

Shunno comes full-circle after 15 years

“I was always a big fan of Shunno. When I joined Shunno, I remember Shaker bhai came to one of our practice sessions, picked up my guitar and began playing. I immediately felt depressed watching him play. The guy is just so good!”

SHAHBAZ NAHIAN

Starting from being featured in Fuad Al Muqtadir's iconic mixed album *Bonno*—with their debut song *Prototasha*—in 2008, to self-distributing their first album *Notun Srot*, Shunno has weathered many a storm on their way to success.

In the last decade, the band would go on to become a household name, cementing their legacy in the playlist of millions.

On the occasion of their 15th anniversary, the connoisseurs of modern Bangla Pop-rock sat down with The Daily Star, amidst their practice session, to reminisce the last decade and their magical musical journey over the years.

15 years is a long time. Obviously, you had your ups and downs, but what are the memories you cherish the most over this wonderful journey?

Rafatul Bari Labib: For me, being a musician and touring all over the world with my band was a childhood dream. So, my most fond memories are the ones where we were touring outside



Members of Shunno

Dhaka, in London, Malaysia, and Australia.

Michael Gomes: Usually, when there are shows in Dhaka, we travel to the venues individually. However, when we are on tour, we are traveling together. That is why tours make for the best memories.

Ishmamul Farhad: Being with Shunno alone has been a roller coaster ride for me, but yes, the memories of tour are the best!

How has fatherhood changed your lives?

Imrul Karim Emil: You start perceiving life differently and become more responsible. Building memories with your child is magical. They become your top most priority.

Labib: Before you are a father, you feel like you are the centre of your universe. But when you have a baby, your child becomes the centre of your universe.

How much do you miss Shaker Raza?

Michael: We miss him a lot! All of us are very close and he even produced our last two songs, *Behula* and *Bibiya*. At times, we really miss his stage presence.

No one can really replace *mama* (Shaker), because everyone has their own individualism. Thankfully, Ishmamul has been an amazing

addition to Shunno. He is a wonderful musician who gradually incorporated his own style within the band.

Ishmamul: I was always a big fan of Shunno. When I joined the band, I remember Shaker bhai came to one of our practice sessions, picked up my guitar and began playing. I immediately felt depressed watching him play. The guy is just so good!

Post-pandemic Dhaka has been vibrant with big concerts. Shunno has sadly been absent from doing live shows. What are you expecting from your anniversary concert on the 26th?

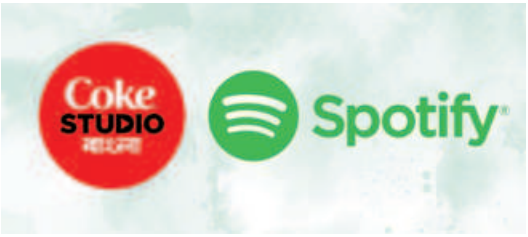
Emil: We have all been extremely busy with our personal lives. Returning to live performances feels very exciting. I am really looking forward to a great night with our beloved fans, at our anniversary concert. We will also be releasing a new music video on that day. We are very grateful to Dreamcast Marketing and Communications Ltd. for taking care of everything.

Any final words for your fans?

Our hearts are full of gratitude to our fans, who have been supporting us for the last 15 years. We hope they will continue to do so over the next 15.



PHOTOS: SHAHBAZ NAHIAN



Coke Studio Bangla officially available on Spotify

One of the largest music streaming service providers in the world, Spotify has collaborated with Coke Studio Bangla, the Bangladesh edition of Coca-Cola's international music property 'Coke Studio', as the official music streaming partner. Under this partnership, all of Coke Studio Bangla's music will be exclusively available on Spotify. In addition, this partnership will also enable the artists of Coke Studio Bangla to share their music with Spotify's 456 million active users, including 195 million subscribers, across 180 markets.

‘Pathaan’ might release in Bangladesh, decision today



Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan's film *Pathaan* might be on its way for release in Bangladesh. It will allegedly be brought through the SAFTA agreement, and the distribution company in question has already sent a letter to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

A source from the ministry has confirmed to The Daily Star that a decision will be given in the afternoon today, following a meeting.

If the film is allowed to release here, it will be showcased two days after its Indian release on January 25.

With the Siddharth Anand directorial, SRK is returning to the big screen with even bigger expectations, as he will be accompanied by Deepika Padukone and John Abraham. We might even see a cameo by Salman Khan and Hritik Roshan in the film.

NEWS

Social protection schemes are crucial

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TDS: Based on your experience, what are the major stumbling blocks to achieving universal rights for children?

