



TRIBUTE

She was the best of us

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What is the best thing you can say about a person? That they made you laugh. Kaarina Kaisar was, sometimes unwittingly, the funniest person I knew. In a world that tests you at every waking moment and asks for some kind of sacrifice each time you want something, she was unapologetic, unconditional, and giving. She

the fray.

However, humour was not all she was—she was also the kindest and most giving person you could meet. She was the type who would send you voice messages to praise and encourage you, even if you had just met. If she perceived you to be talented in any way, she would go above and beyond to encourage you to pursue your craft.

It was easy to forget that

rather than celebrities. Kaisar Hamid was simply *Baba*. Like any other father, he cared, was sometimes annoyed by her antics, but loved her irrevocably. A video where her mother obsesses over a random glass jar she bought also comes to mind. Kaarina definitely knew how to humanise people, and she knew how to treat people like humans.

“They thought they could break my spirit; instead, they fueled my determination to combat this mindset. These are the mass representatives of society. They make you feel inadequate for not fitting into a certain body standard,” she said in an interview with The Daily Star.

Her words did not ring empty, as she wrote the screenplay and acted in *36-24-36*, a seminal film in the context of body positivity in Bangladesh. After its release, a senior colleague—a renowned writer and researcher—reached out to me to say, “I want to write about this film. This concept moved me to my core.” Kaarina had essentially made the jump from comedy to slice-of-life screenplays, including *Internsheep* and the recent *Ekshathe Alada*.

The screening for the latter is where I last met Kaarina. She had conjured up a ‘Sehri’ screening of the very intelligent film, which tackles the theme of divorce and the amicability between two people after a split. She had invited only close friends from

the industry and family. For a comedian, it was an incredibly risky story to tell, considering the taboo surrounding divorce that still resides firmly in our country. Through the lens of Rezaur Rahman and the acting chops of Yash Rohan and Parsa Evana, she gracefully tackled the issue.

By the time she reached 30, she had achieved the rare status of becoming a “celebrity’s celebrity”. She would tell actors, singers, and practitioners that she was a fan of theirs, only to hear back that they were fans of her untouchable humour.

It was no wonder that when Kaarina was hospitalised after liver failure in early May, the entire entertainment industry in Bangladesh held up their hands in prayer. When her parents were struggling for funds to secure an air ambulance, her friends mobilised the industry in a group chat to collect donations.

Even though Kaarina Kaisar is no longer here with us, every person she once made smile, encouraged, or motivated will remember her as one of the best human beings to come out of our relatively small showbiz industry. Some, including myself, are playing back her voice notes on Messenger to honour her presence; others are posting pictures and mourning in their own way. There is no mistaking that she was the best of us. She will always be the best of us.

Asghar Farhadi condemns civilian deaths and crackdown in Iran

Asghar Farhadi, the Oscar-winning Iranian filmmaker, on Friday (May 15) denounced both the deaths of civilians caused by US and Israeli strikes on Iran and the Islamic republic’s violent crackdown on protesters.

Farhadi, who arrived from Tehran last week, responded cautiously when questioned about the situation in his conflict-ridden homeland during the Cannes Film Festival, where his latest French-language film, *Parallel Tales*, premiered.

Referring to what he described as two “tragic events” this year, Farhadi spoke about the deaths of many innocent people, including children and civilians, during the attacks in Iran.

He also pointed to the killing of demonstrators who had taken to the streets in protest before the conflict began. “There is no justification for killing people, whether through war, executions, or the slaughter of protesters,” he said.

John Travolta honoured with Palme d’Or at Cannes



John Travolta received a surprise lifetime achievement award at the Cannes Film Festival on Friday (May 15). The honorary Palme d’Or was presented before the premiere of his directorial debut, *Propeller One-Way Night Coach*. “This is beyond the Oscar, really,” Travolta said as he accepted the tribute.

The self-financed, one-hour film is based on his first flight as an eight-year-old in 1962. His daughter, Ella Bleu, stars as an air hostess. Apple has acquired the rights to the film.

Cannes has presented honorary Palmes to several Hollywood legends this year, including Barbra Streisand and Peter Jackson. Travolta previously appeared at the festival in 1994, when Quentin Tarantino’s *Pulp Fiction* won the Palme d’Or.

