grounds of Jagannath Hall along with other victims of the massacre.

Dr Deb's death marked the violent end of a life devoted to peace, reason, and human dignity. His murder was not incidental but symbolic—the silencing of a philosophical voice that stood firmly against hatred and exclusion.



The personal logo seal of Rashidul Hasan.

RASHIDUL HASAN (1932–1971)

Believing in his people,
without fear

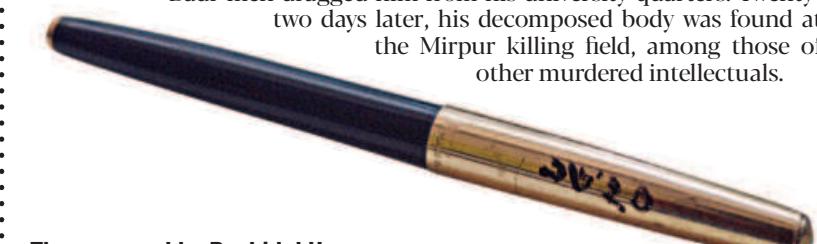
Rashidul Hasan was a beloved teacher of English at Dhaka University and a fearless believer in the rights of his people. Born in 1932, he migrated to East Pakistan in 1949 and soon emerged as a principled academic whose voice carried moral authority both inside and beyond the classroom.

Deeply shaken by Muhammad Ali Jinnah's declaration of Urdu as the sole state language, Rashidul Hasan openly warned that the people of East Pakistan would resist. His prediction proved prophetic. An outspoken supporter of student movements and pro-democracy politics, he stood firmly against linguistic and political domination, a stance that made him a marked figure in the eyes of pro-Pakistani collaborators.

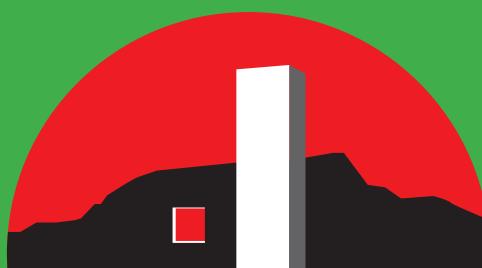
A poem from his diary (5 June 1970) captures the depth of his anguish and devotion as the nation struggled to be born:

Ekhon amar desh amar osru jole
Amar desh amar ontore
Amar desh aaj bikkhubdho shagor bondor shob bheshe geche
Jahaj hetha bheshe bheshe fere
Othoba jahaj dube geche
Duburira udhao howeche

In September 1971, he was abducted for the first time. After twelve harrowing days, he was released—an escape that seemed almost miraculous. But the danger had already closed in. On the morning of December 14, Al-Badr men dragged him from his university quarters. Twenty-two days later, his decomposed body was found at the Mirpur killing field, among those of other murdered intellectuals.



The pen used by Rashidul Hasan.

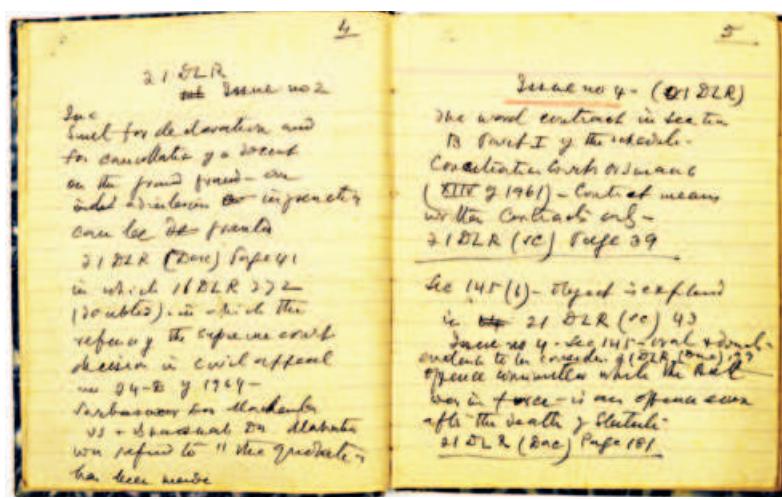


MARTYRED INTELLECTUALS DAY 2025

The Daily Star

DHAKA SUNDAY DECEMBER 14, 2025
AGRAHAYAN 29, 1432 BS

S7



A handwritten notebook in which Dhrendranath Dutta recorded his reflections on the discriminatory "Enemy Property Act", revealing his lifelong commitment to minority rights and constitutional fairness.

