

Tuning into the psychedelic vibes of SHONAR BANGLA CIRCUS



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

SHARMIN JOYA

Three of the four band members—Probar Ripon (lyrics, tune, vocals, acoustic guitar), Shakil Haque (bass), and Saad Chowdhury (keys)—visited The Daily Star's office recently. Over cups of coffee, they spoke at length about their creative process, philosophy, and future plans.

We also connected with guitarist Seth Panduranga Blumberg, who has been on vacation miles away at his home in California. Though joining from afar through the internet, his presence added a new dimension to the conversation.

Probar Ripon begins by explaining the idea behind the new album and the time it took to bring it to life. "If you ask why it took us nearly three years to prepare this album, the answer is simple—it has 17 songs, and the arrangements are massive," he says. Unlike *Hyena Express*, which relied mainly on the traditional rock setup of guitar, keyboard, bass, and drums, *Mohashoshan* embraces a much broader musical canvas. "This time we worked with an ensemble of instruments that are carefully layered—multiple layers of dhol, violin, and more."

He recalls how quickly their previous album came together. "We recorded *Hyena Express* in just four days, and the mixing and mastering

took only two months," Ripon adds. "But this is a full-fledged studio album—and a double album at that—so naturally it demanded much more time."

Beyond the studio, other factors also slowed the process. The band was actively performing concerts, like every month, around 12 shows, and the country's political situation further disrupted their momentum. "All of that affected our progress," he says, "But in the end, the time allowed the album to grow into what it needed to be."

What sets Shonar Bangla Circus apart from other local bands? One undeniable factor is their conscious attempt to break away from the established Bangladeshi rock lineage. They are effortlessly 'non-traditional', refusing to conform to familiar structures or expectations. Still, we wanted to hear how the band members themselves define that difference.

"It's more like lyrical music theatre—or even opera," Ripon explains. "Our psychedelic approach sets us apart right from the start. Beyond that, we are a group of people who connected because we think alike."

Keyboardist Saad Chowdhury, whose native language is not Bangla, has been part of the band a little bit later after the band was

formed. For him, music remains the strongest binding force. "Music is what connects me with the team the most," Saad reiterates. "Even if I don't always grasp the deeper meaning of the lyrics, I can still relate to them musically. The intensity remains the same because we're communicating

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beyond language." He points out that some meanings remain elusive even to local listeners. "In the end, it's the music that holds us together. I've never faced any challenge connecting with these people musically."

What Saad values most, he says, is the band's open-mindedness. He singles out Seth Panduranga Blumberg, fondly known as Pandu, whom he met in 2012. "It was refreshing. I found someone who just goes wherever the guitar takes him.

That freedom is deeply inspiring for me. I didn't even realise I was like that myself until I met Pandu."

Bassist Shakil Haque adds that the bond between Pandu, Ripon, and Saad predates the band itself. "They've been connected for more than 15 years," he says. "Raju was also part of that circle at one point." That long-standing familiarity, he implies, naturally translated into the band's musical chemistry.

When the conversation turns to the music of *Mohashoshan*, Shakil offers a broader philosophical reflection. "Birth and death are inevitable phenomena of life, yet we rarely speak about them in their most natural form," he explains. "They are either turned into moments of celebration or mourning. But what we're addressing in this album and in the previous one as well, is how universal this experience really is."

Hegestures toward the larger world. "Look at our planet—where is death not happening? Where are people not suffering?" For Shonar Bangla Circus, this is not a commentary on isolated events but a timeless, global reality. "We're not making a statement about something happening somewhere. This is something that is always happening, everywhere. It's less about establishing a message and more about feeling and realising it."

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For Ripon, discomfort is an essential part of truth. His lyrics are meant to provoke that unease. "Look at the mirror, and you will see who you are," he says. "It is not my responsibility to manipulate the mirror to make someone look beautiful. My responsibility is to show the mirror. The truth it reveals can be uncomfortable at times—and that is the intention."

Looking ahead, the band plans to continue their solo tour across the country under the title *Mohashoshan Jatra* this April, if the political situation remains stable. This time, they are also hopeful about taking their music beyond borders, with international tours firmly on the horizon.



(L) Seth Panduranga Blumberg, Saad Chowdhury, Shakil Haque, with Probar Ripon at centre. PHOTO: TANZIM BIJOY

After a long gap following 'Hyena Express', released in 2020, the indie rock band Shonar Bangla Circus has returned with a dual studio album featuring 17 tracks last month. Titled 'Mohashoshan 1' and 'Moshashoshan 2', both discs offer ear-soothing tunes and also stay true to the band's signature style—lyrics that unsettle, provoke, and compel listeners to think deeply.

