



People through the Central Shaheed Minar in the capital yesterday to pay tribute to poet Syed Shamsul Haq who passed away Tuesday at a city hospital.

PHOTO:
RASHED SHUMON

On the crest of fame all along

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Before that, he was showered with people's outpouring of love and affection for one last time at all the places his coffin-choir made a halt.

"I bought two roses, one on my behalf and the other on my wife's, from Shahbagh. And placed the flowers at his coffin as our last tribute," said Shafiqul Islam, himself a budding poet, a rickshaw puller in Dhaka.

President Abdul Hamid, Shafiqul Islam and innumerable fans of Haq turned up at the Central Shaheed Minar as proof of the Bangalis' love for poetry, plays and music and their creators. Tribute was paid on behalf of the prime minister as well, who is on a tour of the US and due to come back tomorrow.

Huq's body was taken to the Shaheed Minar around 11:00am, after a brief stop at the Bangla Academy where people from all walks of life had gathered. Later, his body was taken to Dhaka University mosque for his namaj-e-janaza after Zohr prayer.

Earlier, his first namaj-e-janaza was held at Channel-i premises in the morning. Later his body was flown to Kurigram by a helicopter for burial.

The poet was buried beside a mosque at the Kurigram Government College campus following a namaj-e-janaza there

attended by thousands of people, reports our Kurigram correspondent.

Writing was his devotion. "If I don't write, I don't feel well," Haq had once said.

That is why, even when lung cancer overpowered him, Syed Shamsul Haq continued creating verses dictating the words to his family members. The poet's spouse Anwara Syed Haq said yesterday that even in his death bed the poet dictated verses to her.

While addressing the people gathered at the Central Shaheed Minar, the poet's son Ditio Syed-Haq said they will not let those words fade.

"My father was under chemotherapy in his last days. Lying on bed two days ago, he whispered the words to me," he said. "I've organized those words. I'll have to do something with those words," he said in a choked voice.

"I've lost my father but I can see the whole country has lost a man. I can't tell you how much honour it is for me to see my father being paid tribute at the Shaheed Minar," said Ditio.

President Abdul Hamid reached the Shaheed Minar premises around 11:00am and paid his last respect to the writer. He talked to Anwara Syed Haq, Ditio Syed-Haq and the poet's daughter Bidita Sadik and expressed his deep sympathy to the family members.

"Probably none after Rabindranath Tagore was so ambidextrous like Syed Shamsul Haq," said Cultural Affairs Minister Asaduzzaman Noor after paying homage to the writer. He said Haq's contribution in literature will make him immortal.

Terming the poet's death an irreparable loss, cultural personality Ramendu Majumdar said, "A bright star in the literary arena has fallen."

Haq has shown artistry in every arena of literature, said Majumdar. "None has been so versatile after Rabindranath Tagore," he said. "His creation will inspire new generations for years to come."

Haq's friend since his teens, Professor Serajul Islam Chowdhury, a renowned academic, said "He had imagination and creativity. You will find a profusion of these qualities in all of his works."

The treasure trove of Haq's literary work is varied. His poetry collections include, among others, Ekoda Ek Rajje, Boishekhke Rochito Ponktimala, Birotihi Utsob, Protidhonig, Opor Purush, and Kobita Samagra.

Syed Shamsul Haq wrote innumerable poetry, fiction, plays (mostly in verse), and essays. He worked on around 40 film scripts and penned 200 songs for movies and in the patriotic genre. His literary works are included in the curric-

ulum of junior school, secondary, higher secondary, and graduate level Bangla literature.

His plays - Payer Awaj Paoa Jay, Nurulidiner Sara Jibon, Ekthane Ekhon, Ganonayaka, Eerha, Narigon, Khatta Tamasha, Juddha ebong Juddha, and novels Neel Dangshon, Smritimedh, Ek Mutho Janmabhumi, Ayna Bibir Pala, Megh O Machine and Khelaram Khele Ja, among others have inspired generations.

Syed Shamsul Haq is also credited for introducing the Bangali audience to some of the great plays of world literature with his translation work, which include, among others, Shakespeare's Macbeth, Tempest, Julius Caesar, Troilus and Cresida and Ibsen's Pyr Gynt.