DHIRENDRANATH DUTTA (1886–1971)

A champion of communal harmony

Dhirendranath Dutta was an octogenarian lawyer, politician, and lifelong advocate of linguistic justice and communal harmony—one of the earliest and most courageous champions of the Bengali language in Pakistan. In 1948, his historic demand in the Pakistan Constituent Assembly that Bangla be recognised alongside Urdu ignited the first spark of what would later become the Language Movement.

A veteran of the Quit India movement, Dutta endured years of imprisonment for his anti-colonial activism. After the United Front's victory in 1954, he served as Health Minister, where he played a pivotal role in expanding public healthcare. His efforts contributed to the establishment of medical colleges in Rajshahi and Chattogram and the creation of tuberculosis and community clinics across the country, laying foundations that outlasted his tenure. Even in retirement in Comilla, age did not diminish his commitment to justice.

On 29 March 1971, Pakistani military personnel stormed his home and abducted both Dutta and his son. The 85-year-old statesman was taken to the Comilla cantonment, where he was tortured and killed. His body was never recovered.

Dutta's life was defined not only by language rights but by an unwavering defence of constitutional justice. His work consistently stood against discrimination, exclusion, and authoritarian abuse, making his murder an act of symbolic erasure as much as a physical one.



The car used by Dr Fazle Rabbee during the Liberation War.

FAZLE RABBEE (1932–1971)

The physician who turned his car into a lifeline of liberation

Dr Mohammad Fazle Rabbee, a distinguished Professor of Clinical Medicine and Cardiology at Dhaka Medical College, was revered not only for his medical brilliance but also for his moral courage. A lifelong believer in justice and human dignity, he rejected a nomination for Pakistan's Best Professor Award in 1970—a quiet but resolute act of conscience that reflected his political clarity and ethical resolve.

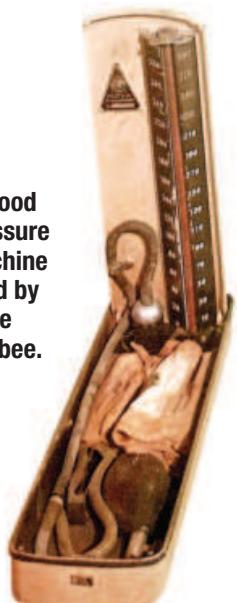
During the Liberation War of 1971, Dr Rabbee emerged as one of the medical profession's most steadfast allies of the resistance. He treated wounded freedom fighters, victims of torture, and women subjected to violence, extending care even to Urdu-speaking Biharis when others turned away.

Among the objects he left behind, his Morris Minor car stands as one of the most powerful symbols of his bravery. It was more than a vehicle; it became a moving lifeline of liberation. Dr Rabbee used it to transport injured freedom fighters, deliver medicines, and quietly support underground networks. At times, he handed the car over to freedom fighters for their missions, never asking questions and never revealing identities—even when threatened.

On 15 December 1971, Al-Badr men abducted Dr Rabbee from his residence in Siddheswari. His body was later recovered from the Rayerbazar Killing Field. He was murdered in the final hours before victory—one more life taken in the systematic attempt to erase Bangladesh's intellectual and moral leadership.



A blood pressure machine used by Fazle Rabbee.



ABDUL ALIM CHAUDHURY (1928–1971)

A compassionate rebel in a doctor's coat

Dr Abdul Alim Chaudhury lived a life shaped by medicine, intellect, and uncompromising patriotism. Born in Kishoreganj in 1928 into a zamindar family, he chose not to inherit privilege but to question it—envisioning a society where dignity and justice were shared by all. After earning his MBBS from Dhaka Medical College and completing further medical training at the Royal College in England, he could have pursued a secure and prosperous career abroad. Instead, he returned home, determined to serve his own people.

From his student days, Dr Alim was politically conscious and unaframed of authority. He marched during the Language Movement of 1952 and was imprisoned in 1954, experiences that only deepened his resistance to Pakistani repression. His activism extended beyond the streets and into the world of ideas. His pen, as incisive as his scalpel, found expression in journals such as Jatrik and Khapchhara, and later in his efforts to establish a branch of the Bangla Academy in London.

