

Shamsur Rahman

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Dr Iqbal Ahmed Chowdhury, assistant professor of BSMMUH, formally declared the country's top poet dead at about 6:45pm. The poet died as his blood pressure fell to the lowest level, he told newsmen at the hospital.

Rahman's blood pressure had been deteriorating since 3:00pm and the doctors could not bring it back despite administering heavy doses of medicine, he said.

The doctors removed the close relatives of the poet from the intensive care unit (ICU) and told poet Abu Bakar Siddique about Rahman's death.

Shamsur Rahman was admitted to hospital on August 6 with serious illness and kept at the ICU.

He left behind wife, a son, three daughters, two brothers and four sisters. His only son Faiaz Rahman works at a private firm and daughters Fousia Rahman and Sheba Rahman live abroad.

"We could not realise what a great gift poet Shamsur Rahman was for the country, who was a Bangla language," said Abu Bakar Siddique.

Poet Shamsur Rahman has earned a permanent place in Bangla poetry and will be remembered forever, said poet Samudra Gupta, general secretary of Jatiya Kabita Parishad.

Meanwhile, a few literateurs and relatives of poet Rahman were critical of the government for dillydallying in sending him abroad for better treatment. They termed the government's assurance of sending him abroad "only a political stunt".

As the death news of the country's premier poet spread, a large number of people, including poets and writers, university teachers, cultural and social activists, political leaders, admirers and relatives, gathered at the BSMMUH to pay the last tribute to their beloved poet.

The body of Shamsur Rahman was taken out of the ICU on a stretcher amid heavy crowd of journalists, camera crew from electronic media, relatives and visitors. The body of Rahman was then taken to his house at Shyamoli.

His first namaz-e-janaza was held at the SOS Shishu Palli Jame Mosque at 10:30pm. His body was kept at the Birdemortuary.

The poet's body will be kept at the Central Shaheed Minar from 10:30am to 12:30pm for people to pay tribute.

The second namaz-e-janaza will be held at the Dhaka University central mosque after the Juma prayers today. Later, the poet will be laid to rest at the Banani graveyard beside his mother's grave.

A condolence meeting on poet Shamsur Rahman will be held at the Shaheed Minar on August 22.

Awami League (AL) leaders Nuha-ul-Alam Lenin, Abdul Mannan Khan, Yafes Osman, Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin and Asim Kumar Ukil placed floral wreaths at the dead body of poet Rahman last night on behalf of Leader of the Opposition and AL President Sheikh Hasina, said a press release.

AL leaders Tofail Ahmed, Amir Hossain Amu and Asaduzzaman Noor went to the poet's Shyamoli residence to see the poet for the last time.

PROFILE
Shamsur Rahman was born on October 23, 1929 at Mahuttuli in Dhaka. He was the fourth among thirteen children of late Mokhlesur Rahman Chowdhury. Rahman studied at Pogos School from where he passed his matriculation in 1945. He passed the intermediate from Dhaka College.

Rahman started writing poetry after graduating from Dhaka College at the age of 18. He studied English literature at Dhaka University (DU) and passed the BA in 1953. He also received his MA securing the second place in second class.

Rahman had a long career as a journalist and was the editor of the now defunct Dainik Bangla and weekly Bichitra.

Shamsur Rahman started composing poetry at a time when most poets, particularly the Bangalee Muslims, were not aware of the development of modern poetry. He started on the ground prepared by the poets of the 1930s and developed and added new features to Bangla poetry.

He popularised modern Bangla poetry among the general mass by successfully expressing their emotion about the country, its people and their language.

A prolific writer, Rahman authored nearly 100 books, of which more than sixty are collections of poems.

Rahman won numerous awards including the Bangla Academy Award in 1969, Ekushey Padak in 1977 and the Swadhinata Award in 1991.

RAHMAN AND BANGLA POETRY

With the geographical division of the Bangla province in 1947, the Bangla literature also got divided. One group was dominated by writers based in Kolkata, capital of West Bengal, and another by those in Dhaka, the new capital city of the then East Pakistan.

The Dhaka-based Bangla poetry was also divided mainly in two groups. Ahsan Habib and Abul Hossain led the progressive group who were deeply influenced by the West and Bangalee poets of the 1930s. The other group led by Farukh Ahmed and Syed Ali Ahsan was termed pro-Pakistan group.

Later, Shamsur Rahman, Al Mahmud and Shaheed Quadri emerged as the most influential poets

in the progressive front during the '50s-'60s of the last century.

Rahman was the most active in this group and relentless in composing poetry.

