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When celebs get quizzed

- Mir, the entertainer, held centrestage at Balai Shaat, an evening of questions and answers, music and mirth, in association with The Telegraph Salt Lake

Our Bureau



CROWNING MOMENT: Siddhartha Chatterjee holds aloft the winner's plate with partner Sayan Gupta by him as Abir Chatterjee, Tushar Kar of GD Pharmaceuticals and quizmaster Mir look on. (Shubham Paul)

It was a quiz on Calcutta and six celebrity Calcuttans fielded questions posed by quizmaster Mir before a packed audience. The event, Balai 60, was presented at EZCC on April 29 by Care Continuum, in association with **The Telegraph Salt Lake**.

Care Continuum provides care to the elderly and ailing and the quiz teams too had one celebrity senior citizen teamed with a young student or professional. So it was actor Barun Chanda with zoology major Arya Chakraborty, actor Deepankar De with school teacher Sucheta Chakraborty, actress Anashua Majumdar with B.Tech student Padmaksha Bhattacharya, Siddhartha "Topshe" Chatterjee with SRFTI student Sayan Gupta, former cricketer Sambaran Banerjee with hospital management student Riyanka Acharya, and singer Usha Uthup with ad filmmaker Abhishek Sinha.

"I will try to bribe him," Usha Uthup said of Mir, as she walked up to take her seat. Mir confirmed that she had asked for a partner who would make her win. Her partner Abhishek was indeed in prime form and the team surged ahead right from the first round.

"Khushwant Singh believed that Bengalis had five holy cows which no one may speak ill of. After Calcutta, Tagore, Mohun Bagan and Netaji what's the fifth?" Mir asked and Team Usha got it right — Satyajit Ray. "Syed Mujtaba Ali wrote that Muhammad bin Tughlaq died after eating palla fish while sailing in the Indus. What do we better know this fish as?" asked Mir and again Team Usha got it right — hilsa.

Other teams, though slower in their scoring rate, too gradually opened their accounts. "What would you find on the first floor of 15 Bankim Chatterjee Street?" asked Mir and Barun Chanda aced it with Indian Coffee House. "Who invented the Ledikeni, that got named after Lady Canning?" After other teams wrongly named every other confectioner in town, Chatterjee bagged marks by answering Bhim Nag.

Laugh-a-minute

After showing a clip from the film *Chander Pahar* with actor Dev escaping a marauding

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elephant, Mir asked what type of snake Dev would come face to face in the scene next. "Black Mamba," replied Abhishek and Team Usha bagged the points.

"As black as Didi's kanjeevaram sari," added Mir as Uthup protested that it was she who knew the answer.

In the audio round, a song *Ami hasbo, ami lorbo* was played. "It's sung by Indranil but you have to name the song writer," said Mir. The audience laughed when Barun's partner Arya replied "Mamata Banerjee". Mir went over to the girl, made her stand and repeat the answer but then surprised everyone by saying it was correct! "This is the song for Sabuj Sathi (a state government project for bicycle distribution among students)," he said, winning her a huge applause from the audience.

"What is the mount of Ma Sitala," asked Mir, adding that he himself was a clue to the answer. "Donkey," answered De, unable to contain his laughter.

"They will take care of us," Majumdar had said of the junior partners before the start of the quiz. Little did she know that she would be saddled with a partner who would contribute ample moments of mirth to Mir. Asked the surname of Devdas in Saratchandra Chattopadhyay's novel of the same name, her partner Padmaksha confidently responded: "Devdas did not have a surname. So the answer is Devdas," making Mir conclude that he frequents the bar of the same name on the Bypass.

In the audio round, they played the song *Dunia dot com* and when Mir asked which band's song it was, Padmaksha said Bandage, Mir's own band that was slated to perform later that evening. A flattered Mir went over and kissed his head and then his hand till Padmaksha said, squirming: "*Ektu barabari hoye jachche na?*" Mir conceded it was indeed over-ambitious to think his band had written the song. The question passed over and Sucheta of Team Deepankar correctly answered Chandrabindoo.

Fond memories

The audience could be heard gasping collectively when team after team named "the first Bengali mega serial" wrong. Many a hand shot up when the question passed to the audience. The answer was *Janani*. Again everyone started murmuring when they played the Doordarshan theme song in the audio round. "But it won't be so easy," people were heard muttering. "I'm sure they'll ask us to identify the composer." Indeed, that was the case and Team Usha got it right again, by naming Pandit Ravi Shankar. "Indira Gandhi had wanted the tune to be close to *Sare Jahan Se Achcha*," added Mir.

The celebrities chatted in between the questions. When Abhishek answered that it was Kishore Kumar who called his wives *bandariya* as all four lived in Bombay's Bandra, his partner shared how much she admired the singer. "My fondest memory of him is when he performed the *Padosan* song live with Mehmood. It was fantastic and when I asked him how he did it, he answered me in chaste Tamil," smiled Usha.



