Of songs and a shining star

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kept on life support as his condition deteriorated.

He had battled several life-threatening complications, including cancer, for a long time.

Having made his debut in the film Shondhikkhon in 1975, Alauddin Ali won the National Award for Best Music Director for the films Golapi Ekhon Traine, (1978), Sundori (1979), Koshai (1980), Jogajog (1988) and Lakhe Ekta (1990).

Born to Ustad Jadob Ali and Zohora Khatun on December 24, 1952, Ali's first musical lessons were from his uncle, Sadeq Ali. In 1968, he joined as a film instrumentalist and assistant to legendary composer Altaf Mahmud.

His burgeoning career as a composer started when his friend, Abul Umrah Mohammad Fakhruddin, showed him a poem describing the seasons of Bangladesh in 1972.

At the time, Ali was working as an assistant to music director Anwar Parvez. After he made a song out of the poem, the masterpiece O Amar Bangla Ma Tor was born, sung to perfection by Sabina Yasmin.

When he signed Shondhikkhon, he was only 23. Over the years, he became a pillar of the Bangladeshi film industry, especially in his partnership with renowned director and lyricist Amzad Hossain.

Ami Achi Thakbo, Ekta Kotha Bolar, Keu Jodi Konodin Amare, Tumi Jodi Shukhi How and Ronger Manush are among those hits that the trio of Alauddin Ali, Sabina Yasmin and Amzad Hossain concocted together.

"He was assisting the music director Anwar Parvez when we first met. It was in the 80s when we first recorded our album under the banner of HMV in Kolkata in his composition," says Runa Laila, who fondly remembers Alauddin Ali as a master of his craft.

"In later years, we did many albums and film songs together, including Amay Genthe Daona Mago Ekta Polash Phuler Mala which created history. I will miss him dearly."

Naquib Khan believes the contribution Alauddin Ali made in Bangla music is phenomenal. "The music genre he introduced, fusing modern music with folk, was begotten him unparalleled success," said this musician.

IRRECOVERABLE LOSS

"Yet another bright star has left us," says Aly Sumon, who is also the lead vocalist of the band Pentagon. "Looking back to my numerous childhood memories with him, I am incredibly grateful to be nurtured and adored by him."

Rafiqul Alam, who first worked together with Ali in the 1973 film Otithi, attributes his success in singing career to the deceased composer.

"His loss can never be compensated," shared Abida Sultana, who was deeply saddened by the news of his demise. "Recording sessions with him were joyful, and were more like picnics, which everyone looked forward to."

Music Composers Society of Bangladesh (MCSB) mourned the departure of Alauddin Ali.

"It is a huge and an irrecoverable loss to the music industry. Each and every member of MCSB is praying for the departed soul," said their statement on social media.

Amar Moto Eto Shukhi, sung by Khalid Hassan Milu, E Jibon Tomake Dilam sung by Kumar Sanu, Tomake Chai Aro Kache by Runa Laila, Nil Nil Nilanjona by Asif Akbar, Pathorer Prithibite Kacher Hridoy by Shakila Zafar and Tapan Chowdhury, Bhengeche Pinjor by Andrew Kishore are only a few among his musical triumphs.

Alauddin Ali's Namaz-e-Janaza will take place today after Zohrprayers, at a mosque near his home in Khilgaon Taltola, followed by another janaza at FDC. He will be laid to rest at the Martyred Intellectuals Graveyard in Mirpur.

He is survived by his children Afrin Ali, Ajmeri Ali Minu, Showkat Ali Rana, Adrita Alauddin Rajkonnya and Alif Alauddin, the latter being a singer and media personality.

Shipra gets out on bail

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providing legal assistance to Shipra. Her lawyer Arup Barua Topu told the court that police accused her in a fabricated case to derail the investigation into Sinha killing.

After the prosecution opposed the plea, Senior Judicial Magistrate Delwar Hossain granted the bail.

