

"I enjoyed every bit of my time working in Bohubrihi" – Abul Hayat

Acclaimed actor, director and scriptwriter Abul Hayat has won many prestigious awards throughout his career, including the Ekushey Padak and National Film Award. He started his journey as an actor with theatre, before making his way into television and films. He has earned praise for his performances in films like Aguner Poroshmoni (1995), Daruchini Dwip (2008) and Fagun Hawai (2019), among others. With Bohubrihi, one of his most popular television shows returning to Bangladesh Television (BTV), the actor, who is practicing self-isolation these days, shares his memories from the sets of the show and more with The Daily Star.

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Bohubrihi, one of the most beloved shows of all time, has returned to television. Tell us a little about your experience of being a part of the show. I enjoyed every bit of my time working in *Bohubrihi*, from reading the script to shooting the show in Gazipur. It was my first time playing the role of a stern and strict head of a family. All the other characters in the story were just shaken by his presence. The audience really appreciated me in that role.

How are you spending your time at home?

I spend most of my time reading. Currently, I am reading Syed Shamsul Haque's *Tin Poishar Jochna*. I am also working on a new script for a theatrical production. Watching movies and serials, and a bit of exercise every now and then are also a part of my routine. We should all abide by the rules set by

the government and stay indoors. It is the only way to be safe right now.

You started your career as a theatre artiste. Do you still enjoy acting on stage?

Theatre brings me immense joy and satisfaction. On stage, we have to get everything right in one take, in front of a live audience. Subsequently, it challenges me as an artiste. *Dewan Gazir Kissa*, which was staged two years ago, was my last theatrical project. However, I hope to return to the stage soon, after the crisis is under control.

Do you have any message for your fans?

Stay home and stay safe. Enjoy movies, spend time with your family and engage yourself in activities that make you happy. Instead of complaining and being depressed, we should all be proud to play a role in the nation's safety.

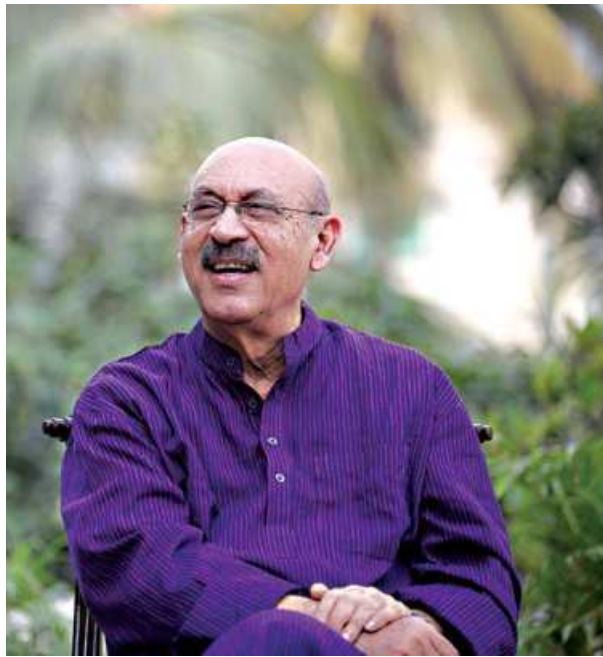


PHOTO: SHEKH MEHEDI MORSHED

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"They came forward and touched my feet!" – Mosharraf Karim

SHARMIN JOYA

Noted actor Mosharraf Karim has been ruling the television industry for more than a decade and has carved a space for himself in films as well. He has garnered legions of fans with his brilliant performances and versatile roles over the years. In a recent chat, the actor shared some of his most memorable encounters with his fans.

I was shooting for a television project at an open space in Munshiganj. The crew had built a barrier around the set with a rope, to keep the public away. Somehow, three women went over the barrier and entered our set. Two of them were young school students. They came forward and touched my feet! Then, the other lady, who was probably the mother of the two girls, touched my feet too! I was speechless and embarrassed.

Another passionate fan, Imran from

Barisal, came to meet me while I was travelling in a ship during the shoot of *Komola Rocket*. He was in the steamer, while our team was in the first-class reserved section. He demanded to meet me, and I didn't know what was going on outside. Someone came into my cabin to inform me. I went outside immediately and saw that the young boy had a rope around his neck! He had tied the other half of the rope to the steamer's railing. Thankfully, I was eventually able to calm him down. The next time I went to Barisal, he came over to meet me, and even bought some home-cooked dishes for me!

Abhijit Chowdhury, a fan from Kolkata, just came to Bangladesh to meet me. I am in touch with him even today. As an artiste, I am tremendously grateful to all my fans for their support over the years.



'Sisimpur' completes 15 years

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Halum, Tuktuki, Ikri and Shiku from *Sisimpur*, the Bangladeshi version of Sesame Street, are some of the most popular characters among children across the country. The show celebrated their 15th anniversary recently.

With a mission to make learning more interactive and fun for children, *Sisimpur* was launched in 2005. The acclaimed pre-school programme is funded by the US Government through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Steered by the motto 'Prithibita Dekhchhi, Protidin Shikhchhi' (observing the world, learning everyday), *Sisimpur* aims to provide primary education for children aged between 3 and 8.

Sisimpur is currently airing their 12th

season. Initially, it aired on Bangladesh Television. Over the years, *Sisimpur* has been telecast on different channels, including Channel i, Desh TV and Channel Nine. Currently, the show is running on both Duroto TV and Bangladesh Television.

