

'Aly Zaker's absence is still hard to fathom'

Colleagues and friends remember the legendary actor on his birth anniversary

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Renowned television actor and thespian Aly Zaker is a household name, resounding through the hearts of the audience for decades, with his brilliant stage and screen presence. Be it acting or directing, the Ekushey Padak awardee's contribution to defining the culture and art scene of the country remains unparalleled.

Today marks the 77th birth anniversary of the legendary artiste, his first after he passed away on November 27, 2020. He had succumbed to his long and hard battle against cancer, and had also tested positive for Covid-19.

The star has garnered his career with many prestigious awards, including the Bangabandhu Award, Noren Biswas Padak, Munir Chowdhury Medal, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy Award, Medal, Meril Prothom-Alo Lifetime Achievement Award, and The Daily Star-Standard Chartered Lifetime Achievement award, among many others. Aly Zaker first appeared on stage with Aranyak



PHOTO: STAR

Natya Dal in Mamunur Rashid's play, "Kabor".

"During the Liberation War, while we were in Kolkata, I once asked Aly Zaker what he would do after the war ends. He said he wants to join theatre," shares Mamunur Rashid. After the war, Rashid approached Zaker for the play.

"We cannot even fathom that Aly Zaker is no longer with us," he shared. "His absence is still hard to fathom. It is his birthday, and it pains my heart when I speak about him now. Be it as a person, or as an actor, he was amazing!"

Being one of the founding members of Nagorik Natya Sampradaya, one of the pioneers in this field, Aly Zaker's directorial ventures "Dewan Gazir Kissa", "Nurul Din-er Shara Jibon", and "Galileo" are still praised during dinner table discussions and theatre circles. His other works as a director includes "Macbeth", "Toilo Sankat", "Ei Nishiddho Polli Te", "Baki Itihas", and "Ochloyoton", among many others. A few of his exemplary films include "Lalsalu", "Nodir Naam Modhumoti" and "Rabeya", amongst many others.

Born in 1944, the Freedom Fighter is remembered for his impeccable performance in the Humayun Ahmed directorial tele-fictions "Bohubrihi" and "Aaj Robibar".

"His absence is an irreversible loss to us," says eminent actor Abul Hayat. "We were like a family."

"He gave his all to the theatre, and never expected anything in return. His contribution to television dramas is also undeniable," he adds.

His "Aaj Robibar" co-actor Faruque Ahmed also shares his experience of working with him. "I used to address Aly Zaker as 'Mama', and the audience would go crazy every time Mama slapped Moti, the character I played," shares the actor. "The audience still enjoys our performances together."

"He was a kind soul, and a library of knowledge to learn from. It still feels like yesterday that we had a chat," adds Faruque Ahmed. Aly Zaker tied the knot to renowned cultural persona, Sara Zaker. Their son, Iresh Zaker is a noted television face today.

In honour of the legendary artiste, Nagorik Natya Sampradaya will host a celebration programme today at the Jatiya Natyashala of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, which starts at 7 pm. Eminent guests, colleagues and family members of Aly Zaker will attend the programme.

Translated by Akhlakur Rahman

I expected Bangladesh to qualify for the semifinals:

Srabonno Towhida

Srabonno Towhida is an anchor, model and actress. She is now a household name, due to being featured in many popular anchoring stints over the years. The multifaceted artiste is also a doctor by profession. In a candid chat with The Daily Star, she spoke about balancing her two professions, personal goals, and more.

SHARMIN JOYA

Srabonno's first media appearance was modeling for a cover of a fashion outlet. She made her anchoring debut in 2013, with a show on Channel 24.

"Since I am also a doctor, I have to stay long hours at the hospital," says the actress. "My family is strict about the fact that whatever I do, my medical profession should not suffer. Thus, I had to reject some big-budget films as well." Srabonno informs that she will not miss the opportunity for a film, if she gets an offer for a character that is strong and empowering.

She has been hosting her signature show, Cricket Extra, since 2015. The ongoing T20 World Cup, alongside her regular television programmes in five other channels, has made her life hectic. However, her passion for cricket has not dwindled even after that. "I expected Bangladesh to qualify for the semifinals, but unfortunately, we couldn't make it!"

Srabonno made her acting debut in 2016 with the tele-fiction "Dourer Upor Prem", starring opposite Apurba. The project was directed by Tanvir Hossain. She earned appreciation after her appearance in the Mahmud Didar directorial, "Dakbaksho".

"At times, I feel extremely exhausted due to workload; I wish we had 48 hours a day," laughs the actress. "However, I meditate and maintain a balanced diet which is the secret to my calm and cool nature."

Being a mother of a three and a half year old child, she also manages to go to gym with her toddler. "I am a fitness freak, and I also need to spend time with my child, thus I take him to the gym with me." The actress will be seen in occasional projects for television, including a special Valentine's Day project. "I am also interested in working on web content, if it doesn't hamper my hospital duties," she concludes.



