



Nasir Uddin Yousuff



Tariq Anam Khan



Jaya Ahsan



Faruque Ahmed

PHOTOS: STAR & COLLECTED

THIS IS HARD TO ACCEPT: Colleagues lament Ahmed Rubel's shocking demise

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Ahmed Rubel, Jaya Ahsan, and Tariq Anam Khan starrer *Peyarar Subash* hit theatres today countrywide. However, a piece of devastating news prevented the cast and crew of the Nurul Alam Atique directorial film from celebrating, as their co-artist Ahmed Rubel suddenly passed away on the day of its premiere show on Wednesday.

The 56-year-old actor drove his car from Uttara accompanied by Atique, and after reaching the venue (Star Cineplex, Bashundhara City), he collapsed in the parking lot, as mentioned by the director.

The lavish hall reserved for the film's screening awaited the artiste but unbeknownst to them, tragedy had already struck. Upon the shocking revelation, the crew and journalists rushed to the Square Hospital, where he was announced dead.

The showbiz industry mourned the untimely demise of this actor. The Daily Star reached out to his close colleagues, who recalled memories with him during their journeys of working together.

It feels strange to hear he's no longer with us: Nasir Uddin Yousuff

Rubel left for good on such an unexpected day! I went there to watch his film and to meet and congratulate him, however this incident was saddening. I've been a member of Dhaka Theatre with Rubel and we worked together for 25 years. It feels strange to hear he's no longer with us.

His dedication to the film *Peyarar Subash* and his love for his work will be remembered by everyone and he will be respected for his work. He'll live on through his work.

I still can't believe Rubel bhai is gone: Jaya Ahsan

I can't believe this is real! Rubel bhai's absence is something I cannot accept. Everyone has to leave one day, but why did he leave like this? Why did he leave us so suddenly? It's a tragedy. To hear such devastating news at a premiere, turned our joyous day into a morose one.

Rubel bhai will live through his work, through his deeds. He was an extraordinary artiste, he excelled in his craft pouring his heart into acting. His love for acting was



Ahmed Rubel

profound. He carved out a distinct image in theatre, television, and cinema. I last worked with him in the film *Peyarar Subash*, and we have lots of memories together. Rubel bhai, may you rest in eternal peace. My prayers are with you.

He was a powerful actor: Tariq Anam Khan

We worked on many projects together in our careers and each time I found a unique artiste in him.

for a television channel, and we last met on February 5. Unfortunately, we couldn't meet that day. I pray for his eternal peace.

My dear brother, you will be missed: Faruque Ahmed

I joined Dhaka Theatre in 1983. Rubel joined three years later, along with several others that year. Among them was my wife, who got acquainted with Rubel. We had a good relationship throughout our lives. We first collaborated in *Hathhodai*. Then, one by one, we acted in *Joiboti Komnyar Mon*, *Ekattorer Pala*, *Keramat Mongol*, and *Bonpangshul* among many more plays.

Rubel as a person was very kind and soft spoken, and he always respected seniors. He used to call me *boro bhai*.

We also worked together in *Shyamol Chhaya*, for which we shot together for a month. We shared countless memories. I still recall a memory from the play *Jomunar Jol Dekhte Kalo* by Humayun Ahmed. There was a scene where he was supposed to slap me, and he told the director that he couldn't slap me. Then, Humayun Ahmed

asked, 'Why?' Rubel replied, 'Faruk bhai is my elder brother.' Hearing this, Humayun sir laughed and said, 'This is just acting.' He was later convinced and slapped me softly, and the director instructed that the shot needed to be done again, and that the slap had to be as hard as possible. Then after the shot was perfectly done, out of immense guilt he continuously apologised to me. He was such an innocent person! My dear brother, you will be missed!

Yesterday, Ahmed Rubel was laid to final rest in Gazipur, his hometown, after his colleagues and well-wishers paid him a last tribute at Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy in the same morning.

