

## Year of the Pandemic: When the stars fell out of the sky

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Even if it were to end today, merely 207 days into the calendar, the year 2020 has probably inflicted enough misery already on humanity across all corners of the planet, such that none would object to the application of the old Latin phrase '*Annus horribilis*' (horrible year) in describing it.

The pandemic induced by a novel coronavirus, and the ruthless manner in which it has ravaged large swathes of the world population, with a distinct predilection for the elderly or otherwise vulnerable, is an obvious game-changer. With another 158 days still left in the year, already people can't wait for it all to be over.

The year has taken away many noted personalities around the world and Bangladesh, including national professor Dr Anisuzzaman, journalist Kamal Lohani and engineer extraordinaire Jamilur Reza Choudhury and more due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and other causes of death.

To honour the deceased, today we recall the contributions of some of the most noted individuals from the artistic and cultural firmament of Bangladesh, who all were taken away from us in the course of 2020 (in order of their time of death from the beginning of the year to July 2020.)

#### **Dr Ashraf Siddiqui**



Ekushey Padak winner internationally acclaimed Bangladeshi folklorist, researcher, essayist and poet Dr Ashraf Siddiqui passed away on March 19, 2020 at the age of 93.

Emerged as a promising young poet in the 1940s, Dr Ashraf cemented his legacy with around 500 poems including his legendary poem 'Taleb Master'; 75 books including short stories, novels, children's literature and many academic research articles on the folklore of Bangladesh in his seven-decade-long career. During his tenure as the Director-General of Bangla Academy from 1976-1982, he started the annual 'Amar Ekushey Book Fair' from 1977 in Bangla Academy ground.

In his successful career, Dr Siddiqui prestigiously held the positions of Kendrio Bangla Unnoyon Board director, chairman of Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS), president of Nazrul Academy and Nazrul Institute, principal of Jagannath College and more. National film award-winning film 'Dumurer Phool' (1978), directed by eminent filmmaker Subhash Dutta, was made from his story 'Golir Dharer Chheleti'.

### **Ferdousi Ahmed Lina**

One of the most familiar faces in television dramas and films, actress Ferdousi Ahmed Lina passed away on April 18 at the age of 63, due to kidney failure.

Ferdousi Ahmed Lina began her career in 1975 as a television artist and made her first appearance in BTV drama 'Kalo Kokila' in 1978. She made her film debut in 'Rajalakshmi Shrikanta', directed by Bulbul Ahmed. Her last film was 'Debdas', directed by late Chashi Nazrul Islam.



In her acclaimed career, Lina acted in several popular television dramas including 'Gulshan Avenue', drama series 'Ghatak Pakhi Bhai', 'Nandini' and more. She was also an official at Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy (BSA).

### **Rana Hamid**

Noted actor, film producer and director Rana Hamid passed away at a hospital in the capital on May 9, due to stomach cancer and kidney complications. He was a member of Bangladesh Film Censor Board.

A known face from the 90's cinema industry in Bangladesh, Rana garnered prominence through his performance in the film 'Gang Leader' and also made several films including 'Masud Rana Ekhon Dhakay' and 'Dhakar Rani'.



During his career, Rana was a former Director of Bangladesh Film Development Corporation (BFDC) and was a member of Bangladesh Film Artistes' Association.

### **Professor Anisuzzaman**

Perhaps one of the biggest loss of Bangladesh in 2020, National Professor Dr Anisuzzaman passed away on May 14 at the age of 83. He was tested positive for COVID-19.

As one of the eminent Bangladeshi academics who earned massive respect from academicians around the world, Dr Anisuzzaman taught at Dhaka and Chittagong universities, was a post-doctoral fellow at University of Chicago, and a Commonwealth Academic Staff Fellow at University of London.





In his glorious career in academia, Prof Anisuzzaman was also associated with research projects of United Nations University and was a visiting fellow at the University of Paris, North Carolina State University, University of Calcutta and a visiting professor at Visva-Bharati of India.

For his immense contribution to the education sector of Bangladesh, he was awarded Ekushey Padak and Swadhinata Padak, the highest civilian awards of the country. The Indian government had awarded him Padma Bhushan, the country's third-highest civilian honour, for his distinguished service in fields of Bangla literature and education.