Stamford students Shifat, Shipra and Tahsin Rifat Noor were in Cox's Bazar to shoot a travel video for Sinha's YouTube channel named Just Go. They were staying at Nilima Resort in Himchari area on Marine Drive Road.

Shifat, who was with Sinha when the shooting happened, was arrested at the scene. Police handed Rifat to his parents' custody.

Witnesses in the narcotics case against Shipra, claimed they were forced to sign on blank papers. Besides, police and witnesses have been giving different accounts of what was seized from their rooms in the resort.

According to the First Information Report, filed by Sub-inspector Shafiqul Islam of Himchharai police outpost, six bottles of liquor and a small amount of marijuana were seized.

But Lokman Khan, caretaker of the resort, said police also seized Tk 2 lakh in cash, a knife, a machete, a desktop computer with monitor, hard drive, a camera, four lenses, a pair of speakers, a keyboard and microphones.

Lokman added that police came back on August 2 and took his signature on a blank piece of paper.

Abdullah, another witness, also said police took his signature on a blank piece of paper.

Asked, Sub-inspector Dipankar Ruaza who is investigating the case, said a separate note was attached to the seizure list about the Tk 2 lakh. He added that a second list is being prepared.

Shifat, who saw the shooting, was accused in a murder and a narcotics case by Teknaf police.

Meanwhile, Stamford students held a rally on campus yesterday, for the fourth consecutive day, and vowed to continue their protest for unconditional release of their two young film students.

They condemned police for attacking participants at a human chain in Bamna upazila of Barguna organised on Saturday for Shifat's release.

A three-member probe body was formed yesterday over the attack.

The team visited the spot yesterday and talked with the organiser of the event, local journalists and policemen, said Mofijul Islam, additional superintendent of police in Barguna, also chief of the probe body.

Road crashes spike

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Dhaka Reporters Unity (DRU) yesterday.

The organisation prepared the statistics on the basis of news reports from July 26 to August 7, he added.

As the number of public transport services were fewer than on past Eid holidays, a greater number of cars and small vehicles operated on the roads, he said.

"So, the number of accidents and fatalities involving private vehicles has increased," he added.

According to the corresponding report of the organisation after last year's Eid-ul-Azha, at least 224 people were killed and 866 injured in 203 road crashes across the country in 12 days of holiday rush.

Meanwhile, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday directed authorities concerned to form a probe committee to investigate road crashes and casualties while people were returning to Dhaka after Eid.

He also asked the committee to submit a report within seven working days, says a ministry press release.

Over the 13 days of holiday rush, the highest number of single-day casualties -- 32 dead in 26 accidents – occurred on August 4, according to the report. August 7 saw the lowest number of fatalities, eight, from eight reported accidents.

Out of 201 road crashes, motorcycles were involved in 88 accidents, which claimed the lives of 106 people and left 65 others injured.

The organisation said total 310 vehicles were involved in the 201 accidents. Of the vehicles, 32.58 percent were motorcycles; 19.35 were buses; 19.35 trucks, pickups, and lorries; 10 percent were battery-run easy bikes; 8.06 percent were auto-rickshaws; 7.74 percent were cars, microbuses and SUVs while the rest were locally made motorised vehicles.

The organisation said 52.23 percent of the accidents occurred after vehicles hit pedestrians, 24.37 percent were head-on collisions, 15.92 percent after drivers lost control of their vehicles and 7.46 percent accidents due to unknown reasons.

Among the accidents, 32.33 percent occurred on national highways, 49.25 percent on regional highways while 13.43 percent on feeder roads, it said. Around four percent accidents occurred in the capital while around one percent in Chattogram city.

Mozammel Hoque Chowdhury said although only 15 to 20 percent people used roads during the Eid rush this time, compared to previous years, the number of road crashes increased "abnormally".

Holding small vehicles responsible for such a large number of accidents, he recommended limiting the number of such vehicles and increasing the number of public buses.

He also called for training drivers of private vehicles, ensuring accountability of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) and taking necessary steps, viewing road crashes as a pandemic.