The prolific actor gained widespread recognition with his performance in the television series *Pret*, written by Muhammad Zafar Iqbal. He went on to win hearts through his appearance in numerous dramas. He portrayed memorable characters in many of Humayun Ahmed's projects. He also received acclaim for his performance in the film *Guerilla*, directed by Nasir Uddin Yousuff, where he portrayed the character of martyred Freedom Fighter Altaf Mahmud.

COUNTRYWIDE

Plum production falls for unfriendly weather



Orchard owner Nazmul Islam tends his plum trees at Durakuti village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila. PHOTO: STAR

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Plum production in different upazilas of Lalmonirhat and Kurigram has been largely hampered due to bad weather conditions early this season.

As a result, fruit traders, who purchase plums from orchards in advance, are facing losses.

Local farmers said due to the adverse weather condition production of different varieties of plums has dropped by 25 to 30 percent, compared to last year.

Usually, farmers prefer to cultivate Baukul, Applekul and Ball Sundari varieties of plums in their orchards.

Nazmul Islam Nawab, an orchard owner at Durakuti village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila, said he planted 350 plum trees on one acre of land and used to get an expected production till last year.

But persistent cold and thick fog badly hampered the natural growth of his plums.

This year each plum is weighing around 45 to 55 grammes, but it was around 70 to 80 grammes last year, he said.

"Usually, I sell my entire plum orchard to fruit traders in advance. But, due to unnatural growth of the plums, caused by the adverse weather this season, fruit traders may not be able to make the expected profit," Nawab said.

Nawab, who cultivated Ball Sundari

variety in his orchard, said on an average he is getting 40kg of plums from each tree this season, compared to 50 to 55kg last season.

While talking, fruit trader Abdul Halim of the village said natural growth of plums never hamper if there is enough sunlight.

But alongside prolonged cold and fog, lack of adequate sunlight has largely disrupted the natural growth of the plums this season.

"I am selling the plum directly from the orchard at Tk 60 to Tk 70 per kg," he said, adding that many fruit traders may have to count losses due to fall in quantity of production this season.

Farmer Sudhir Chandra Barman of Baravita village in Kurigram's Phulbari upazila said he has 200 plum trees on his two bighas land.

Though currently the market price of plums is satisfactory, they will not be able to make much profit due to the smaller size and less weight, added the farmer.

According to Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) sources, there are around 1,25,000 plum trees in 300 orchards, raised on 350 acres of land, in Lalmonirhat and Kurigram, which produced nearly 6,100 tonnes of plums last year.

But due to persistent bad weather condition the production has fall by 25 to 30 percent this season, DAE sources said.

Key accused of rape at JU a drug trader

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the campus," Moin said.

The Rab official said Mamun has been involved in narco trade for six-seven years. He used to collect about 7,000 to 8,000 yaba pills every month from Teknaf in Cox's Bazar and sell those to JU students and others.

Mamun, accused in eight narcotics-related cases, had been behind bars four times.

He and the victim's husband were neighbours for three or four years.

He employed the victim's husband at times to supply drugs to the campus and nearby areas, the Rab official said, quoting the key accused.

To meet Mostafizur's demand, Mamun tricked the victim into going to the campus near Mir Mosharrar Hossain Hall on Saturday, the Rab official said.

As per the plan, Murad confined the victim's husband to room 317. Meantime, Mamun and Mostafizur took the victim

to a secluded place near the hall and gang-raped her. Then they asked the victim to go home.

On Sunday, the victim's husband filed a case with Ashulia Police Station under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, accusing six people of raping his wife and abetting the rape.

All the accused have been arrested.

The Rab official said the JU authorities cannot avoid the responsibility of several rape and drugs-

related crimes on the campus. He said the authorities should be stricter now.

"Many illegal activities take place on the campus. There is a matter of coordination with the law enforcement agencies to prevent those. If they [university authorities] seek help, we will definitely assist," the Rab official said.

