

ENTERTAINMENT'S RISING STARS

Debosrie Antara opens up on finding her resolute stance

ZAREEN NAWAR



Her's is a story that is one with all who have had to and are still working hard to make it in an industry that is elusive. Antara Roy Chowdhury, also known by her stage name Debosrie Antara, hence grew up harbouring a penchant for the ability of music, with the dream of one day becoming a singer. Her younger school-going self was even prepared to sacrifice her drift toward a more substantial career for the love of music.

However, today whenever she's asked about her profession, Antara enthusiastically introduces herself as a "corporate lady who is passionate about music and does some news presentations too."

The singer who recently featured in Habib Wahid's first released track of the year, *Mon Bojhena*, has under her belt around six years' worth of musical training from Chhayanaut until she had to adjust to reality's check. The multidisciplinary Antara said, "I chose to pursue music as an extracurricular passion whilst studying BBA at North South University independently."

This was also a few years prior to the pandemic when Antara was resolutely trying to enter the music industry on her own. The songstress, who eventually went on to duet with Habib Wahid twice, faced instances of utter disappointment and hopelessness. "There was a time when I was replaced overnight for a project meant for me, notwithstanding my demo, rehearsals, and aspirations. It made me realise that I was not in a good place in the industry—so much so that I stopped reaching out to

producers for a year," she explained. That very year, the director of the aforementioned project, Apple Mahmud, reached out to her later and equipped her with an overall experience associated with music studios. The *Tumi Chara* singer learned manoeuvring voice control, providing BGM, and even delivering voice specific for radio. "I worked with him on five to six drama playbacks over a few years. He basically came into my life as the most trustworthy industry insider," Antara noted.

The short slogans or jingles that huge conglomerates require to promote themselves have been a means of her budding identity within the industry. Antara lent her voice exclusively to the jingles of the biggest brands like Robi, Lux, Apex, Rin, Unilever, and Sun Silk, to name a few.

Shortly after the pandemic, Antara approached Habib Wahid for work with the accumulation of all her experiences, which included one of her covers that was aired on *Fuad Live in Dhaka*.

"Habib Wahid really liked my voice, and called me in to assess it. He later worked on the base with me when I was offered my first duet with him in last year's song *Premey Pora Mon*," She revealed.

Speaking more about the overall experience of working with Habib since duetting on their second song, *Mon Bojhena*, Antara said, "He is wise, extremely work-centric, and meticulous about his tunes. He has also been a significant guide for me."

In response to being inquired about what it takes to survive in the industry, Antara expressed, "The first thing is to never hold onto expectations in general, and if you're not someone who can technically build songs from scratch, then it won't do you well to only rely on singing as a profession."



PHOTOS: COLLECTED



Jennifer Aniston and David Schwimmer reunite for Super Bowl ad

In a Super Bowl LVIII commercial, fans were treated to a nostalgic reunion between beloved *Friends* co-stars Jennifer Aniston and David Schwimmer.

The star-studded advertisement, unveiled on Uber Eats' official YouTube channel on February 6, saw the iconic duo crossing paths amidst a roster of A-list celebrities, including Victoria and David Beckham, Usher, and Jelly Roll.

The commercial features Aniston explaining Uber Eats to a confused studio employee. Schwimmer joins, leading to a comical exchange. When Schwimmer goes in for a hug, Aniston pretends to not recognise him. Eventually, she admits she doesn't remember him, irritating Schwimmer, who remarks, "I hate this town."

Is Janhvi Kapoor to play Sita in Nitesh Tiwari's 'Ramayana'?



The highly anticipated film *Ramayana*, by National Award-winning filmmaker Nitesh Tiwari, has garnered attention since its announcement, for its depiction of the significant Hindu religious text and star-studded cast.

Rumored cast for the three-part epic *Ramayana* includes Ranbir Kapoor as Ram, Vijay Sethupathi as Vibhishan, Bobby Deol as Kumbhakarna, and Sunny Deol as Hanuman, to name a few.

Indian media reported that Sai Pallavi was replaced by Janhvi Kapoor as Sita opposite Ranbir Kapoor, sparking mixed fan reactions. Nitesh Tiwari believes Janhvi Kapoor is well-suited for the role based on their collaboration on *Bawaal*.

