

My artistic life feels worthwhile, when I sing for our language martyrs: Rafiqul Alam

The feeling of singing for our language movement can't be compared to anything else in my life. It feels surreal. My cousin, Abul Hossain, was also a freedom fighter. He was a great leader as well. My whole family is in support of the liberation war. He took me to the Bangabandhu's first speech at the madrasa ground in Rajshahi. Whenever someone asks me to sing for our language day, I never say no.

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Rafiqul Alam, a celebrated musician and acclaimed Shadhin Bangla Betar Kendra artiste, is a legend in the Bangladeshi music industry for his decades of playback and *adhunik* songs. Rafiqul Alam not only inspired the freedom fighters during our liberation war with his songs, but also sang many songs to pay tribute to the language movement in 1952.

In a candid conversation with the Daily Star, Rafiqul Alam shared his thoughts on International Mother Language Day, and more.

You sang many classics throughout your career. Tell us about the songs that you voiced for our great language movement.

Following Bangladesh's independence, I performed on radio and television in various languages in honor of International Mother Language Day. I voiced a song named *Opomane Tumi Shedhin Jole Uthechile Bornomala*, written by Abu Hena Mustafa Kamal, with the music composed by Ajit Roy. The song was also included in one of my albums for Ekushey. This song instantly caught the attention of the audience, and became very popular that time.

How much response did you get outside the country for the song "Opomane Tumi Sedhin Jole Uthechile Bornomala"?

I have to perform this song every time I am abroad. Expatriates always want to listen to this song. I also enjoy the experience whenever I can sing this song on stage. This is where my artistic life feels worthwhile, when the song sung for International Mother Language Day receives love from the people.

The music video of the song was made after a long time after the song was released. The video was broadcasted from BTB.



PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

Which song did you sing first for International Mother Language Day?

In 1973, I sang the song *Amra Jenechi Jibon Mrittu Eki Shoman*, written by Rafiquzzaman and composed by Sutejo Shyam. Another favourite of mine is *Angikarer Songi Joto Manush*, released in 1976. The song was also written by Abu Hena Mustafa Kamal and composed by Satya Saha.

You have sung so many songs for our language movement. Still, you haven't received the Ekushey Padak yet. What's your take on that?

I expect the Ekushey Padak award for my contribution to this country, starting from Swadhin Bangla Betar until today. Now, the pro liberation government is in power. Sheikh Hasina, the daughter of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, is doing an excellent job of running the country.

After independence, I worked as a researcher for 3 years at the Bangla Academy

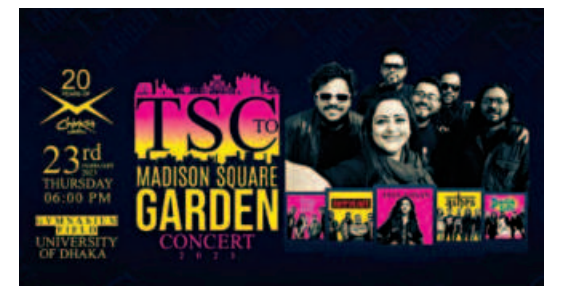
on a project about the liberation war in Bangladesh. The reports of the war in different countries for nine months, all the written information, the records written by the world leaders, and the Bangladesh document book (the book was edited by India's Muchkande), were translated by the four of us. It is one of the best works of my life.

How does it feel to have such a contribution to the music of International Mother Language Day?

The feeling of singing for our language movement can't be compared to anything else in my life. It feels surreal. My cousin, Abul Hossain, was also a freedom fighter. He was a great leader as well. My whole family is in support of the liberation war. He took me to the Bangabandhu's first speech at the madrasa ground in Rajshahi. Whenever someone asks me to sing for our language day, I never say no.

Do you have any memories of the 'Prabhat Pheri'?

I have been going to the Prabhat Feri, since childhood. I used to feel very moved at that time. I still go there every year, to pay homage to the language martyrs.



Chirkutt to celebrate 20 years with concert

Popular Bangla fusion band Chirkutt has created waves with its music on both local and international platforms. The band has given the audiences popular tracks including *Doyal*, *Bondhu*, among others. Chirkutt has come a long way and to thank their fans- they will be arranging their 20th anniversary concert at TSC.

The "TSC to Madison Square Garden" concert will be held tomorrow at 6 pm at Dhaka University's gymnasium field (Central Field).

Popular bands including Cryptic Fate, Ashes, Bangla Five, Kaaktaal, Bangu Bibi, will also perform alongside Chirkutt.

Band music legend Maksoodul Haque (Maqsood O' dHAKA), Foad Nasser Babu (Feedback), Naquib Khan (Renaissance), and Miles along with renowned celebrity Jaya Ahsan will be present as special guests.

'Saturday Afternoon' to be released in US, Canada



After much debate, Mostofa Sarwar Farooki's *Saturday Afternoon*

will be released across North America on March 10. The global distribution rights of the film had been acquired by Continental Entertainment Pte. Ltd. (CEPL) and is being released via Reliance Entertainment (RE).

