Condolences |Light of ethical business

shock and sorrow and prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul and conveyed deep sympathy to the bereaved family.

Latifur Rahman will be remembered as one of those rare entrepreneurs who have made remarkable contributions in building the national capital base of the country. He has done that not only by reinvesting his profit in the country, but also through acquisition of foreign farms, economist Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya told The Daily Star.

The conglomerate he has built ranging from tea estates to pharmaceuticals, fast food to media houses is an extraordinary feat in a country where we see rampant practice of capital flight, Debapriya added.

He proved that enlightened ownership can ensure professional independence of the media. To protect that professional independence, the owners have to be ready to take personal risk.

"I remember him telling me that if one takes financial and commercial benefits from the government, then one cannot really protect the independence of the media.

"That is probably why he did not do business with the government... Many governments tried to harass him with tax-related cases and administrative measures, but to no avail," Debapriya

Everybody knows what a remarkable gentleman he was, Debapriya added.

"I had the privilege of observing over the last three decades. He highly valued his employees and had an extraordinary belief in the bright future of the country.

"In his death the country has lost a great citizen. The industries have lost a unique leader, and many of us lost a wise and sensitive guardian to go to."

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said Latifur Rahman will be remembered as a modest, unassuming and exceptional example of the rare category of business leaders who practice the highest standards of business integrity.

"Unlike many of his peers, he not only refrained from capitalising the loan default culture, but also successfully stayed away from linking his business success with advantages of partisan political patronage.

"Rather, he credibly survived the adversities of attempted political victimisation for being a top raking promoter of free media", Iftekharuzzaman said.

Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal, Planning Minsiter MA Mannan, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan, Information Minister Mohammad Hasan Mahmud, Expatriates' Welfare And Overseas Employment Minister Imran Ahmad, Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister Shahab Uddin, State Minister for Disaster Management and Relief Enamur Rahman, State Minister for Information Murad Hassan and Dhaka North City Corporation Mayor Atiqul Islam expressed shock at his death.

BNP top leaders in a condolence message said the death of an honest, workaholic and benevolent businessman like Latifur Rahman was irreparable.

Former information minister Hasanul Haque Inu also expressed shock.

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in the global business community and a recipient of many prestigious global awards, Latifur Rahman singlehandedly built one of the biggest business conglomerates in the country with his hard work, perseverance and entrepreneurial skills.

And truly he reached the pinnacle of success by setting up numerous enterprises. prosperous new Simultaneously he maintained a vocal stance against unethical business practices and never entertained unfair means, not even in the early seventies when the country's atmosphere was not congenial to business.

Soft-spoken and humble, this visionary, who with his elegant personality would light up people around him, passed away in his sleep around 11:00am yesterday at his paternal home in Cumilla. He had been suffering from lung-related illness for a long time.

He was 75.

The founder chairman and CEO of Transcom Group, a well-known and highly respected business house in the country, left behind an unmatched of entrepreneurship and legacy industrialisation.

He was the founding director of Mediaworld, the owning company of The Daily Star, and chairman of Mediastar, the owning company of Prothom Alo -- both leading English and Bangla newspapers of the country.

His demise prompted a number of cabinet members to express profound shock and sorrow. As the news of his death spread, condolences and memories of working with the corporate giant poured in also from his friends and colleagues.

He was married to Shahnaz Rahman. Together they have three daughters Simeen Hossain, Shahzreh Huq, (late) Shazneen Rahman and a son, Arshad Waliur Rahman.

Latifur Rahman's body was brought to the capital and the namaz-e-janaza was held at Azad Masjid in Gulshan after Esha prayers. Later, he was laid to eternal rest at the Banani Graveyard.

His passing coincided with the death anniversary of his grandson Faraaz Ayaaz Hossain. Faraaz, a student of Émory University in Atlanta, USA, was brutally killed by terrorists during the July 1 terror attack at the Holey Artisan Bakery in Gulshan in 2016.

Born in Jalpaiguri on August 28,

1945, Latifur Rahman lived at the capital's Gendaria.

He began his education at St. Francis School and then went to St. Edmund's School, Shillong in 1956. He also studied at St. Xavier's College in Calcutta (now Kolkata).

After coming to Dhaka, he started his career as a trainee at his family-owned jute mills -- W Rahman Jute Mills -in Chandpur in 1966. It was the first jute mill owned by a Bangalee in the erstwhile Pakistan. He worked there as an executive until 1971.

But when the government nationalised industries in 1972, Latifur Rahman found himself in a very difficult situation.

The family also owned some tea estates in north-eastern Bangladesh. But after the independence of Bangladesh, the price of the produce was less than the production costs.

