



MONCHOSHAROTH'S LOSS 'PERSONAL'

Colleagues mourn late legend

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

The passing of veteran theatre personality Ataur Rahman (84) has left a deep void in Bangladesh's cultural sphere, particularly among those who shared decades of artistic collaboration and friendship with him. Following his death on Monday, May 11, cultural personalities including Abul Hayat, Mamunur Rashid, Masum Reza, and Tariq Anam Khan spoke to The Daily Star, reflecting on the life, legacy, and immense theatrical contributions of the man affectionately known as Monchosharothi.

A legendary figure in Bangladesh's theatre movement, Ataur Rahman was a founding force of Nagorik Natya Sampradaya and one of the key architects behind the growth of post-independence modern theatre in the country. Beyond acting and directing, he was widely respected for helping shape the discipline, structure, and artistic language of contemporary Bangladeshi stage productions.

For Ekushey Padak-winning actor and playwright Abul Hayat, the loss was deeply personal.

Initially struggling to find words, he said, "What can I say? Ata *bhai* was someone so close and dear to me, and now we have lost him. My heart feels heavy with grief. I simply cannot find the language to express it."

Recalling how he first came to know Ataur Rahman, Abul Hayat said, "I have known him for many years. Back then, I lived in Chattogram. We studied at the same school, though he was a few years senior to me. When I went to see him for the last time, memories of the face I knew from those school days came back to me. That familiar face is now silent."

Speaking about the title "Monchosharothi", Abul Hayat said it perfectly reflected Ataur



Abul Hayat

Rahman's lifelong devotion to theatre.

"Whoever gave him such a beautiful title chose it perfectly," he said. "Ataur Rahman was truly the soul of the stage. He made immense contributions to theatre and devoted the finest years of his life to it."

Concluding his reflections, he said, "One after another, the memories keep coming back to me. I pray for the peace of his soul. May Almighty Allah grant him Jannah."

Veteran actor and playwright Mamunur Rashid remembered Ataur Rahman as one of the central figures of Bangladesh's theatre movement.

"I have known him since before the independence of Bangladesh. Even during the Pakistan era, he was involved in theatre. After the country gained independence, he began working in theatre with renewed enthusiasm. Later, he founded Nagorik Natya Sampradaya," he said.

"He remained connected to theatre for more than 50 years and made immense contributions. In particular, Ataur Rahman's contribution to stage theatre was enormous. His contributions can never be forgotten."

Mamunur Rashid also reflected on the breadth of Ataur Rahman's work.

"He wrote plays, adapted scripts, directed productions, and acted as well. Besides working with his own troupe, he also directed productions for other theatre groups. His works were highly acclaimed and received immense love from audiences."

He added, "Leaving everything behind, he has departed from us. He has my deepest love and respect."

Renowned playwright and Desh Natok founding member Masum Reza described Ataur Rahman as "theatre personified".



Mamunur Rashid

"His contribution to theatre was immense. He enriched Bengali drama enormously. He was a creative man who was always driven by the passion to create," he said.

"He was a cultured and modern-minded individual. Despite being such a senior figure, my dear Ata *bhai* remained remarkably modern in his outlook."

Recalling some of Ataur Rahman's most celebrated productions, Masum Reza particularly mentioned *Galileo* and



Masum Reza

Roktokorobi.

"Thirty to thirty-five years ago, Ataur Rahman directed *Galileo*. At the time, the play was staged at the German Cultural Centre and received tremendous praise from audiences. It remains one of Ata *bhai*'s most successful works," he said.

Speaking about *Roktokorobi*, Masum Reza added, "He directed *Roktokorobi* for the stage, which was a major achievement. In fact, Ata *bhai* brought world-renowned classic plays to the stage with immense care and dedication. His productions received great love from audiences in Bangladesh."

Masum Reza concluded, "I found joy in listening to him. I learned many things from him. I hold the deepest respect for him."

Acclaimed actor Tariq Anam Khan remembered Ataur Rahman as a pioneer who remained deeply committed to theatre throughout his life.

"Ataur Rahman was a deeply committed man. He worked with unwavering dedication throughout his life. He was one of our pioneers. He also held important responsibilities within the Group Theatre Federation and played

a significant role in the practice of modern theatre," he said.

Recalling the early days of Nagorik Natya Sampradaya, Tariq Anam Khan said, "In 1968, Ataur Rahman and Zia Haider founded Nagorik Natya Sampradaya. After independence, many others joined the troupe. During the early years of theatre practice in Bangladesh, he directed plays and also acted in them. Perhaps around 1973 or 1974, I developed a close bond with him, and that connection lasted a lifetime."

He also recalled acting alongside Ataur Rahman in television dramas.

"Ata *bhai* and I worked together in a serial



Tariq Anam Khan

PHOTOS: STAR

titled *Lal Matir Kalo Dhoa*. It was a long time ago, and the drama was written by Selim Al Deen. Later, he also acted in our drama *Gulshan Avenue*. So, there is truly no end to the memories."

