

I became numb when I signed my first Vinyl record: Mehreen

RAKSHANDA RAHMAN MISHA

From *Anari* to *Rajkumar*, Mehreen isn't your quintessential artiste. Her deep, soothing voice, as well as her presentation, has always awed listeners. Recently, the singer launched her Vinyl album *Bondhuta* which is the first LP (Long Play) to be produced in Bangladesh after 40 years. Initially, the Vinyl will be available in two outlets- Noise and Analogue Beat. The limited edition LP has been priced BDT 4000.

Tell us about your Vinyl album 'Bondhuta' and how did you come up with it?

I wasn't the one who came up with the Vinyl idea, it was RTV's Managing Director Humayun Kabir Bablu who came up with this unique idea.

Bablu bhai was thinking of producing records of old bands and I was really happy that I was the first to have her own Vinyl album. My album *Bondhuta* was probably released around 2017, but I never got to properly launch it. He called me in America two years ago, and told me that that he wants to make a Vinyl record out of it. Bablu bhai worked hard to ensure that high-end record covers were used to make it adhere to International standards. I was just numb when I was signing the LP, and I couldn't believe I was holding the actual record as it came from London on April 29, **How do you think Jazz and pop genres influenced your music?** *Anari* was more disco-pop. I went on

to do rock pop, melo-pop, and then world pop-jazz. Actually, it all depends on my voice quality and its texture. I am really thankful that I worked with unique musicians who know that they can experiment with my voice. I have a unique vocal but I am not that innovative -- so I chose people who know how to bring out my best. I am a non-commercial singer who doesn't do her work for the sake of money, it has to be interesting for me.

You have been missing from the music industry for some time.

I work in intervals. My debut album *Anari* was released in 2000, after that album I had my first baby and so I had to take some time off. And then after 2002, I began work, and from there onwards I released an album in 2004, and 2006. It takes me a long time to produce my album because of the phase of music. If you would look at the likes of Fuad and Manam Ahmed, they are genius, but they haven't produced thousands of songs. It just goes on to show that creativity takes time.

What was your biggest hurdle in the industry? I am a music labourer -I have gone from cassettes to CD, from CD to MP3, and from MP3 to pendrive, and now to LP. While the LP is incredible for

me, YouTube is certainly my future. However, my biggest hurdle was to accept my voice, now my voice is pretty common. Nowadays, most of the artistes who are coming to the industry have a heavy voice like mine. It was really hard to get the right sound engineer for my voice

during my initial stint.

You have been seen in lots of musical programmes this Eid. Do you have any memorable incidents from those shows?

I had a wonderful time shooting with my band in the live music programme for Maasranga. This was their sole in-house programme for Eid, and I had a great time shooting for it.

I requested AR Rahman in his email asking whether he would be interested to convey his Eid greetings to Bangladesh and he replied within 10 minutes.

This was really special for me.



PHOTOS: COLLECTED



'Hotath Daekha' album launched for Nazrul-Rabindra birth anniversary

With a combination of Kazi Nazrul Islam's and Rabindranath Tagore's songs, Srabani Sen's and Shusmita Anis's new album was launched yesterday. Titled *Hotath Daekha*, the album's music has been arranged by renowned singer and music director, Bappa Mazumder.

The *Hothat Daekha* album is thematically organised in four different genres-love, seasonal, devotional and motivational songs. The whole project is initiated and conceptualised by artiste Shusmita Anis, bringing together artistes and professionals of the two Bengals.

The album is available for streaming on Shusmita Anis's YouTube channel.



Shakib Khan's 'Leader' still going houseful

The Shakib Khan and Bubly starrer, *Leader Amie Bangladesh* has been performing well in Madhumita Cinema Hall, even 10 days after its release. The 6 pm screenings of the film even went houseful on Monday.

Apart from this cinema hall, the film has also gone houseful in multiple theatres including Bashundhara City Star Cineplex and Sony Star Cineplex, among others.

After releasing in 100 theatres across the country on Eid, *Leader Amie Bangladesh* is reigning in its second week, as it keeps on adding more halls to its list. The film is on top of all the other Eid releases.

