

RUNA LAILA'S 72ND BIRTHDAY

'In my career, my mother's contribution stands above all else'

Runa Laila, a revered figure in Bangladesh's music scene, has represented Bangladesh globally through her unparalleled contributions to Bangla music. Throughout her career, she has performed in 18 languages and brought immense recognition to herself and the country, elevating the nation's cultural identity to extraordinary heights.

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

This year is particularly special as it celebrates 60 years of her illustrious musical journey—a milestone only a few can claim. Runa Laila remains unmatched in her craft; her name is synonymous with music and is cherished by fans worldwide.

The celebrated artiste, honoured with numerous accolades, including the Independence Award, is celebrating her 72nd birthday today.

Hailing from Sylhet, her journey began at an early age. She began by lending her voice to film songs from when she was just 12. Whether in cinema, ghazals, contemporary music, radio, television, or live shows—her talent only ever shone across all platforms and helped her rise to the top.

The singer has graced stages in Kolkata, Mumbai, and Delhi, earning admiration and affection from audiences in these cities. Over time, this legendary artiste created herself a record of having voiced over 10,000 songs.

In a candid conversation with The Daily Star, on account of her day, Runa Laila reflected on the overwhelming affection she has received, stating, "I am deeply thankful to the Almighty for everything. It is truly His blessing. At times, even I am amazed by the admiration, respect, and love that continue to come my way. Perhaps, I was destined to be fortunate."

"I have spent 60 years in the world of music and continue to perform with dedication. The love and support I've received from people have been overwhelming, making this journey incredibly rewarding. I remain steadfast in my practice, deeply committed to my art, and driven by an enduring passion for music," she further remarked.

"I thank my entire family for their



PHOTOS: SHAHREAR KABIR HEEMEL

role in supporting me, however, my mother's contribution stands above all. She sacrificed so much and devoted endless time to supporting me. Her encouragement was unmatched. During my childhood performances, my mother was always by my side, and at times, my father would accompany us as well. I have been fortunate to have complete support from my family," she shared regarding the key influence on her journey.

While discussing the younger generation of singers, particularly her well-known habit of calling them during televised music programs—a gesture that has garnered significant attention—Runa Laila expressed, "I don't do it to impress anyone; it comes from a place of genuine love."

"One day, we won't be here, and it will be the younger generation who carries the torch forward. When I enjoy their music, I simply reach out to express my appreciation directly. I let them know how much their work moves

me—it brings them joy and is likely to motivate them. I firmly believe in supporting our artistes, and my affection for them is sincere."

When asked about her plans for the day, she shared, "I'll be in Dhaka, staying in the country and spending quality time with my family."

In response to being inquired about her aspirations, the celebrated singer reflected, "As a child, I dreamt of helping others—I wanted to provide toys and food to underprivileged children. That desire has never left me. The idea of contributing to others' well-being continues to bring me happiness."

When it was time to wrap things up, Runa Laila spoke fondly of the role music plays in her life, saying, "Music is the voice of my soul, it is something significant that remains at the very core of my being. It demands dedication—whether you call it persistence or even a kind of meditation. I remain deeply connected to music, singing both for myself and within myself."



Dhaka Intl Film Festival to dazzle in January 2025

The Dhaka International Film Festival is returning for its 23rd edition, scheduled to run for nine days from January 11 to January 19, next year.

The festival will take place at familiar venues, including the National Museum Auditorium, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, the Russian Cultural Centre, and Alliance Française Auditorium.

Eight films have been selected for the Bangladesh Panorama section of the upcoming festival, including *Shoroter Joba* by Kusum Sikder, *Ekhane Nongor* by Mehedi Rony, *Fatima* by Dhruvo Hasan, *Roktojoba* by Niamul Mukta, *Boli* by Iqbal Hossain Chowdhury, *Batasar Fena* by Tanvir Muhammad, *Agantuk* by Biplob Sarkar, and *Neel Poddo* by Toufiq Elahi.

The festival will showcase approximately 40 short films from Bangladesh.

Conan O'Brien to host 97th Oscars

American television host, comedian, and writer Conan O'Brien has been announced as the host of the upcoming 97th Academy Awards. This will be the Emmy-winning comedian and television host's debut as the Oscars' master of ceremonies.

"We are thrilled and honoured to have the incomparable Conan O'Brien host the Oscars this year," said Academy President Janet Yang in an official statement last Friday.

O'Brien is renowned for his work as the host of late-night programs such as *Late Night with Conan O'Brien*, *The Tonight Show with Conan O'Brien*, and *Conan*. He is currently the host of the podcast *Conan O'Brien Needs a Friend*.



NEWS

Man kills 2 sons, tries to take his own life

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house for money."

"Last night, Nabi, an electrician by profession, came over for the Tk 50,000 he lent to Ahad. Nabi was very harsh to my husband."

Rozina said that Ahad had been unemployed for the last couple of months.

