

# 'Art has the power to establish world peace'

## Nadia Samdani on being honoured with 'MBE' title

ZAHANGIR ALOM

Renowned British-Bangladeshi art patron Nadia Samdani has been bestowed with the title of the Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE), in Queen Elizabeth II's 2022 Birthday Honours List. This is the third highest-ranking Order of the British Empire, which Nadia has received for her prolific services to global art philanthropy and promotion of arts in Bangladesh, South Asia and the United Kingdom. Other famous holders of the title are Adele, Steven Gerrard, Ed Sheeran, Harry Kane and Rob Brydon.

In an exclusive interview with The Daily Star, Nadia Samdani shares her joy and journey of the Dhaka Art Summit (DAS), organised by Samdani Art Foundation. She also elaborates the theme of the upcoming DAS in 2023, scheduled to set sail in February next.

"I am elated to receive such a huge honour, within just a decade of launching of Dhaka Art Summit in Bangladesh. I would like to credit the dynamic members of SAF, the dedicated support of our Golden Harvest team, and of course, the inspiration and sacrifice of my family," says Nadia Samdani. "I am exhilarated that this honour comes as part of the grand celebrations for Her Majesty the Queen's 70th year of accession to reign, and her length of service and commitment is something I hope to emulate in my continuing work," she adds.

Nadia Samdani, along with her husband Rajeeb Samdani, is the co-founders of the Samdani Art Foundation. She is the President of SAF and Director of DAS. The Samdanis are best known for DAS, which brings together curators, artists, scholars and arts professionals from around the world. Their works have resulted them being included in major international public institutions and collections.

"We believe in the power of art,

which should be for everybody," asserts Nadia. "Over the years, DAS has been turned into a school of scholarly gatherings attracting huge levels of public engagement. It is the finest fiesta of modern and contemporary arts, fostering new cross-cultural dialogues between Bangladesh and the rest of the world."

Nadia says that the next Dhaka Art Summit will be based on 'Flood', zooming in on different aspects of climatic change in the meaningful conversations by the scholars and the artistic presentations and performances by the creative minds. "Apart from a number of global curators, several Bangladeshi curators will join hands to help artists produce quality works relaying core messages to safeguard our planet," she says. She adds that the construction of the 'Residency Space' at 'Art Centre' at the Samdani Sculpture Park will be completed by the end of the year in Sylhet.

"Art has the power to establish world peace. We should support arts and artists whatever and however we can," says Nadia. "Art and music evoke global language relaying eternal peace in our minds. I would like to excel in my works which I love most, and serve humanity. Whatever you do for your country and the world at large will remain forever!"

Nadia Samdani is a member of Tate's South Asia Acquisitions Committee, Tate's International Council, Alserkal Avenue's Programming Committee and the Delfina Foundation's International Council, and is one of the founding members of The Harvard University Lakshmi Mittal South Asia Institute's Arts Advisory Council. In 2017, with her husband Rajeeb Samdani, she was the first South Asian arts patron to receive the prestigious Montblanc de la Culture Arts Patronage Award.

The writer is a visual artist and a journalist.



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

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## Mehazabien drives ambulances to save lives

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK



Popular actress Mehazabien Chowdhury will be seen playing the role of a brave ambulance driver in Anonno Emon's Eid special fiction.

The actress announced the news for this upcoming project on her Facebook account.

"Sometimes I wonder whether I would have the privilege of having so many different experiences in my life if I had chosen a different profession? After stepping on the accelerator of the ambulance, I have discovered a new me, one that was unknown to me. I really hope the audience would love this innovative story and my new character in this fiction," wrote the actress.

The shooting for the fiction started on June 4 and concluded on June 6. The Eid special also stars Sudip Biswas Deep, Ziaul Hasan Kislu, and Reshma in pivotal roles.

## 'Shaan' to release in 80 halls in USA

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Siam Ahmed and Puja Chery starrer film "Shaan" is set to release across 80 halls in North America. Mohammad Oliullah Sajeev, president of The Dream Scarecrow, a Canada-based company that is the world distributor of Bangladeshi cinema also confirmed that the film will make it to the silver screen on June 24.



The announcement was made at the event "Dinner with Siam-Puja", a promotional event. The promotional contest urged fans to promote "Shaan" using their social media. Four winners, alongside 20 other participants and the team of "Shaan" attended the dinner.