COUNTRYWIDE

A govt pry school that has no students

S DILIP ROY

It is hard to believe that a government primary school, built in the middle of croplands, in Kurigram Sadar upazila is running without students.

Surprisingly, although the institution has five teachers, including the headmaster, no students are virtually present at the school.

Teachers, however, claimed that this year 80 students are enrolled at the school, but none of them were seen attending classes.

Established in 2004, Uttar Majherchar Adarsha Government Primary School, located at Krishnapur village in Mogolbasa union, was nationalised in 2018.

While visiting the institution on two separate working days a couple of weeks ago this correspondent found all the classrooms empty.

Meanwhile, three assistant teachers Mahasina Begum Anju, Sabina Yasmin and Ashrafi Binte Akhtar were seen loitering at the schoolground.

Teachers said another assistant teacher Afia Sultana was on leave and headmaster Altaf Hossain left for the upazila education office for urgent purpose.

Assistant teacher Sabina Yasmin said

although a number of students from the nearby areas took admission at the school, none of them come to school regularly.

Another assistant teacher Ashrafi Binte Akhter said they have a few students because there are several other schools and madrasas in the surrounding areas.

Teacher Mahasina Begum said as the school is situated in the middle of croplands, many parents are unwilling to send their children at the institution.

One of the local residents Abdus Sattar said though the teachers of the institution together receive a handsome amount from the government every month, they have never seen any students at the school premises.

The upazila education office is well aware of the matter, but no step has been taken in this regard yet, he said.

Contacted, Headmaster Altaf Hussain said due to river erosion the school was temporarily shifted to another place in 2011.

However, the institution has been facing shortage of students since it was brought back to its previous location in September last year, he added.

Kurigram Sadar Upazila Education Officer Lutfar Rahman said he was not aware of the matter.



Believe it or not, this government primary school, built in the middle of croplands in Kurigram Sadar upazila, is running without students.

PHOTO: STAR

Go tough

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ACC lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan told the court that the directives will be implemented.

"All the stakeholders, including the government, civil society, media and judiciary, have to work together. The judiciary and government alone cannot do it. All the people must have patriotism and abide by the rule of law.

"Our prime minister has cited a zero tolerance policy against corruption, which must be followed," Justice Nazrul Islam Talukder said, adding that the media and journalists can play the role of graft watchdogs.

He said that anyone who joins a service must first abide by the system and rules, and be transparent and accountable about the positions.

Justice Nazrul further said Bangabandhu said he would take drastic action if he receives any allegation of corruption in any manner, and fair and honest people are needed to build a golden Bangladesh.

The HC ordered the education secretary and director general of the National Archives to submit the speeches, lectures and directives of Bangabandhu, including available audios and videos, regarding the prevention of corruption and money laundering, before the court by June 4.

The HC directed the ACC to keep Bangabandhu's speeches, lectures and directives in mind when dealing with graft and money laundering.

The court also asked the respondents to explain why they should not be directed to include Bangabandhu's speeches, lectures and directives in the syllabuses of government and private academic institutions, including schools, colleges, universities and training institutes, and what steps have been taken in this regard.

Repeal DSA

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"Five years on we are forced to draw the conclusion that whatever their purpose [to formulate the law] was, it has been used against free journalism.

"Thus today we have no alternative but to demand its repeal," he added.

The discussion titled "Freedom of Expression is the Driver of All Human Rights" was organised by The Editors' Council (Shampadak Parishad) at the capital's Jatiya Press Club.

Addressing the discussion as special guest, Hasanul Haq Inu, chairperson of the parliamentary standing committee on Information and Broadcast Ministry, said the DSA should be reviewed and necessary amendments made to make it more press-friendly.

He called upon the government to take prompt steps in this regard.

Inu said as long as the law is not amended, filing cases under it should be based on prior approval of the home minister.

He, however, also stated that there is a need for a law in the country to fight cybercrime.

New Age Editor Nurul Kabir said the DSA has largely been used against political opponents and those who want to express their opinion freely and write about the country's declining democracy and overall deteriorating situation on human rights.

