

'OCHIN MAJHI' was a tribute to my late father: Shantanu Moitra

NAZIBA BASHER

Shantanu Moitra – a name that is synonymous to melody. A composer, musician and pianist, known best for his works in films such as *Parineeta*, *Lage Raho Munna Bhai*, *3 Idiots* and more, his latest work can be heard in the recently released *Mujib: The Making of a Nation*.

In an exclusive interview with The Daily Star, he shares his approach to making Bangla content and his experience with the film under the direction of filmmaking maestro, Shyam Benegal.

How did you like the film and what was the brief given to you in terms of directing the music?

I'm beyond judgement. I've already seen it around 50 times, as I did the score. I'm a blind follower of Shyam Benegal films. I love the way he portrays larger-than-life characters in a simple way. When he first approached me with *Mujib*, he told me, "Shantanu, there is a danger of being overwhelmed by this character. The way to deal with it is to think of this person

as somebody who was a father, a grandfather, a family man. He loved having his friends at home. He loved the simple things in life – the rivers, the birds, the farmers, he loved the people and the people loved him".

What was your approach with the background score?

The score mainly followed the screenplay and



character. The camera never tells the whole story, it tells you what it is right in front. But the intention of the filmmaker can be portrayed through the score. That's what I tried to do. I also tried to focus on the simplicity of the man. In all the complexities, he loved his people and was their representative – those were the fundamental presets to my approach with the score.

The two released songs of "Mujib: The Making of a Nation" – "Ochin Majhi" and "Ki Ki Jinish Enechho Dulal" have different moods and flavours. What was your strategy with each of the Bangla lyrics?

They are absolutely of two different moods. *Ochin Majhi*, penned by Zahid Akbar, is an original composition of mine. My father was from Rangpur, Bangladesh. After partition, he had to leave for India. But all his life, he told me stories about this magical land he left and he created an imagery in my head. He always wanted to come to Bangladesh and bring me along. We had even booked tickets to come but then Covid happened, the world changed

and I lost my father. But coincidentally, it was right then that Shyam *babu* approached me with this film. So, when I was doing *Ochin Majhi*, it was actually a tribute to the imageries that my father had created in my mind about this magical land. And while I was doing that, it automatically worked with the character of Bangabandhu because this is the land that he loved and fought for.

I want to talk about the final scene, which is possibly the most harrowing and gripping scene in the film. When working with this one, what was your approach?

That scene shakes you up. Shyam Benegal was perhaps most particular about this scene. Throughout the entire film, he wasn't too particular and didn't give me much direction. But for this one, he said, "Shantanu, don't make this [scene] a 'song and dance'". See, in cinema there is a term called "relative silence", where there is no dialogue or music but there are sounds of the environment and the setting the characters are in. He said he wanted me to create the relative silence but added, "I want to hear a song". That was the most challenging part for me. He had shot the sequence first and wanted me to compose it in such a way, the words would fall on the shots of the bodies, and when the camera comes to Bangabandhu, that is when the words match. So, I had to work backwards. I was told to create a melody so powerful that it does not require any music. If you see the sequence, in two thirds of it, Shreya Ghoshal sings in silence, with not music – and that is what hits you! It's a dramatic sequence, you are seeing someone that you love, his blood splattered. Any music would have killed it. I did fight with him, I said it would be difficult, but he had the clarity. That is why Shyam Benegal is Shyam Benegal.

From watching this film, what are your thoughts on the birth of Bangladesh and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman?

My belief is that a person can be killed, but an ideology cannot. And I think today, everybody, every age group, they talk fondly of *Mujib*. There was time when people tried to kill this love for him among the people. But time is the ultimate victor.

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Michael Douglas to be conferred with Satyajit Ray Lifetime Achievement Award

Renowned Hollywood actor and producer Michael Douglas will be felicitated with the Satyajit Ray Lifetime Achievement Award at the 54th International Film Festival of India in Goa.

The *Wall Street* actor will attend the festival in November with his wife, Catherine Zeta-Jones and son Dylan.

The Satyajit Ray Lifetime Achievement Award, established in 1999 by the IFFI, is given to those whose outstanding achievements have profoundly enriched and elevated the world of cinema.

Jessia Islam set to appear in Shakib Khan's Pan-Indian film

Former Miss World Bangladesh Jessia Islam has officially signed on to appear in Shakib Khan starrer *Dorod*, after having made her acting debut on the silver screen this year with *MR-9: Do or Die*.

Annono Mamun is directing this Pan-Indian movie and they will begin filming from Allahabad in Uttar Pradesh, India on October 20.

Bollywood's Sonal Chauhan, Paayel Sarkar, Rajesh Sharma, Misha Sawdagor, Debchandrima, Lutfor Rahman George, Elina Shammii, and many others will also be acting in the film.