NEWS

BNP wins nearly half the votes

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3.73 crore votes, while Jamaat and its alliance partners got about 2.73 crore votes.

The EC said 59.44 percent out of 12.77 crore voters cast their votes in the February 12 polls.

PAST POLLS

In the 1991 polls, a total of 3,41,03,777 voters exercised their franchise. BNP obtained 1,05,07,549 votes, which was 30.81 percent of the total votes, and won 140 seats. It later formed the government with the unconditional support of Jamaat.

Jamaat secured 41,36,661 votes, amounting to 12.13 percent, and achieved success in 18 seats.

In June 1996, a total of 4,28,80,576 people cast their votes. BNP received 1,42,55,986 votes, or 33.60 percent, and won 116 seats, becoming the opposition party. Jamaat obtained 36,53,013 votes, which was 8.61 percent, and won three seats.

The total number of votes cast was 5,57,36,625 in 2001. BNP and Jamaat contested as members of the four-party alliance. BNP secured 2,28,33,978 votes (40.97 percent) and won 193 seats, while Jamaat obtained 23,85,361 votes (4.28 percent) and won 17 seats. The alliance went on to form the government.

In 2008, both parties again ran the race as part of the four-party combine. A total of 7,06,48,485 people voted in the polls. BNP obtained 2,27,57,101 votes (32.50 percent) and won 30 seats. Jamaat received 32,89,967 votes (4.70 percent) and won two seats.

| PARTY, CANDIDATES | SEATS WON | VOTES RECEIVED |
|----------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| BNP (291) | 209 | 49.97% |
| Jamaat (228) | 68 | 31.76% |
| NCP (32) | 6 | 3.05% |
| IAB (258) | 1 | 2.70% |
| BD Khelafat Majlish (34) | 2 | 2.09% |
| Gono Odhikar Parishad (94) | 1 | 0.33% |
| BJP (2) | 1 | 0.14% |
| Gano Samhati (17) | 1 | 0.14% |
| Khelafat Majlish (20) | 1 | 0.76% |
| Independents (275) | 7 | 5.79% |

Both parties boycotted the 2014 and 2024 polls.

In 2018, a total of 8,26,45,218 people cast votes in the election. BNP secured 99,77,319 votes (12.07 percent) and won six seats. Political analysts noted that these results did not reflect the party's actual strength, as the polls were widely considered controversial due to ballot box stuffing on the night before the election and intimidation faced by BNP supporters from the then ruling Awami League.

Election expert Abdul Alim, also a former member of the Election Reform Commission, said years of repression against BNP, including thousands of cases, attacks, torture, disappearances, and even lawsuits against respected party figures, were

not accepted by the public.

"The party chairperson was sick, imprisoned, and there were repeated attempts to break the party, yet it did not collapse. In this situation, public support grew, and so did voter turnout for BNP," he explained.

On increasing voter turnout for Jamaat, Alim noted, "First their registration was cancelled. Since 2014, Jamaat has been outside elections. During the movement, an executive order banned them as a party. Despite this repression, they quietly reorganised. That also drew public interest."

He added another factor, true for all parties, is the presence of swing voters.

Alim said, as a new political party, NCP received a respectable share of votes.

People will remember

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for what the source described as tireless work by officers and soldiers to complete the assignment successfully.

Referring to the army's role in stabilising what he called an unstable political environment, Waker said, "The country and the people will remember this service of the army."

He also quoted a verse from the holy Quran, saying, "Indeed Allah rewards the patient."

In one part of his address, the army chief said the election was completed after significant hardship and that the result was accepted by all, according to the sources.

"You have, after so much hardship, reached this stage and achieved

success. Our hardship has been worthwhile. We have been able to complete an acceptable, fair election, and this election has been acceptable to everyone. This success has been possible because of you," the army chief was quoted by the source about his address to members of all ranks.

Sources said Waker also urged personnel to uphold religious values and encouraged them to live a good life, describing it as important for living well.

The issue of returning troops to barracks also came up at the darbar, the sources said. However, the army chief did not issue any directive on an immediate return, according to the sources.

Instead, he said the timing would depend on government decisions and the overall law and order situation, and that it could take some time.