Kazi Md Shifun Newaz, assistant professor of Accident Research Institute of BUET, was, among others, present at the press briefing.

A cylinder-laden truck on a flyover in Tejgaon emitting thick black smoke right next to windows of residential flats. Such emissions are degrading the air quality in the capital.

PHOTO: **PRABIR DAS**

Minister contradicts secretary's views

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had reached a consensus with the home ministry that any measure against irregularities at private healthcare facilities would be taken jointly.

"They will not go anywhere alone; they will discuss with us. We will take them if needed," he said.

The drives against the anomalies at the private hospitals and clinics came after scams and fraudulence by some facilities surfaced during the Covid-19 pandemic. Licences of some of those were found to have expired.

At present, two thirds of the country's over 15,000 private clinics and diagnostic centres are running without any valid licence since 2018. The renewal of licences has been slow since 2018, when the DGHS began "digitalising" the process, according to officials at the health directorate.

TASKFORCE MEETING

Yesterday, the taskforce in its first meeting decided that both the health ministry and the home ministry would jointly conduct any drive against the errant hospitals and clinics from now on.

The members of the taskforce can visit any hospital anytime.

"The meeting has decided to make the licensing and renewal process smoother and bring all the eligible private clinics, diagnostic centres under the licensing system," said Farid Hossain Miah, director (hospitals and clinics) at the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

The meeting held at the Secretariat also decided that all private hospitals, clinics and diagnostic centres would have to update the DGHS on the status of their licences by August 23.

After getting the information, the authorities might give a timeframe to the facilities running without licence or expired ones to update their status. Actions would be taken if the private hospitals or clinics do not renew their licence after that, said meeting insiders.

The government formed the nine-member taskforce to monitor the progress on Covid-19 prevention activities and operations related to medical activities.

"If any private hospital or clinic does not renew their licence, action will be taken against them," Farid told The Daily Star yesterday. Besides, the authorities may also relax the renewal process, he said.

He said it was also told in the meeting that three officials have to look after licences of around 5,000 clinics and diagnostic centres in Dhaka.

"The meeting has decided to deploy more people in this department to bring pace in work," said Farid.

DGHS sources said on September 4, 2018, a circular was issued hiking the licence issuance fees of private hospitals and clinics from Tk 5,000 to 50,000--2,50,000.

Clinics and diagnostic centres need environmental clearance, employee details, city corporation clearance, tax certificates and other documents to get their licence renewed every year.

Patients not getting

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"You have noticed the death rate has decreased slowly… [Around] 90 percent patients are taking treatment at home and are not coming to hospitals unless they become critically ill. As a result, 60 percent beds [in Covid-19 hospitals] are lying vacant," the minister said.

Meanwhile, in the regular briefing, Prof Nasima Sultana, additional director general of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), said 2,487 people tested positive for Covid-19 yesterday.

This number is around 23.12 percent of all the 10,759 people tested in the past 24 hours till 8:30am yesterday.

In the previous day, this percentage was 22.25 which indicates a rise in infection, according to experts.

With yesterday's figure, the total number of confirmed cases of Covid-19 rose to 257,600.

"The minister's claim is not logical, because we have not enough information available to support it. From epidemiological perspective, there is no reason for decreasing the infection, rather it is on the rise," Prof Ridwanur Rahman, an infectious disease specialist, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Referring to the global standards, he said when the positivity rate will come down to five percent it can be said there there is very few undetected cases left and the transmission is under control.

Meanwhile, a total of 34 Covid-19 patients have died in the same 24 hours yesterday, taking the death toll to 3,399. This is around 1.32 percent of all confirmed cases.

In the meantime, around 57.47 percent of all confirmed patients have recovered from their illness.

Of the yesterday's deceased, 31 were males and three were females.

Of them, 32 died in hospitals and two died at their homes, according to the DGHS.

