



The Ekushey Padak has inspired me greatly

AFZAL HOSSAIN

PHOTOS:
SHAHREAR KABIR HEEMEL

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Afzal Hossain broke into the scene as a quintessential actor, appearing in many lead roles over the years. A man of diverse talents, his creativity extends to direction, painting and poetry. He eventually cemented his name as one of the greatest actors to take up the craft, in Bangladesh.

The renowned artiste's name has been announced for the country's second highest civilian award, the Ekushey Padak this year, alongside distinguished names like Zeenat Barkatullah, Nazrul Islam Babu, Mahmudur Rahman Benu, Masum Aziz, Iqbal Ahmed, Afzal Hossain, and Khaled Mahmud Khan.

In a candid interview with The Daily Star, the noted actor opens up about winning the

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prestigious award.

We congratulate you on this great achievement. How did you feel after knowing that you won the coveted Ekushey Padak?

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My phone has been gyrating with non-stop calls from my admirers, well-wishers and colleagues, congratulating me on my award. People who hardly contacted me over the years called me up after seeing the news

on online portals. The feeling is ethereal, and I am speechless right now.

How do you think this recognition will inspire you in the future?

Any kind of recognition, regardless of stature, adds responsibility on that artiste to perform their best.

The Ekushey Padak has instilled a newfound zest and a sense of enthusiasm in me. I want to contribute more to this field, as it has given so much love and recognition throughout my career.

As an artiste, do you think about accolades when you are working?

As an artiste, I have never done anything to gain fame or fortune. I pursue my work out of passion and ardent love for the field. For example, I wrote books out of my love for writing, not just for the sake of publishing my books. The same goes for acting as well, I pursue it out of passion.

Which projects are you busy with at the moment?

I will make a much-anticipated return to theatre with "Pendulum", directed by two greats - Nasiruddin Yousuff and Masum Reza. Other than that, I am directing my first film for the silver screen, "Maniker Laal Kakra", which I am excited about.

Priyanka lands another Hollywood role with 'Ending Things'

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Priyanka Chopra bagged another Hollywood project opposite Captain America star Anthony Mackie in assassin thriller movie, "Ending Things."



The movie will reportedly will be on the same line similar to James Cameron's 1994's action-comedy "True Lies."

The film is about a hitwoman (presumably Priyanka) who wants to be out of the killing business, but that means ending a personal relationship with her partner (likely played by Mackie) as well. She realises

that she does not want to end things with him, and they join forces for one last job, according to reports by Deadline.

Prithwi Raj's 'Ekul Okul' releases posthumously

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Prithwi Raj's last composition, Rabindro Sangeet song "Ekul Okul" was released yesterday.

The beloved singer shocked the entire entertainment world, when he passed away due to a heart attack on December 15, 2019.

The music video, featuring Emon and Suchona Azad, was released in Tiger Media's and Tutul Chowdhury's social media handles. "Ekul Okul",

voiced by Jane Ishrat has been used in Anjan Aich's directorial movie "Agamikal". The film is slated to be released on March 4, 2022.



COUNTRYWIDE



Artisans worried as demand for 'Swaraswati' idols plummets

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Artisans in Thakurgaon are worried about making desired profit supplying idols of Swaraswati, the goddess of learning, as they are yet to get good response from clients for the closure of educational institutions due to coronavirus.

The artisans are passing busy times for giving finishing touches to the idols amid frustration as the Saraswati Puja is set to be observed on Saturday.

Several idol artisans expressed their worries about getting enough clients targeting the puja.

Bikash Chandra Roy and his wife Bobita Rani of Deogaon village said they have made 33 idols spending about Tk 15,000 targeting to sell in between Tk 35,000 and Tk 50,000.

But the demand of the idols is lesser than previous years as many educational institutions decided not to observe the puja on the premises of their institutions during the spread of coronavirus infections.

The devotees who will observe the puja at their homes are only coming to get the idols.

Amal Barman of Deogaon Amatitola village said he made 85 idols of Swaraswati for this season, spending Tk 40,000. He had a hope to get Tk 1.5 lakh to 1.75 lakh by selling each idol in between Tk 1,000 and Tk 7,000 depending on sizes.

But the big idols, which are made for educational institutions, have not got clients yet.

Amal said it seems to him that the sales have dropped by 15-20 pieces in comparison to last year.

Shyamol Paul, Molin Paul and several others of Basiadevi village echoed the same.

Acting Principal of Abdur Rashid Degree College Anwar Sadat said "We observe the puja every year but this time it was suspended considering health reasons."

Villagers divided over rebuilding Mughal-era mosque

Team from Department of Archaeology visits the site

OUR CORRESPONDENT, LALMONIRHAT

Two groups of villagers are divided over demolishing a Mughal-era mosque and building a new one in place of it. The mosque, situated at Gilabari village in Saptabari union under Aditmari upazila of Lalmonirhat, was built in 1565 during the rule of the Mughal dynasty. Although a group is in favour of demolishing the ancient structure, the other is for preserving this heritage site through the intervention of the Department of Archaeology.

A three-member team of the Department of Archaeology, led by Hafizur Rahman, the custodian of Dinajpur Kantaji Temple Museum, visited the ancient mosque on Sunday (January 30).

Hafizur Rahman said they had visited

the Mughal-era mosque at Gilabari village. They are currently monitoring it. This ancient mosque will soon be brought under the Archaeological Department and declared a heritage site.

"We have told the villagers that this ancient mosque cannot be demolished. This is an ancient architecture. It needs to be preserved," he said.

"We have also requested the local administration to keep the site under surveillance," he added.

The mosque, which is 42 feet long and 16 feet wide, lies on seven decimals of land. The mosque has 13 domes (gambuj). There are also three domes at the entrance to the mosque. There is also an ancient well in front of the mosque. The locals call this mosque Puran Jame Masjid (Old Jame Mosque). Many devotees from faraway

places come here to offer prayers. A total of 40 Muslims can pray together in two rows.

Due to the gathering of a large number of devotees, the mosque committee has constructed a veranda along with the main mosque.

Alhaz Ershad Alam, 76, the president of the mosque committee, said that a section of the villagers has been trying to demolish the ancient mosque and build a new one for a long. On the other hand, many villagers are opposing them as well.

"We want that the ancient mosque is preserved by the Department of Archaeology," he said.

"The mosque is laced with history and tradition. It is the testimony of so many events, therefore, it cannot be demolished," he said, adding that "The

ancient well in front of the mosque was once the only source of drinking water for the people of our village."

Sabuj Alam, general secretary of the mosque committee, a segment of the villagers wants to demolish the mosque as there is not enough space for the devotees inside the mosque.

However, it is possible to build a new mosque without demolishing the ancient one. So, discussions are going on with everyone, he said.

Nuruzzaman Mia, 72, a freedom fighter who lives next to the mosque, said he heard from his grandfather that the structure of the mosque was taller than its present shape.

"We used to collect water from the well along with other villagers in our childhood," he said.