Daily Samakal Editor Mozammel Hossain said the government points to the proliferation of newspapers as a sign of press freedom, but that this is a fallacy.

"If the number of media houses is the yardstick, then the locust would have been the strongest creature on earth," he said.

Daily Ittefaq Editor Tasmina Hossain said that there is a culture of fear and

even editors are a victim of it.

"There is a history of those in power taking steps that repress free media," she said. She recalled the role of legendary editor, Tofazzal Hossain Manik Mia and how he fought all sorts of oppressive steps against Ittefaq during Pakistani rule.

Senior journalist Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul said that they had told the government to remove the vagueness of certain clauses of the law several times.

"On one hand, most of the media is controlled by a select few, shrinking the space for a plurality of voices. On the other, a plethora of laws and regulations are working to restrict the media," said Bulbul.

Prothom Alo Managing Editor Anisul Hoque commented that there cannot be any terms and conditions for freedom of expression. "The American constitution states that no law can be made that hinders freedom of expression. The constitution of Bangladesh allows for certain exceptions, which parties interpret to suit their own needs," he said.

This duplicity must end. The Financial Express Editor Shamsul Haq Zahid pointed out that although the law minister had promised several times that the DSA will be amended, it has not been done yet.

He urged journalists to be united and to fight for this common cause. Desh Rupantor Acting Editor Mustafa Mamun said, "The space for freedom of expression is so narrow that we cannot even say that we are being censored."

He said that as a result, the mainstream media in Bangladesh is losing "credibility and acceptance".

Mahfuz Anam concluded the session by placing a set

of five demands, which we publish in full.

1. Stop further enacting all anti-free media laws now in draft forms. Hold talks with all stakeholders, especially representatives of journalists and media institutions, before moving forward with these draft laws.

2. Amend all existing laws that affect the functioning of the media and remove all anti-free media provisions in them.

3. Repeal Digital Security Act (DSA) or amend it in such a manner that it focuses only on clearly defined cybercrimes and does not in any way hamper the operation of free media or freedom of expression. Suspend operation of DSA till it is either repealed or amended.

4. Withdraw all cases against journalists filed under DSA.

5. Enact laws that support and nurture the growth of free media and remove the current environment of fear and intimidation.

Dewan Hanif Mahmud, general secretary of the parishad and editor of Bonik Barta, moderated the discussion, and said the World Press Freedom Day reminds every government across the globe about their commitments towards free press.

Stalker stabs

FROM PAGE 1

yesterday afternoon, Kawser and his cohorts waylaid her, the OC said.

At one stage, he started stabbing the girl, leaving her critically injured.

Hearing Mukti's screams, locals rescued and took her to Barhatta Upazila Health Complex that referred her to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital.

She died on the way to the hospital around 5:00pm, said the OC.

The suspect is on the run.

Polls internal

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Bangladesh, another party refuses to participate in a national election and may later claim to be an unfair and unjust election.

Patel, however, said as it relates to elections, they want elections to be free and fair and to be reflective of the will of the Bangladeshi people.

"I will say broadly, though, is that the U.S. and Bangladesh last year celebrated 50 years of diplomatic relations, and we look forward to continuing to deepen those relationships," he said at a regular media briefing at the state department.

Patel said Dhaka and Washington have a number of areas where they have the possibility for immense cooperation and engagement -- whether that be climate change, economy, addressing the humanitarian crisis, or other things.

Bangladeshis

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Rasel Mia also expressed his joy as he started on the journey back to Bangladesh. "It was beyond my imagination. We were walking a thin line between life and death. We could have died, but we are still alive. It seems surreal to me."

He could not say exactly how long it would take to reach the port city.

The Bangladeshis, however, said surviving the entire journey would be a challenge as the road between the two locations is risky.

"The buses, carrying 650 Bangladeshis that left Khartoum for Port Sudan, have crossed the risky roads [on their path]. Everyone is expected to reach their destination sometime between midnight and dawn [today] local time," State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam wrote on his Facebook page last night.