



RUNA LAILA'S 73RD BIRTHDAY

An icon that transcends music



PHOTOS: COURTESY OF COKE STUDIO BANGLA & COLLECTED



RAKSHANDA RAHMAN MISHA

Growing up, I would listen to Runa Laila on loop on BTV, from *Bondhu Tin Din* to *Istishaner Railgarita*. I even tried to mimic her iconic *Dama Dam Mast Qalandar*, fully convinced that if I practiced enough, I might somehow sound like her. So, you can imagine my excitement when I came across a vinyl copy of her *Superuna* album on Record Store Day last year. I wanted it badly, but I didn't have the money at the time. Instead, I spent the day listening to the tracks from *Superuna* that were available on YouTube.

Runa Laila has always been more than a legendary voice. She is an icon of beauty, style and charisma, someone whose influence has never faded. She still holds a special place in the hearts of young listeners. She is also one of the rare artistes who connects Bangladesh, India and Pakistan through her music, and reminds us why art crosses borders.

Fittingly enough, on the occasion of her birthday today, a rendition of her timeless *Dama Dam Mast Qalandar* was released by Coke Studio Bangla. Envisioned and produced by Shayan Chowdhury Arnob and Adit Rahman, this version beautifully fuses the timeless spirit of Qawwali with the unique textures of Bangladesh's musical heritage.

Whenever you listen to her rendition of the

13th-century Sufi poem, her voice becomes hypnotic and lifts you in a way that feels almost spiritual. Before you even realise it, you find yourself moving with the rhythm.

Runa Laila's influence has inspired not only music lovers, but also artistes and designers. Renowned designer Sabyasachi Mukherjee is a diehard fan and has dedicated a plaque in his Mumbai store to his mother and to the legendary singer. The plaque reads, "Across the

border, in Bangladesh, another woman

I admire wore a similar black and gold with her own chandbalis, cropped hair and sleeveless blouse. The legendary songstress Runa Laila. I was an obsessive fan. Back then, my very strict father allowed me exactly 10 minutes of Doordarshan, just enough time to watch Runa Laila sing *Dama Dam Mast Qalandar*. In 2023, Six Yards Story also launched a special Eid jewellery collection inspired by her iconic songs, including *Shilpi*, *O Mera Babu Chail Chabila*, and *Bondhu Tin Din*, amongst others.

Her film *Shilpi*, directed by Chashi Nazrul Islam, has aged surprisingly well. The film is loosely based on her life, blending real events with fictional elements, and her on-screen chemistry with her husband Alamgir felt so natural that it is hard to take your eyes off. I was mesmerised by her style, from graceful sarees to chic western outfits, which made her look effortlessly timeless.

Runa Laila has also shared her wisdom as a judge on many musical reality shows, including *Sur Kshetra* and *Sa Re Ga Ma Pa*. She also made a special cameo in the Star Jalsha drama *Ke Apon Ke Por* in 2019. Back then, while flipping through channels, I stumbled upon a promo where the distressed protagonist Joba meets Runa Laila on the street. It was such a delightful surprise and a perfect way to celebrate her 67th birthday at the time.

A picture of Runa Laila with Bappi Lahiri in a recording studio, deep in conversation, is used in her biographies to this day. In the 1970s, a vibrant decade for fashion in the newly independent Bangladesh, Runa Laila stood out as one of the main style icons. Her choices, from bell bottom pants to long unkempt hair and loop earrings, brought global trends into the local fashion scene and inspired a whole generation.

Her influence goes beyond music and fashion. She is now the central figure in a new novel, *Mayar Singhasan*, by the acclaimed fiction writer Abdurrahman Al Muktadir. The book explores her rise in Bangladesh's musical landscape, her artistic journey, personal struggles, and lasting cultural impact. The novel was released today, on her birthday, by Chandrabindu Prokashan. In a heartfelt video message, Runa Laila herself invited readers, saying, "This novel is written about me. I hope you will like it. Do read it."

As an unparalleled icon of music celebrates another year, she stuns with how gracefully she ages, carrying her charm and confidence effortlessly. Her journey inspires millions to be stronger, bolder and ultimately a better version of themselves.

NEWS

Bhashani a lasting inspiration

FROM PAGE 2

name in the nation's history, Tarique said this iconic leader always stood firmly for the oppressed and persecuted and through his fearless and decisive leadership, he continuously inspired the people of this country to stand up for their rights.

"Maulana Bhashani will always be remembered as a guiding force in the nation's liberation. He was a shining luminary in Bangladesh's independence movement, in

democratic struggles, and in the fight for the just rights of farmers, workers, and the toiling masses," he observed.

"His thunderous voice shook the thrones of oppressive rulers and exploitative forces. In the nation's darkest times, he stood firmly for the public interest, earning the trust and confidence of the people," he added.

