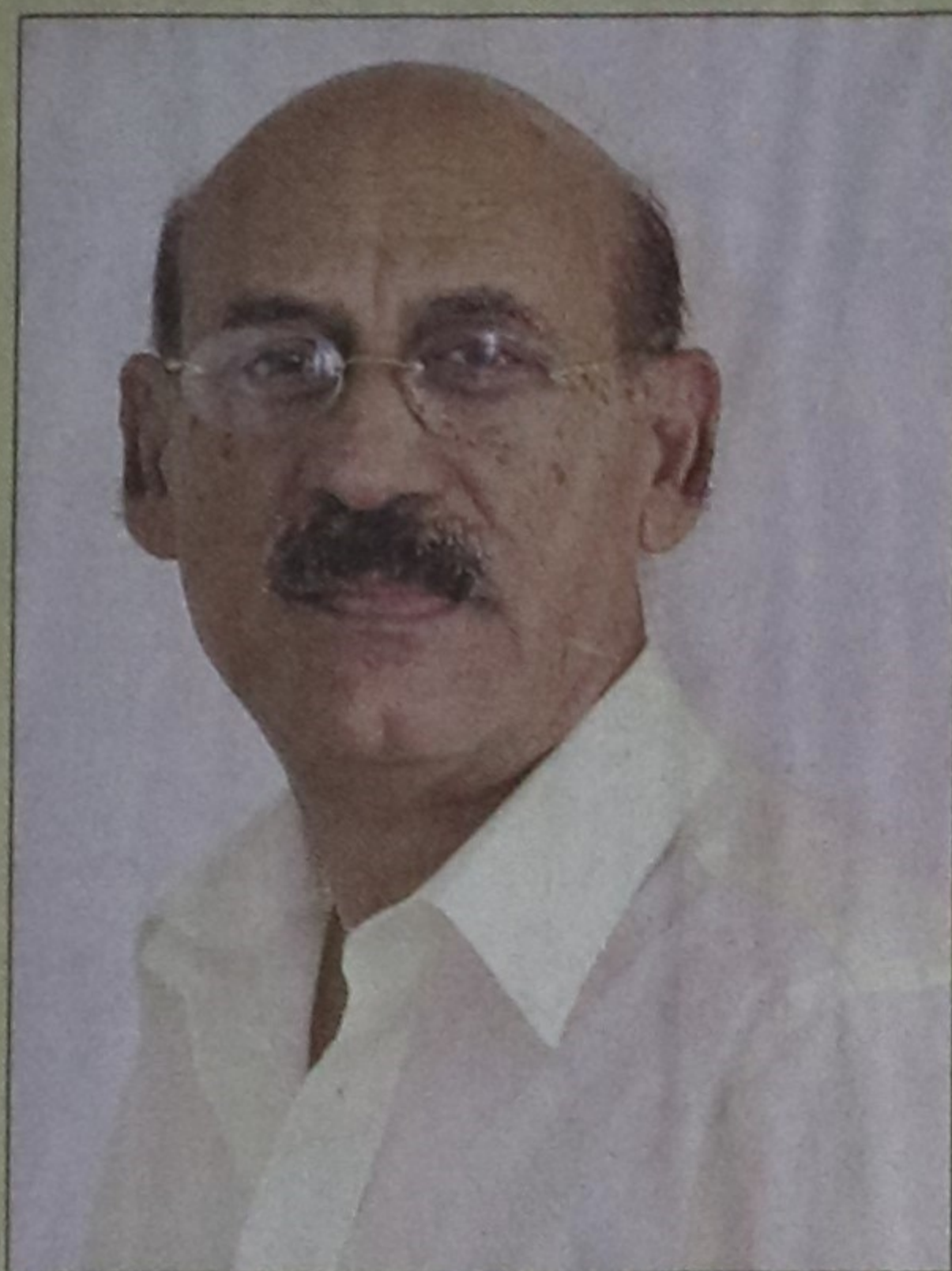


## 2009 Looking ahead, looking back

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT DESK

It's that time again, when we reflect on the year gone by, consider positive changes we need to make, and resolve to follow through. We all have expectations, big and small, from 2009 and some of us have made resolutions on this occasion. Some of the brightest artistes of the Bangladeshi cultural arena have shared their New Year resolutions, expectations from 2009, as well as how 2008 was for them, with The Daily Star. Here's what they had to say:



Versatile actor, director and playwright Abul Hayat, who has been a major TV star for almost two decades now, says, "I am working all the time, which means 365 days a year, and have no time to make even a special resolution for the New Year. But like the past years I would like to keep myself occupied, which I think is what keeps me healthy at this age."



Glamorous TV star Bijori Barkatullah, who is also a virtuoso dancer, is determined to keep her resolutions, and says, "On a personal level, I'd like to stay fit and achieve inner peace through meditation. Professionally, I'd like to work somewhat less in the sense that I want to be pickier and involve myself with more quality projects."



The multitasking lead vocalist of 'Bangla,' one of the most popular bands of the country, and the proprietor of the trendy handicraft shop 'Jatra,' Anusheh Anadil says, "My resolution is to continue working for a better Bangladesh; a Bangladesh free of corruption, poverty and terrorism."