CEPL is a Singapore based film marketing and distribution firm and RE is one of India's leading film and entertainment companies engaged in creation and distribution of content across Film, TV, Animation, Gaming and Digital platforms.

On January 24, the film had finally received a verbal clearance from the Bangladesh Film Censor Board, after being stuck in limbo for four long years. However, the film has yet to receive the official clearance letter, which will let Farooki go about planning the theatrical release of the movie in Bangladesh.

NEWS

21 injured

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maintaining the queue...But, suddenly a group of Chhatra League activists cut in and headed towards the Shaheed Minar," he said.

"As our activists protested, they attacked us," he said.

Five Chhatra Union activists were injured, he claimed.

Panic spread among people who went there to pay tributes to the language martyrs.

Zakaria Dastagir, general secretary of Chattogram City Chhatra League, said no one from the organisation was involved in the incident.

In Manikganj town, leaders and activists of Awami League's front organisations - Sramik League, Jubo League and Swechhasebak League - clashed after placing wreaths at a Shaheed Minar yesterday.

At least 10 were injured, party sources claimed.

Witnesses said the clash sparked between the followers of Sramik League leaders Abdul Jalil and Babul Sarkar around 9:30am. Later, the Jubo League and the Swechhasebak League men also got involved.

District AL's General Secretary Abdus Salam said disciplinary action would be taken against those involved.

In Jhenidah's Kaliganj upazila, six people were hurt after Chhatra League and Chhatra Dal men clashed after they placed wreaths at a Shaheed Minar.

According to police and witnesses, Chhatra League men started pelting Chhatra Dal men with brick chunks when the two groups came face to face at the Government Mahtab Uddin College around 7:30am.

Chhatra Dal activists also retaliated by hurling brick chunks at Chhatra League men.

(Staff correspondent from Chattogram and our correspondent from Manikganj and Jhenidah contributed to this report)

'Please go home'

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working hours on the health and relationships of employees across the world. The World Health Organisation, for example, warned in 2021 that working 55 or more hours a week can lead to a 35 percent higher risk of stroke, and a 17 percent higher risk of dying from heart disease.

Probe bodies record

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11:00am, after visiting the provost's office room at the Deshratna Sheikh Hasina Hall, where the incident had taken place.

However, none was made head of the committee.

The Daily Star spoke to at least three students who were approached by the probe body yesterday.

However, all of them refused to share what they had told the committee, with one of them claiming they were asked not to say anything to the media.

"They [probe body members] wanted to know whether I had any knowledge of any chaos or torture on that night at the dormitory. Then, I gave my deposition," she said, seeking anonymity.

However, she refused to disclose anything further to The Daily Star regarding her statement.

Another student said prime accused Sanjida Chowdhury, vice-president of the hall's Chhatra League unit, was arrogant and tried to "control everything in the hall".

"But I don't know what actually happened that night," she told The

BNP smells a rat

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However, senior Awami League leader Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim told the Jatiya Sangsad on January 26 that before Khaleda was released from prison, a pledge was made that she would not get involved in politics.

At the BNP Standing Committee meeting held on Monday, a senior member said the law minister's comment was nothing but an attempt to dilute the movement.

"The government will come up with such comments in the future. We all have to be very careful while reacting to such comments," the senior leader told the meeting, a source said.

The BNP might announce a march programme in all wards of the city corporations to test the strength of the city units.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia was sentenced to 10 years in prison in the Zia Orphanage Trust corruption case and seven years in the Zia Charitable Trust corruption case.

Daily Star.

Another probe body, formed by the university authorities, also recorded statements of some people, including Sanjida and another accused Tabassum Islam, a BCL activist.

"Our work is progressing significantly. We are working to submit a report in this regard on time," said Prof Reba Mandol, a teacher of the law department and head of the probe committee.

Meanwhile, a four-member body, formed by the hall administration and headed by Prof Dr Ahsanul Haq, a teacher of Information and Communication Technology of the university, is also continuing its work.

Phulpori, a first-year non-residential student, alleged that Sanjida and Tabassum tortured her on the night of February 12 for staying at university's Deshratna Sheikh Hasina Hall without their "permission".

They allegedly tortured her from 11:00pm till 3:30am.

On February 14, the victim lodged a complaint with the university proctor, student adviser and the hall provost, demanding punishment of those involved in the torture.

Indian FM

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decided to put out 20 years later. Do you think the timing is accidental? Don't know if election season has started in India, but for sure it has started in London and New York", Jaishankar said.

The government has dismissed the documentary, which chronicles the events transpiring during the 2002 Gujarat riots when Modi was the chief minister of Gujarat, as propaganda and blocked its streaming and sharing on social media.

The broadcaster has stood by its reporting for the documentary, "India: The Modi Question".