Meanwhile, a faction of JU Chhatra Union took out a torch procession from in front of the

Shaheed Minar on the campus last night.

Speaking at a rally, Chhatra Union leaders demanded exemplary punishment of those involved in Saturday's rape, the activities of the anti-sexual harassment cell be stepped up and illegal occupants of residential hall seats be removed.

Nipiron Birodhi Moncho (Platform against Repression) organised a mass contact campaign in the

They trafficked people for organs

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Harun said the syndicate mainly targeted the victims by sending them text messages that read, "Jobs available for female candidates. If you are interested, contact us."

"If someone fell to their trap, a syndicate member would call them and ask them to contact their agents -- Kabir or Anowarul. During the call,

they would also offer the victims to pay a monthly salary of Tk 20,000 to 25,000 for imaginary jobs," said the official.

"We are trying to trace and arrest the other members of the syndicate," he added.

Asked who is assisting the syndicate along the border, Harun said it's too early to comment on that.

"We may get the

answer after completing the investigation. Interrogation of the arrestee might help too," he said.

A high official of DB said Kabir and Anowarul are brothers. "They received a payment of Tk 40,000 for trafficking each girl," he said, requesting anonymity.

He said the syndicate members used Indian phone numbers to call the

targeted victims to make the job offer believable.

"In most cases, the young trafficked victims were used for organ trade. These organs have a huge demand in Middle Eastern countries. The organs were harvested in India and then, after cross-matching, those were smuggled to the Middle East," he said.

Syndicate members in India and Middle East

countries managed the organ trade through online channels, he added.

Muhammad Fazle Elahi, additional deputy commissioner of DB Ramna division, who conducted the drive to arrest the trafficker, said, "We have got names of some five to six syndicate members from the arrestee. We are hopeful to arrest them soon."

Residents start returning to Ghumdhum

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Last week, more than 120 people, including small children and women, were forced to spend nights at Uttar Ghumdhum Govt Primary School.

Mohammad Nabi, a resident of Tumburu, said he and his three children and wife went to a relative's home on February 4.

"We suffered a lot. The children are traumatised," he said while returning to his home yesterday.

Amina Begum and Farid Uddin, two farmers of Tumburu, said as they could not tend to their farm, the vegetable plants had

almost dried due to lack of water.

In Ukhiya, Cox's Bazar, police last night found the bullet-ridden body of an unidentified man near the border at Thaingkhali.

At least 137 Myanmar troops walked across the border to Bangladesh in that area.

In Nayapara area, children found an unexploded mortar shell around midday, officials said, adding that they have taken cautionary measures.

Last week, 330 members of Myanmar army, border guards, police, immigration

and other officials took refuge in Bangladesh, said a statement from the Border Guard Bangladesh yesterday.

Meanwhile, Asia-based rights body Fortify Rights has called on the Bangladesh government to probe the Myanmar Border Guard Police (BGP) members for their potential involvement in atrocities and to align the findings with the International Criminal Court's (ICC) investigation into crimes against the Rohingya population.

Matthew Smith, CEO of Fortify Rights, said, "These

border guards might have information that could help hold perpetrators accountable for the Rohingya genocide and other crimes unfolding in Myanmar, and they should be properly investigated."

Foreign ministry spokesperson Seheli Sabrin yesterday said it was worth considering whether Bangladesh should seek compensation for the death of two people.

About the Myanmar troops taking refuge in Bangladesh, she said, "Myanmar authorities will take them back at the soonest."

All three

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on a four-day remand, said Noakhali Court Inspector-1 Md Shah Alam.

He added that Charjabbar Police Inspector Md Zainal Abedin, also the investigation officer of the case, sought a seven-day remand after producing Munshi before the court of district Senior Judicial Magistrate Tanya Islam.

On February 5, a woman and her minor daughter were raped in their home in Charkaji Mokhles village in the union, after the three accused broke in. They also stole jewellery and cash from the house.