When the Liberation War erupted in 1971, Dr Alim transformed his medical chamber into a place of refuge. He treated wounded freedom fighters, sheltered those in hiding, and supplied medicine and financial support to resistance networks operating in secrecy. Friends warned him repeatedly of the danger he faced, urging him to leave. He refused. "If everyone leaves, who will work from within?" he asked.

On December 15, 1971, Al-Badr men abducted him from his home. Days later, his body was discovered in the Rayerbazar mass grave. He was killed in the final hours before victory—one of the brightest medical minds and bravest consciences extinguished just as freedom arrived.



The panjabi worn by Abdul Alim Chaudhury.

HARINATH DEY (1941–1971)

A scientist, a philosopher

Dr Harinath Dey was a gifted biochemist and reflective thinker who embodied a rare union of scientific rigour and philosophical inquiry. Born into an enlightened Hindu family, he pursued knowledge not as a discipline alone but as a moral calling. A former professor of Biochemistry at the University of Dhaka, he later served as Principal Scientific Officer at the Science Laboratories in Dhaka, where his research and leadership marked him as a rising scholar of exceptional promise.

Beyond the laboratory, Dr Dey explored the intersections of religion, science, and human reason. He authored philosophical writings that sought harmony rather than division and edited the journal Ikkhon, contributing to a tradition of thoughtful, questioning intellectual engagement.

That life of inquiry was brutally cut short during the army crackdown of March 1971. On 27 March, following a brief relaxation of curfew, Pakistani soldiers raided Malakartola Lane in Old Dhaka, rounding up eleven Hindu residents, among them Dr Dey. They were taken to the Sutrapur Army Camp, forced to kneel for hours, and later marched to the Loharpool (Iron) Bridge over the Dhulai canal. There, at around 10 p.m., they were lined up and shot. Dr Dey was killed instantly; only one detainee survived to bear witness to the atrocity.



A tape recorder used by Harinath Dey, preserved as a trace of a life dedicated to listening, reflection, and knowledge.



The ashtray used by Dr Azharul Haque, preserved at the Liberation War Museum.



DR AZHARUL HAQUE (1940–1971)

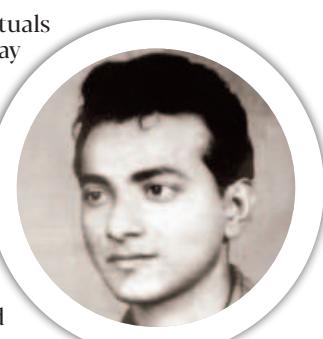
A quiet farewell preserved in ash

An ashtray preserved in the Martyred Intellectuals Gallery of the Liberation War Museum may appear insignificant at first glance. To the casual observer, it is merely an everyday object. But those who pause and look closely will notice cigarette filters resting in its hollow, settled among layers of dust and ash. It is only through such patient attention that the story of Dr Azharul Haque's final farewell begins to emerge.

In July 1971, Dr Azharul Haque was summoned to police headquarters and warned for treating wounded freedom fighters. Though he stopped seeing patients openly in his chamber, he did not stop practising medicine. Instead, he continued to provide secret medical care in the Hatirpool slums and other high-risk areas across Dhaka, where the injured could not afford visibility—or delay.

On 15 November 1971, while attempting to reach a hospital, the area was cordoned off by Al-Badr cadres. An ambulance carrying Dr Haque and his colleague, Dr A B M Hamayun Kabir, was stopped. Both men were assaulted and forcibly taken away at gunpoint. The following day, 16 November, their bodies were discovered in a trench near Notre Dame College in Motijheel.

That morning, before leaving his residence at Hakim House in Hatirpool, Dr Haque smoked a cigarette. He tapped the ash and placed the final cigarette butt into the ashtray he used every day. No one could have known that this ordinary gesture would become his last trace. Today, the dust and ash preserved within the ashtray seem to hold a silent farewell—to his home, and to the country he refused to abandon.



A traditional smoking pot (hukka dani) used by Ranada Prasad Saha.