One question had the teams guessing which railway station a train in a Feldua film clip had halted at and Siddhartha, who played Topse in that film, was barred from answering it. But he later reminisced about that shoot at Kanpur station. "It was shot in 10 minutes flat and we were all very worried that the train might chug off before we were done. But it went off smoothly," he recalled.

"My GK is strong," Sambaran had said at before the quiz, brimming with confidence. Sadly once Anashua overtook him with a correct answer in the buzzer round (by virtue of their single successful reply *mishti doi* to the question "Which sweet had Tagore renamed *payodhi?*") he was left at the bottom of the table, behind even Team Barun.

Sambaran himself had missed a sitter by failing to recognise Barack Obama's voice, talking of Swami Vivekananda who delivered his famous Parliament of Religions address in Obama's former hometown Chicago. "Is that accent like Abdul Kalam's?" said Mir, cringing at his answer. The bonus was gratefully scooped up by Chatterjee.

"The pitch was fine. But we lost because we played too many dot balls," Sambaran later conceded to **The Telegraph Salt Lake**, using cricketing parlance.

Team Usha, which led handsomely in every round till the final, totalled 70 points and was clearly the favourite to take home the winners' crystal bowl on offer.

But surprisingly it was Team Siddhartha that had overtaken them in the end round by just five points. "We won by being aggressive in the buzzer round. I learnt a lot of new things today. The prize was a bonus and I would have enjoyed just as much even if we hadn't won," said Chatterjee.

As the participants posed for a group photograph, requests started coming in for Usha Uthup to sing. She obliged with a smile, singing two lines from *Amra tomari Kolkata*.

But on her way out, she was overheard howling in mock despair: "*Kintu ami jeetlam na. I want to cry!*"



Rumki and Phalguni Chatterjee on stage

SUPER SLEUTH TAKES STAGE

Actor Abir Chatterjee and his parents, theatre personalities Phalguni and Rumki Chatterjee, had come to distribute prizes to the contestants. "I know all the celebrity senior citizens in this contest and can confidently say that all of them are young at heart," he said, before thanking the audience for their response to his National Award-winning film *Bisorjon*.



His parents said how proud they were of their son, who is most popular for starring in Feluda and Byomkesh films. "Initially Abir was known as Phalguni Chatterjee's son. But now I am known as Abir's father," said the founder-director of the theatre group Lokkrishiti. "The name Abir is given by his grandmother," said his mother, adding that his nickname in his *mamarbari* was Darpan. The trivia was lapped up by his fans.

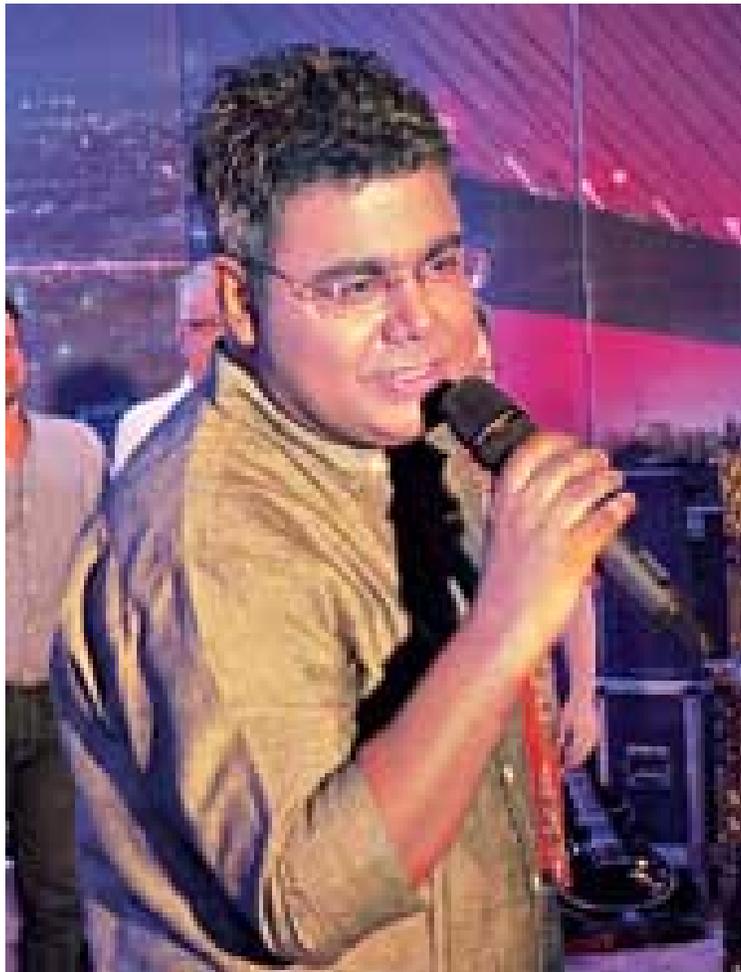
MIRAKKEL MAN MAKES MUSIC

Mir had been his naughty self all evening, to the point of urging Abir Chatterjee's mother Rumki to describe her son as "hot". When she did not oblige, he asked women in the audience who agreed with him to raise their hands. "*Oi dekhun, dhari dhari mohilara haat tulechhe. Shobai baritey swami ke duto roti kore bolechhe, 'Gorom kore kheye nio. Ami Abir Chatterjee ke dekhte chollam,*" as the audience chortled.

