

# KABIR SUMAN makes borders irrelevant

## Bangla's icon serenades Dhaka

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MAMUNUR RASHID

He is now 73 years old, he cannot even hold his guitar, like he used to. However, his mellifluous voice remains timeless – and he proved, like he always does, that every word, enunciation and tune – makes him forever an icon of Bangla music, Kabir Suman.

The artiste, 30 years ago, started a revolution in Bangla's contemporary music with the song "Tomake Chai". After 13 years of absence, he graced Dhaka once again with a concert, and the people in the premises of Institute of Engineers Bangladesh (IEB) would remember this as something that was indeed special.

The performance was supposed to take place at Bangladesh National Museum. However, two days before the event, Dhaka Metropolitan Police informed The Daily Star that the organisers did not have permission to arrange a show there, as the National Museum is a Key Point Installation (KPI).

Despite this oversight by the organisers, Suman did indeed grace Bangladesh, but at a different venue.

Kabir Suman performing his classics at IEB.



Once he got up on stage, it was evident that his love for Bangladesh had not diminished at all.

On January 1999, militant organisation Bajrang Dal murdered Christian Missionary Graham Staines and his two sons, by burning them alive. In protest of this grotesque act, then Suman Chattopadhyay changed his name to Kabir Suman, and embraced Islam. A few days after that, for a programme, poet Joy Goswami wrote a poem for him, which roughly translates to: *There is no division in music, when this musical bird sings, we will listen in groups, to Kabir Suman. We are sons and daughters of fire, these skies are ours, call your wives, we will listen to*

Kabir Suman.

Engineer's Institute was filled to the brim, waiting for the legend to get up on stage well before the allotted time of 4:30 – it was proof of the point Joy Goswami made – music, especially Kabir Suman's immortal words, will never fade away.

Many have said that after Rabindranath and Nazrul, Kabir Suman is the greatest thing to happen to Bangla music, a man that belongs to Bangladesh as he belongs to India. When the great musician finally got up on stage at 5:15 in a traditional *dhuti* and *kurti*, he instantly received a standing ovation from the audience.

Ever-charming and transcendental,

Suman captured the audience with his quips, one song after another. Throughout the show, he played the keyboard, with the efficiency of a master. He talked about Bangladesh, Sufia Kamal, Shahid Qadri – evidently emotional.

During the programme, I was transported to the 20-year anniversary of "Tomake Chai", where poet Nabarun Bhattacharya proclaimed that Kabir Suman was a "People's Artist". He further said that through Suman's music, the guilt of West Bengal's absence in cultural awakening.

"Only fools write music, die with music, if I die now, I will be reborn in your home" – Kabir Suman quoted Sufia

Kamal in one of his many instances reminiscing.

Almost instantly after that, he delivered a stunning, emotional blow, "Was I even born with the good grace of being able to die in Bangladesh?"

This programme was testament to the fact that even during the darkest days of humanity, the people want to see the light. It is inevitable that the light reaches you, and the poet elocutes some words that were unsaid for centuries. The revolutionaries do it with art – with songs that they were never allowed to sing.

The likes of Pete Seeger and Paul Robeson did it, and so did South Asia's legend, Kabir Suman.



## NEWS

### US Congressmen move

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living in the region, regardless of national, racial, ethnic or religious background, to enjoy the benefits of democratic institutions, rule of law, freedom of religion and economic opportunity.

Ahmed Ziauddin said the resolution rightly pointed out the historical facts.

Aroma Dutta, MP, whose grandfather Dhirendra Nath Datta and uncle Dilip Datta were killed by the Pakistan Armed Forces in 1971, said, she wants the killers to be punished for murdering innocent people, including the elderly, young

women, and children.

"My family and I have still not recovered from the trauma and suffering. I, along with other family members of the martyrs, demand recognition of this genocide in which millions were raped and killed," she said in the statement.

HRCBM Executive Director Priya Saha said as a survivor, she hopes that the resolution will initiate a detailed action plan to ensure that the Biden administration holds the Pakistan Army and their Bangladeshi collaborators – the Razakars, Al-Shams, Al-Badr, and Jamaat-e-Islami – accountable.