In another message, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir also paid tribute to the late leader.

3 killed

FROM PAGE 12

will be no Palestinian state," Katz said on X, adding that Gaza would be "demilitarised down to the last tunnel", and Hamas disarmed by the Israeli military in parts of Gaza under its control and by the international stabilisation force or the Israeli military in the rest of the enclave.

The UN Security Council will vote later on Monday on a resolution endorsing US President Donald Trump's Gaza peace plan, reports Reuters.

a pedestrian in front of the Waqf Building, said Sazzad Hossain, inspector (investigation) of Hatirjheel Police Station.

Meanwhile, the Detective Branch of police arrested 10 leaders and activists of the Awami League and its affiliated organisations in 24 hours till yesterday morning for allegedly planning and financing flash processions aimed at stirring unrest in the capital.

A Rab-2 team arrested a man in Mohammadpur with six petrol bombs, a machete, and a gas lighter on charges of preparing for sabotage.

Meanwhile in Gazipur, three petrol bombs were hurled at the Grameen Bank Maona branch in Bartoba Bazar of Sreepur upazila early yesterday.

Several branches of the bank -- an institution linked to Chief Adviser Prof Yunus -- including its Dhaka headquarters, were targeted recently.

Witnesses said seven to eight unidentified youths detonated the bombs around 2:30am before fleeing. One exploded inside the compound and two outside, damaging the gate.

In Feni, helmet-wearing youths poured petrol over and set ablaze the Memorial in Muktibazar area around 3:30am.

In Kushtia, a parked truck was set on fire in Aruapara around the same time. A 51-second video shows two youths setting fire to the truck's rear wheel; one shouting "Joy Bangla" seconds after igniting it.

In Chattogram, several crude bombs said Bulbul.

"Instead, he felt cold metal on his right knee and the sound of a trigger being pulled -- 11 years on, the man still remembers which of his knees was capped at first.

"I heard the sound of a shot being fired, and felt my leg jumping up and then crashing on the ground. Then the same thing happened with my other leg. Then I felt a wetness -- blood -- creeping up my back all the way to my head," recalled Bulbul.

Police then admitted Bulbul to a government hospital in Sathkhira. "The

doctors just wrapped up my legs with gauze and dumped me on the floor of a ward. I implored them to treat me, I told them I was in pain, but it was to no avail."

It was only after his family found him

-- a full day after he was shot -- that he was shifted to Khulna Medical College Hospital, and he received the first dressing of his wounds.

"My family had to bribe a doctor to get me discharged from Sathkhira. I received my first treatment on the night of the second day after getting shot."

"When doctors came to see me, they found that my legs were literally bending up from the knee to the front, totally opposite to how legs are supposed to bend towards the back. A huge portion of my legs just did not have any bones."

The first dressing was excruciating, said Bulbul. "Not even the pain of being beaten up for over two hours compares to the pain of being cut into and cleaned."

Bulbul was referred to the National

Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation in Dhaka

49th death anniversary of Bhashani today

FROM PAGE 12

Yesterdays, a seminar titled "Morality in the Language of Protest: Maulana Bhashani and Contemporary Bangladesh" was held at MBSTU, chaired by its Vice-Chancellor Prof Anwarul Azim Akand. Prof Mohammad Tanzimuddin Khan, a member of the University Grants Commission, was the chief guest at the seminar.

Meanwhile, a seven day (November 11 to 17) fair, known as the Bhashani fair, was organised in Tangail's Santosh, with thousands of visitors, from children to the elderly, attending.

'Crossfire would have been an act of mercy'

FROM PAGE 12

said Bulbul.

Instead, he felt cold metal on his right knee and the sound of a trigger being pulled -- 11 years on, the man still remembers which of his knees was capped at first.

"I heard the sound of a shot being fired, and felt my leg jumping up and then crashing on the ground. Then the same thing happened with my other leg. Then I felt a wetness -- blood -- creeping up my back all the way to my head," recalled Bulbul.

Police then admitted Bulbul to a government hospital in Sathkhira. "The

doctors just wrapped up my legs with gauze and dumped me on the floor of a ward. I implored them to treat me, I told them I was in pain, but it was to no avail."

It was only after his family found him

-- a full day after he was shot -- that he was shifted to Khulna Medical College Hospital, and he received the first dressing of his wounds.

"My family had to bribe a doctor to get me discharged from Sathkhira. I received my first treatment on the night of the second day after getting shot."

"When doctors came to see me, they found that my legs were literally bending up from the knee to the front, totally opposite to how legs are supposed to bend towards the back. A huge portion of my legs just did not have any bones."

The first dressing was excruciating, said Bulbul. "Not even the pain of being beaten up for over two hours compares to the pain of being cut into and cleaned."

Bulbul was referred to the National

Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation in Dhaka