



1. Mustafa Kamal Syed (L) working with Afzal Hossain (2-L) and Suborna Mustafa (3-L) at BTV Studios. 2. Renowned actor Shabana Azmi with Mustafa Kamal Syed. 3. Tariq Anam Khan (2-L) on the sets with Mustafa Kamal Syed (3-L) and Abdullah Al Mamun (4-L). 4. Mustafa Kamal Syed (R) shares a light moment with renowned artist Mustafa Monwar and musical legend Pandit Ravi Shankar.

# The glorious journey of Mustafa Kamal Syed

## A tribute to the legend

SHARMIN JOYA

Prominent television personality and former Deputy Director General and Chief of Programmes of NTV, Mustafa Kamal Syed, breathed his last on May 31 at the capital's Square Hospital. He was admitted at the ICU of the hospital after being diagnosed with COVID-19. His wife, renowned singer Zeenat Rehana, was also infected with the virus. However, she later tested negatively, informs their daughter Rehnema Kamal Ahmed, a news presenter at BTV.

Mustafa Kamal Syed graduated from the University of Dhaka. He went on to attend the TV Producers Training and Certificate Course in the Central TV Institute in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, in 1966, Television Training Course in Federal Republic of Germany in 1969, Broadcasting Management Course held in Japan in 1979, and Media Management Training Course held in Australia in 1981. His academic experience and creative knowledge helped shape him into an iconic media personality.

He joined the then Pakistan TV's Dhaka wing, known as Dacca Television, as a producer in 1967, before it was officially named Bangladesh Television in 1971. He was one of the most experienced television officials in the country. The golden era of the television industry was built in the hands of masterminds like Abdullah Al Mamun, Khaleida Fahmi, Atiqul Haque Chowdhury,



Mustafa Kamal Syed, Nawazish Ali Khan, Mustafizur Rahman and Barkatulla. They played a great role in lifting up the content of the small screens from plays and musical programmes to magazine shows. Mustafa Kamal Syed announced the historic 1970 national election result.

Some of the landmark productions in the history of television industry, including the tele-fiction *Kul Nai Kinar Nai* (1985) and a number of musical programmes were



Mustafa Kamal Syed (L) with Momtajuddin Ahmed and Ferdousi Majumdar.

produced by the legend. He is also known for works like *Niloy Na Jani* and *Sneho*. He was also an established voice caster for National Radio and Television and a director of TV and radio plays. Throughout his splendid journey in television, he served in various roles. His brilliance in every position amazed everyone who directly worked with him. He was Programme Executive, Programme Manager, General Manager, Director International Relations and Deputy Director General (Programme) at different times in his career.

Mustafa Kamal Syed was honoured with the National Award for the Best Music Producer for Television in 1975. He retired from Bangladesh Television on 14 January 2004 and joined the private satellite channel NTV (International Television Channel Limited) as Chief of Programmes.

He left behind numerous well-wishers in the industry. Amongst them, renowned personalities and artistes shared their fond memories with him.

**"He was a man of principles" - Asaduzzaman Noor**

I have known him since the early days of BTV. I started my acting career on television post the Liberation War. We have worked in many productions together. He was punctual, health conscious and strict about his ethical beliefs. He was a man of principles.

He preferred working behind the camera. I tried to bring him in my programme at Desh TV on many occasions, but he never agreed. Most of my landmark projects are from BTV, and he inspired me to keep pushing myself out of my comfort zone to play various roles. He had a keen eye for talent, and could discover hidden potential in just about anyone. Losing an iconic personality like him due to the deadly virus is extremely heartbreaking. I convey my deep condolences to his family and friends.

**"I had the privilege of acting with him on radio" - Suborna Mustafa**

It was mid 70s when I started working at BTV. Afzal Hossain and I collaborated on multiple productions with Kamal bhai. He was at the station during my debut in *Boraf*

*Gola Nodi*, by Abdullah Al Mamun. It was an adaptation of the timeless novel by Zahir Raihan. He would always come to see if I am comfortable. He was one of a kind -- a perfect gentleman and always punctual. He played an integral role in airing cricket on television. I still remember how much effort he had put to convince the ministry for the permission to telecast cricket with Bengali commentary.

I had the privilege of acting with him on radio. In fact, when our radio station was moved to Agargaon, the first recorded play, written by Momtajuddin Ahmed, featured Mustafa Kamal Syed and me.

