

Obituary



Professor Muhammad Muhibur Rahman

In loving Memory of Late Professor Muhammad Muhibur Rahman (1944-2025): A brilliant student, a dedicated teacher, and a committed researcher.

With profound sadness, we write this obituary for a distinguished scholar, an inspiring teacher, and a revered mentor-Professor Rahman, former Professor of Chemistry at the University of Dhaka-who departed this mortal world on 30 March 2025 (*Innā li-llāhi wa-`innā `ilayhi rāji`ūn*). His life stands as a testament to intellectual brilliance, unwavering dedication, and exemplary leadership. From his earliest days as a student, he demonstrated extraordinary merit, and throughout his long academic journey he remained a beacon of excellence, shaping generations with his clarity of thought, passion for knowledge, and uncompromising integrity.

Professor Rahman's contributions as a researcher enriched multiple fields of chemistry, while his remarkable organizational abilities made him a pillar of the academic community. His service in numerous leadership roles, both within and beyond the University of Dhaka, leaves behind a legacy of scholarship, institution-building, and national impact. As a teacher, he inspired not only through his masterful command of subject matter but also through his genuine care for his students. Late Professor Muhammad Muhibur Rahman was our revered teacher and mentor.

Early Life and Education

Late Professor Muhibur Rahman was born on 2nd January 1944 in a remote village, named Manikpur of Zakiganj Upazila in the district of Sylhet. His father was Late Mr. Mamtaz Ali and mother was late Mrs. Asia Khatun. At early age he had his basic Islamic education in the village mosque and primary education at Manikpur Primary School during 1949-1953. He then went to Zakiganj Government High School for Secondary School education during 1954-1959. Late Muhibur Rahman passed the Matriculation examination under the then East Pakistan Secondary Education Board in 1959 and secured 16th position in order of merit. He was then admitted into Dhaka Government College and completed Higher Secondary Education in 1961. He passed ISc examination of Dhaka University and was placed in the 2nd position in the merit list. He was then enrolled in the Department of Chemistry of Dhaka University and completed BSc (Hons) and MSc in 1964 and 1966 respectively. In both the examinations he secured First Classes and placed in the First positions. The results of the MSc examination were published on 1 February 1966. The following day, 2 February, the university was declared closed "*sine die*." He then immediately joined the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) for about five months, and worked as a junior scientist under Dr. Shamsul Hoque, Director of the Atomic Energy Centre, Dhaka and a pioneering physicist.

Academic Career and Research at the University of Dhaka

Dr. Muhibur Rahman joined the Department of Chemistry of Dhaka University on 17 July 1966 as a Lecturer. He was appointed as Assistant Professor in the Department (1971) upon return from England. He was promoted to Associate Professor in 1974 and Professor in 1987. He successfully served the Department of Chemistry of Dhaka University as the Chairman (24 August 1996- 24 August 1999) and retired on 30 June 2010. He was also a House Tutor of Shahidullah Hall of Dhaka University during 1977–1983.

He was appointed the Director of the Centre for Advanced Research in Sciences (CARS) at Dhaka University (2009–2010) and made valuable contributions in promoting advance research at the Centre. His leadership at CARS led to the establishment of the first Air Quality Monitoring facilities at the University of Dhaka—an initiative he conceptualized, funded through HEQEP, and operationalized through international collaboration.

He was also the Director of the Bose Centre for Advanced Study and Research in Natural Sciences, at Dhaka University (1999–2003). Professor Rahman was a Member of the University Grants Commission of Bangladesh (2010–2014) and an elected Fellow of the Bangladesh Academy of Sciences (2012). He was selected as UGC Professor for two years, (2017 and 2018) in the Department of Chemistry. He was Editor of the Dhaka University Journal of Science (1997–1999) and the Journal of the Bangladesh Academy of Sciences (2020–2021).

