

# 'UNMATCHED'

## Eminent Bangladeshi artistes reminisce Asha Bhosle



Fahmida Nabi

ZAHID AKBAR & SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Asha Bhosle (1933-2026) was a legend not only in the context of South Asia, but the entire musical world feels her absence. Her departure brought about a platitude of sorrow in Bangladesh as well. Some of the most renowned musicians in the country made their reactions known in their personal tributes.

### The world has lost a rare jewel: Runa Laila

In an emotional tribute on Facebook, Runa Laila recalled her deep bond with the iconic singer, describing her loss in words that echoed the grief of millions. She said, "I am completely devastated. The world has lost a rare jewel, irreplaceable and unsurpassable. I learnt so much from her. As a child, I would listen to Asha *didi's* songs and try to copy the superlative and finely-honed intricacies in her unmatched voice.

Whilst judging the reality show *Sur Kshetra*, we became very close. We laughed and joked and gossiped so much that after a few episodes the producer placed us far apart so that we couldn't communicate easily. But Asha *didi* insisted that I be seated in the chair next to her and of course you simply cannot say 'no' to her.

She would cook Biryani and Prawns for me and bring them to the shoot for me. We became good friends and loved and respected each other. I always insisted that she call me by my name instead of Runa *ji* and *Aap*. But she told me that she respects a human being and as a 'great' artiste therefore, she continued calling me that.

*Didi* I will miss our long



Sabina Yasmin

conversations on the phone, endless gossip and hearing your voice again saying *Runaji Aap kaisi hain* (Runa *ji*, how are you?) May you rest in eternal peace."

### A voice like hers was rare: Sabina Yasmin

The legendary Sabina Yasmin shared her heartfelt memories of the legend. "I truly have no words to describe Asha *ji's* music. I have only ever listened to her in awe, and I will continue to do so all my life.

Reminiscing about her meeting with the singer, she shared, "I first met her during the recording of the film *Onnyay Obichar*, when I travelled to Mumbai. It was at R D Burman's studio. She was incredibly warm and humble—there was no trace of ego despite her stature. Perhaps that is what defines truly great artistes."

Sabina also added that Asha had praised the songs of *Onnyay Obichar*, and later, when she visited Bangladesh and stayed at the InterContinental, she listened to several of her songs. That remains a cherished moment in her life.

"A signature voice like hers is rare. I feel deeply saddened by her passing. I do not even dare to comment on her music."

The word 'heartbroken' feels insufficient: Kanak Chapa  
Renowned singer Kanak Chapa expressed her grief. "The word



Kanak Chapa

'heartbroken' feels insufficient—I am just shocked. We know that all humans must one day pass away, yet the music of such an artiste never dies."

She also stated that in the next hundred years, the world may never hear another voice like hers—or like Lata Mangeshkar.

"It is hard to even imagine. While she was alive, I felt a strange comfort knowing that somewhere on this same earth, Asha Bhosle existed. It felt as though her breath, her music, somehow reached me. Her voice was utterly unique—like honey that cannot be separated once poured, like a pearl that shines with its own brilliance."

Adding that there's no comparison for her, Kanak Chapa said, "I will listen to her songs as long as I live. News like this is difficult to accept—I am deeply shaken."

### She will remain an idol for generations to come: Rafiqul Alam

"There is no need to say anew how gifted an artiste Asha Bhosle was," said eminent singer Rafiqul Alam. "I consider it an act of audacity to speak about her. Even so, let me say a few words. I had the fortune of meeting such a celebrated artiste twice — once in Dhaka, and once in Kolkata."

Rafiqul Alam said, "In Dhaka, I had the opportunity to speak with her closely. I asked her directly,



Rafiqul Alam

PHOTOS: STAR

'Asha *ji, Jibono*, the song you have sung, is an extraordinarily beautiful song in the Bengali language. Is it possible to render such a song by bringing every skill to bear? No one but you could sing this song.' She was pleased to hear it. She smiled. Then she asked, 'Is it popular here too?' I told her it was a favourite and a song beloved by everyone."

Rafiqul Alam said, "Whenever one speaks of any discipline, one needs a point of reference. In the very first such reference, the name of Asha Bhosle will inevitably arise. If we speak of live music, her name comes up effortlessly. Through her music, she elevated herself to an unparalleled height. She will remain an example for all time."

He continued, "Personally, I feel that to reach the level of an artiste like her, I would have to be born twice. As a female artiste in live music and classical music, Asha Bhosle stands at a very great height. Today she has departed. We must remember her. The songs she sang will keep her alive forever."