RANADA PRASAD SAHA (1896–1971)

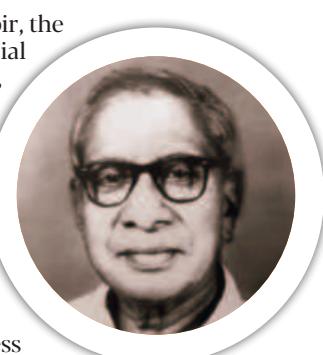
Traces of Danbir's humanity

Ranada Prasad Saha—widely revered as Danbir, the great philanthropist—was a visionary of social welfare whose life was devoted to service, compassion, and nation-building. Born on 15 November 1896, he began his public life far from comfort or privilege. During the First World War, he served in the Royal British Army, fought in Iraq with the Bengal Infantry (Bengali Paltan), and later joined the 1919 Victory March in London, where he was awarded the prestigious Sword of Honour.

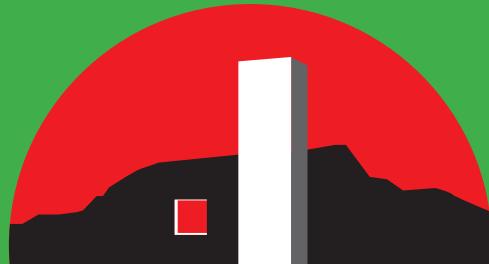
After the war, Saha entered business and accumulated considerable wealth, which he consciously redirected towards public welfare. His mission was clear: to uplift the disadvantaged through healthcare, education, and social development. In 1944, he founded Kumudini Hospital in Mirzapur, Tangail—an institution inaugurated by Governor Lord Casey and destined to become one of the country's most respected centres of medical care.

During the devastating Bengal famine of 1943–44, Saha organised and sustained several langar khana (community kitchens), feeding thousands of starving people for months. His philanthropy was neither episodic nor symbolic; it was sustained, practical, and rooted in an unshakeable belief in human dignity.

The violence of 1971 did not spare even such a life of service. On 29 April, during the Liberation War, Ranada Prasad Saha and his son, Bhabani Prasad Saha, were summoned by the Pakistan Army. Though they were briefly released on 5 May, both were abducted two days later and never seen again. His disappearance marked one of the most painful losses of the war—a reminder that compassion itself was a target.



A blood pressure machine used by Fazle Rabbee.

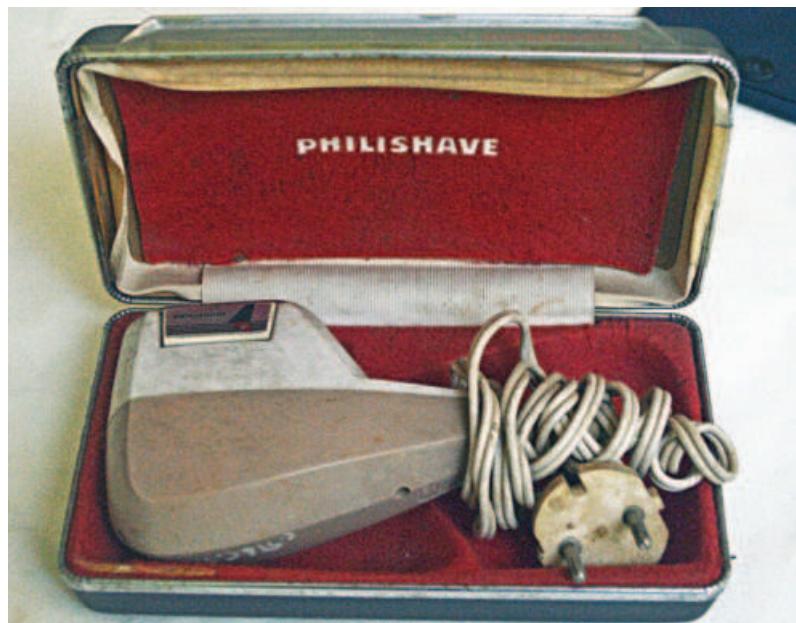


MARTYRED INTELLECTUALS DAY 2025

The Daily Star

DHAKA SUNDAY DECEMBER 14, 2025
AGRAHAYAN 29, 1432 BS

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An electric shaving machine used by Altaf Mahmud.