International Scholarships, Fellowships, Research Engagements

Professor Muhibur Rahman was awarded the Commonwealth Scholarship for higher studies leading to PhD at the Cambridge University, UK (1967–1970) under the supervision of Professor J. W. Linnett, FRS. He was awarded the Alexander von Humboldt Fellowship for post-doctoral research at the Gottingen University, Germany (1974–1976) with Professor Karl Hauße and Kiel University with Professor R. N. Schindler (1984). He received the British Council Senior Visitorship for research with Professor Norman Sheppard, FRS at the University of East Anglia, Norwich, England (1984). Professor Muhibur Rahman again visited Gottingen University (1976–1977) and Kiel University (1984–1987, 1990–1992, 1984–1995) as Guest Scientist for teaching and research. Professor Muhibur Rahman was again specially invited as research scientist of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation by the Wuppertal University, Germany (Sept. 2012–Oct. 2013) to work with Professor Thorsten Benter.

Research Contributions

Professor Rahman's research spanned a remarkable range of fields:

- X-ray crystallography (MSc research under Professor M. H. Khundkar (MSc, DU)
- Mössbauer spectroscopy of ferrites (PhD, Cambridge)
- Heterogeneous gas–solid reactions and catalysis (DU)
- Photoelectric properties of metal oxides (Göttingen)
- Infrared spectra of adsorbed species (East Anglia)
- Kinetics of atmospheric reactions (Kiel)
- Detection of atmospheric pollutants (Wuppertal)
- Solid-state chemistry, adsorption, reaction kinetics, micellar catalysis (DU)
- Nanochemistry and synthesis of nanoparticles using micelles as nano-reactors (DU)

He co-initiated with Professors A. M. S. Alam and M.Y.A. Mollah one of the earliest studies on ambient air pollution in Dhaka City, establishing a mobile laboratory and publishing the landmark paper *Detection and Measurements of Some Gaseous Pollutants in Ambient Air in Some Selected Locations in Dhaka City* (J. Bangl. Chem. Soc., 1991).

He supervised or co-supervised over 90+ postgraduate students, including 10 PhD and MPhil students, and co-supervised two PhD students at the University of Kiel. He authored 96+ peer-reviewed articles, several book chapters, and a widely used Higher Secondary Chemistry textbook.

National Contribution through HEQEP

As a consultant to the Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project (HEQEP) of the Ministry of Education (2015-2017), Professor Rahman played a pivotal role in:

- Establishing Institutional Quality Assurance Cells (IQACs) across universities
- Strengthening Quality Assurance Cell (QAC) framework
- Expanding the Academic Innovation Fund (AIF)
- Introducing Fabrication Laboratories (FabLabs) in multiple universities.

His work significantly shaped the quality assurance landscape of Higher education in Bangladesh.

Professional Societies and Scientific Leadership

Professor Rahman was a founding member of several key scientific bodies:

- Founder Member, Alexander von Humboldt Club Bangladesh (later AHFB)
 - General Secretary (1983–2003)
 - President (2003–2010)
- Founding Member, Bangladesh Chemical Society (1972)
 - President (2007–2008, 2009–2010)

Under his leadership, BCS awarded Honorary Fellowships to eminent chemists including Nobel Laureate Professor Yuan Tseh Lee and IUPAC President Professor Jung-Il Jin. He was also a pioneer in launching the Bangladesh Chemistry Olympiad in 2007 to inspire young scientific minds.

A Teacher of Rare Integrity and Dedication

Professor Rahman will be remembered as a brilliant teacher with impeccable integrity, unwavering dedication, and a relentless pursuit of perfection. His high standards sometimes challenged those around him, but those who worked closely with him understood that his expectations stemmed from a deep commitment to excellence.

Passing and Legacy

Professor Rahman left this mortal world at the age of 81, leaving behind his wife, Mrs. Shamim Rahman, and four daughters. He is also mourned by the thousands of admirers whose lives he touched — his students, colleagues, and many people he encountered throughout his remarkable journey.

May Almighty Allah bless the departed soul of **Professor Muhammad Muhibur Rahman** and grant him eternal peace in Jannatul Ferdous.

-Mohammad Yousuf Ali Mollah
Professor (Retired), Department of Chemistry
University of Dhaka &
Former Member, University Grants Commission of Bangladesh
&
Dr. Mohammad Quamrul Ahsan[#]
Former Director, Analytical Sciences
Novartis Pharmaceuticals, USA.

[#] Dr. Ahsan, who lives in USA, was the first MSc thesis student of Late Professor Muhibur Rahman.