But he did not give up hope.

The same year, Latifur came across Swiss company and started a trading business.

There was no looking back after that. As his business activities branched out into different sectors, he established Transcom Group in 1981. It is now one of the country's largest conglomerates, with operations in the areas of manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, electronics, beverages, media, consumer, food and insurance.

The group has an annual turnover of more than \$600 million, employing over 14,000 people. Its pharmaceutical products are exported to 27 countries.

Transcom Group has won multiple global accolades for its excellence and ethically strong business practices.

Latifur Rahman's enterprises boast immaculate tax and bank loan records and are also among the highest-payers of corporate tax, VAT and import duties in a country where many top companies are wilful defaulters.

In 2012, he won the prestigious Oslo Business for Peace Award for maintaining commitment to social responsibility and ethical values.

The award is considered the most celebrated recognition in the business world, and an independent committee of Nobel Prize winners in peace and economics chooses the award's recipients.

The recognition put Latifur Rahman in the group of exceptional business personalities like Ratan Tata, chairman of India's Tata Group, who got the



As if to make it a reunion, Latifur Rahman leaves this mortal world on July 1, the day his favourite grandson Faraaz Ayaaz Hossain was brutally killed in a terrorist attack. PHOTO: COLLECTED

award in 2010, and Jeffrey R Immelt, It is a question of providing them the CEO of USA's General Electric, who received it in 2009.

He always believed in providing employees with appropriate compensation, training, position, and more importantly "empowerment".

"Respect for the individual is of utmost importance. People may make mistakes, and of course they need to be taken to task for that, if required, but upholding an employee's self-esteem is vital. Everyone deserves to be treated with respect," he once said.

He used to reject a popular perception that there are no qualified people in Bangladesh.

"We are as good as any professionals in the world. We have quality people.

right opportunities, atmosphere and guidance," he said. He urged young students not to be

disheartened in times of difficulties as adversity is a part of natural progression. "You should continue fighting. You should live up to your values, courage

and character.' Latifur Rahman was a member of the executive board of ICC-Paris, vice president of ICC-Bangladesh and member of Brac's governing body. He was a member of Bangladesh Better Business Forum and the Advisory Committee on World Trade Organization (WTO).

He was also president of the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce

lifelong businessman, with no history of involvement in media, could have such a strong, deep, and unshakeable faith in the virtues of a free press and such an ironclad commitment for its independence that played such a crucial part in fulfilling my personal dream of setting up an independent newspaper in Bangladesh. What began as a partnership in building an independent newspaper ended with a friendship that transcended into a spiritual bond of mutual love and respect.

and Industry, Dhaka, for seven terms and of Bangladesh Employers' Federation. He was also chairman of the Bangladesh government's Trade Body Reforms Committee.

He was awarded Business Executive of the Year 2001 by the American Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh.

He was also honoured with the "SAARC Outstanding Leader" award and Lifetime Achievement Award which was presented by the UK Bangladesh Catalysts of Commerce and Industry for setting a "rare example" of doing business by upholding moral values while also fulfilling the organisation's social responsibilities.

Latifur Rahman served in many important national bodies in various capacities, including the president of Bangladesh Employers' Federation (BEF) for two terms and member of the Executive Committee of Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FBBCI), Bangladesh Jute Mills Association and Bangladesh Tea Association.

Besides, he was the member of the Executive Board of Bangladesh Bank and was closely involved in fiscal and trade policy making bodies of the government as chairman, Trade-body Reforms Committee and member, Advisory Committee on WTO.

He was re-elected as a member of the Executive Board of the Paris-based ICC for a second three-year term from July 2017

The business icon believed that Bangladesh has an extremely bright future on the global stage and that there are huge opportunities for entrepreneurs in the country.

"There are ideas all around us. So, young entrepreneurs will have to keep their eyes open and work on them [ideas] to become successful," he once said.

Sign pledge

that results of vaccine research done by the private sector should be in the public domain, making it available to any production facility, as long as it operates under an international regulatory supervision.

This pledge has already been signed by 105 world leaders, including 18 Nobel laureates, 32 former heads of state and government, political leaders, artistes, international NGOs and institutions.

They include Nobel laureates Muhammad Yunus, Tawakko Karman, Shirin Ebadi, Mikhai Gorbachev, Nadia Murad, Malala Yousafzai, Mairead Maguire, and Archbishop Desmond Tutu among others.

The former heads of state who signed this unified appeal include former Pakistan prime minister Shaukat Aziz, former New Zealand PM Helen Clark, former PM of Italy Romano Prodi, former Brazilian president Luiz Inacio, former president of Mauritius Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, and former UK PM Gordon Brown.