COUNTRYWIDE



An empty kandi, a specially prepared bed used for cultivating vegetables in the marshland, at Manoharpur village in Pirojpur's Nazirpur upazila. PHOTO: STAR

UNFAVOURABLE WEATHER

Vegetable farming faces setback

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

Vegetable growers in three unions of Nazirpur upazila are facing a huge setback as they may not get the expected production of crops due to unfavourable weather condition this season.

Usually, farmers of at least 25 villages under those unions pass busy time in harvesting different vegetable from long ridges of soil, locally called 'Kandi' during this time of the season.

But the scenario is completely different this year due to prolonged adverse weather condition.

As a result, most of the high platforms made with soil and water hyacinth to grow crops in the marshland remain empty as local farmers failed to grow expected winter vegetables due to unfavourable weather condition for the last two months.

Geographically almost all the villages under Daulbari Dobra, Kolardonia and Malikali unions are marshland, which remains under water all the year round.

So, during the winter farmers make long ridges of soil, which is about 90 feet long and four to five feet wide, to serve as raised beds for crops when the water rises.

According to the upazila agriculture office, of the three unions, Daulbari Dobra produces the most quantity of vegetables during the winter.

Every year, farmers cultivate vegetable on at least 1,400 hectares of marshland,

using the Kandi method.

After meeting local demands, local farmers sell their products including pumpkin, bottle gourd, brinjal, bean, cauliflower, cabbage, turnip, bitter melon, sweet gourd, tomato, arum spinach, cucumber, green chili and other winter season vegetables to buyers from different other districts across the country.

Farmers said they start harvesting the vegetables in January and continues for next three to four months.

"We are a bit frustrated this year," said Manik Fakir of Beel Dumuria village, adding that most of his vegetable plants got damaged due to continuous rainfall in December last year.

Later, local farmers planted different vegetable seeds again, but that too could not grow properly due to cold wave and thick fog since mid-December.

Local farmers said though the prices of different vegetables are quite high this season, they are being deprived of getting the benefit due to the setback.

Another farmer Taposh Gharami said due to high production cost they will have to count loss, instead of making profit.

Shekhar Mistry, a vegetable wholesaler, said he goes to different villages by boat and collect vegetables, but due to adverse weather condition the area witnessed a drastic fall in production this year.

Bogura's very own IPL!

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the opportunity to form a balanced team."

To register for the auction, a player has to be from the Sariakandi upazila and much like the IPL, each team has a fixed purse to buy players, which was set at Tk 60,000 for this year's tournament.

This year 123 names went under the hammer and six clubs - Kalitola Tigers, Baluair Shahid Momotaz Club, Three Star, Paikpara Brothers XI, Dosto, Royal Strikers - bid for the players they wanted to rope in.

The organisers informed that this year the teams spent a total

of Tk 1,70,000 in the auction.

The tournament is a hit amongst the locals, many of whom donate funds to the teams out of love for the game and with the intention of investing in local sports, informed Razia.

"I am a local rice trader. I invest a little money here to improve the local sports though I don't understand cricket very well. This time, we have bought 17 players for Tk 27,000," said Shahadat Hossain, owner of the Kalitola Tigers.

Al-Amin, owner of the Baluair Shahid Momotaz Club, said that most teams

take part in the tournament just for the joy of it.

"Right from when the tournament first got launched, we have been buying local cricketers through auction. Although the champion team will get only Tk 50,000 as prize money, it's great fun taking part in the tournament and it also helps the local youngsters earn some money."

The teams also get some local sponsors and funding from sports enthusiasts from their community.

"Local shopkeepers, traders, politicians invest in this tournament. Some local

shopkeepers become sponsors. Some of them provide jerseys, sports equipment, under the conditions that we will promote their name on our jerseys," said Mounuddin Shanto, captain of the Kalitola team.

The six teams also get to buy two icon players each. Mamunur Rashid, an icon player of the Royal Striker's, said, "I was bought for Tk 3,500 for this season."

Although it's a small scale event, with Razia saying they spend around Tk 3-4 lakh to stage the month-long tournament, it has been able to bring a community

together and also open up an avenue for young players to earn through playing cricket like professional cricketers.

Bangladesh Cricket Board has been talking about decentralising the game for years, to take the sport to the grassroots level, but with little implementation.

