(From right) Poet Asad Chowdhury, Habibullah Siraji, Hayat Mamud, Rafiq Azad and Rabiul Husain observe a one-minute silence after placing a wreath at the portrait of Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish at a programme at Liberation War Museum in the city yesterday. The museum organised the programme titled 'A day for Mahmoud Darwish: Worldwide reading in memory of Mahmoud Darwish'.

A day for Mahmoud Darwish

Poetry recitation at Liberation War Museum

JAMIL MAHMUD

Liberation War Museum (LWM) arranged a poetry recitation programme titled "A Day for Mahmoud Darwish" at its premises on October 5 to commemorate the life and works of Palestinian national poet Mahmoud Darwish (1941-2008). Noted poets and recitors of the country recited translations of Darwish's poems.

The programme was a part of worldwide reading in memory of Mahmoud Darwish on the day (October 5) -- initiated by the Berlin International Literature Festival organisers.

"This programme reflects the motto of LWM as well as commemorates the Palestinian poet," said Mafidul Haque -- one of the trustees and member secretary of the museum -- in his inaugural speech. Mafidul Haque also read out a translation (by him) of Darwish's writing.

Noted poets Rafiq Azad, Hayat Mamud, Asad Chowdhury and Habibullah Siraji placed wreaths on a portrait of Darwish.
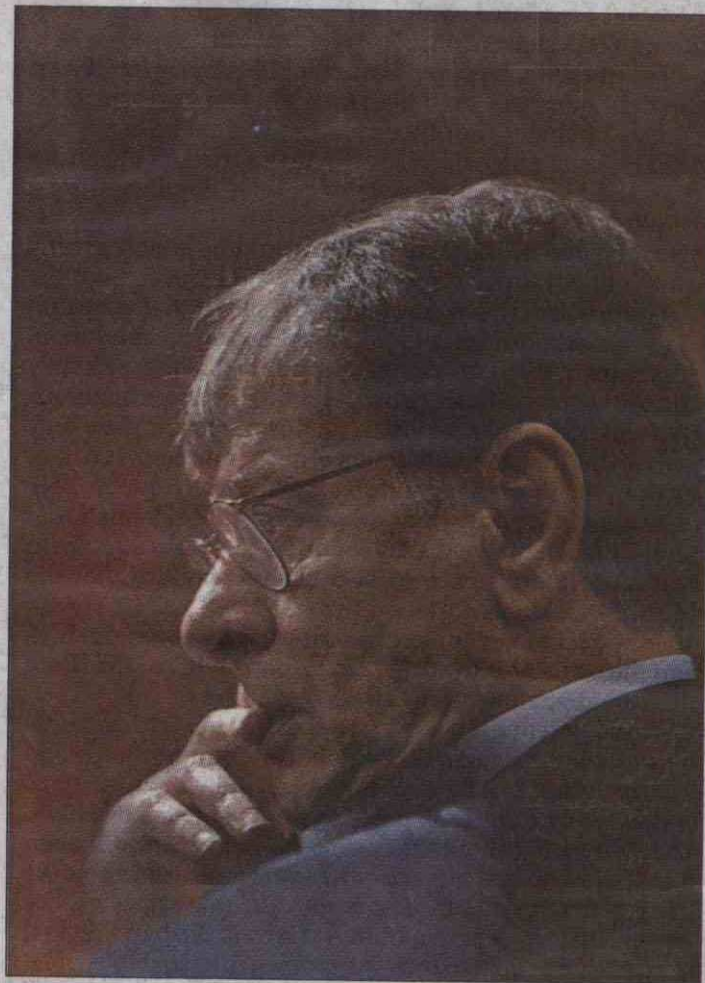
Recitor Rafiqul Islam briefly went over the life and works of Darwish.

The programme started with a recitation of *Shaheedera Jakhan Ghumatey Jaye*, by poet Sajjad Sharif. Sharif recited two more poems at the programme.

Poet Asad Chowdhury recited two poems -- *Asha* and *Bandi Khop Thekey*; translations of Darwish's poems. Among other poets Habibullah Siraji, Rabiul Hussain, Aslam Sani and Golam Kibria Pinu read out Darwish's works at the programme.

Noted recitor Hasan Arif read out two poems of Darwish translated by Hayat Mamud. Mahidul Islam and Laila Afroz, among other recitors, took part in the programme.

Mahmoud Darwish was born in 1941 in the Western Galilee

Mahmoud Darwish

province of Palestine. In 1948, he fled to Lebanon with his family and returned after the establishment of the state of Israel. He worked as an editor for various political and cultural journals. Darwish was regarded as the Palestinian national poet.

After being imprisoned on numerous occasions, he left Israel in 1970 and went into exile. In 1987, Darwish was elected to the executive committee of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO). But he left the organisation in 1993, as a protest to the signing of the Oslo Accords. Darwish received numerous

awards, including the Lannan Prize for Cultural Freedom in 2001 and the Erich Maria Remarque Peace Prize in 2003.

Darwish is said to have given voice to the Palestinian dream of statehood and helped forge a Palestinian national identity. He started out as a poet of resistance and eventually became a poet of conscience.

The poet, who was exiled for over 26 years from his homeland, died on August 9, 2008 following a heart surgery. He was buried in the West Bank city of Ramallah and granted a state funeral.