When asked if the rise of PM Modi and India was not accepted by certain sections in the West and in India, Jaishankar said, "Do you doubt it? It's like drip, drip, drip on a stone...How do you shape a very extremist image of India, the government, of the BJP, of the prime minister? It has been going on for a decade. Let's not have illusions about it".

There's no stopping the thieves!

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at the plant. So, we are investigating whether any group with vested interest had any link with the machine's theft," said a police officer investigating a case filed in this regard.

Md Aliullah, the manager (security and administration) of section concerned of the power plant, filed the case on January 16 with Rampal Police Station.

Police managed to recover the machine from Konabari in the capital's Demra on February 2 and have so far arrested six people, including three staffers of the plant.

Mohammad Shamsuddin, officer-in-charge of Rampal Police Station, said corrupt officials and employees of the plant are involved in theft of the machine.

"We have already arrested some of them and are investigating the matter thoroughly. We will hopefully be able to arrest the others involved," he told The Daily Star.

The arrestees are Badsha Sheikh, 23; Rabbi Islam, 24; Kartik Sheel, 25; Abul Karim, 27; Abu Taher, 46, and Howladar Sohel, 27.

Badsha, Rabbi and Abul are office

attendants at the power plant and Taher is a driver working for the plant under a private company. He drove the pick-up in which the machine was taken away from the plant. Sohel is Taher's assistant, while Karthik once worked as a labourer at the plant.

Apart from the machine, Ansar members recovered stolen goods worth Tk 58 lakh and detained 38 thieves over the last one year, while Rab arrested 24 others in 14 raids and seized various stolen goods in just the past eight months.

OC Shamsuddin claimed that due to their relentless efforts, arrests and recovery of the stolen goods, the incidents of theft have decreased.

Officials at the thermal power plant said 293 people - 18 policemen, 150 armed Ansar members and the rest private security guards - are now responsible for ensuring the security of the plant, which is under construction on 915 acres of land.

Of the total area, there is a boundary wall surrounding 450 acres, while the remaining area is guarded by barbed wire fencing, on which weeds have begun growing.

"Anyone can easily sneak into

the centre of the plant through the unwall area and leave with different goods," said an official wishing anonymity.

Sometimes, labourers working at the plant every day get away with stealing small pieces of materials through eight different entrances, which is tough to stop, he added.

Chandan Debnath, commander of Ansar Battalion 3, suggested increasing security personnel, installing security cameras and building the entire border wall as soon as possible.

Anwarul Azim, deputy general manager of Bangladesh India Friendship Power Company Limited, the company in charge of setting up the plant, said they were mulling the increase of manpower and taking other security measures to stop the frequent incidents of theft. He said it would be discussed at the meeting over the declaration of the power plant as a KPI (key point installation).

If the power plant is declared a KPI, then its security will have to be stepped up significantly, he added.

The 1320-MW thermal power plant is a joint venture of Bangladesh and India.

Research crucial

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thanks to research. "Extensive research is needed now in different sectors, including science and health."

The government, the PM said, provides fellowship and stipends to 24 million students in Bangladesh and free textbooks to school students.

Hasina said English has become a dominant medium for international communication now. The country's children should learn one or two foreign languages alongside learning own language, she added.

The premier said she laid the foundation stone of the International Mother Language Institute during the visit of the then UN general secretary Kofi Annan in 2001, but the subsequent BNP Jamaat government stopped its work.

She thanked the then BNP government for stopping the work, saying that otherwise her government wouldn't have got the scope to develop this institute as per her design.

Hasina recalled the contribution of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to the Language Movement.

The PM, also the chief patron of the institute, at the event handed the international mother language national medals and the international mother language international medals to four recipients.

Habibur Rahman and Ranjit Sinha were awarded the national medals, while Mahendra Kumar Mitra and Mother Language Lovers of the World Society, Vancouver, Canada, were conferred with the international medals in recognition of their extraordinary contributions to the preservation, revitalisation and development of mother languages.

Md Aminul Islam, president of the Mother Language Lovers of the World Society, received the medal on behalf of the society.

Education Minister Dipu Moni, Deputy Minister for Education Mohibul Hasan Chowdhury and Unesco representative to Bangladesh Susan Maree Vize spoke on the occasion.

A video documentary titled "Bangabandhu and Language

Movement" was screened at the event.

Children from different countries, including Bangladesh, India, Australia, Algeria, Japan, China, Russia and France, greeted the prime minister in their own mother languages on the occasion of the International Mother Language Day.

Govt hikes admission

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be deprived of medical education despite being meritorious. This is also disadvantageous for the nation," Mozaharul Haque, former senior adviser of the World Federation for Medical Education, told The Daily Star.

The scope for medical education for the financially weak students is slim in Bangladesh as the majority of the medical colleges are non-government, he said.

There are 7,355 spots in 87 non-government medical and dental colleges while 4,350 seats are in 43 government medical colleges (including six colleges run by the Bangladesh Army).