

THE MAN who has done it all

Romel Ali. While many people will remember him as the man who was once the keyboardist of Warfaze, the artiste's accolades and contributions to the music industry are much more far reaching.

AAQIB HASIB

When I stepped into his house on a Monday around 4 pm, I was somewhat surprised to see the larger than life man that is Romel *bhai*.

Looking around his house, I see a wall of certificates from various music instrument and audio equipment companies. There are also awards from organisations like Guitar Center, Wichita State University and Asian Cultural Association, just to name a few.

Having set up our camera, we start off the interview.

In your career, you have been a producer, a guest speaker at universities, teacher, etc. What motivated you to try out all of these different avenues?

I was always adventurous and could rarely stay in just one place. When I decided that I would do music, I wanted to dip my toes into every aspect of it. Whether it be the business side or the performance one.

Being able to explore the world of music really helped me become a better musician.

Could you tell us about the experience of performing with Air Supply, Aretha Franklin, and Bappi Lahiri?

When I was living in America, I started playing with various musicians. There are many booking agencies in every US

state, who keep a list of some of the top musicians living there.

So, whenever any big names would come through town, they would usually look for someone to play with them at the concert. Since my name was on the list, I got the call to perform with many of these larger than life musicians.

From the Bangladeshi music scene, which artist are you really intrigued by?

One person I really admire is Rafa. Sumon introduced me to Rafa a long time ago, and told me that he was very talented. So, I kept an eye on him. Seeing his growth as a musician, I am really proud of him.

What I really appreciate about Rafa is that he constantly wants to grow and explore new facets of music.

What are your thoughts on the current state of the music industry in Bangladesh?

I think we should get back to making more albums, rather than focusing solely on singles. In my opinion, when you can focus on just the music, it helps you better connect with an artiste.

What projects are you working on right now, are there any projects in the pipeline we can expect to see soon?

Well, there is work going on with RBR's second album. I am also working on an instrumental album in collaboration with international

artists and I am excited about these projects. Lastly, while I am not sure if I can share this or not, I am working on a song with James *bhai*. Hopefully, this will be coming out soon.

After the interview was finished, Romel *bhai* sat down at his keyboard and played us a small tidbit—that all of you will be able to see in a future video interview. While his hands glided across the octaves of his keys, I could not help but marvel at the magic in the hands of this man.



'RRR', 'Top Gun: Maverick', 'Avatar 2' land Golden Globe nominations

Avatar: The Way of Water and **Top Gun: Maverick** were named among the contenders for next month's Golden Globe awards.

The Banshees of Inisherin, the dark comedy film, led all movies with eight nominations on Monday.

S S Rajamouli's epic period drama, **RRR** has also earned a Golden Globes nomination for Best Picture, Non-English Language category.

RRR is being billed as a potential award-winner, either for Rajamouli himself in the 'Best Director' category, or for the film in the 'Best Foreign Film' category.

BTS Jin begins military service, marking end of an era

BTS's Jin has begun his mandatory South Korean military duty from Tuesday, becoming the band's first member to enlist since their announcement of a hiatus—which had left fans heartbroken over the group's uncertain future.

All able-bodied men in South Korea have to serve a mandatory military service of at least 18 months. While, for years, there was a debate about whether BTS deserved an exemption, they confirmed in October that all members will enlist.

Jin—whose full name is Kim Seok-jin—will begin five weeks of training on Tuesday, the military said.

Yonhap news agency has reported the star is expected to be deployed to a "frontline" unit near the border with North Korea.



PHOTOS: SHEKH MEHEDI WORSHEP

NEWS

Murderous scheme

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of the diabolical plan orchestrated and executed by Pakistan army and their collaborators Al-Badr to wipe out the Bangalee intelligentsia as they sensed imminent defeat in the war. Starting on November 15, 1971, they continued the killing mission up until the morning of December 16 morning.

The marauding Pakistan army had planned to deprive the soon-to-be born country of the thinkers and scholars to sabotage the new nation's moving forward. They systematically rounded up teachers, writers, doctors, lawyers, journalists and other professionals from their houses in Dhaka, tortured and killed them en masse and dumped the bodies at different killing grounds.

However, the plan for the deliberate execution of Bangalee intellectuals began in August 1971 when two special envoys of Henry Kissinger, the then national security advisor of the US President, paid a visit to Dhaka in the guise of journalists. One of them, named Duwespice, was a CIA official and another, Haight, was an official of US military intelligence.

In Dhaka, they met Major General Rao Farman Ali several times at the Governor's House and returned to America via Bangkok. A plan was put forward to eliminate only the brightest minds of the nation—its intellectuals.