Actually, the new capital city of Dhaka gave birth to Rahman, and he is the poet of Dhaka in a true sense. Probably, he is the only successful poet in modern Bangla literature who was born and brought up in Dhaka and spent his entire life here.

Rahman also loved Dhaka very much. He wrote memories of his childhood in a book titled "Smritir Shahar (the reminiscent city), which is considered as a classic document of Old Dhaka.

In his over-half-a-century literary career, he also wrote five novels, a number of short stories, many patriotic songs.

The poet was deeply rooted in his own tradition.

He successfully reflected the colloquial language of Dhaka in his works, especially in the poetry. His poem "Ei Matowala Rai" (this drunken night) is full of idioms and dialect of the Dhakaite. Rahman prominently used Old Dhaka's dialect, which is a mix-up of Urdu, Persian and Bangla words.

Urban themes, symbols, signs and resemblance also widely figure in his poems.

As he was born and brought up in Old Dhaka, his use of those foreign words never seems irrational. Rather, Rahman's use of Urdu and Persian words adds an extra flavour and a new taste in Bangla poetry. Through this, he virtually enriched Bangla language.

As a poet and a citizen of Dhaka he could not refrain himself from the political development of the then East Pakistan leading ultimately to the emergence of Bangladesh. Although he was never active in politics, he composed a number of political poems, which were particularly devoted to the country's struggle for freedom and independence.

One of his most popular poems in this group is "Asader Shirt" (Asad's shirt) where the poet gives an emotional description of the death of a young demonstrator, who was brutally killed in police firing at a protest rally against the despotic army rule.

"Like bunches of blood-red oleander, like flaming clouds at sunset/Asad's shirt flutters/in the gusty wind, in the limitless blue/To the brother's spotless shirt/His sister had sown/With the fine gold and thread/Of her heart's desire/Button which his ageing mother/With such tender care/Hung that shirt out to dry/in her sunny courtyard."

These lines excerpted from the poem translated by Syed Najmuddin Hashim held spread the anger quickly among the people against the Pakistani autocratic regime. Rahman was always vocal against the tyrannical rule and suppression of the people by the West Pakistani rulers.

After the independence of Bangladesh, Rahman emerged as the most powerful poet of the country, reflecting the true spirit of independence and the Liberation War. He successfully used the terms and words related to independence.

Rahman composed a number of poems which got immense popularity among the mass people and were highly acclaimed by the critics.

"Swadhinata Tumi" (To Independence) is one of his most popular poems, in which the poet tries to reflect the heartfelt urge and describes the true meaning of independence and freedom.

As he writes in the poem: "Independence, You are/Like un-decaying poems and immortal songs of Rabindranath/Independence, you are/Like waving of long curling hair of Kazi Nazrul/Great man, vibrating with the joy and happiness of creation..."

Rahman was also very active during the struggle against the autocratic rule of HM Ershad. He even took the risk of losing the editorship of the government-owned Dainik Bangla and joined the protest rally against Ershad regime.

His famous poem "Odbhut Uter Pitheh Cholechhe Swadesh" (the country riding a peculiar camel) is about the misrule and political stagnation prevailing in the country during the Ershad regime.

"(Before the Journey" is translated by Kaiser Haq.)

Ershad let off

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corrupt person. He is already known as a corrupt person, and the people gave this verdict much earlier.

AL Presidium Member and lawmaker Suranjit Sengupta said, "The alliance government has misused state power in the delivery of the judgement for political gains."

Suranjit, a veteran parliamentarian, said the government played a partisan role in this regard, which will destroy the judiciary, he said. Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) President Hasanul Haque Inu said the government itself is corrupt. So, it has failed to prove the allegation against Ershad.

JAMAAT REACTION
Mamhammad Razzamanuzzaman, joint secretary general of the Jamaat, said it is not proper to comment on a court judgement. He however said the judgement "looks odd" in the present political context.

"The opposition would have scope to criticise the government for this verdict."

SA Games

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Games – dubbed as the Olympics of South Asia – open at the Sugathadasa Stadium.

The organisers have taken all necessary preparations for a five-hour (5-10pm) long pageantry that will involve over 7,000 school students who will put on a display mirroring the land's culture and heritage.

The security measures, however, would be beefed up although the organisers do not fear any attack on sports events.

"We have tried to make this opening ceremony as colourful as possible. Arrangements to comfort the huge guests that are coming for the event may not be adequate but we have tried sincerely," said chairman of marketing and sponsorship of the organising committee Nalin Attygalle on the eve of the gala opening.