### I followed her style closely: Fahmida Nabi

Paying a heartfelt tribute, Fahmida Nabi expressed her emotions. "I am deeply saddened to hear that Asha Bhosle is no more. I do not know what words could suffice. Another Asha Bhosle will never be born, that much I know. From a young age, her musical finesse, beauty, knowledge, and magical voice shaped my dreams. I followed her style closely, her expression, clarity, romance, everything." An artiste like her never truly dies. She will live on forever in the hearts of listeners through her songs. What she has left behind is timeless and inexhaustible.

# NEWS

## Opposition's arena is streets

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Claiming there were efforts to render parliament ineffective, he urged July fighters to prepare for another mass movement.

"Without a mass movement, the government will not implement reforms. This time, we must take to the streets in a planned way. We do not want to fail or achieve only partial success again," he said.

At least 10 family members of July martyrs and injured activists, along with other speakers, said the key aspirations of the July uprising remain largely unfulfilled, including ending discrimination and reforming the state.

They alleged that by not placing major interim government ordinances before parliament, the BNP has gone against the spirit of the uprising. These ordinances included those on the referendum, police commission, enforced disappearance,

and Anti-Corruption Commission.

Shafiqur said most BNP lawmakers had themselves faced repression. "This [current parliament] is a gathering of the oppressed, who should understand each other's suffering. But power seems so ruthless that it makes people forget their past. Then they see nothing but the lure of power."

Referring to the BNP's 31-point reform pledge, he said, "The very first point was constitutional reform. Now they [BNP] have taken a position against it."

He further alleged a "spree of takeovers" across institutions, from Bangladesh Bank and Bangladesh Cricket Board to district councils and universities, accusing the BNP of attempting to reimpose "one-party rule in a BAKSAL-style manner."

Nahid also said the July martyrs and injured should not be used for

political purposes. "The government is at times invoking the July movement and 1971 to legitimise its actions. Yet it embodies neither 2024 nor 1971," he said.

Among others, Sanzida Khan, mother of July martyr Shahariar Khan Anas, said she did not expect the BNP, once an oppressed party, to "forget the martyrs and stand against the people's verdict" after coming to power.

"We believe Hasnat, Nahid and others represent the July martyrs and injured in parliament. We hope the government will honour the people's mandate and realise the martyrs' aspirations, without political duplicity," she added.

Injured July activist Kamrul Ahsan urged the government to implement the July charter in line with the referendum verdict, warning of a broader movement if it fails to do so.

## 31 eminent citizens slam repeal

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(Repeal) Bill, and the Supreme Court Secretariat (Repeal) Bill.

The signatories said the move amounted to showing a "thumbs-down to the aspirations of the people of the country."

They added that revoking ordinances tied to "fundamental reform, the independence of the judiciary, and ensuring human rights" was done "ignoring the people's demands and despite the strong objection of the opposition party."

The statement said, "This is contradictory to the current government's election manifesto and their repeatedly pronounced commitments. We strongly protest this."

The citizens also criticised recommendations for further scrutiny of the Right to Information (Amendment) Ordinance and the Enforced Disappearance Prevention and Remedy Ordinance, calling such moves "not at all desirable."

They stressed that passing the latter was part of the government's obligation under the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

The statement pointed out that the law minister, who was attorney general when the ordinances were passed, had been involved in drafting the Supreme Court Secretariat and Human Rights Commission

ordinances.

Against that backdrop, the government's objection was described as "truly surprising".

On the Human Rights Commission, they said successive governments had promised to make the body effective but failed.

The existing law, they argued, needed urgent amendment to meet international standards.

Had the ordinance been passed, victims could have received proper redress, and the commission could have acted against human rights violators.

However, since that did not happen, the fear has grown stronger that, as before, the Human Rights Commission may become an ineffective, bureaucratic institution or one dominated by politically loyal individuals, the statement added.

They further noted that the ruling party had pledged in its manifesto to make the Supreme Court Secretariat effective.

Repealing the measure, they cautioned, would undermine judicial independence and restore executive influence over subordinate courts.

The signatories said the 13th parliamentary election was not an ordinary one, but the outcome of a mass uprising that carried a promise to build a discrimination-free state and society after 15 years of misrule.

They urged the government to enact the ordinances through parliament. "Otherwise, there is

no doubt that the people will once again become vocal in protest and undertake active programmes."

Among the signatories are Anu Muhammad, economist and former professor at Jahangirnagar University; Sultana Kamal, veteran human rights activist and founding chairperson of Foundation for Human Rights Culture; Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of TIB; ZI Khan Panna, senior lawyer and chairperson of Ain o Salish Kendra; Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation; Shireen Parveen Huq, member of Naripokkho; Rasheda K Choudhury, executive director of Campaign for Popular Education; and Shamsul Huda, executive director of Association for Land Reform and Development.

## Artemis crew urges

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their shared humanity.