After their departure, Rao Farman Ali held several meetings at the Governor's House while Pakistani Brigadier Bashir Ahmed led meetings in Dhaka Cantonment to make a foolproof plan to eliminate all Bangalee intellectuals.

After the country's independence, a diary was recovered from Ashrafuzzaman Khan's apartment at 350, Nakhlaipara area of the capital. Ashrafuzzaman Khan was the chief executor of Al-Badr, mostly comprising the members of Jamaat-e-Islami's student wing Islami Chhatra Sangha.

The diary contained names of 20 intellectuals, all of whom disappeared during the war. Ashrafuzzaman himself shot dead eight of them, according to Mafizuddin, who gave his testimony before the International Crimes Tribunal.

Dhaka University (DU) teachers Munier Choudhury, Dr Abul Khaer,

Ghiyasuddin Ahmed and SMA Rashidul Hasan, and Dr Golam Mortuza, resident physician of DU, were among the eight martyred intellectuals.

After the war, a diary written by Rao Farman Ali was recovered from a desk at the Governor's House (now Bangabhaban). The diary contained an elaborate list of 3,000 intellectuals. Many of those names had cross marks beside them while some names had home addresses written along with some comments.

It was also written in that diary that Captain Tahir of the Pakistan Army would arrange vehicles for the Al-Badr members to pick up the intellectuals from their homes. Top leaders of Al-Badr helped Rao Farman Ali make the list of the intellectuals.

After Dr Azharul and Humayun, the next victim of the killing operation was journalist Serajuddin Hossain, news editor of the Daily Ittefaq.

On December 10, the Pakistan army picked him up from his residence at Dhaka's Chamelibagh area at around 3:00am. The next day, Syed Nazmul Haque, chief reporter of Pakistan Press International, was picked up at 4:00am from his residence in the Purana Paltan area. Two hours later the same day, they picked ANM Golam Mostafa, chief reporter of the Daily Purbodesh, from his home at Dhaka's Gopibag.

Journalist Nizamuddin Ahmad, general manager of Pakistan Press International, was picked up from his residence at Koltabazar on December 12.

The next day, Dr Ghiyasuddin Ahmed, a teacher of DU and house tutor of Haji Muhammad Mohsin Hall, went missing the same way. In the afternoon, Selina Parvin, editor of the Daily Shilalipi, was kidnapped from her residence at Siddheshwari.

On December 14, the intellectuals were picked up one after another. The first victim was Mufazzal Haider Chaudhury, professor of the Bengali Department at DU. He was kidnapped from his home at around noon.

When he was being kidnapped by the masked men, one of the kidnapper's masks dropped from his face and it was Chowdhury Mueen Uddin, the operation-in-charge of the killing mission.

Eminent playwright Munier

Choudhury, Shahidullah Kaiser and many other intellectuals disappeared on that day. However, the exact number of intellectuals kidnapped on December 14 could never be confirmed.

On December 15, Dr Mohammad Fazle Rabbee, an eminent physician of Dhaka Medical College, and Dr Abdul Alim Chowdhury, a noted ophthalmologist, were picked up from their homes.

Members of Al-Badr force also picked up Prof Dr Abul Kalam Azad of Institute for Advanced Science and Technology, from his Azampur residence in the morning of December 16.

After liberation, mutilated dead bodies of only a few of these intellectuals were recovered from the capital's Rayerbazar killing field. Some of the bodies were so severely mutilated and decomposed by that time that their identities had to be confirmed by their clothes and shoes.

Almost all the killing operations that were conducted from December 10 to 15, were commanded by chief executioner of Al-Badr Ashrafuzzaman Khan and operation-in-charge, Chowdhury Mueen Uddin. Both of them were sentenced to death by the International Crimes Tribunal in 2013 for carrying out "unheard of extermination committed in execution of designed murderous scheme".

And the entire operation were supervised by former Jamaat chief Motiur Rahman Nizami, who was the ex-officio chief of Al-Badr; Jamaat leader Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed; Ehsanul Karim, a physician at the clinical pathology department of Dhaka Medical College Hospital; Emran, head of the Dhaka Medical College branch of Islami Chhatra Shingha, the then Jamaat's student wing; ABM Khaleque Mazumder, office secretary of Dhaka City Jamaat; Mawlana Abdul Mannan, president of East Pakistan Madrasa Teachers Association; and Abdul Quader Molla, who organised the formation of Al-Badr.

Although the Pak army and their collaborators intensified its atrocities in December, intellectuals were killed all over the country throughout the liberation war, right after the war broke out.