NEWS

Sincerity should matter, not failure

FROM PAGE 1

Regardless, the government is on the right track to meeting all the targets, he said, adding that the tax collection target is a continuous process and the government is hopeful of meeting it soon through reforms in the sector.

Asked about the recent macroeconomic indicators, he said: "Bangladesh's economy is doing well persistently, as a whole, except for one or two recent problems. You all know how devastating the pandemic was for many countries. Most of the countries' GDP had squeezed and a supply chain crisis was a reality in that period."

Despite that situation, Bangladesh was among the few countries that managed to increase the pace at which its GDP grew, said Kamal, who is also a former planning minister.

"I am hopeful that Bangladesh will return to the previous trajectory of high GDP growth rate (over 7 percent growth) in the current fiscal year even though the Asian Development Bank gave a cautious estimation of 6.5 percent growth rate."

After the pandemic was controlled, the Ukraine war began and that impacted most of the countries due to globalisation.

"No country remained scratch-free amid the war."

Although Bangladesh's foreign exchange reserves dropped, it is still good enough to meet five months' import demand, according to Kamal.

When the Bangladesh Awami League came to power in 2009, the reserve was \$6.1 billion, which was equivalent to three months' import bill.

Now, the gross foreign exchange reserves are \$21.45 billion, which is equivalent to import payments for five months.

"So, it is surely at a satisfactory level."

About the reason for the falling reserves, he said the central bank utilised foreign currency very logically to avoid massive devaluation of the local currency.

The government's continuous efforts to rebuild the foreign reserves are working well. For instance, the import bill has been controlled while the export earnings grew by 9.12 percent in the first two months of this fiscal year.

Moreover, more migrant workers are being sent abroad.

To bring remittance income through the official channel, the government introduced the 2.5 percent cash incentive, eased the remittance sending process, took steps to reduce hundi and allowed remittance inflow through the mobile financial services platform.

Asked about the economists' charge that wrong policies are to account for the high inflation in Bangladesh when it is declining elsewhere, he said: "The inflationary pressure may vary from country to country due to their different local perspectives and realities. So, it should not be compared simplistically."

He went on to cite the pre-pandemic inflation rate to further his point.

"If the policies were wrong, inflation would not have been low then."

When the Awami League came to power, inflation was 12.3 percent. The government has successfully brought it down in fiscal 2008-09, when it dropped to less than 6 percent, he said, adding that the ongoing inflationary pressure will ease soon.

Some people are saying that the ceiling on interest rates and fixing the exchange rate was the wrong decision, but the two policies helped in macroeconomic stability during the pandemic, Kamal added.

"In order to create an investment-friendly climate, we had brought down the interest rate to single digit after a lot of hard work. The single-digit interest rate was a commitment of our prime minister to the people and it left a positive result on the economy during the pandemic."

The economy was able to rebound strongly after the pandemic due to the lower interest rate regime, Kamal said. At present, the interest rate is close to the market-based rate.

If the government allows the interest rate to rise abnormally, investment can drop. On the other hand, if the local currency devalues massively, it may fuel inflation, Kamal added.

In response to a question about influential loan defaulters taking advantage in the banking sector

and the many irregularities being committed in the Islamic banks, Kamal said he did not agree with the statement.

"If any irregularities happen in any bank, legal action is being taken against the offence."

The central bank is monitoring it regularly.

"Moreover, we have amended the bank company act, so wilful defaulters will not get any loan in future."

Asked when automated fuel pricing will be rolled out, he said the price of fuel is high and volatile in the global market.

"So, we are not implementing the automated pricing formula considering the high price of fuel and inflationary pressure. We have done the homework and a draft is also ready. Once the fuel price is stable, we will implement it."

Restauranteur

FROM PAGE 12

that they would have to stay the night at the restaurant's staff quarters.

Once the women started working, they noticed that armed men were kept on guard to ensure no one could leave. They alleged that Bachchu himself would first sexually abuse them and then force them into prostitution for his guests.

They also said a male worker was tortured for trying to help the women get out of the situation.

On Thursday night, one victim managed to escape the staff quarters and file a police complaint.

Speaking to journalists at the police station, she said, "I have been facing sexual abuse for the last six months."

The same night, the male worker, who was tortured, filed another complaint against Bachchu.

Bachchu could not be contacted over the phone despite repeated attempts since Thursday night. He was also not found at the restaurant when this correspondent visited the place.

Contacted, Rakibuzzaman, officer-in-charge of Cox's Bazar Sadar police, said, "We are investigating the allegations. Legal action will be taken if they are found to be true."

Shakib 'under observation'

FROM PAGE 1

at the Maharashtra Cricket Association Stadium, hinged on the MRI scan report - which was due yesterday.