He was back with his band after a break. The first song by Bandage was "dedicated to those who may be 70 or 80 years but who are still young at heart," said Mir, the lead singer, before starting *Dil toh bachcha hai ji*. He also offered *pranam* to those *jnara opore chole gyachhen*, referring not to the departed but to those in the upper tier of the auditorium.

Thereafter he addressed the crowd. "I'll wait for you to consult your neighbours before I begin the next song," said Mir.

"You may want to discuss things like: '*Baba, Mir toh sudhu TV tey chhyablamo kore jantam. O abar gaan-o korey!*'". Once the crowd was done laughing, he continued. "*Baire borof porchhe*, so the next song is from the film *Barfi*," and slipped into *Kyun na hum tum*.



Picture by
Sudeshna Banerjee

The audience swayed with the music or flocked forward to shoot videos. Many requested Bengali songs and Mir presented songs like *Phulon ke rang se* and *Kahin door jab din* partially in their Bengali avatars — *Borne gondhe chhonde* and *Amay proshno kore* respectively.

At one point during the SD Burman song, Mir sat on the edge of the stage, with legs dangling, and came down to kiss the fingers of an elderly lady seated in the front row, singing *Tumi shudhu tumi*, prompting her to fondly say: “*Tumi amar naatir moto.*”



(L-R) Soma Bhattacharjee, Rana Mukherjee and Maitreyee Bhattacharjee of Care Continuum

HELP AT HOME FOR ELDERLY & AILING

The founders of Care Continuum, all healthcare professionals, took stage between the quiz and music to share the philosophy of their company.

"We know how difficult it is to look after one's parents while living in another city. Many youths are struggling with this today," said Maitreyee Bhattacharjee, one of the founders. "So three years ago we started this company to provide physical, mental and social support for the elderly."

Rana Mukherjee, another founder, noted that as one ages chronic illnesses become more common than acute ones and such problems don't always require hospitalisation. "But at a hospital one has seven to eight nurses at one's service whereas at home just one untrained *ayah*," he said.

Soma Bhattacharjee, the group's third founder, said they took great care to recruit able nurses and caregivers. "We try to give you the best services at home so you don't have to get hospitalised," she said.

Care Continuum provides a range of medical care such as physiotherapy, stroke, dementia and palliative care.

Their NimbleKids wing also provides care for special children.



"I am here for Mir. I have read one Feluda story, so I was also very excited to see Abir on stage," gushed Shreshtha Talukder of AB Block, New Town, who studies in Class V at Delhi Public School Newtown.



"The quiz, the show of Bandage — everything was perfect. My Saturday evening couldn't have been better spent," beamed Riddhi Bose of DA Block.



"I adore Mir. Even when people were leaving mid-way through his concert he was still his cheeky self, bidding them goodbye and asking them to text and Whatsapp the message once they reach home," said first year student of Loreto College, Udita Chakraborty who stays in CL Block.



Sampa Bose, a science teacher at Hariyana Vidya Mandir, won a coffee mug by answering the evening's strangest question — If a cockroach's head is cut off, would it die of a heart attack, a lack of blood supply or hunger? "It had to be hunger," smiled the DA Block resident who came with her daughter Shrija.



Dipankar Bakshi of EC Block got an audience prize by naming the only building in the Dalhousie area which has 700062 as PIN code instead of 700001. "I knew it was Raj Bhavan," he smiled.



Gurusharan Dasgupta, a resident of IA Block, had a request for the organisers. "I loved the quiz, but would have loved it more if we could play it, and not only the celebrities," said the octogenarian.



THE OTHER 5



Singer Usha Uthup applauds her partner Abhishek Sinha, a filmmaker. Pictures by Shubham Paul



Actor Deepankar De had school teacher Sucheta Chakraborty by his side



Actress and elocutionist Anashua Majumdar partnered BTech student Padmaksha Bhattacharya



Actor Barun Chanda celebrates a correct answer with team mate Arya Chakraborty, a Sector V employee



Former cricketer Sambaran Banerjee teamed up with hospital management student Riyanka Acharya

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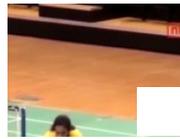
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