"There are reasons to worry for the guests but we are confident that there would be no attack on the sports events. It has been happening for 20 years in Sri Lanka and we can't ignore it. But the LTTE has said they will never hurt sportsmen or sports events. We believe that because there have been no such attacks."

"We are proud to host this event. It is a chance for us to prove that Sri Lanka is not all about terrorism. We are living together and we hope that sports will bring peace and harmony in the island," he added.

More than 2,100 athletes will compete in 20 disciplines as Sri Lanka host their second regional Games after holding the fifth edition in 1991. Hosts Sri Lanka and India have the largest contingents with about 400 athletes each.

So far, the Games committee has issued 7,397 accreditations including athletes, officials, guests and media persons.

Sri Lanka Telecom is the major sponsor for the one-billion-rupee (one crore dollars) Games. They will provide 300 million rupees while the government has put 600 million rupees behind the organisers.

Pry teachers

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they decided to withdraw the strike in the greater interest of the students and the schools will resume from Saturday.

However, he said their organisation would hold rallies in districts on September 6 and a grand rally at the Central Shaheed Minar on September 20 if their one-point demand is not fulfilled by August 31.

The association Secretary General Hafizur Rahman said they will wear symbolic black badges while giving lessons in classes in protest at the government's neglect.

BCS results

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including age, educational qualifications or selection of optional subjects, the press release added. The commission also reserves the right to correct the published results if necessary.

The PSC will later announce the schedule and seat arrangements for the viva and will publish them in newspapers. Directives of the viva will be issued before September 9.

The applicants have been asked to ensure safekeeping of the admit cards of the written test.

Ershad

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political grounds. All the previous governments placed obstruction to the administration of rule of law," he claimed.

Ershad, who was in jail for five years during the tenure of previous BNP government, received bail in several cases due to an understanding with Awami League (AL) after it assumed power in 1996. The JP had helped AL in forming the government then.

Ahead of the ensuing parliamentary election, Ershad led JP, the second largest opposition party in parliament, has drawn public attention as the ruling BNP made a desperate attempt to bring JP on board its coalition.

In the face of opposition from a section of JP leaders unhappy about joining the ruling alliance, Ershad repeatedly claimed that the ruling BNP assured him of withdrawing cases pending against him. He told the party leaders he does not want to be behind bars again.

Of the cases filed against Ershad, verdict of one case will be given on August 27 while the court will decide on August 24 whether charges will be framed against the JP chief in two other graft cases.

A temple

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The area of the temple is 2,500 square feet with a veranda surrounding the big room. The dilapidated temple was built with decorated pillars on four sides.

The archeology department sources said there were terracotta tiles on the walls and pillars of the two-storey temple. A large number of these tiles with engravings of flowers has allegedly been stolen, said the officials.

Local people constructed dwelling houses adjacent to the temple.

To protect the temple the government has also taken an initiative to acquire lands in the area, the RD said.

The main hall room of the temple is still standing but it is in shambles. There were nine spires on the temple, most of which were destroyed during the 1897 earthquake said the officials. Near the main temple there are some smaller temples, which are also in dilapidated conditions.

No extension of time

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deletion of names from the existing voter list which has 7.64 crore voters.

In the capital, 15.73 lakh people have applied to be included in the list while 3.77 lakh applications were submitted to the field-level staffs for deletion of names.

According to the existing voter list, prepared in 2000, there are 28 lakh voters in the capital while the nullified fresh voter list witnessed a staggering 37 lakh voters.

Field officials however suggested the total number of voters in the capital would not exceed 30 lakh as they found a huge number of voters not present at the addresses mentioned in the existing voter list.

Questions were raised over the authenticity of the progress report given by the secretary as many field-level staffs in the capital alleged the thana election officers did not take the progress report from their leader.

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

Following repeated refusals from the leader of the opposition's home

in Dhanmondi to register her as a voter, the EC staffs finally have an appointment to register her and members of the household.

Din Mohammad, temporarily appointed for updating the voter list in Dhanmondi area, told The Daily Star that he had contacted the officials of the residence and they asked him to pay a visit there today.

"I hope I will be able to list Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina as a voter," he added.

Sheikh Hasina, also the Awami League president, was registered in 2000 when she was the prime minister and lived at Ganabhaban at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar. She now lives in Dhanmondi.

Meanwhile, the EC officials in Chittagong say they have completed 90 percent of the list-updating work. They however gave the same information seven days ago.

Only three days before the time limit expires, many voters in the port city still wait for their names to be put on the list, sources said.