Sisimpur is produced under the supervision of Sesame Workshop USA. Financed by the Government of Bangladesh and USAID, under the supervision of Ministry of Women and Children Affairs and in collaboration with Bangladesh Shishu Academy, the *Sisimpur* outreach project has reached 3,340 schools in all 64 districts of the country, since 2010. Sesame Workshop Bangladesh, produces *Sisimpur* with an aim to promote intellectual, social, emotional and physical learning activities for children.

PRIYANKA CHOWDHURY

Acclaimed Manipuri dancer Samina Husain Prema has been keeping the public entertained and motivated through virtual performances, as the nation copes with the coronavirus pandemic.

For Prema, unusual circumstances have always worked as a catalyst for creativity. In her recent videos, Prema performed with her six-year-old daughter. The duo received much appreciation for their performance on the song, *Ek Shathe Dure Thaki*, sponsored by Grameen Phone, in association with Grey Dhaka. With powerful lyrics by Syed Gousul Alam Shaon, the song definitely strikes a chord with the audience. Sharmin Sultana Sumi, the lead vocalist of Chirkutt composed the song, while Pavel Areen, the drummer and sound producer of Chirkutt, has produced, mixed and mastered the music. Anik Ahammed is the assistant mix engineer of the project.

"My daughter Rai loves the song. She was really excited when we decided to turn our drawing room into our stage. She is very observant, and her expressions were quite natural in the performance," says a proud Prema.

The duo's performance was recently aired on Ekattor TV. Prema also participated in a fund-raising live show, organised by 'Sangskritikarmibrindya'. She has submitted a video for UNESCO's virtual art project, which will be released soon. "I intend to focus on positivity and work on more dance routines at this time," she says.

The artiste is also keeping in touch with

her students over the phone. "I have asked my students to keep practicing and performing. For Pohela Boishakh, they made videos of their performances at home," explains Prema. "Creativity can provide solace and strength during these difficult times." She also started conducting online classes recently.

Prema further discussed the importance of physical exercise. "While exercise is beneficial for everyone, it is a must for dancers. I was one of the 25 Bangladeshi dancers who performed at the March 17 celebrations with

the Akram Khan Company. They emphasise a great deal on preparing the body for dance," says Prema. "Out of the 6 hours of practice, we spent 4 hours on physical exercise and 2 hours on the choreography. As we stay at home in these trying times, I have started practicing yoga with my daughter and I have asked my students to do the same." Prema also noted that it is important to seek out the right information and educate children about preventive measures against the coronavirus effectively.



PHOTO: COURTESY

Behind the lights, camera and action

Production crew members open up about their challenges

RASHEEK TABASSUM MONDIRA

In a shooting unit for a film or television project, there are crew members whose contribution and hard work are fundamental to the production's success. Starting from workers in the transport unit to production managers who supervise everything on the sets, the crew members are the actual champions behind the scenes. They reach the shooting spots before everyone else and are often, the last ones to leave. Yet, more often than not, they are left without any recognition.

Production crew and staff members are afraid of losing their jobs and income, despite plans to address loss of income in the country, after the coronavirus pandemic brought nations across the globe essentially to a standstill. *The Daily Star* recently reached out to some production crew members of the showbiz world, to find out more about their lives and how they are responding to the global crisis.

"As we get paid on a day-to-day basis, we don't have a monthly salary. Yet, we don't always get paid on spot," shared Hashem,



PHOTO: SHEKH MEHEDI MORSHED

a gaffer, the lead technician of a production crew who is responsible for setting up all the lights for filming. "Sometimes, we don't receive our deserved payment even after months have passed." Hashem has been working in production since 2006.

Most of these shift workers come from low-income families. They live from hand to mouth and are struggling to make ends meet.

They shared that their employment system needs to be more organised and fair.

When a crew member passed away in a road accident during the Eid holidays last year, other staff members protested and demanded justice for him, along with some notable actors. Yet, in the end, their efforts were of no use and the deceased worker was soon forgotten.

"All we want is for people to give us the recognition that we deserve," said Rakib, an aspiring gaffer who has been working in a lighting crew since 2010. "As the shootings of all films and television projects have been postponed indefinitely, we hope that people will be willing to support us in this time of crisis."

Similarly, Robi, a second unit staff member, added, "All our hard work goes behind the success of a production. But compared to others, we barely receive the proper recognition and praise." Robi hopes to pursue his higher studies abroad.

Ali, a struggling production manager who has been in the business for the last fourteen years, is the only breadwinner in his family. "I often fail to send my mother the monthly money as we don't always get paid on time," he said.

Salahuddin, a make-up artiste who started working when he was in primary school, reflected on his struggles. "Most of the time, I only get to work for ten days in a month and I have to support my family with that money," he shared. The only earning member in a family of five, Salahuddin

is passionate about his job, despite the hardships that come with it.

"Most people are reluctant to give chances to newcomers in this business, even if they are highly capable and skilled at what they do," said Rubel, a freelance cameraman.

Chisty, another cameraman who works on YouTube content and television shows, had a more positive outlook. "This line of work offers a certain kind of independence as I do not have to follow a monotonous, daily routine," he said. However, Chisty added that people in the industry often take advantage of the production workers for their own benefit.

"The price of gas is rising regularly, but the rent of our transport services has not increased," shared Ruhul, a car owner in the transport unit of a shooting crew. "I expect all of us in the industry to work together in harmony during these trying times."

Although several production houses and associations are providing financial support to crew members in these difficult and unprecedented circumstances, it is vital to come up with proper payment packages for these essential workers, for their livelihood and security.