Concluding his reflections, Tariq Anam Khan said, "I am saddened by his passing. But this is the way life is — one must leave eventually. Still, the encouragement he gave me will always remain a source of inspiration."

NEWS

UK PM defiant amid

FROM PAGE 12

resign, calling on Starmer "to do the right thing for the country and the party and set a timetable for an orderly transition".

Jess Phillips then quit as safeguarding minister, telling Starmer in a letter that she was not seeing the change "I, and the country expect". Junior ministers Alex Davies-Jones and Zubir Ahmed followed.

But deputy prime minister David Lammy, Defence Secretary John Healey backed the prime minister, warning that "more instability is not in Britain's interest", while a spokesman for interior minister Shabana Mahmood said she would not be resigning.

Under party rules, any challenger would need the support of 81 Labour MPs — 20 percent of the party in

parliament — to trigger a leadership contest.

Starmer, whose government is due to lay out more detailed legislative plans today, has vowed to contest any challenge.

It has long been rumoured that Health Secretary Wes Streeting and former deputy prime minister Angela Rayner could try to oust Starmer.

But neither is universally popular within Labour.

Pressure on Starmer has soared since Labour lost hundreds of councillors to the hard-right Reform UK party and left-wing populist Greens in last Thursday's polls.

Labour also lost its century-old dominance in Wales and took a hammering from the Scottish National Party in the devolved parliament in Edinburgh.

Suspect joined the search

FROM PAGE 12

The victim has been identified as Fahima Akter, daughter of Roisul Haque.

Citing the statement Zakir gave during initial interrogation, SMP Deputy Commissioner Saiful said the suspect had sent Fahima to a nearby shop to buy cigarettes on the day of the incident.

After the girl returned, Zakir called her to his room, closed the door, and attempted to rape her, the police officer said.

Zakir admitted to strangling the child after she became unconscious at one stage of the sexual assault, Saiful said.

Whether to add a rape charge will be decided once the medical report is received, the police officer said. A murder case has been filed with

Jalalabad Police Station.

Citing Zakir's statement, police said he first stashed the body in a briefcase in the room and later tried to bury it inside his room. As the odour from the decomposing body spread, he dumped it in a nearby pond. Police recovered the body after being informed by the locals.

Police said they recovered a piece of cloth and the briefcase used in the crime based on information given by Zakir. The items will be examined as part of investigation.

"No direct evidence has yet been found of another person's involvement," the deputy commissioner said. "But the probe is underway. If anyone else is found to be involved, they will be brought to justice."

Police are shedding

FROM PAGE 12

against any police member, no one will be spared," the IGP said. He noted that the force has already taken action and brought several members to justice in drug-related cases.

Addressing the award recipients, Fakir said the recognition reflected their responsibility, excellence, and leadership. "I believe these achievements will inspire you to be more responsible," he said, urging the honourees to set an example for their peers through honesty and dedication.

Earlier, the IGP pinned badges on

341 police members who received the "Police Force Exemplary Good Service Badge-2025". The awards recognised performance between March 1, 2025, and February 28, 2026.

The ceremony also featured awards for units that successfully conducted illegal firearms recovery drives between January 1, 2025, and December 31, 2025.

In the shield parade competition, the joint metropolitan team secured first place, while the APBn and industrial police teams took second and third place, respectively.

A towering thespian takes his final bow

FROM PAGE 12

A lifetime member and founding pillar of Nagorik Natya Sampradaya, Ataur Rahman stood at the very core of Bangladesh's post-independence theatre movement. More than a director or performer, he was widely seen as an integral force in building the grammar and discipline of modern Bangladeshi theatre.

His journey in theatre began in the late 1960s, when he helped establish Nagorik Natya Sampradaya in 1968—one of the country's most influential theatre troupes. From its earliest years, the group became a platform for his artistic vision, blending classical discipline with contemporary sensibility.

Over time, Ataur Rahman emerged as a leading theatre director, earning acclaim for his interpretations of major works from both Western and South Asian literary traditions.

6 held over Raju

FROM PAGE 4

The other arrestees are Md Abdul Mannan, 37, identified as the driver of the CNG-run auto-rickshaw allegedly used in the getaway, Md Yunus Mia, 24, Md Ayatullah Ali Adnan, 21, Md Abu Bakkar Siddique, alias Khokon, 48, and Azgar Ali, 39. The arrests were made during drives in Cox's Bazar and several areas of Chattogram, including Double Mooring, Roufabad and Chandaogaon, between Monday and yesterday, said police.

Meanwhile, 11-year-old Reshmi Akhtar, hit by a stray bullet during the shooting, remains on life support at Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

Doctors said the fourth-grade student suffered multi-organ failure and remains in critical condition. "The bullet is still lodged in the back of her head. As it passed through critical parts of the brain, surgery is extremely risky and could cause fatal haemorrhaging," said Prof KM Baki Billah, head of the anaesthesiology department at CMCH.

CMCH Director Brig Gen Taslim Uddin said a specialised medical board was monitoring her condition round the clock.