Kailash: The first thing is the global political will, which needs to be substantiated with adequate policies and budgetary allocations. Secondly, there must be proper budgetary allocation by the respective countries and overseas development aid by the global financial institutions and the international community, especially the rich countries. Mindset is another major stumbling block which needs to be changed as part of building our social will. We have to respect our children and make them our friends, rather than only thinking of feeding them, helping them or showing them pity. And last but not least, the accountability mechanism – the responsibility of each government to ensure that the local authorities at each level are held accountable for the enforcement of laws related to the protection of children and the implementation of financial and development schemes with honesty.

TDS: What are your suggestions on the most effective ways to strengthen the child rights movement in South Asia?

Kailash: We the group of Laureates and Leaders for Children, (consisting of 90 Nobel Laureates, world leaders, such as some present and former prime ministers, presidents and their wives/first ladies, princes, kings and queens), through a joint letter, urged every single developing country to invest in social protection programmes and measures related to children, women and marginalised people, which have been successful.

Especially stipends, mid-day meals, conditional cash transfer programmes and food support (in Bangladesh, paddy was given to attain gender parity in primary education back in 1999 till 2002) were proven to be great social protection measures. They need to be replicated in a number of countries in the world, especially when higher education for girls is denied in some of them. The developing countries have to demonstrate adequate investment and budgetary allocation in education, in the protection and

healthcare of children, and other issues related to them.

We strongly believe that the social protection measures and social security programmes have been very successful. Therefore, we are working on the creation of a global social protection mechanism for children, women, and all marginalised sections of society, in which interested rich countries can pool their money to generate funds for the needy countries.

We have seen that \$53 billion can ensure all the rights of children and pregnant women in the world – less than 10 days of global military expenditure. And this amount is not a big deal because it is a little more than one percent of the social protection budget of European countries.

TDS: What drove you to work for the children? Please share some stories that helped you to carry on your struggle.

Kailash: It's my life and my mission – it's neither a choice nor a career. I can share two stories in this regard. The first one is of the very first day of my school, when I was five and half years old. I met a cobbler boy of my age, sitting outside the school gate. I was disturbed by the scene because I learned from my parents and relatives that every child is supposed to go to school. When I asked my teacher why the child was sitting outside the school gate and not with the rest of us in the classroom, he told me to calm down and said this is not uncommon for poor children to work for their families. I got similar answers from my parents and relatives, but I could not happy with those. One day, I even went to the boy and his father, who, with utter pain, misery and helplessness in his eyes, said, “Sir, you are born to go to school, but we are born to work”. I was so shocked and angry that I started crying. That was when I started looking at the world differently. I started questioning myself about whether whatever we learn from others is true or not. We have to fight and find our own answers. I looked at the empty eyes of the boy every day. I always carried it with me.

The second incident was after quitting my engineering career for my passion to work for children.

In 1981, I started a magazine called “Sangharsh Jaari Rahega” (The Struggle Will Continue), and an elderly man named Wasal Khan came to me to save his 15-year-old daughter Sabo, who was about to be sold to a brothel from a brick kiln in Punjab, where the family used to work. After hearing the details, instead of writing about it, I decided to rescue her. I started preparing for that with my wife Sumedha, and some of my friends. But our rescue mission was unsuccessful and we were beaten up and thrown aside, while Wasal Khan was caught. But we did not give up hope. We were able to register a case at the High Court under the British provision called Habeas corpus, and within a few days, 36 women, girls and men were freed, including little Sabo. This was the first documented rescue of children through civilian effort in history. Thanks to my dear sister Sabo and Wasal Khan – the spark which was ignited in India because of them was spread across the globe.

TDS: How did you get engaged with the Bachpan Bachao Andolan?

Kailash: As I had to create an organisation to create a movement, my wife Sumedha, some of my friends, and I started Bachpan Bachao Andolan in India. In 1989, we created the first South Asian civil society platform called the South Asian Coalition Against Child Servitude. We saw children working on the streets of Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal, and thought of doing something for them and avoided the typical charity mindset.

Later, we realised we could not stay limited to South Asia, Africa, and Latin America. We launched the Global March Against Child Labour, and the Global Campaign for Education – the two largest civil society-initiated platforms and coalitions in the world, with the inclusion of hundreds of thousands of individuals and groups, not only from the NGOs, but also from businesses and corporations, religious institutions, and more.

TDS: With so many children dropping out of school and being forced into child marriage and hazardous labour in the fallout from the pandemic, what are your suggestions for the Bangladesh government to bring

them back to school?

