


Spending the best days of my life

Siam Ahmed

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Siam Ahmed has been ruling over theatres since his film “Shaan” and “Paap Punyo” released recently.
The actor received the Meril-Prothom Alo award on Friday Best Film (Popular Choice) category for his film “Mridha Bonam Mridha”. The actor and his wife, Shamma Rushaly Abante, were also blessed with a baby boy in April.
We caught up with Siam over a phone call to know more about his experience from his recent successes, his first-time memories of becoming a father and upcoming projects.
You recently received the Meril-Prothom Alo Award for Best Actor (Film). What was your initial reaction?
I believe that every nominated actor was deserving of this award. I respect their dedication, and am inspired by their efforts. Now that I was chosen for this award, I would like to thank the jury and my fans.
“Mridha Bonam Mridha” has excellent storyline, and I am glad that I was chosen to be a part of it. The award will push me to try harder.
Your films, “Shaan” and “Paap Punyo”, are doing well in theatres now.
I have received praise from my viewers for both productions, and I hope that people make a habit of visiting cinema halls.
Gias Uddin Selim has invested a lot of care in “Paap Punyo”. Each artiste also tried their best to present their role in the most natural form.
I am always grateful to my fans – they have the power to keep this industry alive. They have been with me since I began the journey of “Shaan”, and have not left my side till date.
I was able to present myself in a new role through “Shaan”. The film is also a bit different from productions we come usually across on the silver screen. I don’t like to repeat characters, and will keep looking forward to diversity.
You were blessed with a baby boy recently. What does fatherhood feel like?
After a tiring day at shoot, his face takes away all my complaints. I am spending the best days of my life, because of him – there is no feeling quite like it.
I am grateful to the Almighty for blessing me with him.



Tanjin Tisha plays identical twins in ‘Chinky Pinky’



For the first time in her career, Tanjin Tisha is playing identical twins on television. The popular actress will portray the titular characters in the tele-fiction, “Chinky Pinky”, directed by Ruhel Hasan.
Although the two sisters look identical, they have completely different mannerisms and fashion sense from one another.
Filming of the project began on Monday in Dhaka.

Farooki joins 2022 Sydney Film Festival jury

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

The Sydney Film Festival (SFF) has announced the 2022 official competition jury, who will award the Sydney Film Prize to one of the 12 titles in the official competition, alongside the first slate of stars and filmmaker guests to attend the festival, which runs from June 8 to 19.
Internationally acclaimed Bangladeshi filmmaker Mostofa Sarwar Farooki has joined the jury of SFF this year.
His film, “No Land’s Man”, has been selected for the festival as well.



NEWS

Govt would amend DSA

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soon. After receiving its recommendations, the government will take necessary measures in this regard. Besides, the European Union has wanted to provide us with technical assistance to this effect,” he said.
The minister was responding to queries from reporters at a “Meet the Press”, organised by Bangladesh Secretariat Reporters Forum (BSRF) at its office at the secretariat.
Anisul said the government had taken some measures to prevent misuse of the DSA.
“I have spoken to the home minister in this regard. He issued a directive to make sure that if anybody files a case under

the Digital Security Act, it is sent to a cell, established under the Information and Communication Technology Act-2006 comprising a high official and a legal analyst, for examination.
“If the cell finds it to be a prima facie case [that has enough elementary evidence], it will be sent to the court concerned for trial. If there is no necessary [or sufficient] information or data, it would not be accepted,” the minister said.
He said the number of cases and arrests under the DSA has already come down.
Replying to a question, Anisul said there are some non-bailable offences

under the DSA, but that doesn’t mean that a court cannot grant bail to an accused. Granting bail is at the discretion of the court after hearing arguments from both sides, he said.
He said the DSA has been formulated to tackle cybercrime and not to curtail freedom of press and freedom of expression.
The minister requested journalist leaders to submit a report to his office explaining their objections to the proposed Mass Media Employees (Services Conditions) Act so that the government can bring changes to the proposed law and the journalists can benefit from it.
Anisul said cybercrimes, including distortion

of history and making derogatory comments about Hazrat Muhammad (SM) and Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on social media, are being committed, and therefore, the government wants the media to be run in a disciplined manner.
He said the government will formulate the Personal Data Protection Act and OTT platform regulations after soliciting opinions from the stakeholders, including journalists, so that the independence of press and freedom of expression are not curtailed.
BSFR President Tapan Biswas and General Secretary Masudul Hoque also spoke at the event.

22 univs go

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Sylhet; Hajee Mohammad Danesh Science and Technology University, Dinajpur; Mawlana Bhashani Science and Technology University, Tangail; Noakhali Science and Technology University; Jashore University of Science and Technology; Pabna University of Science and Technology; Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Science and Technology University, Gopalganj; Rangamati Science and Technology University; Bangamata Sheikh Fojilatunnesa Mujib Science and Technology University, Jamalpur; and Patuakhali Science and Technology University.

Covid booster

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Contacted, a DGHS official, seeking anonymity, said, “It would be difficult to bring people to the vaccine centres [for booster doses] as the number of Covid-19 cases is now very low.”
He also said the health officials already discussed the issue earlier at a meeting.
Health Minister Zahid Maleque is expected to announce the detailed plan for the special campaign soon, said officials.

Bangladesh

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The main challenge for the power sector would be providing uninterrupted power at an affordable cost, Hamid said.
But it is unlikely that would happen in another 5-6 years as it entails huge outlays.
“If we go for ensuring uninterrupted power supply, the entire power distribution and transmission lines will have to go underground. Those are very costly projects,” he said, adding that it would cost Tk 16,000 crore to take the system underground in Purbachal alone.

