

Remembering Razzak as I saw him

MIR AFTABUDDIN AHMED

AFICIONADOS of classic films might remember the lines *Amar shapon, adho-jagoron, chirodin tomare chini* from the song *Tumi Je Amar Kobita*, a timeless melody from the 1970 Bengali film *Dorpo Churno*. The song, and indeed the film, gave the Bengali film industry four cultural figures that would be adored by millions of fans on both sides of the border. Sabina Yasmin and Mahmudun Nabi sang the song, which added to the magical on-screen chemistry between Kabori Sarwar and Abdur Razzak. Nabi died in 1990 but the other three would outlive him by over two decades and counting, taking the industry to new heights and emerging as national icons. Razzak's death on August 21, 2017 brought down the curtain on an illustrious career spanning nearly five decades. His absence will surely be felt for many years to come.

There is no doubt that the nation adored him. Many of his fans and friends even worshipped him. Film

lovers in India and Pakistan also highly respected his skills and versatility as an actor. Yet Razzak was a humble man and gave our film industry everything he possibly could without asking much in return. I was lucky to have known him personally. His grandson, Tahmid, is a good friend of mine. When we were younger, we used to play cricket in front of Razzak's residence. As he sat on his rocking chair and talked to the people who came to him for advice and assistance, he used to call out in his robust voice: "Oderke Nasta De."

I found him to be an extremely simple man. He sat in the veranda, enjoyed watching his grandson and his friends play cricket, like any other grandfather. His son, *Samrat Chacha*, and his friends would sometimes join us. And those 10 am cricket matches meant that he remained observant, inquiring about who was bowling or batting, and most importantly, whether we were being fed and taken care of. He loved to personally give us sweets whenever he could. It gives me great joy to remember that he took



Razzak and Kabori, one of the most famous screen couples in Bengali cinema.

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quite a liking to my younger brother's cricketing qualifications. Family meant a lot to him, and it is because of his love and affection for his family, friends and peers that he received their unquestioning support to become the man that he was.

Razzak's life story is one for the history books. Born in Kolkata, he and his family moved to the then East Pakistan after a Hindu-Muslim riot broke out in 1964. The *Nayak Raj* was perhaps one of the few artists who worked and achieved success in Bangladesh, Pakistan and India. His on-screen partnerships with some legendary actresses such as Kabori Sarwar and Farida Akhter Bobita were an enduring source of inspiration for the emerging actors and actresses. After several unsuccessful attempts, Razzak's first major breakthrough came with the director Zahir Raihan's *Behula* (1966), which turned him into a household name overnight. Since then, his acting career was constantly on the rise, starring in films such as *Neel Akasher*

Nichey, *Maynamati*, and *Jibon Theke Neya*.

In 2015, Razzak received the prestigious Independence Day Award for his lifelong service to the cultural sector in Bangladesh. On numerous occasions before, he had been selected as Best Male Actor by the National Film Awards judges. Shortly before his death, the West Bengali film fraternity presented him with a lifetime achievement award. With over 300 films to his credit and numerous awards and accolades, could there be anything that troubled the mega star?

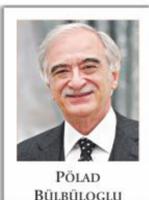
According to a story by *The Daily Star* in 2016, Razzak was concerned about the deteriorating condition of the film industry. After working tirelessly to improve the image of the Bangladeshi cinema, Razzak had to witness the unfortunate downfall of the same industry in his own lifetime. He was absolutely right when he expressed his dissatisfaction with the state of affairs in the film industry. These days, quality films rarely get

made. The young population of Bangladesh are unwilling to support a venture that has lost its grace and dignity with which it produced films in the past. So, if there was a dream that remained unfulfilled in the glorious career of Razzak, it was in the collective failure of the industry in institutionalising the efforts of the artists of yesteryears.

The country has lost its most treasured and cherished actor, who deserves the title of being Bangladesh's greatest artist. My friend has lost his grandfather. But most importantly, Razzak's demise brings to the end an era of graceful and quality film-making, which one can hope will be revitalised in the coming days. And as his timeless song from *Dorpo Churno* suggests, as long as there is a Bangladeshi film industry, we will forever remember you.

Mir Aftabuddin Ahmed is a student of economics and international relations at the University of Toronto, Canada.

UNESCO: Challenges for its new leadership



UNESCO is one of the United Nation's oldest and most important agencies. Today it is mostly known for the listing of World Heritage Sites but its remit goes much further than this. Founded in 1945, its aim is to foster peace and development by not only protecting the world's cultural and natural heritage, but also by improving global access to education and promoting the use of science. That unique mandate has never been more relevant than it is today. However, despite the efforts of its current leadership to save it, in the view of many observers—myself included—UNESCO is in danger of losing its way.

The organisation has much to be proud of. Its work on combating racism and promoting diversity goes hand-in-hand with its position as a champion of the environment, and of course its protection of the most iconic heritage sites in the world. However, global politics has too often hampered its effectiveness. As developing countries have sought to strengthen their voices, many of the global institutions designed in the

immediate aftermath of World War Two, including UNESCO, have sometimes struggled to accommodate their views. Decisions from world heritage listings about funding that should have been taken on their technical merits have become issues of intense controversy.