Kailash: In the past, Bangladesh has proven to solve child labour issues partly or largely. We have seen the drop in child labour and an increase in school enrollment and retention, especially of the girls. We have also seen progress in the social protection programmes and safety measures such as stipends, foods and more, which need to be enhanced. The parents, the community, teachers and everyone should encourage the children to go back to school. And for this, we have to create a more child-friendly environment in the communities and in society as a whole.

TDS: What do you do to keep your spirit alive?

Kailash: I believe everybody has to do their best in any manner. When I started working on it, it was a non-issue. Today, it has become a global issue. These days, I tell everyone that if you can make an unknown child smile through your writing, teaching, talking, money, business and politics, do it. Make at least one child happy – I will be the happiest person then.

Strange ‘sparks’

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Above the regions about to flare, scientists found that the solar corona produced small-scale flashes similar to small sparklers before big fireworks.

They believed the findings could lead to improved predictions of solar flares and space weather storms, which are disrupted conditions in space caused by the Sun's activity.

These space weather events are known to affect Earth in a number of ways, including by producing auroras, endangering astronauts, disrupting radio communications and even causing large electrical blackouts.

“Our results may give us a new marker to distinguish which active regions are likely to flare soon and which will stay quiet over an upcoming period of time,” Dr Leka said in a statement.

Scientists used a newly created image database of the Sun's active regions captured by Nasa's Solar Dynamics Observatory (SDO).

Initiatives should

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this standard, we will see whether these initiatives will be conducive to development work or create division or confrontation. That is something that we need to think of,” Wen said while replying to journalists' query.

Asked about the Russian ship, which could not offload equipment of the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant in Bangladesh or India as it was facing US sanctions, and is now on the way to China, the envoy said he had no idea about it and just read it in newspapers.

“I just want to express hope that any sort of sanctions should not affect the ordinary people in any country. So, they are not supposed to be under sanction. These are mostly unilateral sanctions, not by the UN.”

The envoy, however, said the ship should not have any problem in unloading tools in China.

Asked about the ship, Momen said he was also unaware of where the ship was heading towards.

Asked about the displacement of the Rohingyas from the Bangladesh-Myanmar zero line near Tambru of Bandarban following clashes between the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army and Rohingya Solidarity Organisation last week, the foreign minister said Bangladesh would not allow any more Rohingyas in.

Presently, more than one million Rohingyas live in Bangladesh, most of whom fled Rakhine State of Myanmar in 2017, creating massive financial, ecological, security and diplomatic

challenges for Bangladesh.

As the Rohingyas' shelters at zero line were burnt, they took shelter in Bangladesh side and some of them even left for the Rohingya camps in Ukhiya of Cox's Bazar, said Momen.

“Our home and other ministries are working on it. We won't allow them to enter Bangladesh. This is the general principle,” he added.

According to a foreign ministry statement, during his meeting with the Chinese envoy, the minister sought China's continuous support for Rohingya repatriation to Myanmar.

In reply, the Chinese ambassador hoped that the repatriation would start at an early date.

Momen appreciated China's assistance in several mega projects in Bangladesh. He also thanked China for increasing duty-free, quota-free market access from 97 percent to 98 percent products from Bangladesh into the Chinese market and hoped that this facility would be offered within a short time after necessary gazette notification.

Momen also sought more Chinese investments in Bangladesh.

Ambassador Wen expressed his satisfaction over the ongoing Chinese-supported projects, including Padma Bridge Rail Link, Bangabandhu Tunnel under the Karnaphuli river, upgradation of Mongla Port and extension of Osmani International Airport in Sylhet.

He said China would take part in the Bangladesh Business Summit in Dhaka on March 11-13.

59pc upazila hospitals

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efficient, majority of the problems could have been solved, he added.

Surveying 77 physicians, the study also revealed that the physicians are less interested in working at the UHCs and the district-level hospitals for different types of challenges at their workplace.

Around 63 percent of the approved posts of resident medical officers at upazila health complexes are vacant, said the study.

In the case of junior or senior consultant posts, the vacancy rate is 77 percent at UHCs and 51 percent at the district-level hospitals.

At the UHCs, 66 percent posts of cleaners are vacant while in the case of security guards, the vacancy rate is

53 percent at UHCs and 31 percent at the district-level hospitals.

Some challenges the physicians say they face include poor working conditions, unavailability of proper medical products and technology, shortage of support staff, lack of workplace safety, poor housing facilities, and lack of opportunity for higher education or training.

Prof Syed Modasser Ali, president of Community Clinic Trust, however, said willingness of physicians to work at the UHCs or the district-level hospitals depends on their mentality.

“There are all sorts of standard facilities at the Gopalganj hospital. But physicians don't want to stay there. So, physicians' mentality is important.”