

A final farewell to Mustafa Monwar, a guiding light for Bangladeshi artists



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

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With the passing of one of the country's most beloved cultural icons, Mustafa Monwar, Bangladesh has lost a towering figure in its artistic and cultural landscape. The eminent artist and cultural personality breathed his last yesterday at the age of 90 while undergoing treatment at a private hospital for age-related complications.

A legendary figure admired across generations, Monwar was cherished by people from all walks of life. As the nation's cultural community mourns his loss, The Daily Star spoke to several distinguished cultural personalities, who shared their memories and reflections on the remarkable life and legacy he leaves behind.

He was our mentor: Mamunur Rashid
Cultural personality Mamunur Rashid reflected on a lifelong relationship with Mustafa Monwar. "I first met him sometime in 1967 at Bangladesh Television. From that first introduction, our relationship continued throughout our lives. I learnt so much from him and gained invaluable knowledge through his guidance. He was a man of immense wisdom. Mustafa Monwar was our mentor — a mentor to generations of artists."

Reflecting on their time together during the Liberation War, Rashid said, "In 1971, when I was working at the Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra in Kolkata, I had the opportunity to spend a great deal of time with him. It was then that I truly realised what an exceptional human being he was — generous, kind-hearted, and remarkably talented. Art was at the centre of everything he did."

Speaking about Monwar's artistic stature, Mamunur Rashid said, "There are very few artists in Bangladesh who could match him in watercolour painting. Mustafa Monwar was a complete artist in every sense of the word."

Rashid also highlighted Monwar's deep

commitment to children. "Most importantly, he always thought about children. He devoted much of his life to creating meaningful work for them. I have the deepest respect for him, and I believe he will continue to live on through his work."

His constant encouragement helped me grow as an artist: Nima Rahman
Actress Nima Rahman, niece of the cultural icon Mustafa Monwar, shared about the profound influence her uncle had on both her life and artistic journey.



Mamunur Rashid

"Mustafa Monwar was not only my maternal uncle; he was also my mentor," said Nima Rahman. Recalling her early years, she said, "I was only two and a half years old when I first took part in a children's television programme. As a child, I participated in countless programmes, including recitations, poetry performances, and other cultural activities."

Nima also remembered a milestone from her childhood career. "In 1972, I took part in a programme based on Kazi Nazrul Islam's poem *Bidrohi*, titled *Bidrohi Jonaki*. I later received the National Film Award as a child artist. He was the one who constantly encouraged and inspired me to pursue my

work and continue growing as an artiste."

She added, "At one stage, I also presented *Notun Kuri*. All of that was possible because of his guidance and support. Today, he is gone. He will never return, and I will never see him again. It feels as though a protective shade has been lifted from above my head. I pray that his soul finds eternal peace on its final journey."

Simply sitting with him was an education: Tariq Anam Khan
"Mustafa Monwar was truly one of a kind.



Nima Rahman

There will never be another like him," said Tariq Anam Khan. "His presence extended across every branch of the arts. The breadth of his knowledge was extraordinary. He was deeply familiar with world literature, and simply sitting with him was an education in itself. You would always learn something new from him. That is why I say — Mustafa Monwar was unique."

He recalled first becoming familiar with Monwar through television.

"I first came across his name on Bangladesh Television. Seeing his name repeatedly on BTV left a lasting impression on me." Tariq Anam Khan went on to describe how his personal relationship with

Monwar developed over the years.

Reflecting on Monwar's support for theatre, he said, "After the establishment of Natyakendra, we received immense encouragement and inspiration from him. He watched many of our productions. During his time at BTV and later at the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, I had many opportunities to be in his company. His companionship enriched me greatly, and I learnt so much from him."

Sharing a treasured personal memory,



Tariq Anam Khan

Tariq said, "He once sculpted a clay figure and gifted it to me. I still have that sculpture today."

I can still picture his ever-smiling face: Abul Hayat

Veteran actor Abul Hayat fondly remembered his long association with the late cultural icon Mustafa Monwar, reflecting on the artist's immense talent, intellect, and lasting contributions to Bangladesh's cultural landscape.

"I worked in two television dramas directed by Mustafa Monwar in 1970," said Abul Hayat. "One was *Dakghar*, and the other was *Muktodhara*. That was the beginning of our acquaintance, which continued for decades. Even then, I realised how knowledgeable he

was and what an extraordinary person he was. It is rare to come across a person of his brilliance."

Abul Hayat also recalled Monwar's acclaimed adaptation of Rabindranath Tagore's *Roktokorobi*.