Govt's bank borrowing

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and will affect the overall monetary situation, said another high official.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman recently visited Washington to convince the donors to release the money immediately, the official said, adding that following Saifur's request, the donors agreed to send a mission to Bangladesh again in September although they did not make any commitment to release the money.

On his return from Washington, Saifur had said the money would be released in time while other sources said there was no categorical commitment from the donors' side and the money release might be delayed further.

Meanwhile, the cabinet in its last meeting sent back a draft proposal for turning three nationalised commercial banks – Sonali, Janata and Agrani – into public limited companies, said a source.

"It's a wrong signal to the donors against the finance minister's strong commitment to top brass of the

World Bank and IMF to bring reforms in the public sector institutions," the source said.

Since the end of the last fiscal, the government has been witnessing huge increase in development expenditures in some sectors ahead of the next elections.

Planning ministry sources said implementation of some visible development projects like construction of roads, bridges and culverts has increased in recent days and these are aimed for the next election.

Several ministries are now busy signing contracts for development projects for which funds have already been released, sources said, adding that it has led to increase in bank deposits of different autonomous and semi-autonomous bodies of the government.

It rose to Tk 10,793 crore at the end of the last month, they said.

14-party demands

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17,2005 including the JMB supremo Shaikh Abdur Rahman and Siddiqur Rahman Bangla Bhai.

The government has been procrastinating in the trial process because they are patrons of the militants, claimed the opposition combine speakers.

The opposition combine also reiterated that no election would be allowed to hold in the country before reforms in the systems of caretaker government and the Election Commission (EC) are carried out.

The AL-led 14-party opposition combine observed Anti Terrorism Day yesterday protesting serial blasts in 63 districts on August 17, 2005, which left two killed and more than 200 injured. The opposition combine held rallies and brought out anti terrorism procession in all 63 districts.

In the capital, the opposition combine held a rally at Bangabandhu Avenue and brought out a procession that ended at the Central Shaheed Minar.

Addressing the rally, AL Presidium Member Amir Hossain Amu said the anti liberation war forces who could not accept the country's independence and sovereignty have been conspiring to destroy the country by making way for the foreign forces to

come in. Militancy will not be restrained until the patrons are identified and brought to book, Amu observed.

Abdur Razzak said the religious fanatics are being financed by foreign forces only to destroy Islam and democracy in the country.

Tofail Ahmed said it has already been proved that the alliance government has close relationships with the militant ringleaders Shaikh Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai because the government has been facilitating the convicts with death sentence by housing them in an air-conditioned house.

Abdul Jalil, coordinator of the 14-party combine and general secretary of AL, accused the prime minister and the Jamaat-e-Islami of the last year's countrywide serial blasts. He urged the countrymen to drive the anti liberation war forces out of the country politically.

Other leaders who spoke at the rally include Suranjit Sengupta, Motia Chowdhury, Nurul Islam, MA Gani, Syed Zafor Sazzad, Mainuddin Khan Badal, Mofizul Islam Kamal, Kazi Mostak Elen and Asit Baron Roy.

Militant network

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City BNP President and Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka chaired the rally, addressed by top leaders of the party.

Speaking as chief guest, BNP Secretary General and LGRD Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan said, "A certain quarter tried to project Bangladesh as a fundamentalist and ineffective state. But it (Bangladesh) stands firmly as an effective and democratic state."

He went on, "We have proved that we are against militancy and we have taken steps to crush it."

The LGRD minister regretted that the main opposition Awami League did not assist the government in its drive against militants.

The BNP stalwart said his party has served the people for the last five years of its rule and it will continue to do so, if re-elected.

Health and Family Planning Minister and a top leader of the BNP Khandaker Mosharrar Hossain said, "Countries like USA and UK could not arrest any militant kingpin but we have done that."

The BNP leaders urged their partymen to work with the people unitedly to win the next general election.

They called upon the people to foil all conspiracies by the opposition and cast their vote for the BNP again.

The rally was held in front of the

Politics of election boycott never

succeed: Moudud

BSS, Dhaka

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed yesterday said politics of election boycott had never succeeded in the country as people were always in favour of democracy.

He called upon all to help create an environment for holding a fair election in the country to continue the pace of the democratic process and hoped that all political parties would participate in the next parliamentary polls.

Moudud was speaking at a roundtable on "On-going democracy: industry, trade and commerce" at Jatiya Press Club organised by Journalist Society for Human Rights and Welfare, Advocate M Shajahan, managing director of Rupali Finance Abu Taher Majumder, Advocate Saidul Haque, journalist Sheikh Rakib Uddin and Abdullah Ferdous addressed it.