### Charges pressed

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The investigator during the investigation did not find any illegal e-transaction, the probe report added.

The Daily Star has obtained a copy of the charge sheet.

Speaking to this newspaper, complainant Alamgir yesterday said, "I have no interest in running the case as I have already been almost fully compensated by Evaly."

Rab arrested Rassel and Shamima from their flat in the capital's Mohammadpur on

September 16 last year after a customer filed a case with Gulshan Police Station over embezzlement.

Later, the couple was shown arrested in several cases filed against them with different police stations over embezzling customer's money.

Police last month pressed charges against the couple in two embezzlement cases filed with Dhanmondi Police Station by two customers.

Rassel is now behind bars, while Shamima is out on bail.

### Recruit more manpower

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Welcoming the Brunei Sultan, President Hamid said Sultan's first visit to Bangladesh would usher in a new chapter of bilateral ties between the two brotherly countries, reports BSS.

Brunei Sultan arrived on a two-day state visit to Bangladesh yesterday.

The red carpet was rolled out to welcome the Sultan and over 40 members of his entourage, including his family members, ministers, and officials, reports our diplomatic correspondent.

They landed at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport around 2:30pm.

He was given 21-gun salutes as he disembarked from the aircraft. Bangladesh President Abdul Hamid welcomed him with a bouquet.

A combined contingent of Bangladesh army, navy and air

force presented him with a guard of honour while Sultan and President Hamid stood on a dais.

National anthems of the countries were also played at that time.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan, Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi, and State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam were present.

Besides, chiefs of the three services, principal secretary to the prime minister, foreign secretary, inspector general of police, secretaries concerned to the Bangabhaban, and senior civil and military officers were also present.

Sultan is making his first-ever visit to Bangladesh at the invitation of President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, reciprocating PM Hasina's visit to Brunei in April 2019.

The Sultan was escorted to the National Martyrs' Memorial in Savar in a motorcade from the airport. He placed a wreath at the memorial in memory of Bangladesh's 1971 Liberation War martyrs, planted a sapling and signed the visitors' book.

The Sultan, who is scheduled to stay at Hotel InterContinental in Dhaka, will place a wreath at the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum on Dhamondi 32 and visit the museum at 2:45pm today.

He will then go to the Prime Minister's Office, hold a tete-a-tete with Hasina and then lead a delegation-level talk with her before signing several MoUs. He is scheduled to fly back to Brunei at 6:00pm today.

The two countries are scheduled to sign at least four MoUs on importing fuel from Brunei, introducing direct flights between the two countries, labour recruitment and mutual

recognition of mariners' certificates.

Around 20,000 Bangladeshis currently work in Brunei. Officials said Brunei was eager to recruit workers through Bangladesh Overseas Employment Services Limited (BOESL) to streamline the recruitment process. Direct flights will drastically reduce the cost of labour migration.

Brunei is also eager to source halal food from Bangladesh, especially the Black Bengal goat, which is preferred by the Sultan. Brunei also wants Bangladesh to provide expertise to it in fisheries and agriculture industries.

Bangladesh considers Brunei an important country that, as an ASEAN member, can use its leverage in addressing the Rohingya crisis, facilitate Bangladesh's pursuit of becoming an ASEAN Dialogue Partner and become a potential market for Bangladeshi products, as well as human resources.

### Fury in Iran

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Drivers in vehicles next to where it was happening started sounding their horns, a form of protest in similar situations seen in the past few days across the country.

The woman, who appears to have no hijab, or headscarf, is then seen standing up and running away from the scene.

At this point, the same voice on the clip was heard saying: "Look at him [the security force officer], he is laughing".

The footage has been verified by the BBC's Persian service.

Tehran's Police Public Relations office has said the incident is being investigated, state news agency IRNA reported.

The police statement did not give details of what happened,

but said that "enemies using psychological warfare tried to cause public anxiety and incite violence".

The fact that the incident happened in public has led human rights activists to question what security forces might also be doing behind closed doors.