ALTAF MAHMUD (1933-1971)

The music that defied bullets

ANM Altaf Ali, popularly known as Altaf Mahmud, was a celebrated singer, composer, and cultural activist whose life fused music with resistance. Born in Barishal in 1933, he emerged as one of the most influential musical voices of his generation and later became a martyred intellectual of the Liberation War of 1971.

From an early age, music shaped his world. He received his initial training from the violinist Suren Roy and later studied classical music under Ustad Abdul Kader Khan in Karachi. His artistic journey soon became inseparable from political consciousness. During the Language Movement, Altaf Mahmud composed and performed "Aamar Bhaier Raktey Rangano Ekushe February"—a song that would transcend its moment to become a timeless tribute to the martyrs of 1952 and a defining symbol of the Bengali struggle for linguistic and cultural rights.

During the Liberation War, his home became a refuge for freedom fighters and a clandestine storage site for arms and ammunition. On 30 August 1971, the Pakistani Army raided his residence, discovered a steel trunk containing weapons, and arrested him. He was subjected to brutal torture and is believed to have been killed in September 1971. His body was never recovered.



A photograph of artist Qamrul Hasan, filmmaker-activist Zahir Raihan, and others at a meeting of intellectuals in Kolkata, 1971.

ZAHIR RAIHAN (1935-1972)

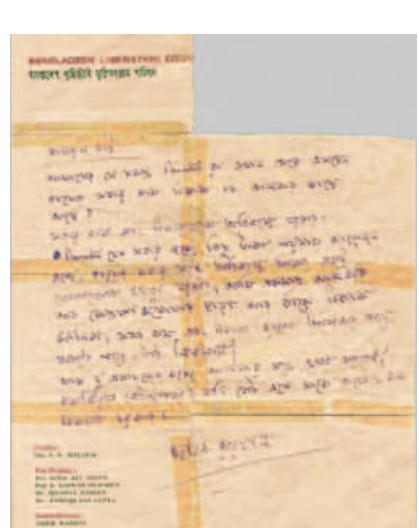
Filming freedom

Few figures embody the fusion of art and resistance as powerfully as Zahir Raihan. From an early age, his life was shaped by defiance. As a student, he walked out on 21 February 1952—among the first ten to defy the ban on assembly—and paid for it with arrest. Neither prison nor censorship ever managed to silence him.

Raihan's creative output moved fluidly across literature and cinema, each reinforcing the other as instruments of resistance. From the pages of *Arek Falgun* and *Hajar Bachhar Dhare* to the screen adaptations of *Kancher Deyal*, *Behula*, and most famously *Jibon Theke Neya*, he transformed storytelling into political intervention. Drawing on folk myths and everyday domestic life, he constructed powerful allegories that exposed how cultural identity itself had become a site of struggle under Pakistani rule.

When the Liberation War erupted, Raihan crossed into Kolkata—not to retreat, but to fight with his camera. He raised funds for the war effort and ventured into active conflict zones alongside guerrilla fighters to document the unfolding resistance. His documentaries *Stop Genocide* and *A State Is Born* confronted international audiences with the scale of violence inflicted upon Bengalis, forcing the world to bear witness.

In December 1971, after his brother Shahidullah Kaiser was abducted in Mirpur, Zahir Raihan entered Mirpur in search of him. He never returned. His disappearance deprived Bangladesh not only of a visionary filmmaker and writer, but of a future in which culture and politics might have continued to move together in the true spirit of liberation.



A letter written by Zahir Raihan to Qamrul Hasan.

MEHERUNNESA (1942-1971)

