

Celebrating a golden career: Sohel Rana's birthday today

Renowned as the golden hero of the silver screen, Sohel Rana stands as an icon of Bangladeshi cinema. Five decades ago, he made his debut with Masud Rana's productions and since then, he has captivated audiences through countless blockbuster films. Moreover, the veteran actor was also featured in the country's first Liberation War film, 'Ora Egaro Jon'.

I feel another year has passed from life. Life is slowly slipping away. This thought troubles me a lot. But also, it feels good when I receive people's love. I show respect to this special day. I pay homage to the martyrs.

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Today marks the birthday of the legendary actor. As we celebrate this day, the artiste graciously shared insights into his remarkable life's journey in an exclusive interview at his residence.

Undoubtedly, it can be said that during your time, it was a golden era for cinema.

The depth of the word 'golden' is much more. Instead of saying golden, I would say it was an era of creating quality films. I believe that not only cinema but everything was golden during our time. Our time had golden people and the time itself was golden.

You were quite popular as an actor at that time, along with a few others. What was your relationship with everyone like?

We loved and respected each other, hence we had good relationships with one another. Our time was about competing to do good work, to make good movies. Everyone worked hard. Everyone chased excellence. But we were also friends and that friendship remained throughout our lives. Undoubtedly, I can say we had a remarkable relationship and we only competed to produce quality work.

February 21 is a special day, as it's your birthday. How do you feel on this day?

It feels gloomy. I feel another year has passed from life. Life is slowly slipping away. This thought troubles me a lot. But also,

it feels good when I receive people's love. I show respect to this special day. I pay homage to the martyrs.

What do you want at this stage of your life?
To remain healthy – that's all I want. I once fell seriously ill. God has restored my health. Now, I want to stay healthy for as many days as possible. There is nothing more precious than health. I hope everyone prays for my wellbeing.

Some people from your time have passed away. How much do you remember them?

I perceive my birthday nostalgically as on this day, many people who are no longer with us cross my mind. Their memories – joyous and sorrowful – it all come back to me. Those who were close to my heart, I reminisce my

memories with them.

Centering around birthdays, which memory stands out more or lingers in your thoughts?
When I first joined the film industry, I had a cherished childhood friend who has remained by my side since our earliest days. Over the past 50 years, he has faithfully remembered my birthday. In those early days, he would bring a cake, sometimes with monetary help from his father, to celebrate my birthday. Now, he is married and well-established, yet he still holds onto this tradition.

Without fail, he arrives in the morning, bearing a cake. He doesn't indulge much in the festivities, only asks for some pickles when I request to eat something. His enduring affection after all these years is palpable to me. Despite not hearing from him all year, I know he will show up on my birthday. This memory is precious to me, and I will never forget it.

After gaining fame as an actor, how often did you receive love letters?

I received letters quite often, including love letters. I used to read every letter as I used to enjoy them. Admirers used to show up at my residence or sometimes at shooting spots to meet me. I was always intrigued to know how they managed to find my place?

How did you respond whenever rumours circulated about your love affairs?
I've never been privy to any rumors myself. You see, the selection of the leading lady alongside me was determined by the producer. Discussions were held around the

table during our era. The Razzak-Kobori duo starred together in numerous films. There may have been some chatter about them as well. While there was a connection between two individuals, it was purely professional. We regarded ourselves as colleagues, working alongside each other.

Once the shooting was complete, she [any actress] went her way, and I went mine. Such romantic entanglements never occurred in my experience.

Is there any resentment regarding acting?

None. I have achieved as much as the Almighty has stored for me.



PHOTOS: ALIF RIFAT

Jaya Ahsan refunds govt grant received for 'Roid'



Actor turned producer Jaya Ahsan was previously awarded a government grant of Tk 60 lakh for her film *Roid* during the 2020-21 fiscal year – set to be directed by Mejbaur Rahman Sumon. However, three years later, both the director and producer announced that the film would proceed without government funding, under a new arrangement. Jaya Ahsan has already returned the initial installment of the grant.

Previously, director Amitabh Reza Chowdhury also returned grant money within the same financial year.

Md Saiful Islam, Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, verified the reimbursement of Jaya Ahsan's funds. He mentioned, "Jaya Ahsan has expressed her intention not to continue with the film. She has refunded the money received in the initial payment."

Regarding the reimbursement of the grant money, director Sumon stated, "The casting process, location selection, and even my busy schedule has all contributed to delaying the commencement of the project. We received the grant two years ago, and the deadline for submitting the film has already passed.

Many have faced criticism for not being able to complete and submit the movie on time. Neither Jaya nor I wish to face such criticism. Therefore, we decided to return the grant money. However, given the circumstances, we may require additional time to complete the film."