Dr Anisuzzaman has also served as the President of Bangla Academy till his death.

### **Ajmeri Zaman Reshma**



Legendary actor and cultural personality Ajmeri Zaman Reshma passed away on May 20 due to old-age complications, at the age of 82.

Reshma earned the reputation of being an actor in the pre- and post-independence film industry of Bangladesh. She has also worked on the country's theatre sphere and television as a presenter and newscaster.

She was hugely acclaimed for her performance on television in the Bangla adaptation by Munier Chowdhury of William Shakespeare's "Taming of the Shrew," titled "Mukhora Romoni Boshikoron," with co-stars Golam Mustafa, Hasan Imam, Laila Hasan and many others in 1970. The drama was directed by artist Mostofa Monwar.

Debuted with the Urdu film "Jeena Bhi Mushkil," she tantalized her audiences in both Urdu and Bengali films like "Chokori," "Bhawal Shonnyashi," "Noyontara," "Indhan," "Darshan," "Chand aur Chandni," "Phir Milenge Hum Dono," "Shurjo Uthar Agey," "Megher Pore Megh" and "Shesh Uttor."

## Mustafa Kamal Sayed



Another epic loss for Bangladesh credited to the COVID-19 pandemic, eminent Bangladeshi television producer Mustafa Kamal Sayed passed away on May 31 at the age of 75.

Being the man who propelled Bangladeshi television contents as one of the founding producers of Bangladesh Television (BTV) from 1967 to 2004, Sayed joined popular Bangladeshi television channel NTV as its Chief of Programme after retiring from BTV. He took both the channels into massive heights with quality contents, along with launching a handful of young and promising talents in the television industry of Bangladesh who later established themselves as celebrities.



Syed was the recipient of National Award for Best Music Producer of Television in 1975.

### **Kamal Lohani**



Ekushey Padak winner veteran journalist and cultural personality Kamal Lohani became the most recent victim of the COVID-19 in the arts and culture sphere of Bangladesh on June 20.

Starting his celebrated career as a journalist in the Daily Millat in 1955, Kamal joined country's renowned cultural institution Chhayanaut in 1962 as its General Secretary. He also formed 'Kranti', a left cultural organization in 1967 and served as the head of news of Shwadhin Bangla Betar Kendra during the Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971.

Throughout his eventful career, Kamal Lohani worked at reputed Bangladeshi newspapers including Daily Azad, Daily Sangbad, Daily Purbodesh, Dainik Barta and more. He has also served as the President of Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ).

Alongside his journalistic achievements, Kamal Lohani also performed his duty as the Director General of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy (BSA) from 2009 to 2011.

### **Nimai Bhattacharya**

The Bengali writer who is known for his immensely popular classic 'Memsahab', writer Nimai Bhattacharya passed away on June 25 at the age of 89 in Kolkata, India.

Born in Magura district under the British Presidency in 1931, the 'Banga Bibhushan' winner writer has penned over 150 books including "Memsahab", "Diplomat", "Minibus", "Inquilab" and "Imon Kalyan" in his career.



His most popular novel 'Memsahab' was adapted into a commercially-successful movie starring Uttam Kumar and Aparna Sen in the lead roles.

### **Andrew Kishore**

The golden-voiced 'King of Playback' in the Bangladeshi music industry, Andrew Kishore, one of the most popular singers of the country, passed away on July 6 at the age of 64.



A record eight-times National Film Award winner, Andrew Kishore lost his long-fought battle with Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma cancer which he was diagnosed with on September, last year. He was receiving treatment in Singapore since then and came to his motherland on June 11.

An impossible number of 15,000 songs in his illustrious career, some of Andrew Kishore's monumentally popular tracks are 'Jiboner Golpo, Achhe Baki Olpo', 'Amar Buker Moddhe Khane', 'Dak Diyachhen Doyal Amare', 'Hayre Manush Rongin Fanush', 'Amar Shara Deho Kheyo Go Mati', 'Amar Babar Mukhe Prothom Jedin Shunechilam Gaan', 'Bhengeche Pinjor Meleche Dana', 'Bhalobese Gelam Shudhu' etc.