



ILLUSTRATION: OISHIK JAWAD

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"It's hard to believe these scenes are now being seen on the streets of Bangladesh," wrote a defiant Shafin Ahmed on July 23, 2024, on social media. "I've witnessed such scenes in our Liberation War. I've often seen Israeli soldiers occupying Palestine doing such things. But to see such a scene in Bangladesh, with our own police force behaving this way with our own people... it's unbelievable!"

Amidst the authoritarian regime's crackdown on protesters, the former Miles frontman was one of the first from the music industry to speak out without any filter whatsoever. He did that a good two weeks before musicians would be mobilised into *Get up, Stand up*, which culminated in a historical musical protest on August 3. Little did we know that we would lose him only three days after that Facebook post. He had lost his life to a heart attack while on a tour with his lineup in North America.

It was an irrevocable and incredibly damaging loss, overshadowed by the flames of revolution. In any other passage of time, he would have received more widespread recognition for his illustrious career.

A lot has been written about Shafin Ahmed's musical prowess. After all – playing complex basslines while singing his trademark tunes like *Firiy Dao, Jala Jala, Dhiki Dhiki*, and *Aaj Jonmodin Tomar* was no small feat; it required prodigious musical talent. However, what the music industry misses more is his defiant, unfiltered, sometimes unhinged voice.

Perhaps the intense desire to change Bangladesh led him to join the realm of politics. With Jatiya Party, his most notable political endeavour was contesting for the mayoral position of Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) in 2019, representing the Jatiya Party and using their electoral symbol, the 'plough.' Although he did not win the election, it was arguably impossible for him to win in a rigged system anyway.

I still remember the random mornings he would call me and ask me to publish his side of the story about his public beef with his former band, Miles. "You have to write whatever I say verbatim," he used to say. He ranted for hours about the alleged corruption, issues on royalty splits, and credit-allocation that the members partook in. "Look at what they're doing to the legacy of Miles!"

I knew that I had to go against my better editorial judgment in order to publish those interviews since it'd look like the back of a tabloid without due diligence. Unfortunately, since the band itself did not comment on Shafin's allegations, I could not publish those stories.

Shafin's relationship with Miles was marked by several departures and rejoinings. He left in 2009, rejoined in 2014, left again in 2017, and returned in 2018, before his final departure from the band in 2021.

"Until the problems are resolved, until an agreement is reached, I won't be found with them. From that standpoint, the initiative I took to work with a different lineup, in my own way, is reflected in 'Voice of Miles.' Initially, I didn't use any name; I simply started with 'Shafin Ahmed.' My wish was that if we couldn't work together, it would be better not to use the name 'Miles.' However, the other party didn't refrain from using it," he had said.

All the ego and misunderstandings would dissolve with Shafin's passing. After all, in no way could Hamin, his elder brother and Miles' legend, know that his partner for the better part of four decades would leave so soon. "I feel like I have lost a part of me, please pray for my brother," he had said. Ultimately, Hamin would turn this grief into power when he risked his life to protest against the Awami regime.

This was a regime that had actors, musicians, and artists on its payroll, some of whom manufactured legitimacy for many of its anti-democratic activities – but it could not buy Shafin Ahmed. How could they? Shafin was musical royalty – born to legends Kamal Dasgupta and Feroza Begum, he carried their honesty as an heirloom to his grave.

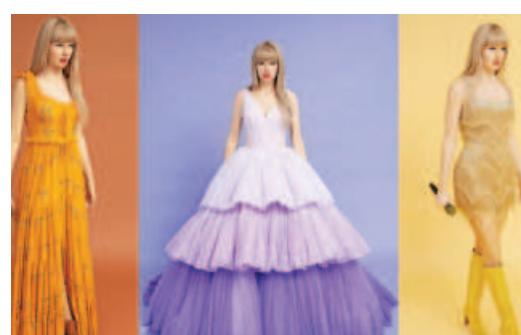
I have no doubts that the overwhelming victory of the Bangladeshi masses would have pleased Shafin Ahmed greatly. And I have even fewer doubts that had he been alive today, he would continue to voice his criticisms against the present government as well. After all, no chains could ever bind Shafin Ahmed, the voice of Miles.