The election would be held as per the voter list prepared by the Election Commission, he said and urged all to keep confidence in people, who really decide the results of the election.

The law minister said under the caretaker government system all the political parties have to participate in the elections from the same level. So, the question of getting favour does not arise at all, he added.

The President, the Chief Adviser, the Chief Election Commissioner and the Army Chief have nothing to do with the results of the general elections. If so, how come Awami League (AL) won in the 1996 and BNP in 2001, he questioned.

Moudud said it was the proposal of AL President Sheikh Hasina that the immediate past Chief Justice would be the Chief Adviser of the caretaker government.

Referring to the opposition's debate on the next Chief Adviser, Moudud said it is impossible to find out a person without political background. So, "We shall have to choose anyone from among them, this is reality," he added.

Voter list updating is a continuous process, Moudud said adding that in India there are many complaints about the voter list, but the elections were held in time.

On the price hike of essentials, the law minister said if the purchasing capacity of people increases, the price hike is not a problem, as people have money to buy commodities.

11 'outlaws' killed

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Hajj, chairman of Raninagar Union Prishada and ruling BNP leader. He backs a criminal group locally known as 'Alhaj group'.

Officer-in-Charge of Sujanagar Police Station Rabiul Islam Khan and Sub-Inspector Abdur Razzak received mild injuries as the criminals hit them with rifle bullets. Besides, injured police constables Shah Alam, Maruf and Sohrab were admitted to Sujanagar Health Complex, police said.

The operation is a part of the ongoing anti-outlaw drive in the southern and part of northern regions of the country, Superintendent of Police of Pabna Mirza Abdullah Baki said.

Police picked up 50 outlaw suspects, he said, adding, "We are searching for more munitions that the criminals left in water while fleeing."

Meanwhile, relatives of the outlaws termed the incident a 'cold-blooded murder'.

Slogans

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was looking worried and upset. But as soon as the verdict was delivered he looked very enthusiastic.

The procession brought out by the JP on the court premises defying the HC ban stunned the lawyers of Dhaka Bar Association.

A senior lawyer on condition of anonymity told The Daily Star everybody must follow court orders. If anyone disobeys an order, he or she should be charged with contempt of court. Leaders and activists of JP violate the court order by chanting slogans in the courtroom and bringing out a procession on the court premises, he added.

The HC on August 1, following a petition filed on June 29, issued a contempt rule against 11 SC lawyers after they held demonstration and placed obstructions to SC judges and other lawyers entering the court on June 11.

They were ordered to explain why proceedings of contempt of court should not be brought against them for violating the HC suo motu rule.

SECURITY MEASURES
Meanwhile, additional police forces were deployed at different gates of the District and Sessions Judge's Court ahead of the judgement yesterday.

In addition, Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and other law enforcement agencies were also deployed on the court premises to avoid any untoward incidents. Litigants and other commoners were checked with metal detectors before they were let to enter the court premises.

Hundreds of people from all walks of life thronged the court premises to hear the verdict of the case.

Lebanese army

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hours along the Blue Line," the UN-demarcated border between Lebanon and Israel, said General Charles Shikhani, commander of the Marjayun area where troops hoisted their flag just seven kilometres (four miles) from the border.

Israel said it had handed control of half the zones it was occupying to UN peacekeepers and that of the 30,000 troops who poured in to Lebanon at the height of the war, all reserve units have left.

A Lebanese army commander said troops were stationed in 30 villages, including several next to the Israeli border.

Countries ready to contribute to a strengthened UN Interim Force in Lebanon prepared to meet at the United Nations to thrash out the tricky details of the deployment but few countries have said they were prepared to sent troops.

"We expect the arrival of the first elements at the start of next week, light elements," said the force commander General Alain Pellegrini.

"This Unifil will be very different from the previous one. The old Unifil is dead. The new one will be stronger, enhanced with more people and new engagement rules."

The deployment by the Lebanese army, which stayed largely on the sidelines of the 34-day conflict between Israel and the Shia Muslim Hezbollah, was approved at a cabinet meeting Wednesday.

It followed implementation of a ceasefire on Monday in line with UN Resolution 1701 which aims to halt a conflict that killed 1,150 Lebanese, mostly civilians, and 160 Israelis, mostly soldiers.

Prime Minister Fuad Siniora said the operation would stamp the government's authority on the region south of the Litani where Hezbollah had held sway since Israel ended its last occupation six years ago.

"There will be a single state... with the sole decision-making power, there will be no dual authority," he said. "There will be no off-limit regions for the army."

Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah has vowed to keep