"It was one of his most remarkable productions. The production created a tremendous impact and was widely celebrated. He was very keen for me to be part of the cast, but due to commitments to other productions, I was unable to accept. Even so, whenever we



Abul Hayat

met afterwards, he would greet me with the same warmth and kindness. I can still picture his ever-smiling face."

He noted that Monwar was particularly admired for his pioneering work in puppetry.

"He was widely recognised for his contributions to puppet theatre. Beyond his work for adults, he was deeply devoted to creating meaningful programmes for children, which made him even more admirable in my eyes."

Speaking of Monwar's musical abilities, Hayat added, "He had a wonderful singing voice and was an excellent singer. I heard him perform on many occasions, and he always captivated his audience."

NEWS

Lighter whistle helps fuel faster, fiercer WC

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"Looking at data from the last three World Cups, the distance covered by the athletes is similar, but there's a lot more high-speed running, a lot more sprinting," said Chris West, conditioning coach for football at the University of Connecticut.

Most teams now press opponents not only to disrupt the build-up but also to win the ball back, West said.

As a result, the high-speed running players do in attack continues when possession is lost, as they seek to regain the ball as quickly as possible.

"It has become a high-intensity game," he said.

The game's relentless intensity has also been aided by a more lenient approach from referees.

"There are a lot of tackles that referees simply don't call. Anything goes," Brazilian television pundit Ledio Carmona said during Uruguay's group-stage match against Spain, praising the official's willingness to let play flow despite the contest's physical edge.

World football's governing body, FIFA, wanted fewer interruptions to matches, according to comments by its Chief Refereeing Officer Pierluigi Collina. The aim is for the game to have a better flow.

That is also why it introduced new rules for this year's tournament.

An analysis by NetSI Sport, the research hub specialising in data and sport run by Northeastern University, showed the number of fouls per game this year fell to 24.3 from 27.7 in 2022 and 29.3 in 2018.

The number of yellow cards has also dropped, but there has been an increase in red cards.

NetSI Sport analysis showed the group stage this year was the highest-scoring of the modern era with 2.95 goals per game, surpassing the previous record from Brazil's World Cup in 2014 of 2.83 per match.

"The best referees pick their spots, allowing the stars to shine," said Mark Clattenburg, Fox TV rules analyst and former English Premier League referee. "The game's played in a better way, the game has flowed better," he

said during the Germany versus Ivory Coast clash.

The faster, more physical game is also testing the limits of players' bodies.

West said hamstrings and calves are among the muscle groups most exposed by the current intensity, with the risks rising sharply for players who are not fully fit.

Neymar is among the World Cup stars dealing with a calf injury, battling to get fit and make his mark on the tournament.

Brazil also has concerns over Raphinha, who suffered a hamstring injury during the group-stage match against Haiti.

The Brazilian Football Confederation declined to comment on either player's condition or whether this year's high-intensity matches were increasing injury risks.

Other key players have faced similar problems, with US playmaker Christian Pulisic recovering from a calf injury and England's Reece James still managing a hamstringing issue.

He also suggested placing budget implementation review reports before parliament every three to four months.

The opposition leader criticised the proposed budget for lacking a clear roadmap for recovering money allegedly laundered abroad.

He said recovering even a fraction of the funds would significantly reduce the budget deficit and urged the government to pursue legal measures with the relevant countries to bring the money back.

Shafiqur also called for bringing Qawmi and Ebtedayee madrasas under budgetary support, including eligible educational institutions in the MPO scheme, transforming universities into research-oriented institutions, increasing investment in education and healthcare in the Chattogram Hill Tracts, strengthening healthcare infrastructure and workforce, forming a parliamentary task force for expatriate Bangladeshis, and dismantling labour recruitment syndicates, particularly those linked to the Malaysian job market.

Dengue cases

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Entomologist GM Saifur Rahman of National University attributed the rise in cases to weather conditions and weak mosquito control measures.

"This year, humidity, temperature and rainfall are all high, creating ideal conditions for dengue transmission," he said.

He said Bangladesh has failed to effectively control Aedes mosquito populations for several years and still lacks proper identification of mosquito breeding and transmission clusters, as well as an effective early warning system.

"The current increase is consistent with what we had predicted," he said.

Rahman said establishing an early warning system should now be a priority so authorities can identify hotspots, monitor the spread of infections, and alert residents to take preventive measures.

He also urged people to protect themselves by wearing long-sleeved clothing where possible, keeping doors and windows closed during peak mosquito biting hours in the early morning and late afternoon, and using mosquito repellents or coils.

