

Tributes pour in for WALIUL HAQ RUMI

The Bangladeshi television industry lost a shining star yesterday with the untimely passing of Waliul Haq Rumi, a beloved actor whose talent graced the screen over the years. From his humble beginnings to his recent role in the drama series 'Bokulpur', Rumi's journey was marked by versatility and dedication. Tragically, his battle with cancer, which didn't begin so long ago, reached its sombre conclusion on Monday morning.



Waliul Haq Rumi

PHOTOS: COLLECTED

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

The actor was diagnosed with colon cancer just a few months ago, leading him to initially seek treatment in Chennai, India. Then, he returned to Bangladesh and his struggle continued as he had been undergoing treatment at a private hospital in the capital city until his last days.

Rumi's journey in acting began in 1988 with the play *Kreotodash*. During the same year, he made his debut in the showbiz industry with the television drama *Kon Kanoner Phool*, which earned him praise for his performance. Alongside television, he has also acted in several movies. In 2009, he made his silver screen debut with the film *Doriaparer Douloti*.

Amongst his notable dramas are *Suggestion Selim*, *Bokashoka Tinjon*, *Makeup Man*, *Dhaka*

to *Barishal*, *Dhaka Metro Love*, *Bap Beta Dourer Upor*, *American Shaheb*, *Journey by Bus*, *Bakir Nam Faki*, the *Jamoi* sequels, and *Comedy 420*.

Rumi was last seen on-screen in the popular drama series *Bokulpur*, which airs on Deepto TV.

On his untimely and unfortunate demise, actors Fazlur Rahman Babu, Chanchal Chowdhury, Shazu Khadem, Nadia Ahmed and Shahnaz Khushi paid heartfelt tribute to the late actor.

FAZLUR RAHMAN BABU

Rumi was more than just a colleague; he was a cherished friend. His departure left a void that cannot be filled. I vividly recall visiting him in the hospital just yesterday, hoping for a swift recovery. His simplicity and sincerity were rare in our industry, and his presence on set always brought joy. Rumi wasn't just a co-worker, he was family. We shared the same neighbourhood for years, and his children were like my own. His generosity and warmth will be sorely missed.

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CHANCHAL CHOWDHURY



The news of Rumi's passing has left us all reeling. His sudden departure has robbed us of a dear friend and a talented artiste. His infectious laughter and camaraderie will be deeply missed. I can't help but wonder why he left us so soon. His absence will be felt keenly, but I pray that he finds eternal peace.

SHAHNAZ KHUSHI



Rumi's departure has left a profound emptiness in our hearts. He was not just a colleague but a pillar of support and kindness to me. He used to call me by the nickname 'Bondhu'. His humility and gentle demeanour endeared him to all who knew him. I'll miss his affectionate calls and his comforting presence. May his soul find solace in the afterlife.

SAZU KHADEM



Rumi's passing is a profound loss for all of us. His sudden departure has left us grappling with grief and disbelief. I remember our recent shoot together, where his spirit seemed low. Little did we know the severity of his condition. His resilience and spirit will be remembered fondly. Rest in peace, dear friend.

These heartfelt tributes paint a poignant picture of Waliul Haq Rumi's impact on those around him. Though he may no longer be with us, his legacy will continue to inspire and uplift us all.

NADIA AHMED



Rumi's absence leaves a gaping hole in our lives. He was not just a colleague but a mentor and a friend. His unwavering support and encouragement meant the world to me. I'll miss his infectious laughter and his unwavering optimism. May he find eternal peace in the arms of the divine.

These heartfelt tributes paint a poignant picture of Waliul Haq Rumi's impact on those around him. Though he may no longer be with us, his legacy will continue to inspire and uplift us all.

International Disability Art Festival to kick off Friday



The inaugural of International Disability Art Festival 2024 is set to commence at the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy in the capital on Friday.

Organised jointly by Dhaka Theatre and British Council, with support from Sundaram and the Institute of Informatics and Development, the two-day festival will showcase a diverse range of events, including theatre shows, film screenings, exhibitions, seminars, and more.