Producer M Wahidur Rahman and Shoikot Salahuddin, the CEO of Swapna Scarecrow Bangladesh, signed a contract on behalf of the film's production company "Filmmann". The producer also said that while they are starting with 80 theatres, their aim is to release the film in 100 cinema halls abroad.

# NEWS

## Govt scraps Odhikar's registrations. Untimely death

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The letter states that on February 7, 2022, the Bureau wrote to Odhikar asking for the names and addresses of the victims along with relevant case details of the incidents correlating with the figures listed under "Total Extrajudicial Killing (2009-2021)" and "Enforced Disappearance (2009-2021)".

"Odhikar refused to provide the information saying a legal case was still pending."

The tenure of its registration expired on March 25, 2015.

Ruhul Amin Bhuiyan, Odhikar's lawyer, said, "The organisation applied for a renewal of their licence in 2014. This application had been left pending for years. Finally in 2019 the organisation filed a writ petition challenging the government's inaction."

The case is still ongoing. The Bureau's letter stated that "[...] the organisation has created various issues by spreading propaganda against the state and publishing misleading information on its own website about various extrajudicial killings, including alleged disappearances and murders, which has seriously tarnished the image of the country to the world. For all these reasons, the overall performance of the organisation has not been satisfactory to the NGOAB."

Bhuiyan questioned, "There is a case going on, how could the Bureau cancel the registration?"

He added that a supplementary affidavit submitted to the court by the government said Odhikar was committing "seditious acts".

Deputy Attorney General Aurobinda Kumar Roy, representing the government in the case, said the High Court has no embargo on cancelling

registrations. "The case concerns the inaction of the government. They have turned inaction into action."

The NGOAB letter further said a special intelligence agency has informed the Bureau about the financial inconsistencies and negative activities while implementing three projects, namely Education of the Convention against Torture and OPCAT Awareness, Empowering Women as Community Human Rights Defenders, and Human Rights Research and Advocacy.

In addition to the allegations of "ruining the country's image", the NGO Affairs listed some other reasons as well.

These include the failures to pay Tk 10,482 in VAT, to submit an invoice copy for the deposit of Tk 2,921 in VAT arrears, to pay the increased fees stipulated by the new law, to submit the Bureau's approval letter for foreign travel, and to explain why expenses above Tk 10,000 were not paid through bank cheques.

"No reply/explanation was given to the objections raised on eight audit reports of the projects," said the letter.

"There is no scope to consider the application for renewal of the registration submitted by Odhikar," it concluded.

## SC chamber

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A verdict directing Haji Salim to surrender to the trial court within 30 days in connection with the graft case.

Haji Salim, who was sentenced to 10 years in prison in the case filed in 2008, surrendered before the trial court on May 22 and sought bail.

Denying him bail, the court sent him to Dhaka Central Jail in Keraniganj,

FROM PAGE 12  
"It is just an untimely death of a dream" on Facebook.

The accident happened after the driver of a Safe Line Paribahan bus lost control and hit a staff bus of the Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission on Dhaka-Aricha highway on Sunday morning.

The Safe Line Paribahan bus did not have route permit, and its fitness certificate and tax token expired in 2014 and 2015 respectively, said Sajjad-Ur-Rahman, inspector of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority's (BRTA) Savar office, yesterday.

A case has been filed against the driver, who fled the scene after the accident

## CMCH staff

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to Chattogram following the prime minister's special directive. "Three patients are in critical conditions and they should be moved to Dhaka for special treatment."

According to the information booth of the Chattogram district administration, 99 victims of the fire were receiving treatment at the CMCH and other government hospitals until 3:30pm yesterday. Among them, 14 were in the Combined Military Hospital and two in Chattogram General Hospital.

Sources said the health authorities, divisional health director's office and the Chattogram civil surgeon's office are coordinating the treatment of patients. Different volunteer organisations of Chattogram and the district administration are providing support to the victims.

Visiting different wards at the CMCH yesterday,

and is yet to be identified.

Police are working to identify the driver and the owner of the bus, said Golam Mostafa, inspector of Savar Highway Police Station.

Contacted, Safe Line Paribahan's Gabtoli counter manager Jahangir Alam said they had suspended business ties with the bus a few days ago as they were incurring losses.