"What struck me wasn't necessarily just Earth, it was all the blackness around it. Earth was just this lifeboat hanging undisturbedly in the universe," said Koch.

"There's one new thing I know and that is: Planet Earth — you are a crew."

Hansen called on fans of the Artemis mission to see themselves in the crew of four, who marked a series of milestones: Glover was the first person of color to fly around the Moon, Koch was the first woman, and Canadian Hansen the first non-American.

## War threatens remittance lifeline

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authorities have restricted such gatherings," he said. "There are thousands of daily wage workers like us who are suffering."

Bangladeshi businesses in the Gulf are also struggling. "Be it clothing shops or construction work, every business is affected. There are almost no tourists in the thriving tourism industry of Bahrain," said Shafi Sarwar, a Bangladeshi businessman in Manama.

The Middle East hosts some 70 lakh Bangladeshi migrants, according to the Bureau of Manpower, Employment, and Training (BMET).

But overseas employment has dropped sharply in recent months. BMET data shows emigration clearance fell from 95,095 in January to 65,634 in February, and further to 44,661 in March.

In 2025, more than 80 percent of over one million Bangladeshi migrants went to the Middle East, which accounted for around 60 percent of the country's \$32 billion remittance.

Sharmin Akhter, 26, of Satkhira secured work visas for Jordan on February 27 and was supposed to fly in the first week of March.

"I am unable to fly and join work because my agency could not buy an air ticket," she told this newspaper yesterday. "Now I'm worried over the uncertainty created by the war."

Ali Haider Chowdhury, former secretary general of the Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies, said many workers who had received clearance are now also reluctant to travel due to security concerns.

"Employers are naturally hesitant to issue visas amid the business slowdown," he said, warning that remittance inflows could be affected.

Shakirul Islam, chairman of the Ovivashi Karmi Unnayan Programme, stressed that immediate attention must be given to migrants affected by the crisis.

"A significant number of Bangladeshi migrants are daily wage earners with irregular work. They are bearing the brunt of the crisis," he said.

Field reports suggest many have lost jobs or seen incomes fall sharply, with some struggling to afford food and shelter after being displaced, he said, urging Bangladesh missions in the Gulf to provide emergency

support.

Fahmida Khatun, executive director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, said higher energy import costs due to the Middle East crisis are already straining Bangladesh's economy.

"If overseas employment declines due to a prolonged conflict, it will further aggravate economic challenges," she said. "Migrant families would suffer from reduced income and job losses."

Each year, over 20 lakh youths enter the job market, of whom about 10 lakh seek jobs abroad, while only around one lakh are absorbed into formal employment.

"With private investment already low, a decline in overseas jobs would create a double burden for the employment sector," Fahmida said.

She emphasised diplomatic engagement with Gulf countries to protect migrant jobs and ensure support during the crisis.

Fahmida also recommended seeking assistance from international organisations and bilateral partners and creating a special fund for migrant workers to support evacuation and reintegration if necessary.

## Suspect dies after DNC raid

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pending against him at different police stations.

Mohammadpur Police Station Officer-in-Charge (OC) Mohammad Ashrafuzzaman confirmed that a DNC team conducted a raid at Akubbar's home in Charpara village around 10:00am and detained him.

"During questioning, he allegedly refused to provide information, prompting members of the team to beat him," said the OC, quoting locals and Akubbar's family.

"He fell ill and was first taken to a village doctor. When the practitioner refused to provide treatment, Akubbar was taken to the district Sadar hospital, where the on-duty doctor declared him dead," the OC told The Daily Star.

Angered by the incident, villagers attacked DNC personnel and injured one of them. Police later rescued them from the scene.

A general diary has been filed and the body has been sent for autopsy. If the death is found to have been caused by assault, a case will be filed accordingly, the police officer said.

Contacted by The Daily Star, Dr Sadia Selina Jhora, an emergency department physician at Magura 250-bed Sadar Hospital, said the man was brought dead to the hospital around 12:15pm. "The exact cause of death will be determined after an autopsy."

Speaking to this correspondent, Sub-Inspector of Magura DNC Sahara Yasmin said an 11-member team conducted the raid based on prior information and

recovered approximately half a kilogram of cannabis from the suspect's house. He was then arrested and a seizure list was prepared.

"After his arrest, we handcuffed him and were preparing to take him away when he suddenly fell ill. His family also said he was unwell. On humanitarian grounds, we removed the handcuffs and left him inside the house."

"We were outside near our vehicle when we heard he had become seriously ill. Soon after, locals got agitated, attacked us and vandalised our vehicle," she said, denying the allegation that DNC officials beat Akubbar.

Deputy Director of the Magura DNC, Md Nasir Uddin, could not be reached for comment despite several attempts.