

Artistes should question power, not fear it

Celebrities are now emerging from their shells to advocate for the people—a much-needed phenomenon to strengthen the cultural backbone of the nation.

SHOWBIZ DESK

"We were afraid of the government, but the students gave us courage – so we owe it to them to protest the brutality inflicted upon them," said Cryptic Fate's vocalist, Shakib Chowdhury, on August 3, just two days before former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina resigned and fled the country amidst a mass uprising led by students in Bangladesh. The irony lies in the fact that many of these students were inspired by Cryptic Fate's "Cholo Bangladesh," as documented by numerous social media edits.

On that very day, the nation witnessed musicians marching towards the Central Shaheed Minar in solidarity with the people—the most unprecedented act of defiance by celebrities since the Awami League came to power. Throughout the quota reform movement, which escalated from July 15



ILLUSTRATION: ANWAR SOHEL

motivator for this silence, one cannot ignore the role greed may have played. Consider the National Film Awards, where merit often took a backseat to how well one could lobby for recognition.

"You've left, but you could have given the national awards to artistes who were oh-so inclined," wrote Sadia Ayman, a young actress who had vocally supported the student-led uprising while senior celebrities remained silent. She referred, of course, to a recent government-backed all-star biographical film that seemingly guaranteed accolades for its participants, regardless of the quality of their performances. Sadia also spoke out when a select group of cultural elites visited the BTV premises on August 1, lamenting over the vandalized building while hundreds of students had already lost their lives. "Shame on you," she wrote in a Facebook post.

As the student movement reached its zenith, actress Zakia Bari Mamo resigned from Actors' Equity Bangladesh in protest of their statement, which contradicted the students' demands. "We are a free nation; anyone is free to support any political party, but blind devotion leads nowhere," she asserted.

On August 1, several bands boycotted the annual Joy Bangla Concert, held on March 7. "There is no question of performing in the Joy Bangla Concert after what has transpired in the past two weeks," Nemesis announced on their social media platforms. The band had been vocal on behalf of students since the 2018 Road Safety Movement, and this time was no different. Their songs, "Gonojowar" and "Joyoddhoni," flooded social media and graffiti across the country. Furthermore, they were seen cleaning the streets in the days following the mass uprising.

Celebrities are now emerging from their shells to advocate for the people—a much-needed phenomenon to strengthen the cultural backbone of the nation. It would be remiss not to mention the iconic stance taken by Prince Mahmud, who wrote, "It takes time for the culture of fear to end. Not all forms of protest are the same. We should welcome the culture of asking questions."

Cultural figures, some without even being directly involved in the movement, fueled the protest with their music, art, and philosophy. As the fire of resistance raged on, the veil of fear was lifted, and more voices joined in. We can only hope that today's celebrities learn to question power rather than remain subservient to it.



onwards, celebrities cautiously offered their heavily censored condolences with statements such as "We don't want bloodshed" or "Let peace return to the country," all the while ignoring the harsh reality that armed forces were firing upon unarmed students, instead of working to de-escalate the situation.

Once regarded as the beacons and mirrors of society, entertainment stars had, regrettably, been tamed, censored, and coerced into partisan silence over the past fifteen years. It became common knowledge that national honors, film awards, and even relevance in the industry depended on a celebrity's proximity to the ruling party. While many argue that fear was the primary



Plays depicting uprising

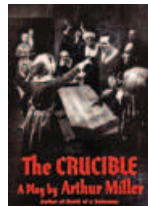
Mary Stuart
Friedrich Schiller



The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui
Bertolt Brecht



The Crucible
Arthur Miller



Kobor
Munier Chowdhury



Chaka
Selim Al Deen



WHAT'S ON THE GRAM

Azmeri Haque Badhan

Actress Azmeri Haque Badhan, who has been an ardent supporter of the student-led quota reform protest since its inception, recently shared this photo on Instagram.

She joined in the merrymaking associated with welcoming a new Bangladesh and expressed her joy at seeing the students' demand for the former prime minister's resignation being met.

In a recent interview with TV9 Bangla, she emphasised the need to join forces with everyone for a secular and harmonious nation. She stated, "The students who are making the crucial decisions today, regarding the appointment of Muhammad Yunus to lead the interim government, are our future. They are advocating for a reformed system, and rightly so."



TV TALKIES



'Shōgun' delivers a gripping tale of power and intrigue in Feudal Japan

The series *Shōgun* is visibly an impassioned storytelling material, taking place against the backdrop of Japan's looming civil war in 1600. Created by Rachel Kondo and Justin Marks, it ambitiously and respectfully brings James Clavell's iconic 1975 novel of the same name to the screen.

Considering that the original book spans over 1,000 pages, it's remarkable that they've successfully distilled it into just 10 episodes. The outcome is a visually striking and captivating series.

Shōgun has been in development for several years, first being announced in 2018

has proven to be deserving of the wait.

The story centers on English sailor John Blackthorne (Cosmo Jarvis) arriving in feudal Japan, where he allies with Lord Yoshii Toranaga (Hiroyuki Sanada), who is vying for power. Their paths intersect through Mariko (Anna Sawai), an outcast and Blackthorne's translator. These intertwined narratives of political intrigue form a tightly woven tale of ambition.

The series is mainly in Japanese, with some English for Portuguese scenes, but it's surprisingly easy to follow. However, it demands your full attention—one can't casually multitask with this one.

TRENDY STREAMS

Netflix
The Umbrella Academy
(Season 4)



Prime Video
The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power



HBO Max
Industry



Disney plus
Star Wars: Young Jedi Adventures



Apple TV+
Lady in the Lake



Keno

Shironamhin's latest single, *Keno*, is a haunting reflection of the current turmoil in Bangladesh. The track captures the nation's anguish and confusion amid ongoing violence.

The lyrics evoke powerful imagery, questioning the senselessness of suffering and the inevitability of chaos. The melancholic blend of instruments—bass, cello, violin, and guitar—paired with emotive vocals, intensifies the song's impact. Part of their upcoming

album *Batighor*, *Keno* stands as a moving tribute to the students and lives lost, urging listeners to confront the unsettling realities of our time.

Penning by Ziaur Rahman and music by Kazy Ahmad Shafin, the song asks, "Why are the birds of this city flying aimlessly like the blind all night? In the scorching heat, why does the red sun still burn in the sky, turning everything to ashes?"



[শিরোনামহীন]
SHIRONAMHIN