US has concerns

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President Joe Biden’s strong policy on human rights.
Following repeated requests from Bangladesh for lifting the sanctions, Haas recently said they want “concrete steps” by the government.
“It is not really the question of providing a list of things that must be accomplished. It is about those two principles [accountability and reforms in Rab] that need to be held in order for those who have been sanctioned to request relief from the US,” the diplomat said yesterday.
Haas said the US gives utmost importance to holding free, fair and transparent election in Bangladesh in line with the international standards. He said freedom of press, lack of violence and the Election Commission’s capacity of overseeing are some of the important factors for holding a fair election.
“This is a job of the Bangladesh government, people, media and the civil society to create conditions for a free and fair election,” he said, adding it is important to remain vigilant as people are already talking about elections.
The envoy said he has raised concerns with the Bangladesh authorities publicly and privately when it comes to democracy and human rights, especially extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances, press freedom, especially the Digital Security Act, and several draft laws and regulations that could inhibit press freedom.
The US also has concerns about insufficient labour rights and poor working conditions that cost Bangladesh access to the US Generalised System of

Preferences (GSP) in 2013, while Bangladesh is also missing out on investment capital from the US International Development Finance Corporation.
“As Bangladesh is going to become a middle-income country, it is important for Bangladesh to protect labour rights, freedom to association and forming unions,” Haas said.
He said he has discussed with the foreign ministry for creating a catalogue on the outstanding issues between the two countries so that they can work more effectively to address those.
Recently, the US has announced formation of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) with 12 countries. Haas said the IPEF is designed to take into account what the 21st century economic landscape would look like.
The various aspects of IPEF are: making supply chain resilient, digital trade and emerging technologies, clean energy and decarbonisation and preventing corruption, which are quite important for Bangladesh. As its membership expands, the diplomat expressed optimism that Bangladesh will consider joining it.
Asked if Bangladesh was at any risk of falling into a debt trap like Sri Lanka did, Haas said Bangladesh has a strong macro-economic management and a substantial foreign currency reserve. It is also careful about borrowing from international financiers.
The amount of foreign debt to China is relatively small, but it is bigger to the ADB, the World Bank and Japan, the diplomat said, adding that the situation in Bangladesh will not be like that of Sri Lanka, though it has other

challenges including high inflation amid supply chain disruptions following the war in Ukraine.
Enquired if the US would recognise the genocide committed in Bangladesh in 1971 when the country supported then West Pakistan, Haas said Bangladesh witnessed terrible atrocities and that there was considerable amount of death. However, the question of determining genocide under the related US law is a very difficult legal question, he added.
The envoy said Bangladesh faces some daunting challenges, including tackling the Rohingya crisis and climate change.
He said since 1972, the US provided \$8 billion to Bangladesh as assistance and it continues to invest around \$200 million each year in development programmes.
“I believe that in the last 50 years, Bangladesh has had no better friend than the United States. And that it will have no better friend over the next 50 years.”

China sends 30 warplanes into Taiwan air defence zone

AFP, Taipei
China has made the second largest incursion into Taiwan’s air defence zone this year with Taipei reporting 30 jets entering the area, including more than 20 fighters.
Taiwan’s defence ministry said late Monday it had scrambled its own aircraft and deployed air defence missile systems to monitor the latest Chinese activity.

Israel signs first Arab free trade deal

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“Dubai is fast becoming a hub for Israeli companies that look to South Asia, the Middle East and the Far East as markets for their goods and services.”
Nearly 1,000 Israeli companies will be working in and through the UAE by year’s end, he said.
The UAE was the first

Gulf country to normalise ties with Israel and only the third Arab nation to do so after Egypt and Jordan.
Talks for a free trade agreement began in November and concluded after four rounds of negotiations.
The latest was held in March in Egypt between Israeli Prime Minister

Naftali Bennett and Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, UAE’s long-time de facto ruler who became president this month after the death of his half-brother Sheikh Khalifa.
Israel had in March hosted a meeting of the top diplomats from the United States, UAE, Bahrain and Morocco.

Sudan in 2020 also agreed to normalise ties with Israel, but the strife-torn northeast African country has yet to finalise a deal.
Israel has already struck free trade agreements with other countries and blocs, including the United States, European Union, Canada and Mexico.

Australia names junior ‘minister for the republic’

AFP, Sydney
Australia’s centre-left Prime Minister Anthony Albanese named his cabinet yesterday including an “assistant minister for the republic”, despite the country being a constitutional monarchy.

Egypt unearths trove

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objects dated to the Late Period, about 500 BC, the ministry said.
They were accompanied by a musical instrument known as a sistrum and a collection of bronze vessels used in rituals for the worship of the goddess Isis.
The painted wooden coffins were found intact in burial shafts and contained mummies, amulets and wooden boxes. Wooden statues of Nephthys and

Isis from an earlier period were also found, both with gilded faces.
One coffin contained a well-preserved papyrus written in hieroglyphs, perhaps verses of the Book of the Dead, and was sent to the laboratory of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo for study, said Mostafa Waziri, Secretary General of the Supreme Council of Antiquities.
A collection of cosmetics was found, including

kohl containers, as well as bracelets and earrings.
The coffins will be transferred for display at the Grand Egyptian Museum under construction near the Great Pyramids of Giza and due to open later this year.
Saqqara, to the south of the Giza pyramids, has provided a steady stream of archaeological discoveries in recent years. The mission has been excavating in the area since 2018.