Other signatories include former presidents and prime ministers of Romania, Finland, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Croatia, Poland, Moldova, Albania, Bulgaria, Mexico, Ireland, Ecuador, Latvia, Montenegro, Serbia, Belgium, Hungary, Malaysia, Kyrgyzstan, Andorra, and Georgia.

Two independent newspapers were his gifts to Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 1 should not be published, or how a news should be treated. Like everybody else he would read the newspaper in the morning. In this long journey it is quite possible that he may have disagreed with what we did but he never, for even

once, allow his views to override ours. Even when he faced the wrath of the powers that be, simply because of what the two newspapers published, he would never allow that to affect our daily work. In fact he would never even tell us that he lost certain contracts, or that his factories' permission were delayed or denied, or that his expansion plans got derailed because way we were writing commentaries. There was never a word but that of standing steadfast behind the two newspapers. An anecdote from the very first year of my editorship perhaps makes the point beautifully. The boss of a certain big business house asked Latifur Rahman as to why The Daily Star was publishing certain findings of the Bangladesh Bank to which he said, "Why don't you talk to the editor, he runs the paper." To which the businessman replied with disbelief, "You are financing the paper

and the editor runs the paper. How can that be?" Well that is how it was and has been all along, and that is what made The Daily Star what it is today.

The other fundamental belief he held most firmly was the need for democracy for Bangladesh to prosper. These two beliefs - democracy and the need for a free and independent press fed into one another made an symbiotic whole that formed the totality of his life's philosophy that later turned into his life's passion - a passion in the fulfillment of which it was my honour to be a humble part.

He was a gentleman per excellence. With impeccable manners and reporting, taking editorial positions or immaculate courtesy his was a personality that immediately drew the attention of any gathering both for his insightful observations and strongly held opinions. He would not invite controversy in a conversation but would not shy away from it if the situation so unfolded. He was a man of firm beliefs but always open to counter positions if they were well argued and supported by facts and logic. But challengers would soon become aware that he had his own arsenal of facts and logic which were formidable to say the least.

personality.He would not easily open up but once he would his hearty laughter would brighten up the occasion and enjoin everybody else in a merriment that were unforgettable.

Another unique aspect of his personality was the sense of dignity with which he always conducted himself. Even at his most tragic moments - when he lost his daughter and years later, his grandson - he bore these two incalculable losses with an inner strength and dignity that seemed to most of us as superhuman.

In the world in which he spent his whole life - the world of business - he was an iconic figure. He was respected by all, even those with whom he was not too popular. His honesty was awe striking and adherence to ethical business practice almost legendary. He was known to have given up many business opportunities because the deals were not cent percent above board. His reputation for honesty and integrity were unrivaled and he was universally respected for upholding the highest ethical standards in business. My loss is both personal and professional and to say the least,

There was a hidden humour in his incalculable. On a personal level he was a friend, a brother, a mentor, a source of strength when I felt weak, a source of support when I was not sure, a guide when options before me were not obvious. He became a brother when I lost all four of mine in quick succession and greatly helped fill a vacuum that would otherwise remain with me forever. He was ever the fountain of courage for me whenever obstacles seemed too formidable. I often looked upon him in wonder as to how, a

Latitur was the founding director of Mediaworld, the company owning The Daily Star, and chairman of Mediastar, the company owning Prothom Alo, both leading English and Bangla newspapers of the country. He was the driving spirit behind the establishment of The Daily Star.

He was an honouree of "Oslo Business for Peace Award 2012" for his recognition of business ethics and social responsibilities. He was awarded Business Executive of the Year 2001 by the American Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh. He was also president of the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dhaka for seven terms.

43.27pc of dead FROM PAGE 1

Including yesterday's 17,875 RT-PCR tests for Covid-19, some 7,84,335 people have so far been tested for the virus.

Of them, 19.03 percent tested positive for Covid-19. Yesterday, the rate was 21.12 percent.

Among yesterday's deceased, 38 were male and three were female, while 23 died at hospital and 18 at their houses, said the DGHS.

Four were aged between 31 and 40, five between 41 and 50, 12 between 51 and 60, 11 between 61 and 70, and seven between 71 and 80, and one was between 81 and 90. Another was over 100 years old.

Division-wise, 13 of yesterday's deceased were from Dhaka, 17 from Chattogram, five from Khulna, three from Barishal, and two from Sylhet, while information of the other deceased was unavailable from the DGHS.

According to the DGHS data, 43.27 percent of all 1,888 deceased were over 60 years old, while 28.81 percent were aged between 51 and 60, 14.99 percent between 41 and 50, while others were from under 10 to 40 years old.