He had won every major award there was in the field of literature in the country including National Poetry Honour (2001), Independence Award (2000), National Poetry Award (1997), Nasiruddin Gold Medal (1990), and TENAS Medal (1990), Padabali Kabita Award (1987), Literary Award of the Association of Women Writers, Jubunessa-Mahbubullah Gold Medal (1985), Ekushey Padak (1984), Alaol Literary Award (1983), Kabitapal Award (1983), Alakta Gold Medal (1982), Adamjee Literary Award (1969), and Bangla Academy Award (1966).

Govt to use device

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medical and dental colleges in the country.

Facing widespread allegations of question paper leaks last time, the ministry has made a new arrangement this year. Medical coaching centers were alleged to have links with the leaks.

Nasim said he had received allegations against coaching centers and would seriously think of closing them if found involved in irregularities.

Abul Kalam Azad, director general of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), said the health ministry or the DGHS would provide administrative and secretarial assistance, but the total admission process will be overseen by the moderator (medical educationist) -- from preparing the question papers, printing and distributing them to students' admission and migration from one college to another.

The ministry has formed a committee comprised of journalists, medical educationists, information technologists and representatives of Bangladesh Medical and Dental Council and Bangladesh Medical Association. As per their recommendations, the moderator has been appointed to keep the DGHS and the

ministry away from the admission procedure, Prof Abul Kalam said.

Question papers will be printed in the DGHS press, he said, adding that the printing process would be monitored by CCTV cameras under the supervision of the moderator himself.

"The printing staff will be illiterate and will remain in the press without any mobile phone. They will also not be able to go out of the premises during the printing."

The principal of each medical college, where the exams will be conducted, or his representative and district magistrate will carry question papers in trunks, the DG of the DGHS said.

Each trunk will have two locks -- key of one lock will remain with the DGHS staff and of the other with the magistrate.

Inside each trunk, there will be a tracking device to enable the authorities to centrally locate the transport.

There will be a mechanism so that the moderator gets an alert if the lock is opened on the way or before an instruction is given.

On the exam day, no student will be allowed to enter exam halls ten minutes before the tests or ten minutes after the beginning of the tests, Prof Abul Kalam said.

Fly ash a big threat

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Norris's work experience includes areas of performance, oversight review, or management of site assessment, computer modeling of fluid flow, contaminant transport, and geochemistry, and aquifer evaluation.

"In my opinion, the potential for environmental damage is substantial both from the lagooned/dyked facility that is proposed and from the 'utilization' of fly ash over an area of 1414 acres without any apparent containment," he remarked in the statement.

There is nothing provided with respect to what will constitute the "utilization" across the 1414 acres that "will be developed gradually with generated ash," the report said.

"Norris said, "...disposal of ash by ponding and uncontained 'development' of broad expanses of land with fly ash is an inherently bad idea as it poses a substantial environmental risk."

The tender documents do not allow a meaningful assessment of the chance or likelihood of environmental damage from the lagooned ash disposal. There is no useful characterization of the site or specificity of the proposed design that allows assessment, he said.

These documents are at most qualitative with respect to the design, and little more than conceptual.

Norris's report says fly ash will react with water and toxic pollutants from the ash have the potential to contaminate ground water.

But the tender document does not contain any chemical characterizations of the ash nor does it describe how to handle those chemicals.

"If that leachate is not contained, environmental contamination occurs," it states. Leachate is produced when water passes through any matter and extracts soluble or suspended solids from the matter.

When asked about the report Dr Abdul Matin, joint convener of the National committee for saving the Sundarbans, said they have been demanding the government for scrapping the Rampal treaty as it would destroy the Sundarbans.

The government has been saying there was no scientific basis for such claims.

"So we requested this expert to review the tender document," said Dr Matin. He also sought attention of the prime minister and requested her to reconsider the decision of the Rampal power plant.

Activist and engineer Kallol Mustafa who has also been analysing different documents of Rampal power plant and finding the loopholes of safety measures of Rampal power plant said the issues underlined

by Norris regarding coal ash disposal were indeed of major concern.

"From the very beginning we are highlighting the risks of ash disposal in an ash pond by the river Pasur given that the area is flood and cyclone prone," says Mustafa.