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Inflation hits businesses across board

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The survey covered agriculture, manufacturing and services, drawing responses from 762 businesses, including 330 manufacturing firms and 432 service-sector enterprises, while agricultural data was sourced from government agencies.

The study focused on Dhaka and analysed data collected during the first and second quarters of fiscal 2025-26.

Businesses identified weak consumer demand as one of their biggest concerns. Small and medium-sized enterprises appeared to be under the greatest strain, as they struggled to absorb higher costs without losing customers.

Many firms also reported continued unofficial payments and demand for speed money to obtain licences, permits and regulatory approvals.

As per the EPI, agriculture performed well in the first two quarters of fiscal 2025-26, but the manufacturing sector suffered due to energy shortages, expensive imports and high financing costs.

Performance of the services sector, which includes wholesale and retail trade, was moderate.

Bangladesh’s economy is facing a difficult period marked by high inflation, pressure on foreign exchange reserves, sluggish investment, energy uncertainty, rising manufacturing costs and declining employment opportunities, said DCCI President Taskeen Ahmed.

Together, these challenges are intensifying pressure on the broader macroeconomy.

Conventional macroeconomic indicators often fail to capture real-time economic conditions and short-term changes, limiting the scope for timely policy responses.

In that context, he described the

EPI as a timely initiative that could help policymakers, entrepreneurs and researchers make decisions based on ground realities.

The index would gain greater credibility and effectiveness if expanded beyond Dhaka to capture nationwide business conditions, said Zaidi Sattar, chairman of the Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh.

Such an indicator could help entrepreneurs better assess the economic climate and make informed decisions, he added.

Nesar Ahmed, an international trade expert and former additional secretary involved with the Support to Sustainable Graduation Project (SSGP), warned that Bangladesh’s graduation from the least developed country (LDC) category could jeopardise duty-free access to European markets.

The CMSME sector could be particularly vulnerable, he said, while stressing the need to reduce the cost of doing business while ensuring supportive policies.

The economy is currently grappling with three major challenges: high inflation, weak investment and a fragile banking system, said Shibir Bicitro Barua, an additional secretary at the commerce ministry.

He also emphasised the need for future studies to incorporate broader macroeconomic indicators such as remittance inflows, foreign direct investment, domestic investment, inflation and unemployment to better reflect the overall economic situation.

Miah Rahman Ali, senior private sector specialist at the International Finance Corporation, urged future studies to focus more on risk reduction, value addition and preparing industries for global shocks, including wars, supply chain disruptions and environmental

pressures.

He cautioned that Bangladesh’s heavy dependence on garment exports and remittances leaves the wider economy vulnerable to any downturn in the apparel sector.

He also called for stronger policy support to help industries comply with increasingly stringent environmental standards in Europe and recommended alternative financing tools such as movable asset-based collateral and embedded finance backed by appropriate legal frameworks.

Both public and private sector spending had outpaced income growth in recent years, while sluggish investment expansion has slowed overall economic activity, said Mizanur Rahman, a professor at the University of Dhaka’s department of accounting.

Bangladesh should rely more on the capital market for long-term financing instead of depending predominantly on banks, said Syed Muntasir Mamun, director general of the foreign ministry’s international trade, investment and technology wing.

The country’s capital market remains weak and there is still limited readiness to deepen reliance on it, he added.

Sector-specific information could play an important role in policymaking, institutional reform and designing incentives, said Md Ariful Hoque, former director general of the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority.

Greater digitalisation of public services would significantly reduce hassles faced by the private sector, he added.

There is no alternative to foreign direct investment for accelerating economic growth, said Akhand Mohammad Akhtar Hossain, chief economist of the Bangladesh Bank, adding that Bangladesh trails significantly in this area.

(Kotwali zone) of Rangpur Metropolitan Police (RMP); Rabiul Islam, former officer-in-charge of Tajhat Police Station; and sub-inspector Bibhuti Bhushan Roy, who was in charge of the university’s police outpost. They were also given an additional 10 years’ rigorous imprisonment on other counts.

Former BRUR VC Rashid and former RMP commissioner Md Moniruzzaman were sentenced to 10 years’ imprisonment on charges of command responsibility.

Good ties with India hinge on Farakka

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Khaleda Zia to secure agreements.

“This treaty must be for an indefinite period and remain effective until any future agreement replaces it,” Fakhrul said, stressing that unity is essential.