The director emphasised that despite returning the grant money, the movie is still in progress under a different arrangement. He assured that the pre-production tasks have already been finished. The film will be produced under Facecard Production.

Jaya Ahsan could not be reached for further discussion on the matter. Currently, the actress is in India promoting another film.

I want to stay in Bangladesh for the rest of my life:

KABIR SUMAN

"Until my last breath, I long to remain in Bangladesh and dedicate myself to serving my mother tongue. I wish to teach Bangla kheyal to others as much as my health permits," expressed the legendary artiste Kabir Suman through social media, on Monday.

Seeking assistance and refuge publicly from the government of Bangladesh, the artiste wrote a long



note, where he stated his disappointments as well. "It is not that Bengali followers of Sanatana Dharma don't respect me; there are those who do. However, a significant number of them despise me; they openly express it in my presence."

The artiste explained his name, saying, "And there is another category of orthodox Bengalis who don't want to address me by my name Kabir. Since February 2000, according to the Constitution of India, my name has been officially Kabir Suman. First name Kabir, surname Suman."

Addressing Bangladeshis' love for him, he said, "From what I understand, those who genuinely respect me, provide me with unwavering respect, are the wonderful people of Bangladesh."

However, the singer also mentioned that Kolkata is his first love and that in almost all of his songs, he has talked about Kolkata countless times.

Celebrating the languages of Bangladesh: Coke Studio Bangla at the forefront



ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

The Language Movement of 1952 is the result of our country's fight to identify as a liberated nation. The present-day economy and culture of Bangladesh are also consequences of the independence that our predecessors strived for. Our language transcends its role as a mere communication tool; it stands as an integral component of our rich history. As Bangladesh commemorates International Mother Language Day, the reverberations of its diverse linguistic heritage resonate far beyond its borders, underscoring its enduring significance on a global scale.

An influential catalyst within this cultural movement is Coke Studio Bangla, a platform that not only mesmerises audiences with its music, but also acts as a representative of the multitude of languages within the nation.

The show's impact of bringing mainstream attention to indigenous languages from Bangladesh is evident in the spread of the song *Nasek Nasek*, featuring the Hajong language. Hajong is a local language that is spoken by only a few thousand people in Bangladesh including the show's season one rockstar Animes Roy.

The song's debut on Coke Studio Bangla sparked widespread interest, especially in shedding light on the Hajong community. Its popularity has not only increased curiosity about the Hajong language and community but also boosted tourism in the area.

Similar to *Nasek Nasek*, the season two opener *Murir Tin* incorporated three native dialects: Sylheti, Khulna, and Chatgaiya. While these dialects were regionally prevalent, the song's popularity transcended boundaries, making these local languages part of the national fabric as people across the nation sang along to its cheerful melody.

While leaving a significant impact within Bangladesh, these songs also gained international recognition. *Nasek Nasek* notably became the sole Bangladeshi song played at an ICC World Cup match in Australia. Thousands of fans at the venue joined in singing

along, creating a moment of unity that resonated with millions of viewers worldwide.

Coke Studio Bangla has sparked renewed fascination with Bangladesh's musical heritage, notably with *Kotha Kojoyo Na*. Following its release, there has been a surge in Google searches for

Maimansingha Gitika, a centuries-old collection of folklore. Moreover, the song has gained immense popularity in neighboring India, with thousands of Instagram reels featuring it.

The platform's channel boasts 400 million views, with a significant

portion coming from various countries such as India, the US, Africa and so on. The hit song *Deora* even reached audiences in Tanzania, where popular Tik Toker Kili Paul lip-synced to its lyrics. Despite possibly not understanding the song's meaning, the music resonated so deeply that he began speaking Bangla words.

A YouTube search reveals numerous internationally renowned content creators reviewing these songs, all sharing a common query: how can they access more Bangladeshi music? This trend indicates a growing interest in our local music and language. A particularly inspiring story emerged on social media, where a child from the Bangladeshi diaspora in the United States, despite lacking knowledge of Bangla, started learning the language to understand and compose music for Coke Studio Bangla.

The concern of a younger generation losing touch with the Bangla language once seemed imminent, but now, seeing a child in the heart of the US diligently learning Bangla to appreciate the intricacies and rhythm of Bangla songs demonstrates the profound impact of music in bridging connections across generations and continents.

As International Mother Language Day ensues, let's cherish the diverse languages that enrich Bangladesh. Coke Studio Bangla isn't just about music; it's also a celebration of our languages. Through singing in various dialects and sharing traditional tales, the platform enhances our appreciation for our language and culture.