There are instances of ash spill from coal power plants even in technologically developed countries. Notable among them are Dan River Coal Ash Spill on February 2012 from the power plant of Duke Energy, USA and Kingston Fossil Plant coal fly ash slurry spill in December of 2008 in to the Emory and Clinch River, Mustafa said.

Dr Ainun Nishat, eminent hydrologist and environmentalist, said whenever protesters or campaigners come up with a criticism, the government would come up with a solution.

"But concern is whether what the government says would be followed during the construction phase and also maintained in the long run. Who is going to give us that assurance that everything will be followed exactly in the same way even after five years," said Dr Nishat.

The Unesco, a specialised UN body, also expressed concern over the Sundarbans at least three times in the last two years for its "Outstanding Universal Value." In a report titled "Report on the Mission to the Sundarbans World Heritage Site, Bangladesh" after the visit of the Unesco reactive mission to Bangladesh last March, it expressed their concerns about the management of coal ash.

The Unesco report said, this ash has high risk of containing various toxic metals including arsenic, lead, mercury, nickels, vanadium, beryllium, barium, cadmium, chromium, selenium and radium all of which may cause serious damage to human and the environment. Mercury is a potent neurotoxin that reduces intelligence and otherwise impairs the brain development of infants and children, and has been linked to heart problems. After leaving the smoke-stack, the mercury falls to earth and accumulates in water bodies and subsequently in the tissues of fish and of people and wildlife that consume those fishes.

Ruling out any possibility of harm from the nearly one million tons of fly ash to be generated annually, the environment minister, Anwar Hossain Manju said, "Fly ash would not harm the Sundarbans, rather it will help us. There are many cement factories in Mongla and those have been using fly ash for long time. The fly ash is not harmful," he said.

"Currently our cement factories are using fly ash imported from India. They will be able to use fly ash generated from Rampal," the minister said.

India ratchets up pressure

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India blames Pakistan for the deadly assault. Pakistan rejects the accusation and says India should conduct a proper investigation before it apportions blame.

New Delhi has vowed to respond to the Kashmir attack, and has launched a campaign to isolate Pakistan diplomatically, including through the United Nations.

On Tuesday, India said Prime Minister Narendra Modi would not attend the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) summit in Islamabad in November, in a major snub to its neighbour.

Hours later, Bangladesh said it was also pulling out. Afghanistan and Bhutan -- both close India allies -- have since followed suit, according to a Saarc official who asked not to be named.

India's announcement came hours after Sartaj Aziz, foreign policy adviser to Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, warned India against drawing more water from three rivers that flow from India into Pakistan.

Aziz said Islamabad would seek arbitration with a commission that monitors the Indus Water Treaty if India increased its use of water from the Chenab, Jhelum and Indus rivers.

India says it does not plan to abrogate the treaty but Modi said on Monday India should "maximise" the amount of water it uses without breaching the agreement warning "blood and water cannot flow simultaneously."

If India revoked the treaty, Aziz said, Pakistan would treat that as "an act of war or a hostile act against Pakistan".

Later on Tuesday, Pakistan approached the World Bank amid reports that India could revoke the 56-year-old water-sharing treaty, with senior Pakistani officials taking up the matter with the international lender which had mediated the water-sharing deal.

A delegation of the Government of Pakistan led by the Attorney General for Pakistan, Ashtar Ausaf Ali, met with senior officials of the World Bank at the World Bank Headquarters in Washington DC, to discuss matters relating to Pakistan's recent Request for Arbitration given to India pursuant to Article IX of the Indus Waters Treaty, 1960, Geo News reported.

The report also said Pakistan approached the International Court of Justice, but did not provide any details.

On 19 August, Pakistan had formally requested India for settlement of outstanding disputes pertaining to

India's construction of Kishenganga and Ratle hydroelectric plants on rivers Neelum and Chenab respectively, by referring the matters to the Court of Arbitration as provided in Article IX of the treaty.

Under the treaty, the World Bank has an important role in establishment of the Court of Arbitration by facilitating the process of appointment of three judges, called Umpires, to the Court, while each country appoints two arbitrators.

The Pakistani officials met with senior officials of the World Bank to insist on early appointment of the judges and empanelment the court, it said.