“Maulana Bhashani united people over the Farakka issue, which later made it possible for Ziaur Rahman to implement an agreement.”

He warned that the current Ganges Treaty, set to expire in December 2026, must be renewed to avoid serious concerns.

“I thank our Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, who has taken a quick decision to move forward with the Padma Barrage project. This is a historic decision that will help protect vast areas of the country,” he said.

People will resist obstruction

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have been spreading confusion about these programmes.

He urged everyone to stay alert so that development projects are not disrupted due to plots by any quarter.

Earlier, around 2:40pm, the prime minister inaugurated the re-excavation work on historic Khorddo Khal in Shahraستی upazila of Chandpur, 48 years after his late father and former president Ziaur Rahman excavated it, UNB reports.

Addressing a rally there, Tarique called upon the country’s people to take a vow to rebuild the nation.

“From today, let our only mission be nation-building and state reconstruction.

Fakhrul urged immediate discussions with India, asserting, “Bangladesh will never allow any agreement that undermines the country’s interests. We believe Tarique Rahman’s government will always prioritise Bangladesh’s interests above everything else.”

At another programme organised by the Bhashani Janashakti Party at the Central Shaheed Minar, Information and Broadcasting Minister Zahir Uddin Swapon said the government would renew the treaty ahead of expiry, prioritising national interest.

He said strong diplomatic efforts would continue, in coordination with all stakeholders, to secure Bangladesh’s rightful share of transboundary river waters under international frameworks,

reports BSS.

Recalling Bhashani’s foresight, Swapon noted that although no effective international water-sharing mechanism existed in the 1970s, the veteran leader anticipated the crisis.

He said the current government stands closest to Bhashani’s ideology and upholds the Sheaf of Paddy symbol, representing independence, sovereignty, and a diplomatic path to resolving the dispute.

Swapon called on democratic forces to unite, stressing that water-sharing depends not only on treaties but also on strong bilateral ties. He expressed hope that the government, backed by its popular mandate, would resolve the long-standing issue.

BNP government will fulfil all public demands gradually,” Tarique said.

He also said the government would discuss with the education ministry soon the issue of establishing an agricultural university in Cumilla.

Criticising the previous Awami League regime, the PM alleged that it oppressed people, carried out enforced disappearances and killings, and laundered public wealth abroad during its 17-year rule.

“As a result, the country is now under economic pressure. That is why we all have to work hard and remain patient. Insha’Allah, we will gradually fulfil the demands and expectations of people,” he said.

Culture of fear returning to univs

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universities, practices of renaming academic buildings and student halls opened new avenues for attacks on dissent.

The network reported that progressive teachers at private universities like Uttara University and the University of Asia Pacific, who had joined the July protests, were also targeted.

The statement also said some student union leaders played a role in attacks on The Daily Star and Prothom Alo, while calls for assaults on cultural groups like Udichi and Chhayanaut reportedly came from elected student leaders at Rajshahi and Jahangirnagar universities.

Rajshahi University Prof Kazi

Mamun Haidar, joining virtually, said fear and intimidation returned to campus when a former student leader of the now-banned Chhatra League was killed by a mob in September 2024.

He added that while building and hall names were changed, no academic reforms followed.

Khulna University Prof Abdullah Harun Chowdhury noted that “personal or narrow interests drive everything”, and a neutral university administration, backed by impartial government support, could solve many problems.

Jahangirnagar University Assistant Professor Dhiman Sarkar observed that if anyone goes against a certain ideology, bot attacks begin.

Waterlogging in Ctg

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will be temporarily halted during the peak monsoon, work will resume at full speed immediately afterward. “By the end of this year, a major, visible solution to Chattogram’s decades-old waterlogging and drainage crisis will be achieved,” Khosru promised.

“We want a definitive solution now, but the accounts of what was looted in the past will certainly be unearthed. Investigators will find out exactly who was involved in plundering these project funds,” he asserted.

Former VC

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A video showing him being shot by police while standing with his arms outstretched in defiance went viral, turning him into an icon of resistance and a symbol for the movement.

His killing is widely seen as a turning point that galvanised the mass uprising, which culminated in the fall of the Awami League regime on August 5, 2024.

Those sentenced to life imprisonment are Md Arifuzzaman, former assistant commissioner