Of the dead, one was aged between 21 and 30, four between 31 and 40, five between 41 and 50, six between 51 and 60 while rest 18 were over 60 years.

Fourteen of the yesterday's deceased were from Dhaka, six from Chattogram, four from Rajshahi, seven from Khulna, two from Barishal and one from Mymensingh divisions.

So far, the highest -- around 48 percent -- number of deceased were from Dhaka division followed by 23.65 percent in Chattogram division.

Law enforcers liable

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But there has been no instance of any official being held responsible for not being able to protect those in custody.

Police and Rab offer mainly two identical narratives after such "shootouts".

One narrative, particularly for those killed in custody, is similar to the narrative police came up with after Belal's death.

In this case, as the police or Rab version goes, they took the detainee for a drive to recover arms or drugs or to arrest other criminals.

Suddenly, the "criminal's cohorts came out of the blue and started firing at the law enforcers, who fired back in self-defence. And the victim, caught in the line of fire, was hit and killed".

After killing of Mesbah Uddin Tarek, a 24-year-old garment worker, on September 14, 2014, a day after he was picked up, detectives of Dhaka Metropolitan Police cooked up a similar story.

While family members do not usually file a case against cops, Mesbah's father filed a case with a Dhaka Court against 10 people, including seven officials of the Detective Branch of police. But after nearly five years of legal battles, he was forced to negotiate with the accused and withdraw the case.

As a result, the police men faced no action for the death of a young man, while the police department also took no steps against the accused for their failure to protect a man in their custody.

In a rare incident, seven police personnel, including immediate past Teknaf Police Station officer-in-charge Pradeep Kumar Das, were taken in custody on Thursday after they were made accused in the murder of Major (retd) Sinha Md Rashed Khan in Cox's Bazar on July 31.

After the death of Sinha, the second and more common narrative was used -- the victim "was killed in a gunfight" when law enforcers went to carry out raids on information. Police claimed that the ex-major had aimed his gun at the law enforcers first before they "retaliated" and killed him.

Usually in this narrative, law enforcers don't pick up the victim beforehand. However, many victims' families alleged that their loved ones were picked up before being killed in the so-called crossfires.

Meanwhile, Inspector General of Police Benazir Ahmed on Wednesday said he would not label the incidents as "crossfires", even though the narratives come from police themselves after each incident.

"NGOs use the word," the IGP said, adding that they bring money from abroad talking about different issues.

There are many things they can say to justify that (the money they bring in) and crossfire is one of them, he said during a joint briefing with army in Cox's Bazar after the Sinha killing.

Even now, top police and Rab officials maintain that gunfights take place only when they are attacked by criminals.

Rab to quiz 3 cops today

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forces talked to each other.

A high official of BGB 2 battalion confirmed the incident to The Daily Star.

According to sources, the two constables were known to be in the inner circle of OC Pradeep who used to travel with them.

Meanwhile, assistant sub-inspectors Mithun Bhowmick and Sanjib Datta -- also known to be close to the disgraced OC -- have been transferred from Teknaf to Cox's Bazar District Special Branch and Pekua Police Station, according to officials.

Police authorities suspended all the seven accused and appointed a new officer-in-charge for Teknaf Police Station.

Jamil ul Haque, Rab Assistant Superintendent of Police and also the IO of the case, yesterday quizzed the four accused at the Cox's Bazar District Jail gate for the second day.

Superintendent of the jail Mohammad Mokammel Haque said the IO started interrogating the accused from 10:00am yesterday which continued till 2:00pm.

Rab Director Ashik Billah also said they appealed to a Cox's Bazar court for the postmortem report of ex-major Sinha. The IO would attach the postmortem report with a case docket after receiving it from the people concerned.

He also said the IO of the case yesterday visited the spot and talked to locals about the incident. The IO will talk to the witnesses, review those and take necessary steps, he added.

Ex-Major Sinha, 36, had been making travel documentaries for a YouTube channel called Just Go. On July 31, he was returning to Cox's Bazar from Teknaf. His car was stopped at Shaplapur on Marine Drive.

