Beat: Miscellaneous

Bangladesh President Zillur Rahman dies at Singapore hospital

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USPA News - Bangladeshi President Zillur Rahman, a veteran ruling party leader who held the largely ceremonial post for more than four years, died Wednesday while undergoing treatment for a lung infection at a hospital in Singapore, the government said. He was 84 years old.

Rahman was pronounced dead at 6:47 p.m. local time on Wednesday while surrounded by his children and other close relatives at the Mount Elizabeth Hospital in Singapore. He had been admitted to a military hospital in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, on March 9 and was flown to Singapore the next day to undergo treatment for a serious lung infection. M. Mahbubuzzaman, the Bangladesh High Commissioner in Singapore, said Rahman`s body was expected to be flown to Dhaka on Thursday morning. Parliamentary speaker Abdul Hamid, who has taken over as acting president, announced a three-day national mourning period with the country`s flag flying at half-mast. Rahman, the country`s nineteenth president, was elected in 2009 and is recognized as having made important contributions to his country`s democratic transition throughout his political life. But with Bangladesh being a parliamentary democracy, his role as president was largely ceremonial with the prime minister holding executive powers. United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, through his spokesman, said he was saddened by Rahman`s death and offered his "heartfelt" condolences to the president`s family, the government, and the people of Bangladesh. The United States and Canada also expressed their condolences. "From his early days as a history student and political activist, President Rahman dedicated his life to the people of Bangladesh," said U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry. "His efforts helped lead to the creation of Bangladesh in 1971, and his subsequent decades of public service helped Bangladesh establish itself as the democracy it is today." Kerry added: "As Bangladesh nears the 42nd anniversary of its independence, President Rahman`s death offers a moment for all Bangladeshis to come together in mourning and reflect on what unites them as a nation. On behalf of the American people, I offer my sympathies to President Rahman`s family and to the Bangladeshi people during this sad time."

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UPA United Press Agency LTD
483 Green Lanes
UK, London N13NV 4BS
contact (at) unitedpressagency.com
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