

# ‘WAS IT WORTH IT?’

## A First-Time Concertgoer’s review of Atif Aslam’s Show

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For someone like me who has never been to a concert before in her entire life, attending Atif Aslam’s concert felt like a feast for the senses. When a friend of mine asked without a trace of forewarning, “Would you go to Atif Aslam’s concert? I’m buying the tickets because they will sell out soon.” I replied, “Count me in for a ticket as well,” without hesitation as I couldn’t let my once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to witness childhood nostalgia slip away like that.

Fast forward to the time when I reached the venue, Bangladesh Army Stadium, it was almost 5:15pm, and there was still a sea of people waiting in the queue to get inside. The lines seemed endless, breathing mass of anticipation, frustration, and sweat.

When the crowd couldn’t control itself, the army decided to show up at the very last moment. When we finally got in around 7:05pm, my firsthand experience was a mob coming toward me at full speed as they broke through the barricades. I could hear the people in charge saying, “Don’t we

have bats to fight them off?” without actually doing anything.

To add to the audacity, the police started assaulting audience members at the entrance with valid tickets without acknowledging what was happening in that situation. Although, they later managed to identify the assailants, beat them, and throw them out of the stadium.

Despite all the hassles, was Atif worth it? True to form, the artiste sang with a passion that made each note hit home. This time, his concert kicked off with a style that only he could pull off.

On the big screen, an opening video played where he boldly claimed, “My song has its own kind of creativity,” set to a tune we all recognised. And when he says it’s creative, you just nod along, because somehow, he makes it feel like it actually is.

Donning a grey hoodie that read, “Trust the process, success takes hard work,” he proved throughout the show how he lived up to this phrase. While the audience was eventually worn out, his energy never waned.

When he sang classics like *Tera Hone Laga Hoon* from the film *Ajab Prem Ki Ghazab Kahani*, I could clearly time travel 11 years back to 2014, when I would listen to the songs on my MP3 player or perhaps download it on my computer. Then, there I was, in a flash, witnessing the performance of the very man right before my eyes, that too, among a crowd where I truly belonged.

The proverbial ‘magical moment’ happened when he performed *Dil Diyan Gallan*. Just like in the music video where Katrina walked down the



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stairs, and charms showered around her. You wouldn’t believe me when I say the atmosphere was recreated to match the video exactly. Atif belted out the song, and those confetti from the music video fell upon the audience.

On Friday night, Atif was in full-on qawwali mode, performing *Tajdar-e-Haram* and *Kun Faya Kun*. The Bangladeshi organisers, however, were clearly inspired by his song *Kuch Is Tarah* (just like this) when it came to mismanagement and power cuts. Atif, ever the professional, seemed to pray

through his songs, as if saying, “No more mishaps, please.” Who were we to complain? When the artiste himself said, “Keep your spirits high, power cuts are just part of the concert experience.”

Even his smallest gestures during the concert were a treat for the eyes. While performing my all-time favourite, *Aaoge Jab Tum Saajna*, Atif made a heart sign with his hands, and at that moment, every struggle; the long wait, numb feet, and suffocation felt entirely worthwhile.

The experience as a whole was not

as rosy as I made it sound. If I were to speak from the perspective of an audience, Bangladesh is not yet an ideal place to host concerts, especially for international artistes like Atif Aslam.

The crowd size is simply too large for any available space. I, as a front-zone audience member, couldn’t even see Atif perform live and had to rely on the screen. I might as well have just opted for YouTube for that kind of experience.

The concert was divided into three sections; magical, front, and general zones. However, if you managed to buy a ticket worth Tk 10,000 in the magical zone, consider yourself lucky, because in reality, there was no such thing as general or front zones – Just a chaotic crowd with poor management.

Setting my emotions apart from Atif, the night wasn’t complete without another Pakistani artiste, Abdul Hannan, who poured his heart out in singing hits like *Iraaddy* that definitely set the bar for romance.

To top it off, our very own Kaaktaal and Tahsan gave their full efforts to make the night a memorable one for us, the audience.

I didn’t realise it until I got home, but writing this feels like speaking for every other Atifian who carries him as a core memory of their childhood. This man represents our childhood; he made our first heartbreaks somewhat easier through his tracks and accompanied us during those nights before falling asleep. And even a decade ago, our headphones were well acquainted with his voice and tunes.

So, when I wondered again, was it worth the hassle? I would say, as a first-time concertgoer, I wouldn’t have missed the chance to relive that childhood nostalgia. When such an opportunity presented itself, how could I ever let it pass? But in the future, I would definitely not set myself up for this kind of experience again.

## NEWS

### Power sector’s indemnity act repealed

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communicating and bargaining with one or more institutions.

In the ruling, which came following a writ petition filed by Supreme Court lawyers Shahdeen Malik and Md Tayeb-Ul-Islam Showrov on August 28 citing public interest, the HC condoned the actions already taken in good faith under the two sections of the act to avoid legal complexities.