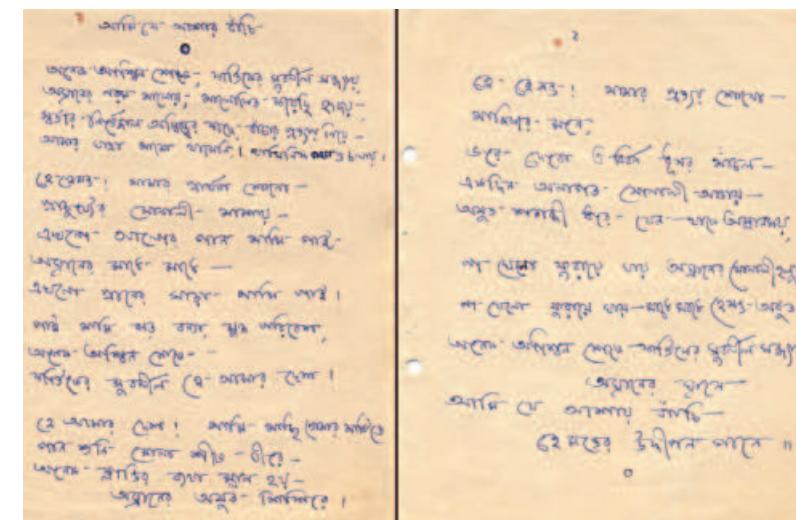
A martyr of poetry and patriotism

Meherunnesa's life, though brief, burned with rare intensity. A poet of fierce empathy and unyielding conviction, she emerged as a fearless voice during the turbulent decades leading to Bangladesh's independence. Born in 1942 in Khidirpur, she became a refugee after Partition and migrated to East Bengal with her family in 1950. Largely self-educated, she developed a poetic sensibility shaped by displacement, hardship, and resistance. Forced to abandon formal education at an early age to support her family, she worked at Bangla Academy, Radio Pakistan, and the USIS Library, carving out a life of letters against formidable odds.

As political tensions mounted in East Pakistan, her poetry underwent a decisive transformation. What began as tender reflection grew into sharp, uncompromising dissent. Her poem "Rajbondi", which carried the slogans Amader Dabi Mante Hob (Our demands must be met) and Rastrabhabha Bangla Chai (We want Bangla as the state language), drew the attention of state surveillance as early as 1954. Yet she never softened her pen. At a time when Rabindranath Tagore was banned by the Pakistani authorities, she defiantly invoked Gitanjali and Geetbitan in her verse, asserting cultural freedom in the face of repression.

Her final poem, "Jonota Jegeche", was published on March 23, 1971, just days before anti-liberation forces brutally murdered her and her family.

She was only 29. Yet Meherunnesa's life and death remain a testament to the power of poetry as resistance and to an unwavering love for her country.



A handwritten manuscript of Meherunnesa's poetry.

Tikka Khan's letter of warning

In the first week of September 1971, as the military regime tightened its grip on a defiant Dhaka, a short, chilling letter arrived at the University of Dhaka. Issued under the seal of Martial Law Headquarters, Zone B, it bore the signature of Lieutenant General Tikka Khan—Governor of East Pakistan, Martial Law Administrator, and, by virtue of office, Chancellor of the university. Addressed to Dr Sirajul Islam of the English Department, it warned him against indulging in "anti-state activities." The language was terse, bureaucratic, and unmistakably threatening.

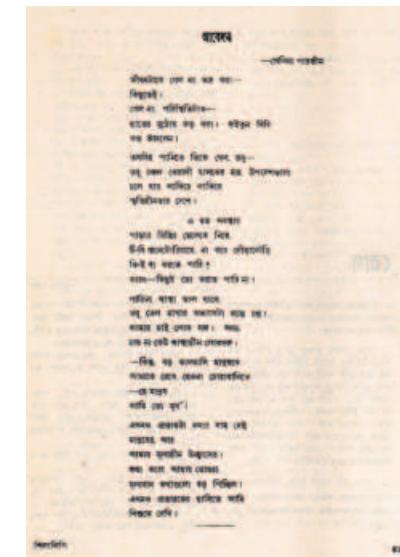
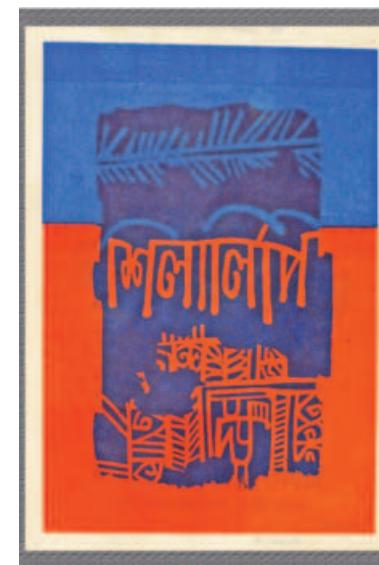
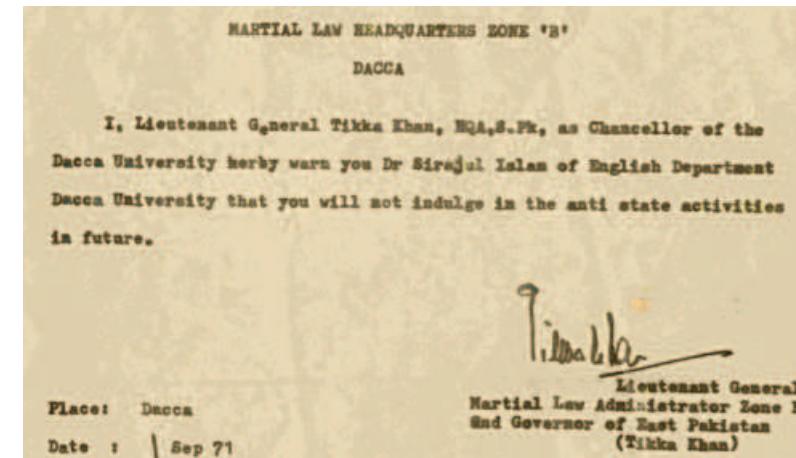
For Dr Sirajul Islam Choudhury, the letter was both personal intimidation and a symbol of the regime's determination to silence intellectual resistance. Though dated 1 September, it was delivered a day later. He recalls how six teachers were named in total: Professor A.B.M. Habibullah of Islamic History; four scholars from the Bengali Department—Dr Muhammad Enamul Huq, Munier Chowdhury, Nilima Ibrahim, and Muhammad Moniruzzaman—and himself. Some were dismissed outright. Others faced punitive threats. Moniruzzaman, ironically punished for patriotic songs he had written for Pakistan but imbued with the spirit of Bengal, was handed a sentence of six months' imprisonment. The rest received warnings meant to terrify rather than prosecute.