Prof Nasima added that there were 6,075 general beds and 139 ICU beds for Covid-19 patients in Dhaka city's Covid-19 hospitals or hospital units.

In the country, there were 14,784 general beds and 381 ICU beds for Covid-19 patients in Covid-19 hospitals or hospital units.

Besides, there were 11,144 oxygen cylinders, 204 high-flow nasal cannulas, 98 oxygen concentrators in the Covid-19 hospitals across the country.

As of yesterday noon, 4,873 Covid-19 patients were admitted to general beds of hospitals while 216 were to ICUs.

In the same 24 hours, 538 patients were admitted to Covid-19 hospitals or hospital units while 497 were released.

It is with an unfathomable emptiness in my heart that I pay this humble tribute to the man to whom I owe so much.

We've not spent

Social media too has been rife with rumours about the budget. Brig Gen Nasir said, "We had told

the ministry that we will have to spend Tk 26 crore. They agreed to give Tk 20 crore, but that has not been given yet, so we have not spent any money. We are just accruing bills.

"The rule is that healthcare workers will work for seven days, stay in quarantine at a hotel for 14 days and spend time in isolation at home for another week. Every day for three weeks, we have to bear the food and accommodation costs of 1,894 healthcare workers."

As Railway General Hospital is attached to DMCH, their staffers' food and accommodation are also being paid for by DMCH, he added.

On May 2, the hospital first opened its doors to Covid-19 patients by turning the "old" Burn and Plastic Surgery Unit into a dedicated hospital for coronavirus patients, and on May 16, the DMCH-2 hospital building followed suit, which means that the burn unit has been operational for nine weeks (or a 3-week cycles) and DMCH-2 has been operational for seven weeks. Speaking to The Daily Star, Nasir

said hotel rooms cost from Tk 350 to Tk 5,500 per night. Rooms in 30 hotels have been rented, he added.

The hotels range from Hotel Shalimar Intl in Kamalapur, Hotel Osmani Intl in Wari, Hotel Melody International in Nawabpur to Hotel La Vinci in Farmgate and Dhaka Regency Hotel and Resort. The room and hotel depends on the position and seniority of the healthcare worker.

He claimed that bills rack up to approximately Tk 13.6 crores per month.

"We are paying a contractor Tk 500 per day for the food of each health worker," said added. So, the food for 1,894 workers for two months costs over Tk five crore.

"We are also paying for transportation of health workers from hotels to hospitals.

These include 11 air-conditioned microbuses, one air-conditioned 26-seater tourist coach, two 45-seater non-AC buses and four double-decker buses.

"The cost for transportation is approximately Tk 47 lakhs per month, and about a crore for two months, claimed Nasir.

Top police officials and diplomats paying their tributes to the lives lost in the militant attack at Holey Artisan Bakery at the capital's Gulshan as the country observed the fourth anniversary of the gruesome murders.

Lost friends remembered

9:00am to 12:00 noon and placed

flowers at a makeshift stage. General people were not allowed there amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

On the night of July 1, 2016, five armed militants stormed the cafe in Gulshan diplomatic zone and held the diners hostage. By the end of the night, they had murdered nine Italians, seven Japanese, one Indian, and three Bangladeshis.

Twenty-year-old Faraaz Avaaz Hossain, a student of Emory University in the US, was one of the three

Bangladeshis killed there. He was given the choice of walking out of the cafe. But he refused to leave his friends Abinta Kabir, a Bangladesh-born US citizen, and Tarishi Jain, an Indian student of the University of California.

He was killed along with his friends. Two police officers also lost their lives as groups of law enforcers tried to close in on the place. The five militants and a chef of the cafe were killed in a commando operation the next morning. Another staffer died in hospital while in custody.

Around six months after the attack,

the cafe reopened a few blocks from its original location. Currently, the twostorey building, that was once the Holey Artisan Bakery, is being used as home by the land owners.

Rab Director General Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun, Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner Shafiqul Islam, US, Italy, and Japan ambassadors to Bangladesh paid tribute to the victims.

Talking to reporters, Shafiqul said militants have no capability to carry out big attacks as the law enforcement agencies have destroyed their dens after

the cafe attack, reports UNB.

"For this, the capability of militants came down to minimum level. Even they have no expert to make improvised bombs," he claimed.

PHOTO

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"Many of the militants are now in jail or were killed in various anti-militant operations. So, they have no capability to occur big incident," he said.

All the militants who directly took part in the cafe attack were killed in a military commando operation, he said, adding that other militants who were involved in the attack were given punishment by court.

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