Approximately 240 disabled artistes will demonstrate their talents at the festival, showcasing the richness of their artistic expressions. The festival will conclude on April 27.

Rock & Roll Hall of Fame announces inductees for 2024

The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame has announced the names of 16 artistes and musical figures set to be inducted in 2024.

This list includes rock pioneer Big Mama Thornton, pop sensations Cher and Dionne Warwick, '70s rockers Peter Frampton and Foreigner, heavy metal icon Ozzy Osbourne, and '90s favourites like the Dave Matthews Mary J Blige, amongst others.

Cher, Osbourne, Foreigner, Frampton, and Kool & the Gang are being honoured after their first appearance on the ballot. Alexis Korner, Big Mama Thornton, and John Mayall are set to be honoured with the Musical Influencer Award, recognising their profound impact on rock and roll music.

NEWS

Abu Saeed Khan

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A self-taught technology expert, Saeed advised numerous tech giants and international organisations, helping to shape technology at the service levels in Bangladesh.

"I found him a good man and a senior person, who contributed to the development of the telecom sector and improvement of the country," Md Rezaul Kader, a former commissioner of the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission, told The Daily Star.

"Saeed had a great grasp of the telecom sector. He contributed to the formulation of the International Long-Distance Telecommunication Services Policy and I sought his advice often while issuing directives."

Saeed held the position of senior policy fellow at LIRNEasia, a think-tank based in Colombo. From August 2010 to July 2012, he served as the secretary general of the Association of Mobile Telecom Operators of Bangladesh. Before that, he was a strategy analyst at Ericsson's Southeast Asian head office in Malaysia.

He was also the technology editor at bdnews24.com and a research analyst at EMC World Cellular Database (now owned by Informa), where he covered the mobile telecommunications markets of Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Nepal.

As a journalist, he influenced various policies for the telecom sector of Bangladesh. His reports, which revealed anomalies, alerted the authorities and led to interventions that saved public funds.

In 2002, he was a key person behind the government decision to join the SEA-ME-WE4 consortium, linking the country with its first submarine cable.

The next year, he played a similar role when the government established a Class 4 switch, known as ATOB Tandem, which significantly alleviated the mobile operators' interconnection issues with the state-owned carrier.

He had over 30 years of diverse experience as a senior executive, international consultant, and policy researcher.

Saeed had worked with global organisations such as Ericsson, Huawei, Facebook, Google, the World Bank, and the United Nations ESCAP in various international and local capacities.

He also wrote on the telecom sector's policy reforms.

Saeed left behind a son, a daughter-in-law, and a host of well-wishers.

His first namaz-e-janaza was held at the CMH mosque after Zuhr prayers yesterday. He was buried next to his wife's grave after a second namaz-e-janaza in Tangail in the evening.

Greater resilience needed

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In order to achieve this goal, she put forward six proposals.

First, major carbon-emitting countries must take effective action to reduce their emissions to limit the rise of global temperature to within 1.5°C.

Second, commitments by developed countries to an annual climate fund of \$100 billion must be met. This fund must be equally distributed between adaptation and mitigation.

Third, developed countries must ensure efficient energy solutions and the transfer of technologies to developing countries.

Fourth, during the transition to renewable energy, the development priorities of the countries involved should be taken into account based on their losses and damages.

Fifth, all countries must share the responsibility for the rehabilitation of people displaced by sea-level rise, salinity, river erosion, floods, and droughts.

Finally, major economies must work globally in partnership with all stakeholders to ensure a sustainable future for generations to come.

Environment, Forest and Climate Change Secretary Farhina Ahmed, UN Resident Coordinator in Bangladesh Gwyn Lewis, executive secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Simon Steele and Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister Saber Hossain Chowdhury, among others, also spoke at the programme.

The prime minister said that although Bangladesh's contribution to global carbon emissions is less than

0.48 percent, it is one of the most affected and vulnerable countries to its negative impact.