There are a few people that I consider to be true stalwarts of television, including



Young Mustafa Kamal Syed announcing the historic 1970 national election result.

Abdullah Al Mamun, Atiqul Haque Chowdhury and Mustafa Kamal Syed. They played vital roles in building the television industry from the ground up. I am upset that I could not pay my last respects to him because of the virus.

**"Kul Nai Kinar Nai was a landmark for our television industry" - Afzal Hossain**

Mustafa Kamal Syed was one of the greatest personalities ever in the television industry. He was immensely tasteful and creative. He always maintained discipline, and was an honest person, who always had a smile on his face. He could understand the pulse of the audience.

*Kul Nai Kinar Nai* was a landmark for our television industry. Written by Momtajuddin Ahmed, it was one of the finest productions ever made. The national television of Japan, NHK, bought the tele-fiction, and aired the dubbed version several times. It was also televised from CCTV in China. The legendary duo of Mustafa Kamal Syed and Momtajuddin Ahmed have produced some excellent shows together and I feel privileged to have worked in most of them.

**"Kamal was an iconic media personality" - Nawazish Ali Khan**

Mustafa Kamal Syed was one of the pioneers of the television industry. I joined Karachi Television from its first day. He joined

Dacca Television, which is now Bangladesh Television, in 1967. We would exchange ideas, and even had disagreements that we overcame with good reasoning. I never saw him engaging in any unethical matters, like nepotism or personal interests in his professional life. Kamal's creative ability mingled with his administrative skills made him an iconic media personality.

**"He was the most honest person in television" - Shykh Seraj**

From mid 70s until 1996, I have worked in Bangladesh Television. We worked together at that time, and have many memories together. Until his last breath, I was aware of his condition, and I was one of those taking decisions about him in his last moments. He was one of the pillars, and the most honest person in television.

He prioritised quality over quantity. He had an extremely powerful voice, and he had done so many voiceovers and radio plays. His last voiceover was done for Channel i, a translation of the Azan in Bengali. In the 80s, one day Kamal asked me after watching an episode of *Mati O Manush* (aired on BTV at that time) if I could make such kind of episodes with short durations. From that time, the trend of presenting social messages and creating health awareness sketches between programmes began. We shared a strong bond. I will miss him.

**"He was an idol to the young generation" - Redoan Rony**



(From left) Runa Laila, Alamgir and Mustafa Kamal Syed.

I met him after my first production, *Shunchhen Ekti Radio Jockey Golpo*, back in 2007. He called me and said that he was very happy with my work. We used to have hours of conversation in his office. He would point out the flaws in my work in a beautiful and eloquent manner. He used to preview every piece of content that would

run in the channel, so that the quality does not get compromised. He was really good at constructive criticism. He was an idol to the young generation. He loved to guide others and was open to new ideas.

**"I have lost a mentor because of this pandemic" - Masuma Rahman Nabila**

I started my career in 2006, and I met Mustafa Kamal Syed in 2008. NTV held a strong position amongst the television channels because of him. I was a newcomer, and it was a big deal for me to get the opportunity of working at such a prestigious channel. At that time, there were only a few private channels. He would always encourage me and taught me to handle criticism. I will always remember his words. I have lost a mentor because of this pandemic. I pray for his departed soul to rest in peace.

**"Land Phoner Dingulote Prem was made because of him" - Ashfaque Nipun**

I met him in 2007 when one of my fictions was aired on NTV. After that, we met again in 2013, and he still remembered me and asked me why I did not make more projects. I went to his office with the plot of *Land Phoner Dingulote Prem*. He immediately told me to go ahead with it. I later became busy with other works and forgot about it. As Eid Ul Azha arrived that year, Kamal bhai contacted me and asked if I had made this project for any other channel. When he learned that I didn't make it yet, he told me to finalise it so that the channel can include it in their Eid schedule. *Land Phoner Dingulote Prem* was made because of him. I believe that this tele-fiction, featuring Tahsan Khan and Rafiath Rashid Mithila, was the turning point in my career. He always appreciated the young generation of artistes. His demise is an irrecoverable loss for the industry.