One source quoted him as saying people were now understanding that the army could perform its duty, adding that the purpose of the deployment had been to ensure security so that a democratic process could be carried out properly.

The 13th parliamentary election concluded on February 12, without any major occurrences reported across the country. It was held in a calm atmosphere, free of major violence, with law enforcement and the armed forces receiving broad praise for keeping voters safe.

Dismislab finds rivals peddling falsehoods

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misinformation has also been spread claiming that Jamaat carried out the attacks or was involved in the clashes.

A review of the websites and Facebook pages of nine fact checking organisations that verify information related to Bangladesh shows that, in the two days following the election—February 13 and 14—at least 13 fact-checks were published addressing false claims about post-election violence or protests. When multiple organisations published fact-checks on the same piece of misinformation, it was counted only once.

MISINFORMATION INVOLVING JAMAAT

Several pieces of misinformation circulated online claiming that Jamaat supporters were subjected to violence.

One such claim involved a Facebook video alleging that homes were set on fire because residents voted for Daripalla (Jamaat's electoral symbol) in Debidwar, Cumilla. However, verification reports found that the video was old, and had been circulating on Facebook for at least a month before the election.

Another video was spread with conflicting claims, including that BNP activists attacked homes belonging to minority communities in Cumilla after the election victory, or that houses were vandalised simply because people had voted for the Jamaat. This, too, was later fact-checked and debunked.

A third piece of misinformation involved a seven-year-old video claiming that BNP's student wing, Chhatra Dal, forcibly evicted members of the National Citizen Party (NCP) and Jamaat's student organisation, Islami Chhatra Shibir, from residential halls at Dhaka University.

During this period, several other



An old video falsely circulated claiming it showed a DUCSU protest against BNP attacks on dissenting voters (left); a screenshot from another old video spread with the claim that the BNP, after coming to power, was attacking people for voting freely (right).

unrelated videos were also shared on social media with the false claim that they showed Shibir protest marches in response to post-election attacks.

MISINFORMATION IMPLICATING BNP

A number of misleading and fabricated claims have also been circulated online implicating the BNP. One such claim was spread through a Facebook video, presented as footage of post-election attacks. In the caption, the poster accused the party that "came to power" of assaulting people for voting for the opposition. However, fact-check revealed that the video actually showed a clash between BNP and Jamaat supporters during the election

campaign, not a post-election attack.

Another video was shared with the false claim that BNP activists gang-raped a female leader of NCP.

False information has also circulated targeting Jamaat in the context of election-related violence. A video shared on the social media platform X alleged that Islamist groups were attacking Hindu communities after Jamaat's defeat in the election.

Fact check showed that the video was unrelated to the 2026 election. It actually depicted an incident in which a man was assaulted for chanting "Joy Bangla" during the funeral of former Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia.

UN chief renews push for 'immediate ceasefire' in Sudan

AFP, Addis Ababa

The United Nations is "fully committed" to piling on pressure for an immediate ceasefire in Sudan, which has been devastated by nearly three years of civil war, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Saturday.

Since April 2023, the Sudanese army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces have been locked in a bitter struggle for control of the country.

The conflict has killed tens of thousands of people and forced more than 11 million from their homes, sparking what the UN has called the

world's worst humanitarian crisis.

"We have been very actively engaged... with the African Union, with the Arab League, with the Quad and with other key actors, in order to put effective pressure for an immediate ceasefire," Guterres said.

"We must look first of all to create the conditions to put pressure on the two parties of the conflict," he told reporters on the sidelines of an African Union summit in Ethiopia.

He also stressed the need to tackle foreign actors "supporting and arming" both sides -- "some in the African continent and some outside".

India rout Pakistan

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and Agha again declined to shake hands at the toss—not the first such instance, as Suryakumar had also skipped handshakes in all three Asia Cup meetings in Dubai last year, including the final.

After Salman chose to field, India welcomed back Abhishek Sharma from a stomach bug, but he fell for a second ball duck. Kishan counterattacked, reaching his fifty in 27 balls and scoring 77 of India's 88-2 in 8.4 overs before Ayub bowled him.

Tilak Varma (25) became Ayub's second victim, trapped lbw at 126-3. Hardik holed out next ball, giving Ayub hat-trick hopes as he finished with 3-25.

Suryakumar made 32 before falling in the penultimate over. Shivam Dube was run out for 27 in the final over, Axar fell off the last ball, and Rinku Singh remained unbeaten on 11.