Many distinguished teachers of DU were killed on the night of March 25 and in the next morning. They included Prof Anudvaipayan Bhattacharya of physics, Prof AR Khan Khadim Prof Sharafat Ali of mathematics, Prof Abdul Muktaadir of geology, Prof Dr Fazlur Rahman Khan of soil science, Dr Govinda Chandra Dev of philosophy and ANM Muniruzzaman, head of the statistics department.

On March 29, leader of the Language Movement and eminent politician Dharendraanath Dutta was picked up along with his son by the Pakistan army and was detained in Mainamati Cantonment. They were brutally tortured and later executed. Advocate Abdul Karim, a collaborator leader in Comilla directed the Pakistan Army to kidnap and kill Dharendraanath Dutta.

DU Prof Jyotirmoy Guhathakurta was seriously injured by the Pakistan army's gunfire on March 25 and later embraced martyrdom on March 30.

On April 4, Pakistani soldiers bayoneted and shot physician and philanthropist Prof Jogesh Chandra Ghosh, founder of Sadhana Aushadhalaya.

On April 13, Nuton Chandra Sinha, founder of Kundeshwari Aushadhalaya, another renowned ayurvedic medicine company and one of the pioneers of female education, was killed by the order of Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury, a convicted war criminal.

Prof Sukharanjan Samaddar of the Sanskrit department at Rajshahi University was killed by the Pakistan army on April 14. The next day, Prof Habibur Rahman of the mathematics department of the same university, disappeared.

In an editorial titled "Slaughter in East Pakistan" published on June 15, 1971, the Washington Daily News stated, "Naturally, the military regime of President Yahya Khan denies it is committing selective genocide. But evidence mounts that it is cold bloodedly murdering minority Hindus, Bengali separatists, intellectuals, doctors, professors, students—in short those who could lead a self-governing East Pakistan."

[The story is translated by Md Shahnawaz Khan Chandan]

BNP defers its programme

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League council. We have decided to reschedule the mass procession following the Awami League's request."

He said the new date for the processions would be decided after discussions with the like-minded political parties.

Earlier in the day, BNP Standing Committee member Khandakar Mosharrat Hossain said, "Our target is to make sure that the government falls. We will deal with them politically in the coming days. We will settle the crisis on the streets. We must prepare to oust this autocratic and fascist regime."

The ruling party was defeated on December 10 as people joined the mammoth rally despite repressions by the government, he told a rally in the capital.

"Our rally turned into a sea of mass people despite so many obstacles and arrests. The government tried to foil our Dhaka rally by arresting our leaders and activists. The country's people won on December 10, and the government was forced to accept defeat," he said.

Mosharrat said people joined BNP's recent rallies spontaneously, giving a clear message against the misrule.

The BNP is left with no other alternative but to unseat the government through a strong movement on the streets and pave the way for the unconditional release

of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and other leaders, he said.

The rally in front of the BNP office in Nayapaltan started around noon with the presence of hundreds of activists.

Addressing the administration officials, Mosharrat said, "You took an oath to protect the peoples' interest. Please stay by the people."

"We don't have anything against you ... We wage movements democratically and peacefully to materialise our demands ... You people are not employees of any party."

Dhaka City (north) BNP Convener Amanullah Aman chaired the event.

Meanwhile, Oli Ahmed, president of Liberal Democratic Party, said the "brutality" of police at BNP's Nayapaltan office exposed the government's "true colours to the world".

Everybody witnessed the atrocities carried out by the police, he told reporters after visiting the BNP office that was raided by police on December 7.

The opposition parties will have to oust the government through a peaceful movement, he added.

Leaders of the Jatiya Party (Zafar), Kalyan Party, Labour Party, NPP, Jatiya Dal, LPD (Shahadat), NDP, Islamic Party, Muslim League, Jagpa, Samyabadi Dal, Islami Oikya Jote, Democratic League, People's League, NAP-Bhasani and Bangladesh NAP also visited the BNP office yesterday.

SOS from 250 Rohingyas

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this, no help had been given.

Mohammed Rezuwan Khan, a Rohingya activist, said his older sister and her five-year-old daughter were among those onboard the boat.

"They need to be urgently rescued because they don't have food or water," he said.

People smugglers take advantage of the Rohingyas' vulnerability and desperation to traffic them to Indonesia and Malaysia during the winter season when the sea is comparatively calm.

On December 2, the UN Refugee

Agency issued a warning over the dramatic increase in the number of people attempting to cross the Andaman Sea, from Bangladesh and Myanmar.

It said these journeys are exposing people to grave risks and fatal consequences. At least 119 people have been reported dead or missing on these journeys, this year alone.

Most of those risking their lives are Rohingya refugees, who fled Myanmar in hundreds of thousands in 2017, to escape military persecution and took shelter in Bangladesh. It is now home to some 1.2 million Rohingyas.