The author is Entertainment Editor at The Daily Star.

## Madame Tussauds unveils 13 new Taylor Swift 'Eras Tour' wax figures

Madame Tussauds has unveiled 13 new wax figures of Taylor Swift, styled in outfits inspired by her record-breaking *Eras Tour*. The figures will be displayed in 13 cities across four continents, including Las Vegas, London, Amsterdam, Shanghai, and Sydney. The exhibit took 14 months and 40 artists to complete, making it the most ambitious project in the museum's 250-year history.

Swift now has a total of 14 wax figures, with her first introduced in 2010 at age 20. The previous record was held by Lady Gaga with eight figures in 2011 and Harry Styles with seven in 2023. The new collection is open to the public from July 24.



## 'No one has the right to tell me what to wear'

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Widespread backlash erupted across social media after Bangladesh Bank issued a directive imposing a dress code on its employees, particularly restricting female staff from wearing sleeveless tops, short-length dresses, and leggings at work. The directive, criticised for targeting women's attire, was later withdrawn yesterday following public outrage.

In response, National Film Award-winning actress Azmeri Haque Badhan took to Facebook to express her frustration over the imposition of dress codes and the persistent societal judgment women face regarding their clothing choices.

"I was once a brilliant, kind little girl who always dressed as expected; what my parents preferred, what the community deemed 'decent'. I didn't wear jeans as a teenager, because society believed only 'bad girls' did," she wrote.

Recounting a turning point in her life, Badhan shared how her decision to leave an abusive marriage led her to participate in the "Lux Channel i Superstar" competition in 2006. "That

experience helped me discover myself; not just as a woman, but as a human being."

She further stated, "Even then, I tried to be the kind of woman society approves of. But this time, I wore jeans. I wore clothes that showed my skin, things 'good girls' supposedly don't wear."

Badhan also recalled an incident where she was asked to cover her shoulders during a television interview because she was wearing a sleeveless blouse. "They lectured me on morality. Over the years, I've been told how I should dress, as a mother, a 'sensible woman', or a daughter from a conservative family. But I don't care anymore. I am free. No one has the right to tell me what to wear, say, think, or how to live. That is my decision alone."

She concluded her post by criticising the societal obsession with controlling women. "This is the harsh reality we face daily. Society seems obsessed with 'fixing' women as if that's the ultimate virtue. But let me say this: it is your own actions that determine your path, not your control over others, and certainly not over women."



PHOTO: COLLECTED

## 'Mukhomukhi' premieres at Shilpakala Academy today

A new theatrical production titled *Mukhomukhi*, directed and conceptualised by Dhiman Chandra Barman, will premiere today at 7pm at the Experimental Theatre Hall, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy.

Organised by the academy under the Ministry of Cultural Affairs and staged by Theatre Web, the performance is open to the public free of charge.

Structured as a series of fragmented scenes, the play explores themes of authoritarian violence, collective trauma, and the inevitability of resistance. Rather than a linear narrative, *Mukhomukhi* unfolds as a political montage echoing the spirit of last year's July movement.

The cast features Al Mamun, Poly Chowdhury, Fauzia Afrin Tili, and others. Mohsina Akter designs costumes, with choreography by Amit Chowdhury and Hasan Ishtiaq Imran.



Netflix renews 'Wednesday' for a third season ahead of Season 2 premiere



Netflix has officially renewed *Wednesday* for a third season, even before the premiere of its highly anticipated second season. Since its debut in 2022, the supernatural comedy – starring Jenna Ortega as the deadpan, gothic teen Wednesday Addams – has become Netflix's most-watched English-language series and has won four Emmy Awards.

The second season is set to release in two parts on August 6 and September 3. The story picks up with Wednesday returning to Nevermore Academy, where she must face a new enemy while protecting her werewolf roommate, Enid.

Returning cast members include Gwendoline Christie, Emma Myers, and Riki Lindhome. The star-studded ensemble is further bolstered by the addition of Steve Buscemi, Christina Ricci, Luis Guzman, and Catherine Zeta-Jones.

The show is created by Alfred Gough and Miles Millar, with Tim Burton returning as executive producer.