The league in Bogura is an ideal example of how cricket can be used at the root-levels to promote young cricketers.

The razzmatazz of an auction, sponsored jerseys and icon players only add to the interest, almost turning it into Bogura's very own version of the IPL.

AL leader tried to make it look like a burglary

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carry out the rape.

The 29-year-old mother of three said he was angry at her for blocking his phone number after he made repeated inappropriate sexual proposals.

The victim's husband said Abul Khair was their neighbour, who his wife would call "uncle".

"My wife and children used to collect water from his tubewell."

"A few months ago, he took my wife's phone number and would make inappropriate proposals when I would not be around. Despite her complaints, I ignored the matter, fearing social repercussions given his political influence. When my wife blocked him on her phone, he got furious."

He added that Abul Khair

even offered to provide financial help to the victim's family.

"As my wife refused his favours, he got angry and wanted revenge. That's why he broke into our home with two others on Tuesday. They staged a burglary and raped my wife and daughter."

The husband, a day labourer, was out looking for work in the nearby Hatia upazila when the incident occurred.

"My father-in-law called me around 2:30am on Tuesday to tell me what had happened. I reached home in the morning and found my wife and child devastated."

He demanded exemplary punishment for the rapists.

Hours after his arrest, Abul Khair was expelled as the president of Char Wapda union Awami League, Md

Hanif Chowdhury, secretary of Subarnachar AL, confirmed to The Daily Star yesterday.

According to the victim, who is currently undergoing treatment at Noakhali General Hospital along with her daughter, Abul Khair threatened to burn down her house if she disclosed the rape incident to anyone.

"We are safe here in the hospital, but I don't know if we can safely return home and live there. Munshi is very influential. I'm worried about my daughter's future."

Noakhali Superintendent of Police, Md Asaduzzaman, told a press conference yesterday that the other accused, Harun, had persuaded Mehraj to break into the victim's house, saying the family had money.

"Mehraj broke into the house first and let the others

in. They found the woman and her daughters sleeping.

"There, Abul Khair and Harun raped the woman and Mehraj raped one of the daughters, who is a minor."

Jakir Hossain, a member of Char Wapda Union Parishad's ward-5 and a local AL leader, said he came to learn that Munshi would often harass the victim.

"He got angry at her for blocking him and staged the burglary to rape her with the others."

According to Jakir, Abul Khair settled in Tal Tala Bazar in 1968 and joined AL in 1991. Enjoying close ties with a district AL leader, he served as union unit Awami League president for 17 years without councils. He served as an elected member of the Ward 5 of Char Wapda Union in 1995, 2005, and 2010.

Key accused among 2 held

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On Saturday, the victim's husband filed a case under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act against six people with Ashulia Police Station, on charges of raping and abetting the rape.

All of the accused have been arrested so far.

According to the case statement, the woman was raped inside the university's botanical garden on Saturday night, after her husband was confined at Mir Mosharrif Hossain Hall.

Police immediately arrested four JU students over the incident.

They are - Mostafizur Rahman, 28, the prime accused, also the JU BCL's international affairs secretary; Sabbir Hasan, 24, an executive member of JU unit BCL, ASM Mostafa Monowar alias Sagar Siddique, 26, and Hasanuzzaman, 26.

Students and teachers at Jahangirnagar University have been staging protests for the last few days, demanding exemplary punishment for the culprits and justice for the woman.

Sunak writes to Hasina

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open and fair competition were not consistently met during the election period. It expressed concerns at the significant number of arrests of opposition party members before the polling day.

In the letter, Sunak said, "As you embark on a historic fifth term and reflecting

Bangladesh's impressive development gains under your leadership in recent years, I am writing to underline my commitment to strengthen the growing economic and security partnership between our countries and to support Bangladesh's graduation from LDC status.

"Our partnership is based

on a deep shared history and friendship, underpinned by strong people-to-people ties," the UK PM said.

Sunak said he sees cooperation on migration as an important part of the bilateral agenda.

He recalled that Hasina endorsed a sustainable and streamlined way forward

to return the irregular Bangladeshis living in the UK, and anticipated that the arrangement is finalised as part of the wider agenda of mutual cooperation.

Sunak said he looks forward to working with Hasina to develop further the two countries' important and historic relationship.