

# THE BUSINESS STANDARD

## **BIGD commemorates Dr Akbar Ali Khan**

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Akbar Ali Khan. Illustration: TBS

**Brac Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD), Brac University organised a webinar to commemorate eminent economist and former caretaker government advisor Dr Akbar Ali Khan on Thursday (20 October).**

The webinar titled "Dynamics of Statecraft, Governance Reform & Public Intellectualism in Bangladesh: The Legacy of Dr Akbar Ali Khan" was joined by scholars and colleagues who have known Dr Khan for decades and are familiar with his work and research, said a press release.

The panelists spoke about Dr Khan's years of commitment to public service with a fierce sense of integrity and honesty. They also reflected his dynamic professional career as a teacher, bureaucrat, freedom fighter, policymaker, writer, and public intellectual, all of which revolved around the fundamental principles of advancing the public.

Dr Akbar Ali Khan was the architect of BIGD's unique Masters in Governance and Development program launched in 2005. Targeted exclusively for mid-level public bureaucrats, the program was conceived and designed by him, to inculcate a people-centered and scholarship-oriented entrepreneurial bureaucracy leadership.

BIGD Senior Research Fellow Dr Mirza M Hassan delivered a trigger presentation on the intellectual legacy of Dr Khan. The presentation focused on various concepts, analytical approaches, and theories that Dr Khan frequently used to reflect on Bangladeshi statecraft, governance reform, and many other topics.

He said, "Dr Khan employed various concepts, analytical approaches, and theories to reflect on the critical areas of development, state-society relationship, and governance reform."

M Musharraf Hossain Bhuiyan, former cabinet secretary and senior advisor to BIGD, chaired the session.

Dr Asif Shahan, Associate professor, Department of Development Studies, University of Dhaka, took part in the discussion by paying homage to the veteran.

He said, "An interesting aspect of Akbar Ali Khan was that he was both a scholar and a practitioner. He heavily contributed to providing academic explanations to bureaucratic phenomenon. His work also challenged colonial legacies and frame of thought."

Dr Syed Akhtar Mahmood, Former Lead Private Sector Specialist, World Bank Group said, "Akbar Ali Khan was a voracious reader, a dedicated scholar, and a relentless writer, and a courageous public intellectual. His life and work has been a journey of discovery."

"He was fluent and lively with his writing and had the ability and expertise to connect disparate dots, which created curiosity among general people,

provoked thoughts, and inspired them to learn more," said Dr Ahrar Ahmad, the director general of Gyantapas Abdur Razzaq Foundation.

Remembering Dr Khan, renowned economist and Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) Chairman Professor Rehman Sobhan said, "The discussants duly emphasized on his academic prowess. But we also need to explore his life as a civil servant. Because as a civil servant he was exceptional in a period where integrity and objectivity were progressively eroding in the culture of the bureaucracy. He stood firm and he had to pay the price for it periodically."

CPD Distinguished Fellow Professor Rounaq Jahan emphasised on the contribution Akbar Ali Khan made through his writing in the public sphere.

She said, "From his writings it becomes visible that he was an academic at heart. He believed in promoting reforms, and when he talked about reforms he was very objective about it. He wanted more discussion and debate on his work and writings, which says that he was a believer of public reasoning."

The webinar was also attended by scholars, activists, researchers, development professionals, bureaucrats, journalists, and students who expressed their deepest profound for Dr Khan and his work.