The police claimed that they tried to search the vehicle, and Sinha aimed his pistol at them prompting them to shoot back in self-defence. They also claimed that they seized drugs from the vehicle.

However, witnesses gave different accounts of the incident. They said Sinha got down from his car, put his hands over his head, and then the police shot him.

Two cases have been initiated over the incident. But the police account raised many questions, prompting the government to form a committee to investigate the incident.

Five held over rape of teen in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Chattogram*

Chattogram Metropolitan Police (CMP) arrested five people, including four women, in connection with the rape of a teenage girl at Luxury Beauty Parlour in the city's Khulshi area.

The arrestees are Rahima Akter alias Doly, 49, owner of the parlour; Sumi Akter, 25, Shamim Ul Karim, 28, Rahima Akter, 35, and Yasmin Akter Munni, 40, all workers of the same parlour.

Pranab Chowdhury, officer-in-charge of Khulshi Police Station, said all the women arrested in this case were the part of a prostitution racket.

Of them, Sumi had good relationship with the family members of the victim, he added.

On June 24, she took the 14-year-old victim to the parlour. At one stage, Doly forcefully sent the victim to one of her clients who raped her, the police official said.

Later, the victim shared her horrific experience with her family who informed police about the incident, the law enforcer said.

Conducting a raid at the parlour, police arrested the five yesterday the OC added.

Police filed two cases in connection with the rape.

N Korea's Kim sends aid to city locked down over virus

AFP, SEOUL

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has ordered the distribution of aid to the border city of Kaesong after the area was locked down last month to fight the coronavirus, state media said yesterday.

Authorities raised the state of emergency to the maximum level for the city in July, saying they had discovered the country's first suspected virus case.

A train carrying goods arrived in the "totally blocked" city of Kaesong on Friday, the official KCNA news agency reported.

"The Supreme Leader has made sure that emergency measures were taken for supplying food and medicines right after the city was totally blocked and this time he saw to it that lots of rice and subsidy were sent to the city," it said.

Kim had been concerned "day and night" about people in Kaesong as they continue their "campaign for checking the spread of the malignant virus", the report added.

Last month, Pyongyang said a defector who had left for South Korea three years ago returned on July 19 by "illegally crossing" the heavily fortified border dividing the two countries.

The man showed symptoms of coronavirus and was put under "strict quarantine", authorities said, but the North has yet to confirm whether he tested positive.

If confirmed, it would be the first officially recognised case of COVID-19 in North Korea, where medical infrastructure is seen as woefully inadequate to deal with any epidemic.

The nuclear-armed North closed its borders in late January as the virus spread in neighbouring China.

It imposed tough restrictions that put thousands of people into isolation, but analysts say the country is unlikely to have avoided the contagion.

Internet slows

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WE 5).

The Daily Star tried to communicate with him over phone and also over text massages, but the BSCCL MD did not respond. Rahman told Prothom Alo that they were working on assessing the extent of damage.

"We can say when the service will be normal only after the assessment," said BSCCL MD Rahman, who rushed to the spot in the south-central district immediately after the incident, adding that the damage was a cause for serious concern for the country.

He also said that the submarine cable is rooted deep beneath the surface.

"We will file cases against those who have damaged it," he said.

The 20,000-kilometre cable system connects 19 countries from Singapore to France. Bangladesh became connected with the SEA-ME-WE 5 through the second cable landing station in Patuakhali's Kalapara in 2017.

The country receives a bandwidth of 1,500 gigabyte per second from this cable system. Bangladesh was connected with a submarine cable line (S-M-W-4) for the first time in 2005.

International Internet Gateway (IIG) operator Fibre@Home's Principal Technology Officer Sumon Ahmed Sabbir said the country gets around 30 to 40 percent of its bandwidth through the second submarine cable line.

He also said the problem of slow internet speed at the consumer's end would persist until the damage was repaired.