"If people know dengue is spreading in their area, they are more likely to take preventive measures," he said.

Rahman also called on city corporations, municipalities and union parishads to eliminate mosquito breeding sites and intensify insecticide application in outbreak areas.

"Fogging, ultra-low-volume spraying and adulticide spraying should be carried out where dengue patients have been identified. Without killing infected adult mosquitoes, it will not be possible to interrupt transmission," he said.

"No matter how many larvae we eliminate, we cannot effectively control an ongoing outbreak unless infected adult mosquitoes are also targeted. Authorities must ensure they have the necessary equipment, insecticides and operational capacity without delay," he said.

"As long as the rainy season continues, dengue transmission is likely to increase unless effective interventions are put in place immediately," he added.

Power outages persist

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shortfall at 266MW, followed by Dhaka (244MW), Khulna (189MW), Rajshahi (183MW) and Cumilla (163MW).

Grid data showed electricity supply fell short of demand by about 500MW to 1,800MW for most of the past week.

In Gazipur, residents said power went out every one to one-and-a-half hours, with some areas enduring 10 to 12 hours of load shedding a day.

Abdus Sattar Bhuiyan, owner of Mumtahina Foods and Oils Mill in Sreepur, said repeated power cuts had halved his factory's mustard processing output in recent weeks.

Foyez Ahmed, administrative manager of SPM Design Limited, said the outages were seriously disrupting production. "We are also being forced to spend extra on fuel to run generators," he said.

Students also suffered. Maulana Faiz Uddin, a teacher from Gazipur Sadar, said prolonged outages were disrupting his students' exam preparation.

Last week, residents in Kaliakair blocked the Dhaka-Tangail Highway and later besieged the local electricity office, demanding uninterrupted supply. Officials said the Mouchak and Bannara areas required about 70MW but were receiving only 32MW.

In Savar and Ashulia, residents and industries reported similar experiences.

"Our factory has been facing around three hours of power cuts every day since Eid. We have to depend on generators, which is increasing production costs," said Md Adam Ali, HR and compliance manager of Nava Knit Composite Ltd.

Monira Dewan Omi, a resident of Bank Colony in Savar, said electricity went off seven to eight times a day.

Officials of Dhaka Palli Bidyut Samity-1 and 3 said they were receiving 20 to 30 percent less electricity than required.

In Mymensingh, officials said supply improved yesterday as higher generation and rainfall reduced demand, although residents in several rural areas still reported outages lasting more than three hours.

In Narayanganj, residents said Palli Bidyut consumers were facing worse load shedding than those served by the Dhaka Power Distribution Company, with frequent nighttime outages becoming routine.

Cumilla continued to face a power deficit of 15 to 20 percent, with rural

areas experiencing much longer outages than urban centres.

Kamrul Hasan, a resident of Daudkandi, said his area was experiencing around 10 hours of load shedding every day.

In Khulna, prolonged outages continued to disrupt daily life.

Meghla Mollick, an HSC candidate from Batiaghata, said power cuts every two to three hours over the past week had seriously affected her exam preparation.

According to the Bangladesh Frozen Foods Exporters Association, the electricity shortage had forced many shrimp processing factories to suspend operations.

"If the aerators stop because of power cuts, the shrimp will suffer. In this intense heat, prolonged outages could wipe out the entire stock," said shrimp farmer Krishna Biswas.

Residents also complained they could not watch FIFA World Cup matches because of frequent power cuts after sunset.

Mostafizur Rahman Anik of Bagha in Rajshahi, said, "The power goes out several times at night. On top of that, the intense heat makes these sudden outages extremely uncomfortable."

Zahedur Rahman of Kurigram added, "We get power for one hour and then lose it for two."

Officials in Rangpur said rainfall reduced demand yesterday, resulting in little or no daytime load shedding, but acknowledged they had implemented 25 to 40 percent load shedding over the previous week because of inadequate supply.

(Our correspondents from the respective districts contributed to this report.)

5 die in a single day

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City Corporation, Dhaka South City Corporation, and Mymensingh.

With the latest deaths, the dengue death toll this year has risen to 18, including 11 outside Dhaka.

The total number of confirmed dengue cases has reached 5,924, of which 4,203 were reported outside the capital.

Currently, 451 dengue patients are undergoing treatment at hospitals across the country, including 349 outside Dhaka.

So far, 5,455 dengue patients have recovered and been discharged from hospitals, with 4,203 of them from outside Dhaka.