Bangladesh physio Bayjedul Islam Khan, in a press release, did not reveal the results at the end of the day but informed that Shakib's fitness will be "under observation".

"We will clinically assess his day-to-day progress and take measures accordingly," he added.

The game's opening innings saw the ace all-rounder suffer from cramps while batting. He tried to hit his way out of trouble, but it cost him his wicket. Later, Shakib was seen standing at slips before leaving the field early after bowling out the full quota of 10 overs.

Bangladesh suffered their second consecutive defeat in the tournament after falling to New Zealand by an eight-wicket margin. It will thus be crucial for the Tigers to regroup before their next game.

The Tigers are scheduled to resume training on October 17 as the team management decided to give the cricketers a two-day rest in Pune to recover from the physical and emotional stress of the crushing defeats to England and New Zealand.

"We should have a good rest. The danger here is that the World Cup games come thick and fast," Bangladesh assistant coach, Nic Pothas, told the media on Friday.

"They are high-pressure [matches]. These games take a lot out of you. You get into a more-is-more situation. You think more practice helps but it doesn't. We will be giving the players a good amount of mental and physical rest to help prepare for India," added the South African coach.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh's failure at the top-order in all three World Cup matches has drawn attention towards the repeated reshuffling of the batting order, prompting harsh criticism from all quarters.

Mehedi Hasan Miraz was dropped to number five against England after making a fifty against Afghanistan - before returning to number three against New Zealand.

Najmul Hossain Shanto, who had been nurtured as the number three batter over around the past year and had scored substantially in that position, batted fourth against Afghanistan in the first game. The 25-year-old batted at number three against England, but was moved

to number four again against New Zealand.

Towhid Hridoy, another young batter who made his mark since making his ODI debut at number five and scored over 500 runs this year in that position, has batted at number seven so far in the World Cup. According to Pothas, the batters are aware of their roles.

"This is modern cricket. The batters know that they have to be flexible and adaptable. They are all dependent on our opposition and conditions. A lot of thought goes into [the batting-order]," said Pothas.

Even vice captain Shanto was unable to explain why the batting-order was constantly being shuffled. He stated that it was primarily the coach and captain's decision.

Obviously, the team management might devise a different strategy at times, taking into account the opposition's strengths and shortcomings. However, if the reshuffling continues between matches, the players tend to have a clarity over their roles, leading to a collective failure as evidenced so far in the main event.

HC set to deliver

FROM PAGE 12

in the Gulshan diplomatic zone and held the diners hostage before killing three Bangladeshis, seven Japanese, nine Italians and one Indian.

The militants were killed during a rescue operation by army commandos. Two police officials and a chef of the restaurant were also killed during the 12-hour standoff. An injured employee of the restaurant died later.

On November 27, 2019, the Anti-Terrorism Special Tribunal in Dhaka convicted and sentenced seven militants to death for their involvement in the attack, terming it a disgraceful attack aimed at assassinating the non-communal character of Bangladesh.

The convicts are Jahangir Hossain, Aslam Hossain Rash, Hadisur Rahman, Rakibul Hasan Regan, Md Abdu Sabur Khan, Shariful Islam Khaled and Mamunur Rashid Ripon.

The tribunal also acquitted one accused as it found him not guilty.

The convicts then filed separate appeals with the HC challenging the tribunal verdict.

43pc youths hesitant

FROM PAGE 12

53.8 percent of the registered voters among the respondents have never voted in national elections and 46 percent have never voted in local elections.

Moshreka Aditi Haque, assistant professor of anthropology in Chittagong University, mentioned that a large number of citizens are unable to freely exercise their voting rights.

Shama Obaid, organising secretary of the BNP, said, "Not all citizens can take to the streets to fight for their rights. The government should provide opportunities for people to contribute [to the country's development] in any way they can. They should have the right to criticise."

"The government is currently keeping citizens away from democracy. The situation needs to change, otherwise we won't be able to utilise the country's youth to its fullest potential."

Ahasanul Islam Titu, an Awami League lawmaker, said his party will try to introduce a registration system for the unemployed members of the youth.

CPD Distinguished Fellow Prof Mustafizur Rahman said, "We don't only want a developed country, we want one that is also inclusive."

"This new generation has the responsibility to do that. That's why we set the slogan 'Let the country be as the youths desire' for this programme."

At the event, young attendees put forth some "hopes and expectation of the youth", including the abolition of laws that obstruct freedom of expression. A debate was also organised.

Most children

FROM PAGE 12

the strain weakens the immune system.

The study was conducted by the Department of Epidemiology, Disease Control, and Research at the Shishu hospital.

The researchers also studied blood samples from 50 children who tested negative in the NSI and IgM tests, and found through RT-PCR testing that 17 of them had dengue.

Prof Jahangir said, "As part of the research, we are continuing the genome sequencing work. We will make the findings public later."