It seems that veteran playback singer Andrew Kishore considers his life to be perfect, and that's why he does not believe in making New Year resolutions. According to the singer, "I have my own ideologies and philosophies, and I act according to that. I don't make New Year resolutions for any specific target or expectation. I deem myself to be an ordinary person and whatever I do, I give it my best shot."



Ruminating over the year gone by, pop star Mehreen says, "Last year was good to me. I can honestly say that I could focus on my music alongside fulfilling my roles as a wife and mother. You could say the whole year was 'musical' for me. The release of my new album 'Tumi Achho Boley' was a major milestone in my career. For many years, I had sought to venture into jazz. I'm fortunate that this album gave me the opportunity to do so; that too in Bangla. This has been a major challenge for me, but the reaction from the listeners has been inspiring. Both Fuad and Habib came up with some remarkable compositions for the album. I'll be busy promoting the album throughout the early part of 2009."



With the song "Nithua patharey nemechhi bondhurey, dhoro bondhu amar keho nai..." from the soundtrack of the yet-to-be released feature film 'Manpura,' prolific actor Fazlur Rahman Babu has demonstrated his singing abilities in 2008. According to the candid artiste, "I'm inherently nostalgic and the past always seem happier to me. However, I'm optimistic about this year. A major reason for my optimism is that after two long years democracy has been re-established."



Youth icon, musician Habib Wahid says, "In 2009 I'd like to work more in movie soundtracks. There is a growing demand for quality movies in our country. The few good productions, which were released last year, have all been successful in drawing the audience to the theatres. I also have plans to bring out a second duet album featuring me and my father, Ferdous Wahid, following the success of our first joint-venture 'Obosheshey'."

Ferdous Wahid, seasoned singer and a style icon of his time, is looking forward to that upcoming album as well. "The response we've received from music lovers after 'Obosheshey' was released has been truly inspiring," he says. The veteran singer has also undertaken a talent hunt for aspiring singers. "There are many talented singers in our country, but there isn't enough exposure. The aim is to find gifted singers and promote them. I'll personally take initiatives to bring out their albums," he adds.



Popular among TV audiences of all ages, actor Tisha says, "Every year presents us with some happy events and some 'not so happy' events. 2008 was no exception. I was busy throughout the year with several single-episode plays, drama serials, talk shows and so on. However the most significant incident of last year for me was landing the central role in the film 'Third Person Singular Number'. If I receive positive response from the audience, I'd like to do more films. My New Year resolution is to take acting more seriously."



"Last year was very generous to me. Several serials and single-episode plays including '420,' 'Ghar Kutum,' 'Kobi Bolechhen' and 'Carom 2' were popular among the TV audience," says Mosharrar Karim, another familiar face on TV. "Usually my plans don't work out, so no specific New Year resolution for me. I want to immerse myself in work, just as I did last year. However, I'm a tad exhausted at present, and trying to make time for a vacation. I'm working in Mostafa Sarwar Farooki's upcoming film 'Third Person Singular Number' and I hope the audiences sit," he adds.



"This year I'd really like to shed some pounds," says whiz musician-composer Fuad Al Mukhtar. Going over last year, Fuad says, "2008 has been a very productive and eventful year for me. Five of my albums -- 'Fuad featuring Topu,' 'Fuad featuring Kona,' 'Kromannoy,' 'G Hit Album' and 'Fuad featuring Sumon and Anila' -- were released last year. All of these were hits." "This year I'd like to study music further. I'll be leaving for US in March. Also, in 2009 I have plans to start working in video and multimedia production alongside music," he adds.



Socially aware singer-lyricist-composer Kazi Krishnokoli Islam sounded somewhat jaded when asked what she expects from the new government: "I don't expect miracles. Our current political structure won't allow revolutionary changes. I just hope this year people will become more aware of their rights," she says. "What I am looking forward to in 2009 is 'Amader Pathshala.' It's a school in Mirpur for underprivileged children. There's no NGO involved; some of my friends set it up on their own initiative. I'll collect funds for the school." In regards to her music, Krishnokoli says, "I'm contemplating putting together an album with Chandana Majumdar. The album will feature some original, new songs as well as re-imagined covers of some oldies."



Heartthrob actor Apurbo says, "I was really up to my neck in work last year; it was overwhelming at times. I worked in a film by acclaimed director Moshedul Islam, which I consider a milestone in my acting career. I'm eagerly waiting for the public response. In 2009, I also hope to bring out my solo music album."



Internationally acclaimed dancer Shibli Mohammad says, "For the last two years, the overall situation was rather uneventful in the country; at least no big political feud, hartals, etc. We, cultural activists, want a favourable atmosphere where we can concentrate on our art. In that sense, 2008 was satisfactory. In our field, that is dance, we had several significant incidents throughout the year. On a personal level, 2008 was good to me. Besides participating at several national and international dance festivals and judging a major dance competition, I will count the workshop at the ITI festival on Dance as one of the most significant event for me last year. The workshop was conducted by Shamim Ara Nipa and me. This year I'm hoping for a more encouraging atmosphere ensured by the newly elected government so that we can continue with our artistic endeavours."