The delivery of the letters, he remembers, felt grotesque—"like a prize distribution ceremony." One by one, the teachers walked into the office of the Acting Vice-Chancellor, who handed over each sealed envelope as though awarding a certificate. Behind this dark theatre lay a deeper fear: their files were now at the General Headquarters. As Tikka Khan prepared to hand over power to A.M. Malik later that month, he cleared these cases, leaving the academics exposed. "If Pakistan survived," Choudhury recalls, "we understood it would not be possible for us to keep our jobs; our lives would be endangered."

These fears were justified when, on 14 December, Al-Badr death squads began picking up intellectuals according to a list prepared by Major General Rao Farman Ali. Choudhury notes bleakly that his own name was on it, alongside those who would be killed. He survived only because the authorities did not have his address. Others were not so fortunate. Munier Chowdhury, whose home was clearly identified, was abducted and murdered. Professor Habibullah managed to flee the country just days before the killings.

Why were these academics targeted? Not because they were political activists, Choudhury insists. Their "crime" was intellectual independence: advocating nationalism, secularism, democracy, and socialism; defending university autonomy; protesting Ayub Khan's ordinances; writing in newspapers that supported the people's movement; and, most notably, organising a 23 March seminar at Bangla Academy on the future of a secular, democratic, and socialist Bangladesh. In a Pakistan where dissent had become treason, this was enough to attract the wrath of the military state.

Looking back, the letter stands as a stark artefact of a regime's paranoia—a document meant not merely to warn, but to break the collective spirit of the university. Instead, it became part of the long historical trail that reveals how Bangladesh's intellectuals chose courage over fear, and how the repression intended to silence them only strengthened the moral force of the liberation struggle.



A cover and a page from Shilalipi, edited and published by Selina Parveen.