"These adverse effects of climate change threaten our potential development and economic prosperity. Continued global warming is raising sea levels."

As a result, she mentioned, a large swath of southwestern Bangladesh, which comprises about 12-17 percent of the country's total area, is at risk of submergence by the end of this century.

"We have made the call to the developed world to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C," she said.

Hasina mentioned that in 2015, Bangladesh formulated the Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and submitted it to the UNFCCC in 2021 after updating.

In the document, she said, Bangladesh set an unconditional 6.73 percent and a conditional 15.12 percent greenhouse gas emission reduction target.

She also mentioned that Bangladesh has reduced the use of fossil fuels and increased the use of renewable energy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and in 2023 it formulated the Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan (MCPP), which aims to reach from vulnerability to resilience to prosperity while combating the adverse impacts of climate change.

Besides, she said in the adaptation and mitigation programmes of the MCPP, emphasis has been laid on the spontaneous participation of local people and stakeholders and nature-based solutions.

ACC opens enquiry

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Khorsheda said that after investigation, legal action will be taken within the stipulated period in accordance with the relevant laws and regulations.

Earlier in the day, a Supreme Court lawyer filed a writ petition with the High Court seeking its directive on the ACC to conduct an enquiry into the allegations against Benazir.

Lawyer Md Salah Uddin Reagan submitted the petition as a public interest litigation before the HC, with a prayer to issue a rule asking the ACC to explain as to why its inaction and failure to take appropriate action against the reported allegations should not be declared illegal.

Petitioner's lawyer Manoj Kumar Bhowmik told The Daily Star that his client earlier sent a legal notice to the ACC to take necessary measures in respect of the reports titled "Benazir Ghore Aladiner Cherag (Aladin's lamp at Benazir's house)" and "Bon-er Jomite Benazir Resort (Benazir's resort on forest land)" published in Bangla daily Kaler Kantha on March 31 and April 3 respectively.

The lawyer said the HC may hold a hearing on the petition today.

On Sunday, SC lawyer Syed Sayedul Haque Suman, also lawmaker from Habiganj-4 constituency, submitted an application to the ACC seeking an investigation into the wealth of Benazir.

Benazir, in a post from his verified Facebook profile on Saturday, termed the allegations of illegal wealth acquisition false.

26th death

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Shazneen, who was a grade-IX student of Scholastica School, was murdered on the night of April 23.

More than 19 years after the shocking incident, the convict in the Shazneen rape and murder case, Shahidul Islam alias Shahid, was hanged at Kashipur High Security Prison in Gazipur in 2017.

A Special Tribunal for Prevention of Women and Children Repression delivered the verdict in September 2003, sentencing six accused to death for the rape and murder.

They are domestic help Shahidul contractor Syed Sajjad Mainuddin, who was tasked with renovating the house, and his assistant Badal; housemaids Estema Khatun Minu and her sister Parvin; and carpenter Shaniram Mandal.

After the lower court verdict, the death reference reached the High Court for confirmation of the sentence. At the same time, the accused appealed to the High Court against their convictions and sentences. The HC acquitted Shaniram.

Later on, Hasan, Badal, Minu and Parvin appealed to the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court against the HC verdict. Shahidul filed a jail appeal.

On August 2 in 2016, the Appellate Division granted the appeals of Hasan, Badal, Minu and Parvin and dismissed Shahidul's appeal.

On March 5, 2017, the apex court rejected Shahidul's petition for review of the verdict. He sought presidential mercy, which was turned down by the president. He was executed on November 29 that year.

Israel carries

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At least 16 people, mostly children, were killed in Israeli strikes on two Rafah homes over the weekend, according to Gaza's civil defence agency.

Meanwhile, Israeli troops fought their way back into an eastern section of Khan Younis in a surprise raid, residents said yesterday, sending people who had returned to abandoned homes in the ruins of the southern Gaza Strip's main city fleeing once more, reports Reuters.