The president’s ordinance said the contracts signed under the 2010 act or the actions taken under the contracts would be counted as legal before the act was repealed.

However, the government will preserve the rights to review all the activities done under the act and to take actions in this regard in public interest, the ordinance added.

Using the act, which was passed by parliament in 2010 initially for five years but amended several times to extend its validity to 2026, the previous Awami League government awarded power and energy projects without floating tenders.

In so doing, Bangladesh’s power generation capacity soared to 27,000 megawatts (MW) even though the demand is around 17,000 MW. And

due to a fuel supply shortage, the government failed to produce more than 15,600MW of electricity.

Subsequently, the state had to give capacity charges amounting to Tk 130,000 crore to the idle power plants over the last 15 years, according to the data from the Bangladesh Power Development Board. Of the sum, about Tk 32,000 crore was given in fiscal 2023-24 alone, a major leap from Tk 5,600 crore handed out in fiscal 2017-18.

In addition, major decisions in the energy sector like making deals to import high-priced liquified natural

### 31 journalists suffered

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emphasising the importance of objective journalism and media freedom, but these incidents continued.

“Besides these, vested interest groups targeting different media outlets in the country with threats, attacks, vandalism, arson, demonstrations, and Ziafat programmes is an ominous sign for the freedom of the media.”

However, no effective action by the government was visible despite the repeated statements on the freedom of the media, said the rights group.

The MSF said its compilation of information published by various media outlets showed that 18 of the 31 journalists, who faced rights violations last month, were injured in attacks while performing their professional duty.

Nine others were subjected to threats or assault, another was accused in a case under the Explosives Act, and three journalists of daily the Jugantor faced a contempt rule by the High Court over an article. Five journalists were injured while covering violent clashes.

According to the MSF report, BNP leaders and activists were involved in six of the 32 incidents of attacks or harassment of journalists; police and accused individuals in two each; sand miners and influential individuals in three each; drug dealers, government officials and miscreants in four each; and engineers, teachers, doctors, and students in one incident each.

The MSF said that the information and broadcasting ministry can cancel any journalist’s press accreditation upon getting evidence of specific allegations. But the cancellation of the accreditation cards of many journalists by the Press Information Department without any specific allegation or evidence was an obstruction of media

freedom.

Moreover, the filing of cases against journalists in a wholesale manner, labelling them as associates of the former government, further hampers independent journalism, the MSF said.

Four cases were filed against 19 journalists in November in connection with the movement that toppled the Awami League government. One of them was arrested, the MSF report said.

According to the MSF, casualties in mob beatings have continued at an alarming rate in November.

Based on media reports and MSF’s data, at least 19 incidents of mob violence occurred last month, leaving 10 people dead and 11 seriously injured. October saw 24 incidents of mob beatings.

Such incidents have raised serious concerns about the sense of security among the public, the rights group said.

Shrines and Baul Akhras in different parts of the country came under attack in November as well, the report said, describing the incidents as “a disgraceful assault on religious and cultural sentiments”.

The MSF said 22 incidents of attacks on religious minorities were reported in November. It believes such incidents will destabilise the country’s communal harmony, which is not good for the people of Bangladesh.

It said 72 cases were filed last month in connection with acts of violence by the AL regime during the July mass uprising, and previous instances of misconduct, corruption, attacks, and murders. The number of such cases was 102 in October.

The total number of accused named in the cases filed last month is around

Around 5,856 individuals were named as accused in the cases filed last month. The number of unidentified suspects in these cases totalled over 5,517.

### Cops release Munni Saha

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Considering her condition and that she is a female journalist, we released her under section 497 of the Criminal Procedure Code,” Mallick said.

She was handed over to her family on bond and she must appear in court to seek bail and comply with future police summons, he added.

Section 497 of the CrPC allows the release on bail of any person under the age of 16 years or any woman or any sick or infirm person accused of an offence punishable with death.

Earlier, around 9:20pm, a group of people blocked Munni Saha when she was leaving a media office at Janata Tower in the capital’s Kawran Bazar by car.

Video footage of the incident on social media showed people accusing Munni Saha of spreading misinformation during the BDR mutiny in 2009 through her reporting.

Mobarak Hossain, officer-in-charge of the Teigaon Police Station, told The Daily Star at that time, “Munni Saha was wanted in a case filed earlier. She was arrested after police rescued her from locals in the capital’s Kawran Bazar area.”

The case against Munni Saha, six other journalists and another 185 individuals was filed on July 22 over the death of 17-year-old student Nayeem Howlader in the capital’s Jaurabari on July 19 during the quota reform protests.

### Giving support

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“We’re fully supporting the interim government and intend to continue doing so. Peaceful transfer of power through this interim government is the only path to return to democracy.”

He also talked about recent protests outside the Deputy High Commission of Bangladesh in Kolkata, the capital of India’s West Bengal state.

“There was no reaction in Bangladesh, which demonstrates the strength and resilience of our nation. Unlike others, the people of Bangladesh do not engage in such acts. This is the Bangladesh we aspire to build.”