Mistreatment, including sexual and psychological abuse, has been reported by many inmates, especially political prisoners, for years.

Many Iranians commented on social media that the video from Tehran had made them more determined to go out on the streets to protest, with one person saying they intended "to put their anger and fury into action".

### Probe on to find

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"We found that it was a result of lack of coordination between the NLDC [National Load Dispatch Centre], PDB [Bangladesh Power Development Board] and Desco [Dhaka Electric Supply Company Limited].

"We will sack those who were responsible for the incident and will take departmental actions," he added.

It will take another two weeks to recover from the shock of the grid failure, the state minister said, adding that the load-shedding has increased in Dhaka and its adjoining areas following the grid failure.

"Synchronisation of power between western and eastern zones needs some more time."

### Dogs can smell

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and sweat alone, which could be useful when training service dogs and therapy dogs.

In the study, the dogs were taught how to search a scent line-up and alert researchers to the correct sample.

Stress and relaxed samples were then introduced, but the researchers did not know if there was an odour difference the pooches could detect.

In every test session, each dog was given one person's relaxed and stressed samples, taken only four minutes apart.

to middle-income status, he said, adding that the IMF asked Bangladesh to reform the banking and revenue sectors.

The IMF has once again expressed its disagreement with the Bangladesh Bank's method of calculating foreign exchange reserves, which include the riskier local investment exposure, the official said.

Regarding the reform, Governor Abdur Rouf said any reform would be made considering the country's overall socio-economic condition.

The Bangladesh delegation had meetings with IMF Deputy Managing Director Antoinette M Sayeh and Rahul Anand, chief of IMF Asia and Pacific Division. The talks took place on the sidelines of the World Bank and IMF's annual meetings, being held from October 10 to 16.

Of the \$4.5 billion loan, Bangladesh sought \$1.5 billion each for balance of payment and budget support and another \$1.5 billion from the IMF's newly created Resilience and Sustainability Trust fund. The trust helps countries build resilience to external shocks and ensure sustainable growth.

The Bangladesh delegation also met Martin Raiser, World Bank vice president for South Asia, to discuss a \$500 million loan for budget support

and climate resilient fund.

The WB has agreed to give the fund in the next quarter on condition that its suggestions on reforms would be implemented, said the official.

The government requested the global lenders to grant it the funds to ease financing constraints and advance the efforts to manage fiscal, monetary and financial stability risks amid the Russia-Ukraine war and climate challenges.

The IMF, however, has asked the Bangladesh government to ramp up revenue collection as the tax-GDP ratio remained very low.

Tax collection as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product in Bangladesh has been stuck at around 7.6 per cent, the lowest in South Asia and also one of the lowest in the world.

To increase revenue, the IMF suggested meeting multipronged targets like simplifying the VAT rate structure, modernising the revenue administration and building compliance risk management capacity through focusing particularly on large taxpayers.

The IMF also said that high nonperforming loans in the banking sector, especially in the state-owned banks, remains a major challenge for Bangladesh and it suggested several measures to discipline the sector.

Nonperforming loans in the

country's banking sector increased 16.38 per cent year-on-year to Tk 103,274 crore in 2021, according to Bangladesh Bank data.

As major reform priorities, the IMF suggested Bangladesh strengthen corporate governance, ensure strict supervision and enforcement of the current framework, and reform the legal system to support a stronger enforcement of creditor rights and debtor incentive for repayment.

Once the loan agreement between Bangladesh and the multilateral lender is reached, which usually takes a few months, a loan programme will be sent to the IMF executive board. The loan is disbursed after the approval of the programme by the board.

Bangladesh's economy was still recovering from the losses of the pandemic in February when the Russia-Ukraine war began. The war disrupted global supply chains and eventually caused inflation in many countries, including Bangladesh.

Uncertainties over the forex reserve has also become a major concern for Bangladesh. On August 4, the country's foreign exchange reserve was around \$36 billion, down from around \$46 billion at the same time last year.

Bangladesh is expected to receive more than \$3 billion from the World Bank, IMF and other lenders this fiscal year.