"We are going through tough times, struggling to meet our daily expenses with the salary I get after working at multiple houses. Ahad was frustrated with the debt, which often led to arguments."

"The kids were playing video games

on phones and Ahad seemed normal when I was leaving for work. I cannot believe this just happened!"

Adilur Rahman, inspector (investigation) of Pallabi Police Station, said Ahad and the children were first taken to Kurmitola General Hospital, where the doctors there declared the children dead and referred Ahad to DMCH.

"We are investigating the incident. We know that Ahad was in debt, and there was tension in the family."

"We primarily suspect Ahad killed his sons and later attempted suicide. We'll be able to say what

exactly happened with certainty after investigation."

Meanwhile, Rozina and her mother, Ayesha, were taken to the police station for interrogation.

Ahad's brother Rajon Mollah said, "Ahad called our mother around 5:00am today [Saturday] and told her he would leave this world and take his sons with him. But Ahad did not explain why he said something like that."

Sheikh Abdullah Al Mamun, duty doctor at the DMCH, said, "Ahad's larynx has been cut. We have performed a surgery. He is now under observation."

Compensation remains elusive for most

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either killed or injured in 10,515 road crashes between January last year and November 12 this year, according to BRTA data. All of them are supposed to receive compensation.

Only Tk 26.35 crore was spent on compensation, although Tk 225.43 crore was still available till October 21, according to BRTA.

According to different non-government organisations, the number of road crash victims is much higher, and so the percentage of getting compensation would be much smaller.

Meanwhile, police had arrested the driver of the truck that killed Mohiuddin, but he was released on bail within a few days. Police were yet to submit a charge sheet in the case. The truck owner even managed to take back his vehicle from police custody, said Helal.

Getting justice in a road crash case is very rare in Bangladesh, although Mohiuddin's family still believes that they would get justice.

Against this backdrop, World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims is being observed today.

The day, initiated by the British charity RoadPeace in 1993 and adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2005, is observed on the third Sunday every November as the appropriate acknowledgment of victims of road crashes and their families.

BRTA will hold a views exchange meeting at its headquarters to mark the day.

COMPENSATION

Thousands lose their lives in road crashes every year, while many suffer from life-changing injuries. However,

compensation was a rare concept in the country until enactment of the Road Transport Act in 2018.

Under the Motor Vehicles Ordinance 1983, which was repealed after the Road Transport Act came into force in November 2019, victims or their family members could seek compensation at the Motor Accident Claim Tribunal for death, injury, and damage to properties caused in crashes.

In rare instances, victims file petitions with the High Court seeking compensation.

As per the Road Transport Act-2018, the government formed a trustee board and set up a fund for compensating the road crash victims. This initiative was taken in January 2023 after the formulation of rules of the act.

However, compensating the victims started in October last year.

As per the rules, the family of a person killed in a road crash should get at least Tk 5 lakh in compensation. Those who lose a limb or suffer other forms of life-changing injuries get Tk 3 lakh each, while the victims who are likely to recover from injuries and return to normal life get Tk 1 lakh each.

Till November 12 this year, the trustee board received 1,940 applications seeking compensation. Of them, 1,835 were sent to the permanent inquiry committee for investigation, and the committee so far has given reports regarding 654 applications, according to BRTA.

But the authority has handed over 592 cheques (in connection with 501 deaths and 91 injuries) involving Tk 26.35 crore.

As per the rules, those seeking compensation will have to fill out a form and submit it to the trustee board

chairman within a month of the road crash, with some particulars.

The chairman will form an inquiry committee within 10 days of receiving the application, and the committee will submit a report on the damage in a month, read the rules.

The board will take steps to compensate a victim within 30 working days of receiving the report.

But Helal, brother-in-law of victim Mohiuddin, said they did not get compensation even 11 months after filing an application.

"BRTA wrote to the address of Mohiuddin's village asking us to go to its office. But we got the letter five days after the date to appear before BRTA. Then we contacted BRTA and submitted more documents around six seven months ago, but did not get any response," Helal said.

BRTA officials said there is a six-member permanent inquiry committee led by UNO (of the upazila concerned) to probe the crash, but delayed submission of reports from the committee is the main reason behind the delay of disposing of the applications.

"There is a bureaucratic tangle here, which is causing the delay," a BRTA official said, wishing not to be named.

Responding to another question, he said many people are not aware of the process to get the compensation while many got discouraged to file applications due to "relatively technical and lengthy process."

"The process should be made easier so that the victims get benefit of the initiative."

BRTA Chairman Mohammed Yasin, also the chief of the trustee board, did not respond to our phone calls and texts.

Kidnapped child rescued

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Col Munim Ferdous said, "About a week ago, Shapla met Farzana during her commute to the office and introduced herself as Raisa from Naogaon. She claimed to be unmarried and a second-semester BBA student at a university and said she also worked as an office assistant in the Secretariat's transport pool."

