

Flasback

A walk down memory lane

Anisul Haque, The Mayor of Dhaka North City Corporation, reminisces about his career as an anchor in 'Ontorale'.



Anisul Haque with the producer of 'Ontoarale' Musa Ahmed. Photo: courtesy

Neatly brushed hair, dressed in bell-bottoms, paired with straight pointed collar shirts, and a bright, wide smile.

Packed with entertaining contents and featuring the

spontaneous, up-tempo personality of the anchor, Ontorale, a BTV show from the 80s, was a staple of national television during that time.

Long before Anisul Haque was elected as the Mayor of Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC), he made his mark in the minds and hearts of the public with this TV show, as a TV host.

Interestingly, Haque's foray into TV as an anchor in Ontrorale was rather coincidental.

Year 1980. With no intention of auditioning for a TV show, Anisul Haque was accompanying a friend at the BTV centre. He had a train to catch in a few hours. But producer Musa Ahmed had other plans.

Ahmed was about to commence the shooting of his new show, but his anchor had not shown up on the set.

“He asked me two questions – whether I absolutely needed to leave for Chittagong and whether I ever faced the camera,” Haque recalls laughingly.

Ahmed
was a bit
sceptical

about
this
young
man
who had
no



experience in hosting a TV show and wasn't sure whether Haque had what was needed to make the show a success. However, Anisul read the script once, faced the camera test, became a member of the cast and the

rest, as they say, is history. The show became an instant hit.

Anisul Haque's charismatic presentation was undoubtedly a reason behind the show's popularity, says Abdun Nur Tushar, a popular media personality, debater and a doctor. "As it was a star studded show, people would be glued to their TV sets to catch a glimpse of their favourite media personalities," says Tushar. "Starting from Abdullah Abu Sayeed to Afzal Hossain and Suborna Mustafa, every celebrated name was invited as a guest at least once on the show."

The show had 24 episodes in total and was aired every 15 days for 50 minutes. In the beginning of every episode, Haque would come up with a different theme and a number of items – like songs, dances, recitations, quizzes, debates and interviews, based on the particular theme.

"Once something quite unexpected happened on the set as Haque was working on a theme titled 'Mother'," recalls Tushar. "As he was showing a book with pictures of martyrs from 71 and paying respect to their mothers, one of the junior artists present on set recognised her freedom fighter son among the other martyrs. Unaware of her son's death before this, she completely broke

down.”

The shooting was halted and she was asked whether she would like to be interviewed about her son, adds Tushar. After she agreed to do so, the content was revised that very moment and her interview was included. That particular episode touched many people's hearts.

“Even though it was not the longest running show, we heard that people took out a procession when the show aired its final episode,” says a nostalgic Anisul Haque. “On the set of the last episode, other popular anchors like Fazle Lohani, Abdullah Abu Sayeed, Shafiq Rehman were also present and as I finished the show, apparently many people had tears in their eyes,” he ends.

“Haque did not announce the ending in an ordinary manner, he did it using an anecdote”, informs Tushar.

The anecdote goes like this – ‘once upon a time there lived a king who was dearly loved by all his subjects. One day, the king suddenly died leaving everyone shattered. They were not ready to accept his absence, so they decided to wait for him to return. They waited for a long time, having painted the castle and adorned it with flowers.’

Ontorale too, like the King, made its exit from our television scene leaving an indelible mark in the viewers' hearts.