PHOTO: ABU NASER PHOTOGRAPHY, COURTESY OF TOWHIDA SRABONNO

Showcasing Bangladesh through the lens

Asaf Ud Daula's exhibition kicks off in Italy

MD MIZANUR RAHMAN HIMADRI

Bangladeshi photographer Asaf Ud Daula's solo exhibition "Emotion to Generate Change" commenced in the beautiful city of St Peter's Square (Vatican City) on October 31.

The exhibition showcased 40 photographs by Asaf which will be on exhibition till November 9.

Pope Francis inaugurated the photography exhibition while the photographs were curated by Italian filmmaker and writer Lia Beltrami. Asaf Ud Daula will be connected online throughout the exhibition.

Photographer Asaf Ud Daula said "For the first time in history, such a big photography exhibition has been organized here where the works of



a Bangladeshi photographer like me are being showcased," mentions the photographer.

"I have tried to depict the picturesque beauty of Bangladesh and the smiling countenance of her people. I feel thrilled thinking that people from all over the world are getting familiar with Bangladesh through the photos. I feel proud as a Bangladeshi to be able to raise the red and green flag of Bangladesh all over the world," adds Asaf Ud Daula.

This is the second solo exhibition by the young photographer on the Italian soil. In 2018, Asaf's first solo photo exhibition was held in "Religion Today Film Festival" in Trento, Italy where 33 photographs were showcased.



PHOTOS: COURTESY OF ASAF UD DAULA

Moving Bangladesh, Making Waves

Nuhash Humayun's vision before cameras start rolling

ASHLEY SHOPIRSHI SAMADDAR

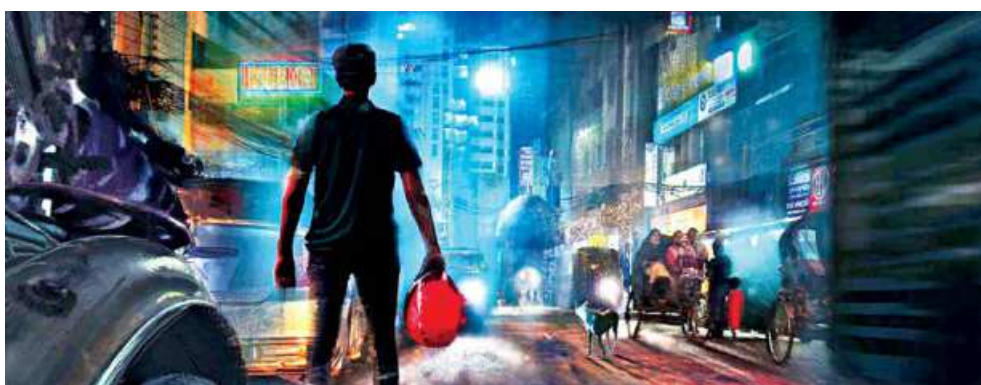
Exemplifying the day-to-day struggle of Dhaka city dwellers, Nuhash Humayun's is set to start shooting for his feature film "Moving Bangladesh".

Being the first film to bag the BDT 76 lakhs from the Taipei Film Fund, the productions embodies the boredom of being stuck in traffic for hours and how a simple idea of ride sharing transformed the scenario for students, job-holders and entrepreneurs.

In a candid chat with The Daily Star, Nuhash shares how he came up with this concept, and developed it over time, his expectations from this venture, and more.

"Moving Bangladesh" is based on ride sharing app Pathao's becoming. However, Pathao will not have any creative or financial stake on the project. "This is a creative work of fiction based on facts," he shares.

The international project is a supported by Arifur Rahman and Bijon Imtiaz from



Concept Art by Shafayet Nabi Tamal.

Bangladesh's Goopy Bagha Productions, Bich-Quan Tran from France's Dissidenz Films and Patrick Mao Huang from Taiwan's Flash Forward Entertainment.

Following the fame brought to Nuhash by "Sincerely Yours, Dhaka", the director took a time of two years during this pandemic to

develop the script of "Moving Bangladesh".

"When I visited the Busan International Film Festival, I realised most of the questions that came my way were about Bangladesh, not even my film. I thought it could be interesting to depict the cultural shift that's happening right now in terms of the South



PHOTO: TAHSIN RAHMAN. COURTESY OF NUHASH HUMAYUN

Asian start-up scene. Solving local problems are becoming a global phenomenon."

Nuhash's "Moving Bangladesh" has already managed to keep uplift hopes as it made way some of the most prestigious platforms including Film Independent's Producer Lab 2022, Cannes Marche du Film

2021, Locarno Film Festival's Open Doors Consultancy 2020 and NFDC Film Bazaar Coproduction Market 2020.

"I was sitting in my bedroom, hyperactively describing the sights, sounds and world of 'Moving Bangladesh' to the Taipei Film Fund committee over Zoom, while my words were simultaneously being translated to Taiwanese. It was surreal," laughs Nuhash.

"It's not the amount, it's the respect that comes with Taipei Film Commission backing 'Moving Bangladesh' that fills me with joy" he mentions.

The director is looking for fresh faces for this production. "Echoing the theme of innovation, I was looking for a bit of origination in casing too. Thus, like all my productions, this film will treasure a combination the expertise of veteran artistes while a tint of freshness from young performers," concludes a hopeful Nuhash.