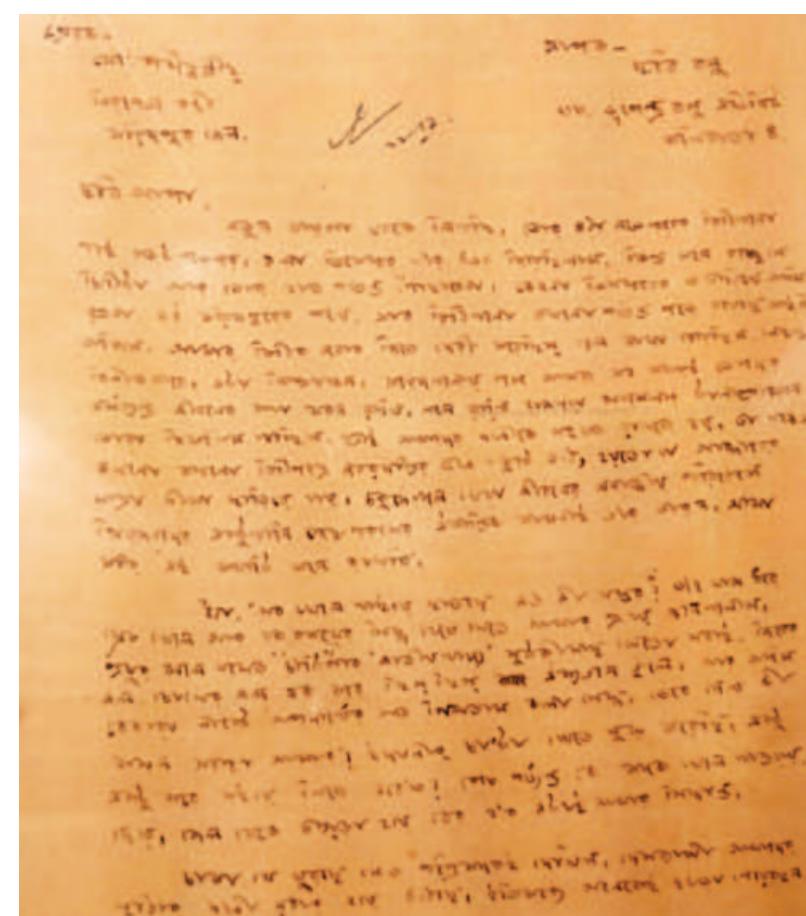
SELINA PARVEEN (1931-1971)

From Shilalipi to the killing fields

Selina Parveen lived a life shaped by care, conscience, and creative resolve. Born on March 31, 1931, she trained as a nurse and joined Mitford Hospital in 1956, dedicating her early professional life to healing. Her commitment to service soon extended beyond medicine. In 1959, she served as matron of Rokeya Hall, and the following year joined the Azimpur Baby Home as a teacher, working closely with children and women at society's margins.

Alongside her professional responsibilities, Selina Parveen cultivated a powerful literary voice. Through the 1960s, her poems and essays appeared in various journals, and she wrote regularly for Weekly Begum and Weekly Lalana. Most significantly, she edited and published the literary magazine Shilalipi, creating a space for reflection, creativity, and quiet resistance at a time when such expression was increasingly fraught.

On December 13, 1971, Selina Parveen was abducted from her residence by Al-Badr, the killing squad of the Pakistan Army. The following day, December 14, she was murdered alongside other intellectuals at the Rayerbazar killing fields in Dhaka. When her body was found, her hands and feet were bound, her eyes covered with cloth, and her body bore the marks of brutal bayonet attacks. Mutilated and left among other corpses and scattered debris, her remains testified to the calculated violence unleashed against those who dared to think, write, and care.



A letter written by political prisoner Shahidullah Kaiser from jail to Chabi Basu of Calcutta.

SHAHIDULLAH KAISER (1927-1971)

A writer made by resistance

Shahidullah Kaiser was one of the most powerful novelists of Bangla literature and a fearless voice in journalism. His life and work were forged in resistance. For his role in the Language Movement of 1952 and his uncompromising criticism of martial law, he endured relentless persecution under the Pakistani state, spending a total of eight years in prison. "I became a novelist because Ayub Khan sent me to jail," he once declared—an assertion that captured how repression ignited, rather than extinguished, his literary genius.

Behind prison walls, Kaiser turned confinement into creation. Some of his earliest works, including *Naam Nei* and *Jadu-i-Halwa*, were written inside his cell. It was there that he produced major novels such as *Sareng Bou*, *Shangshaptak*, and *Rajbondir Rojnamcha*—works that would later define modern Bangla fiction for their psychological depth and social realism.

His journalism was no less defiant. Kaiser worked for The Daily Ittefaq before joining the editorial desk of The Daily Sangbad, where he remained until his disappearance.

Kobey Pohabe Bibhabori (When Will the Night End?) was the only novel he wrote outside prison. Begun during the Liberation War, it sought to chronicle the brutality of the Pakistani army.

On 14 December 1971, masked men abducted Shahidullah Kaiser from his home. He was never seen again; his body was never recovered.