Mujahidul Islam Selim, former president of the communist party of Bangladesh; Nazmul Haque Pradhan, general secretary of Bangladesh JaSad, and Saiful Haque, general secretary of the Bipobi Workers Party, also spoke at the programme.

After the opening session of the council, the Gono Forum announced an 151-member partial committee, keeping Dr Kamal as emeritus president.

Mostafa Mohsin Montu was made president and Mizanur Rahman general secretary of the party.

### Noor assaulted

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“Later, officials from the jail and police, with help from doctors, took Noor and Tanvir to safety,” he said.

The attackers were later taken to the office of BSMMU Director Brig Gen Dr Md Rezaur Rahman.

A family member of the former minister said, “Noor was hospitalised with severe pain in the lower part of his body and doctors said he needed regular physio. His spinal degeneration has gotten worse and he’s experiencing weakness in his legs.

“But today he couldn’t even get any therapy because of this [attack].” BSMMU Director Brig Gen Dr Md Rezaur Rahman said, “We heard about the incident and a team is trying to know the details.”

The team would investigate the incident to determine what happened and the reasons behind it, he added.

Noor, the ex-cultural affairs minister, was arrested in the capital’s Bailey Road area on September 16 and sent to jail in a murder case while Tanvir was arrested in Gulshan area on September 18.

### Delhi needs to address

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be killed?”

The adviser said the dynamics of Indo-Bangla relations shifted after the fall of the Awami League regime on August 5. He hoped India will try to take forward the relations in this new context.

He, however, expressed concern over the Indian media’s aggressive campaigns against Bangladesh, especially regarding the attacks on religious minority communities. “This is detrimental to a good relationship.”

Touhid stressed that Bangladesh’s media should play a role in countering the misinformation spread by Indian media, and in covering the Bangladesh foreign ministry’s statements.

He said it is quite obvious powerful countries should exert influence over the weaker ones. Therefore, Bangladesh should boost its capability, especially improving the quality of education and skills, and ending political divisions.

“Bangladeshis working in the Middle East are often paid much less than the nationals from other countries only because of a lack of adequate skills and English communication skills.”

He called for national consensus on foreign policy, stating that Bangladesh has often achieved much less in negotiations than it could have due to a lack of national consensus.

Addressing the event, BNP Vice Chairman SM Asaduzzaman Ripon said the AL regime provided facilities to India without proper negotiations, solely to stay in power, thereby

weakening its bargaining position. The previous government also falsely tried to give an impression that militancy would rise in Bangladesh.

He said if anyone is accused of any crime, the person’s arrest should not be viewed from a religious perspective. India’s concern over the recent arrest of Hindu monk Chinmoy Krishna Das constitutes interference in Bangladesh’s internal affairs, he added.

Lt Gen (ret’d) Mohammad Mahfuzur Rahman, former principal staff officer of the Armed Forces Division, said India as a regional power feels nervous about China’s influence on the South Asian countries.

That is why, he said, it is challenging for Bangladesh and other small countries in the region to maintain relations with the regional powers. “We need to be smart.”

Prof Mohammad Abdur Rob, vice chancellor of Manarat International University, said Indo-Bangla relationship should be founded on fairness and equity. He, however, regretted that India has been interfering in Bangladesh’s internal affairs.

“India is publicising Bangladesh’s mass uprising in a negative light.”

Stressing the need for developing Bangladesh’s military deterrence, he said strong unity among the political parties would enable Dhaka to navigate diplomatic issues more effectively.

AB Party Joint Member Secretary Asaduzzaman Fuaad, former diplomat, Saquib Ali, NSU Vice Chancellor Prof Abdul Hannan Chowdhury, SIPG Director Sk Tawfique M Haque and NSU Associate Professor M Jashim Uddin also spoke at the event.

### Joty and Co seal Ireland ODI series

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steady the ship.

Fargana and Supta then departed in quick succession, putting Bangladesh in a spot of bother with the score at 107 for three after 29.2 overs.

Sobhana Mostary (16) did not hang around much longer, becoming Laura Delany’s second scalp. However, skipper Joty, alongside Shorna Akter, then stitched a 53-run stand off just 40 balls to place the team on the verge of victory.

Joty, who hit four fours and a six in an entertaining knock that also earned her the player-of-the-match award, departed in the 41st over, bowled by Arlene Kelly.

Shorna, however, remained unbeaten on 25 alongside Fahima Khatun (four) to take the remaining runs and complete the victory with 37 balls to spare.

Earlier, despite Amy Hunter’s 68 and contributions from Orla Prendergast (37) and Laura Delany (33), Ireland could muster only 193 for six in their 50 overs after winning the toss. Sultana Khatun took a couple of wickets for the home side.

In the series opener, Bangladesh won by 154 runs – their biggest ever victory in WODIs in terms of runs – riding on Supta’s 96. The third and final match of the series will take place on Monday at the same venue.