Instead of following the spirit of consensus-building and international cooperation embodied within its charter, some powerful nations have sought to browbeat others into adopting the line favoured by their governments and their allies, while the Secretariat has been forced to stand by, powerless to act. That approach will only lead to UNESCO's further decline. It is time that the organisation's leadership was empowered so that it can regain the trust of its membership and redouble its efforts to work with member governments to resolve the difficult issues that they face. Indeed, it could deliver so much more if it were allowed to do so.

Bangladesh provides a case in point. Over the last few years the country has seen a dramatic transformation in social conditions for many of its people. It has achieved spectacular successes in delivering on the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), including those around extending

access to education, particularly for girls. This is a key part of UNESCO's core mandate and the organisation should be much more proactive in partnering with the government in Dhaka to understand how it has managed its remarkable



achievements. Indeed, the Bangladeshi government should be made an official UNESCO Champion for Basic Education to help other countries still struggling with these issues to make the same strides that they have done.

In two months UNESCO's current

Director-General, Irina Bokova will step down. She has been a strong and capable leader for the organisation at a difficult time. Whoever is chosen to replace her must build on the legacy she leaves behind. They will need to renew the organisations purpose,

balance its various interests and vigorously pursue not just its heritage but also its development agenda.

Ironically, for an organisation charged with promoting cultural and ethnic diversity across the world, of its 10 Director Generals, a total of seven have come from

either Europe or North America. Only one has been Muslim. Indeed, no-one from an Arab or a Central Asian country has ever been elected to lead it. This is not merely a question of it being the turn of a specific region to assume

leadership, but rather, one of democratic representation and ensuring that its programmes represent global priorities—not just Western ones. Even today, the list of World Heritage Sites is still dominated by Western countries, neglecting Asia, Africa and the

Muslim world. This cannot continue. In order to return to the spirit of its charter, UNESCO's leadership needs to better reflect its 195 nation membership. In order to do so it must resolve what is, perhaps, its most difficult issue—funding.

The current leadership's efforts have been undermined by a serious funding shortfall. Since the United States withdrew funding in 2011, UNESCO has lost nearly a quarter of its overall resourcing. The outstanding shortfall is now over USD 750 million. This is more than the organisation's entire two-year budget of USD 650 million. This is crippling UNESCO's ability to function.

The new Director General must make UNESCO much more financially independent from its biggest members, so that it can act without fear or favour in fulfilling its remit. They will have to adopt new fundraising techniques, through strategic partnerships with both the corporate world and civil society. There must be stronger appeals directed at a global public that cares passionately about both protecting our cultural and natural heritage, and promoting development through education and science.

Pölad Bülbüloğlu, Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Russia, former Minister of Culture of Azerbaijan, candidate for General Director of UNESCO.

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QUOTABLE Quote



MAHATMA GANDHI

Leader of the Indian independence movement against British rule

If one is to find salvation, he must have as much patience as a man who sits by the seaside and with a straw picks up a single drop of water, transfers it and thus empties the ocean.

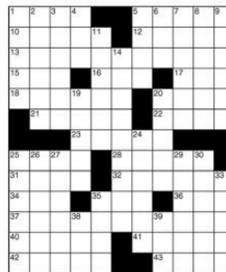
CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Stepped down
- 5 Western evergreen
- 10 Lute's cousin
- 12 Ridiculous
- 13 Spy's quest
- 15 Twisty fish
- 16 Army bases: Abbr.
- 17 Lynx or lion
- 18 Quiz show fodder
- 20 Bakery buy
- 21 Virtuous fellow
- 22 Land in the sea
- 23 Prophets
- 25 Diva's piece
- 28 Saloon orders
- 31 Bakery buys
- 32 Affront
- 34 Fire remnant slang
- 35 Paid player
- 36 Book before Esth.
- 37 White House event
- 40 TV's De-Generes
- 41 "Superman" star
- 42 Canary chow
- 43 Grove growth painter
- 25 Humbles
- 26 Steal cattle
- 27 Breathe in
- 29 Track athlete
- 30 Shirt part
- 33 Low digit
- 35 Signing needs
- 38 TV's Danson
- 39 Tennis divider

DOWN

- 1 Useful skill
- 2 Soda buys
- 3 Roma's nation
- 4 Skin art, for short
- 5 Bakery buys
- 6 Co. abbr.
- 7 Drug agents, in
- 8 Early tie score
- 9 Irritate
- 11 Purify
- 14 road-runner, for New Mexico
- 19 Travel papers
- 20 Gets up
- 24 "The bathers"



YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

BAIL PLEAS
ARNO ROAMER
CRAW INTOTO
HOWCOME EBB
SWEATER BAR
AIR WACO
CRASS PESKY
LABS SHELTER
ELS SHELTER
ALE WARTIME
TINGES ORES
SECEDES DENT
DETER ODDS

BEETLE BAILEY



BABY BLUES



BY MORT WALKER



BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