The treaty gives India complete rights to waters of the Eastern Rivers (Ravi, Sutlej and Beas) and gives Pakistan the rights over the Western Rivers (Indus, Jhelum and Chenab) with limited allowance for use of water by India from the western rivers for purposes of, among others, power generation.

The treaty provides specific design criteria for any hydro-electric power plants to be built by India. Pakistan has held the position the Kishenganga and Ratle hydroelectric plants violate the design parameters of the treaty.

Meanwhile adding pressure to

Islamabad, a meeting convened by Modi today will explore the option of dragging Pakistan to the World Trade Organisation's (WTO) dispute resolution body for refusing to reciprocate for 20 years India's granting of the Most Favoured Nation status to Pakistan.

Under the World Trade Organization (WTO) agreements, countries cannot normally discriminate among their trading partners. If a country grants another country a special favour (e.g. lower customs duty on imports) then it has to offer the same favour to all WTO members.

India granted Pakistan MFN status in 1996, and Pakistan is yet to reciprocate. According to a report, out of India's total merchandise trade of \$641 billion in 2015-16, Pakistan accounted for a meagre \$2.67 billion.

India can move WTO and request for withdrawal of MFN status to Pakistan, citing breach of security.

Divided between India and Pakistan since 1947, the flashpoint of Kashmir lies at the heart of the countries' rivalry.

India and Pakistan have fought three wars since partition in 1947, two of them over Kashmir, where the two countries regularly exchange fire across the disputed border.

Bangladesh one-notch up

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was ranked 107 out of 140 countries, according to the WEF that prepared the report unveiled worldwide yesterday. The Geneva-based forum made the report based on a survey conducted with a set of questionnaire to assess the level of competitiveness of the economies.

The CPD released the GCR on behalf of the WEF in Dhaka. It also disclosed the findings of its Bangladesh Business Environment Study 2016.

In the GCR's competitiveness ranking, Switzerland continued to maintain its position as the most competitive economy in the world,

narrowly ahead of Singapore and the United States. Following them are Netherlands and Germany, said the WEF.

According to the report, all countries, except Sri Lanka, gained in rankings with India moving 16 notches up to 39 from last year. Bhutan and Nepal also rose in ranks and remained ahead of Bangladesh.

Pakistan becomes the weakest performer among the South Asian countries.

Bangladesh's overall score rose 1.06 percent to 3.8 on the current index from 3.76 a year ago, said CPD Additional Research Director

Khondaker Golam Moazzem while presenting the key findings of the competitiveness report.

Though infrastructure is said to have improved in Bangladesh, it still remains the major problematic factor for doing business in Bangladesh followed by corruption, according to the report.

Limited access to finance emerged as the third major problem, Moazzem said, adding that problematic factors increased from a few to many.

Bangladesh's competitiveness is not growing compared to the countries it is competing with, he said.

"Bangladesh is stuck in the lower end

segment of business competitiveness. We are walking but others are running."

The GCR shows that the country has made progress in infrastructure and institutional capacity.

However, Bangladesh's position has deteriorated in macroeconomic stability. It slid to the 65th position in macroeconomic stability from 49th last year.

Bangladesh's position went down because of a declining situation in terms of government budget balance and gross national savings as percentage of GDP and the country's credit rating in comparison with other economies, said Moazzem.

Bangladesh has been increasing its competitiveness based on scores in 12 categories termed as the pillars of competitiveness. The competitiveness index is the weighted average of these pillars.

Last year, Bangladesh moved up two notches from its ranking of 109 in the GCI 2014-15.

The latest report said Bangladesh's performance deteriorated in health and primary education and financial market sophistication. The country's ranking of financial market sophistication fell to 99 from 90 a year ago.

Moazzem said the financial sector suffers due to poor soundness of

banks, limited availability of financial products and difficulty in raising capital through the stock market.

"Financial system needs overhauling to improve its competitiveness," he said, recommending a reform commission.

Governance is the weakest part of business competitiveness of Bangladesh, Moazzem said.

"The government should gradually focus on efficiency enhancing factors along with ensuring basic requirements," he said, adding that other than electricity, none of the infrastructure facility was found to have improved considerably, said Moazzem referring to rail, road and waterways.