The shooting took place on the night of May 7 in front of Bihari Colony at Roufabad, when five to six masked gunmen allegedly opened fire targeting Raju, according to police.

Reshmi was on her way to buy betel leaves for her mother around 9:10pm when she was struck.

His directorial repertoire included adaptations of plays by William Shakespeare, Rabindranath Tagore, Samuel Beckett, Syed Shamsul Haque, Sayeed Ahmed, and others—works he approached with a distinctive balance of restraint, clarity, and intellectual depth.

His mortal remains were kept at the Central Shaheed Minar from 3 pm to 4 pm on Monday (May 12), where people from all walks of life gathered to pay their final respects. He was later laid to rest at Banani Graveyard.

Born on June 18, 1941, in Noakhali, Ataur Rahman's life reflected a rare devotion to the stage. A postgraduate in Soil Science from the University of Dhaka, he ultimately chose theatre as his life's calling, going on to become a playwright, actor, director, and author who remained deeply embedded in Bangladesh's cultural

landscape for decades.

Through his long career, he played a central role in shaping the country's group theatre movement, both as an artiste and an institution-builder.

He also held important institutional roles, serving as secretary general of the Bangladesh Centre of the International Theatre Institute and as former chairman of the Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation, further strengthening the country's theatre infrastructure.

In recognition of his contribution to arts and culture, he received the Ekushey Padak in 2001 and the Independence Award in 2021, the highest civilian honour of the state.

With his passing, Bangladesh loses not only a master of stagecraft but also one of its foundational theatre thinkers—an artiste whose work helped define how generations would see, feel, and understand theatre.

Bangladesh's absence jarring

FROM PAGE 12

On my flight to France, I sat beside Yusuf Shaikh of Janta Cinemas. He was not travelling with a film in competition, but for what he called "recon work" — observing trends, building relationships, and understanding where global cinema markets are heading.

He asked me a simple question: "Why wasn't Bangladesh making a more concentrated effort to market its films at Cannes?"

The question lingered because it exposed a striking contrast in mentality. Even without an official selection, producers from neighbouring industries view Cannes as a strategic space worth occupying. In Bangladesh, participation too often remains tied to rare moments of festival recognition rather than long-term industry presence.

Walking through the Village International as the Marché du Film opened, the absence of a Bangladeshi pavilion was impossible to ignore.

The contrast with other countries was stark. Japan has built a major presence around its Country of Honour status, while South Korea and India continue to operate some of the

market's busiest hubs. Even Nepal, despite more limited resources, has maintained a visible presence.

That absence is all the more frustrating because Bangladesh has already shown it can produce internationally respected cinema. Rehana Maryam Noor and "Ali" proved that Bangladeshi stories can travel beyond national borders.

Still, the Bangladeshi spirit remains resilient in one of the festival's specialised sections. This year, Cannes Docs — a prestigious hub for non-fiction storytelling — is showcasing four projects that demonstrate our narrative voice is very much alive.

Under a French-supported initiative, Opekha, Blue Collars from the Frontline, In Search of Her and My Cousin are being pitched to global distributors and programmers.

Last year, "Ali" showed that Bangladeshi cinema could earn recognition at Cannes. The challenge now is whether the country can build a sustained industry presence so such successes become part of a continuing trajectory rather than isolated moments of celebration.

Iran threatens

FROM PAGE 12

will not be significantly impeded unless that highly enriched uranium (HEU) stockpile is removed or destroyed.

"One of Iran's options in the event of another attack could be 90 percent enrichment. We will review it in the parliament," Iranian parliamentary spokesman Ebrahim Rezaei, who is spokesperson for the parliamentary national security and foreign policy commission, posted on X.

Iran sent its proposal in response to an earlier US plan, details of which remain limited. Media reports have said the American plan involved a one-page memorandum of understanding aimed at ending the fighting and establishing a framework for negotiations on Iran's nuclear programme.

Iran's foreign ministry said its response called for ending the war on all fronts, including Lebanon, halting the US naval blockade on Iranian ports and securing the release of Iranian assets frozen abroad under longstanding sanctions.

"There is no alternative but to accept the rights of the Iranian people as laid out in the 14-point proposal. Any other approach will be completely inconclusive; nothing but one failure after another," Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said in a post on X.

"The longer they drag their feet, the more American taxpayers will pay for it."

Meanwhile, the US ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee told a conference that Israel sent Iron Dome air defence batteries and personnel to operate them in the United Arab Emirates during the war, after it was targeted more than any country by Iran.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia launched numerous, unpublicised strikes on Iran in retaliation for attacks carried out in the kingdom during the Middle East war, two Western officials briefed on the matter, and two Iranian officials said.

The Saudi attacks, not previously reported, mark the first time that the kingdom is known to have directly carried out military action on Iranian soil and show it is becoming much bolder in defending itself against its main regional rival.

The attacks, launched by the Saudi Air Force, were assessed to have been carried out in late March, the two Western officials said. One said only that they were "tit-for-tat strikes in retaliation for when Saudi (Arabia) was hit."