Bangladeshi

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bringing sacks of sugar from the border this morning.

Later, he was rescued and taken to the Upazila Health Complex where the on-duty doctor declared him dead, they said.

OC Raju said that the body of Hasan has been recovered and sent to Kasba Upazila Health Complex.

The body will be later taken to the Brahmanbaria General Hospital morgue for autopsy.

IMF team to focus

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Since the IMF approved the \$4.7 billion loan for Bangladesh in January last year, the multilateral lender has so far released \$1.16 billion in two tranches.

Bangladesh sought the loan amid a crisis of forex reserves.

However, the reserves have not improved since the loan programme commenced. The country's gross forex reserves have been around \$20 billion in recent months, as per an IMF calculation.

One of IMF's major conditions for the loan is that Bangladesh maintain a certain net international reserves (NIR). Bangladesh failed to meet it in the first review, and is going to fail this time again.

Besides, inflation has been over nine percent since March last year.

During a press briefing on the sidelines of the Spring Meetings of the World Bank Group and IMF in Washington, DC on April 18, IMF's Asia and Pacific Director Krishna Srinivasan said Bangladesh's reserve position has not improved much.

Referring to Bangladesh's elections, he said, when elections take

place, there's always some uncertainty about prospects. This affected part of the financial account, he added.

"But also, I think it's important for Bangladesh to transition to a more flexible exchange rate regime. That will be important to build external resilience and build buffers and build reserves. So, I think that is the area where engagement and dialogue continues in terms of allowing the exchange rate to be more flexible so that reserves can be built up, so that, in a sense, will be a key priority for the country going forward," he said.

For macroeconomic stability, the visiting IMF mission will discuss matters related to fuel, power and energy subsidies, public debt, upcoming budget, and performance of the state-owned enterprises.

For over a decade, Bangladesh's revenue collection has been around eight to nine percent of the GDP. The IMF loan programme has several reform proposals for the revenue sector.

Also, several reform proposals for the banking sector and their progress including implementation of the bank company act will be discussed during the IMF mission's visit.

Connectivity, FTA

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the Pacific (ESCAP)'s 80th session on April 25. The next day, the PM will meet her Thai counterpart Srettha Thavisin.

"The two countries will sign a letter of intent on Free Trade Agreement (FTA)," Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud told journalists at his ministry yesterday.

Last year, the bilateral trade between the two nations was around \$2.5 billion. Bangladesh imported products from Thailand worth over \$1.5 billion.

As Bangladesh is set to graduate out of LDC by 2026, it is discussing FTAs, preferential trade agreements or economic partnership agreements with different countries as part of enhancing its exports and investments.

"Apart from FTA talks, the visit by the prime minister will create scopes for discussing investment, tourism, energy, connectivity via sea and land, and development cooperation," said Hasan Mahmud.

The two countries will sign an agreement on visa waiver for those having official passports and three MoUs on energy cooperation, tourism, and mutual cooperation on tax.

Both Bangladesh and Thailand share the burden of sheltering

Rohingyas. Thailand is an important member of ASEAN, of which Myanmar is also a member.

"So, we would seek Thailand's support for solving the Rohingya crisis," said Hasan Mahmud.

Hasina will strongly request Thailand for making Bangladesh a sectoral dialogue partner of ASEAN, he said.

ESCAP is providing technical support to Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) connectivity project and the Asian Highway Network and Cross Border Paperless Trade mechanism.

Besides, the UN agency is also supporting Bangladesh in LDC graduation, domestic revenue mobilisation, women's economic empowerment, and disaster risk reduction.

ESCAP Executive Secretary Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana will also hold a bilateral meeting with Hasina on April 26.

Finance Minister AH Mahmood Ali, Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud, PM's Private Industry and Investment Adviser Salman F Rahman, State Minister for Posts, Telecommunications and Information Technology Zunaid Ahmed Palak, and State Minister for Commerce Ahasanul Islam Titu will be part of the Bangladesh delegation.