He said the bus used to ply Dhaka-Benapole route under the banner of Safe Line Paribahan. But it did not have a fitness certificate. That is why, Safe Line Paribahan cut all business relationships with the bus on May 26.

Over the last few days, the bus was running under the banner of another transport group on Dhaka-Kushtia route, he claimed.

However, The Daily Star found the name Safe Line Paribahan on the bus.

Jahangir said a transport businessman named Iqbal owns the bus. Iqbal could not be contacted by phone despite repeated attempts.

The bus was registered in the name of Exim Bank, said Sajjad-Ur-Rahman, the BRTA inspector.

Contacted, Exim Bank's transport division head, Kazi Nesar Uddin, said the bank does not have any bus. The bus owner might have bought the bus taking a loan from the bank.

## Newspaper industry in crisis

FROM PAGE 12  
Board of Revenue] and they appeared to have understood the matter. But, nothing was implemented," he added.

Though the newspaper industry is a service-based industry, it did not get any special facility like a stimulus package to withstand the pandemic fallout, said Matiur Rahman, editor of Prothom Alo, in his keynote speech.

Moreover, the sector has to pay 30 percent corporate tax like any other non-listed company.

In the era of globalisation and digital media, the print newspaper industry is becoming weak, and the pandemic has compounded its woes.

The corporate tax for such weak industries should not exceed 10 percent while some profit-making industries pay only 10-15 percent corporate tax.

"Earlier, the production deficit was met with the income of advertisement -- this has become impossible now."

In the VAT and Supplementary Duty Act 2012, newsprint is listed as a VAT-free item. And yet, the industry had to pay a 15 percent VAT on the import of newsprint as the customs procedure code enlisted it in their list, Rahman said.

NOAB demanded a VAT-free facility or a maximum 5 percent VAT

## Transparent

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experience for those on board.

Passengers will be able to view shipwrecks, reef and marine life, as well as a diver show devised to raise awareness around environmental issues, during the 30-minute dives.

for newspapers. Moreover, the import duty on newsprint is 5 percent. Along with the duty, 15 percent VAT and 5 percent advance income tax (AIT) make the landing cost of newsprint to be about 127 percent.

"Actually, the rising transportation cost makes it more than 130 percent," he said, while demanding the withdrawal of the import duty.

According to the income tax act, newspapers pay 4 percent tax at source on advertising revenue and 5 percent AIT.

"This comes to 9 percent tax. But the majority of the newspapers do not earn 9 percent in profit," Rahman added.

There are 26 laws related to the freedom of speech in the country and some of them need to be repealed, said Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul, former president of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists.

"None of those laws was enacted to expand journalism and protect journalists," said Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star.

The main ingredient for journalism is freedom of speech and the laws curtail the freedom of journalists.

"Those who smuggle, adulterate products, do unsocial work in the name of businesses, how many laws do we have against them? If you have

no freedom, with the newsprint, ink and the press, you will only be able to publish a PR [Public Relations] journal," Anam said.

Journalists should be united in finding a solution, said Md. Nizamul Huq, chairman of Bangladesh Press Council.

Along with all the demands, the mainstream journalists should speak about the 'vague journalists' who are trying to earn money from other sources using a registered newspaper, he added.

"It is alarming that the youths are engaging more with social media than the mainstream media including newspapers," said Anwar-ul Alam Chowdhury, president of the Bangladesh Chamber of Industries.

Tasmima Hossain, the editor of Ittefaq; Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh; Mostofa Azad Chowdhury Babu, senior vice-president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry; Asif Nazrul and Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir, professors at the University of Dhaka; Omar Faruque and M Abdullah, presidents of the two factions of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists, also spoke.

Devan Hanif Mahmud, the editor of Bonik Barta, moderated the event.

Measuring 15.4 metres (50.5 feet) long, the Triton DeepView 24 is described as "virtually silent, entirely non-polluting and producing no carbon or effluent emissions."

It was commissioned by Vinpearl, Vietnam's largest domestic hotel operator, in 2017 as a

response to the increasing interest in "adventure and experience-based holidays."

The Triton DeepView 24, also known as the Vinpearl Submarine Nha Trang, was initially delivered in April 2020 and had been due to launch later that year.