**"Mustafa Kamal Syed made me who I am today" - Shafayat Mansoor Rana**

*Shunchhen Ekti Radio Jockey Golpo* was the first script I wrote. It was directed by Redoan Rony. I went to NTV for some work, and there I met Mustafa Kamal Syed. When I was introduced to him, he stared at me for about a minute, and to my surprise he hugged me. He told me that after long time he saw a witty story, which he absolutely loved. He also said that he has been looking for me. At that time, I was planning to start directing, and I shared the thought with him. He told me to come up with a story and start making a production. I told him that I do not have any previous experience of shooting. However, he had such confidence in me that he gave me a slot on the third day of Eid for my first directorial, *Uchhomaddhomik Poribar*. Mustafa Kamal Syed made me who I am today.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF WWW.MYSYED.COM

## "Masud Rana is my dream role"

-ABM Sumon

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

ABM Sumon started his journey as a model with international fashion companies. He entered Bangladesh's film industry with *Ochena Hridoy* (2015) and was well appreciated for his performance in *Dhaka Attack* (2017). The actor will soon appear on screen as Masud Rana, the protagonist from Qazi Anwar Hossain's spy thriller novel series of the same name. *MR-9*, jointly produced by Jaz Multimedia and Silver Nine, is helmed by Bangladeshi-born Hollywood director and actor Asif Akbar. In a candid chat with *The Daily Star*, ABM Sumon talks about landing the role, his expectations from the film and more.

After a rigorous process, Qazi Anwar Hossain selected you for the character of Masud Rana. How do you feel about being chosen by the writer of the book series himself?

I have been a *Masud Rana* fan since my school days. Needless to say, the fact that Qazi Anwar Hossain chose me for the role himself was a pleasant surprise. Masud Rana is my dream role and *MR-9* will be a milestone in my acting career.

Have you met or spoken to Qazi Anwar Hossain after you were finalised for this role?

I have not spoken to him yet. However, I plan to meet him as soon as things around us get better. I want to seek his blessings in person.

When will the shooting begin?

We were set to begin shooting the film

from January this year, but unfortunately, the coronavirus pandemic brought our plans to a halt. We are now looking to start filming in August and our first location will be South Africa.

How are your preparations for the role? Are you nervous?

Of course, I am! Getting to play Masud Rana is a privilege, but at the same time, living up to people's expectations will be a big challenge, because he is such an iconic character. I have not taken up any other projects at the moment, as I just want to focus on this role. I have been re-reading the novels and trying to study Masud Rana's psychology, body language and mannerisms.



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

## "We cannot solely rely on television anymore"

- Mizanur Rahman Aryan



SHARMIN JOYA

Celebrated television director Mizanur Rahman Aryan reflects on the issues of family and contemporary relationships through his work. His shows, *Boro Chhele*, *Life Insurance* and *Sublet*, were widely acclaimed. This Eid season, his tele-fiction *Upohaar*, starring Afran Nisho and Mehazabien in the lead roles, was a massive hit with audiences. *The Daily Star* recently caught up with the director, to discuss his upcoming ventures, his take on the state of the television community and more.

Aryan has already come up with a script related to the coronavirus pandemic. He also looks to work on family-oriented and thriller stories. "As the risks of the coronavirus are still lingering in the country, my decision to start shoots will depend on how things unfold in the coming days," he adds.

Several of Aryan's tele-fictions, which were previously shot, aired during Eid-ul-Fitr this

year. The director and his crew did the post-production work for those projects online.

Aryan further addressed how the television community is going through a crisis these days, in terms of storytelling, as conflicts often come up between writers, directors and producers. "Everyone is right from their own perspectives," he says. "A producer thinks about revenue and a director wants to be creative. A scriptwriter prioritises the story above all else. In meeting their different interests, the production gets affected, on the whole. We can hardly take any risks and we also need to take factors like money and time into account at all times." Aryan also added that scriptwriters need to understand the limitations of the directors. They need to take the budget into account and visit the premises physically, when a tele-fiction is being shot.

"In the era of digitalisation, we cannot solely rely on television anymore. We also have to count our surpluses on YouTube

channels, which look at the number of views on a tele-fiction," he shares. As a result, producers are interested in projects that have statistically similar content and can bring in more commercial success.

Aryan also addressed the economic downturn that the television community is faced with in these critical times. "I feel that the current circumstances demand for directors to help out struggling crew members, especially the teams that they have most recently worked with," he says. "It is not the ultimate solution, but it is a starting point."

Aryan is hopeful that the rise in the consumption of alternate media will in turn, create an increase in the demand for variety in content.

"I think audiences will look for comic relief once these difficult times come to an end. They may also lean towards family-oriented stories, as I believe that the isolation period has brought families closer together," he concludes.