"Shapla further told Farzana that she needed a room to sublet in Dhaka and, if Farzana rented her a room, she could take care of her child while studying at home."

He said Farzana agreed as she needed help with her child and rented a room to Shapla, who paid Tk 2,000 in advance on Thursday and moved in.

The next morning, Shapla told Farzana that her relatives from the village would be bringing rice to the house. Around 8:30am, she brought three men into the house and introduced them as her cousins.

It Col Munim said, "Once they got inside, the four suddenly threatened Farzana with sharp weapons, tied her hands and feet with scarves, and looted gold, cash and other valuables. On their way out, they took Zaila."

"Shapla then went to a house in Mohammadpur's Nabinagar Housing with Zaila, while her accomplices went into hiding. They had planned to demand a ransom of Tk 10 lakh, but when the news of the abduction spread quickly through media and social

media platforms, they refrained from making the demand.

"During questioning, Shapla revealed that the other three are Suman, Hasan and Raihan. They haven't been arrested yet."

It Col Munim said the four had been following Farzana's movements for two weeks before committing the crime.

"They had planned to conduct the robbery on Thursday but were unsuccessful because a relative of Farzana was at the house."

About whether any family member might be involved, he said the victim's husband is under surveillance.

"The couple has been living separately for the past four months. However, the husband would meet their daughter frequently."

Jashim Uddin, deputy commissioner (Lalbagh Division) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, told The Daily Star that kidnapping a child after a robbery is a new dimension of crime, and they will investigate whether there are any other motives.

According to Rab, Shapla is a homemaker, originally from Bogura. After completing her HSC in Dhaka in 2014, she enrolled in college for a degree in marketing but did not complete the programme.

She married her husband Mohammad Selim Hossain in 2023 and moved into his and his family's house in the Nabinagar Housing area around three-four months ago.

Pope Francis

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Holiness Pope Francis and my own aspirations for a transformative and inclusive future," the 2006 Nobel Peace laureate said.

"This initiative not only aims to achieve zero poverty, zero unemployment, and zero net carbon emissions but also aspires to foster the emergence of a new civilisation—one grounded in compassion, equity, and sustainability," he wrote.

"A civilisation where not only should no one be left behind, but where each person can also be the protagonist of their destiny, proud to belong to one human family, as the Holy Father has emphasised in recent years," he said.

"In his encyclical Fratelli tutti, he writes, 'Let us dream, then, as a single human family, as fellow travellers sharing the same flesh, as children of the same earth, which is our common home, each of us bringing the richness of his or her beliefs and convictions, each of us with his or her own voice,

brothers and sisters all."

"Inspired by Pope Francis's unwavering commitment to social justice and my belief in the power of social business, the 3Zero Club encourages young minds to envision and implement projects that drive meaningful change," Prof Yunus said.

"By nurturing their creativity and entrepreneurial spirit, we empower these young leaders to become architects of a more just and harmonious society," he said.

Conveying his "deepest respects and gratitude," to Pope Francis, Prof Yunus urged all "to embark on this transformative journey together, inspiring the next generation to build a civilisation that honours the dignity of every individual and preserves the sanctity of our planet."

According to the latest counts, there are at least 4,600 Three Zero clubs across the globe, all inspired by Prof Yunus's vision for a new civilisation. Many of the clubs are set up in universities.

People won't tolerate

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working to fail the interim government. "If they succeed in undermining this government, they will also fail democracy and the millions of Bangladeshis who cherish democratic values," the BNP leader said.

In such a situation, he said, some decisions of the interim government appear to ignore the people's aspirations, instead imposing what they believe is best for the public.

Tarique also said if priorities are set incorrectly during the reform process, it will be seen by the people as a sign of the government's inefficiency.

Speaking at the programme, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said the country is facing a very critical time. "We must navigate this period with great caution."

He urged the interim government to quickly complete the necessary electoral reforms to ensure credible and acceptable elections, in line with the people's wishes.

Tarique also called on BNP leaders and activists to preserve the party's image by refraining from any wrongdoings and standing firm against any form of injustice.

BNP Standing Committee members Dr Abdul Moyeen Khan and Dr AZM Zahid Hossain, among others, addressed the programme, with Jatiyatabadi Textile Engineers Association of Bangladesh President Fakhrul Alam in the chair.

Judiciary, some media enabled autocratic rule

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Additional Attorney General Anik R Haque, who also attended the event, assured journalists of legal support in cases involving contempt of court allegations.

The workshop aimed to equip journalists with investigative skills to uncover judicial irregularities and highlight the intersection of law and investigative reporting.

Supreme Court Reporters Forum's President Masudur Rahman and General Secretary Golam Rabbani also addressed the gathering, stressing the importance of an independent press and judiciary in safeguarding democracy.

The event underscored the critical role of journalists in holding institutions accountable and fostering transparency in governance.