



## Samira Khan Mahi and Sharif Siraj to make silver screen debut

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Acclaimed director Syed Salahuddin Zaki, well known for his 1980 film “Ghuddi”, is working on a new film which will also feature Afzal Hossain playing a negative role. The movie titled “Krantikaal” will see the silver screen debuts of two fresh faces, Samira Khan Mahi and Sharif Siraj, the former gained recognition for her work on small screen projects and the latter for his OTT projects such as “YouTumor” and “Refugee”.

## Jessia and Alisha to star in ‘MR-9’

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Miss World Bangladesh of 2017, Jessia Islam and first runner-up of Miss Universe Bangladesh in 2019, Alisha Islam are set to star as Bangladesh Counter Intelligence Agency (BCI) spies in the upcoming Masud Rana movie, “MR-9”. The film has already wrapped up shooting in the US, with the next phase of shootings already starting in Bangladesh. The “MR-9” team started shooting on June 24 in various locations across the country. Both Jessia and Alisha started shooting for their parts last Friday.

**The film industry has changed its ways, and revenues are no longer dependent on theatres only.**



ZAHID AKBAR

After the devastating impact of Covid-19, filmmakers and cinema hall owners became optimistic with the booming response to Eid releases. While 18 movies have been released so far, only a few were able to pull audiences back to the halls.

The film industry has changed its ways, and revenues are no longer dependent on theatres only.

Directors can earn money through other mediums, including OTT platforms, sale of TV rights, digital rights, sponsors, release of their movies in other countries.

Throughout the last 6 months, these are the movies which have been released: “Chitamahal”, “Tor Majhey Amar Prem”, “Shoshurbari Zindabad 2”, “Mafia”, “Mukhosh”, “Shimu”, “Gunin”, “Lockdown Love Story”, “Jal Cherar Somoy”, “Golui”, “Shaan”, “Bidrohi”, “Boddo Bhalobashi”, “Paap Punno”, “Agamikal”, “Bikhov”, “Omanush” and “Talash”.

Azad Khan, the producer of “Shaan”, told The Daily Star that he is really happy with the positive

response for the film.

“The movie has received superb response from the audiences. It’s still running in a few theatres. However, we are not able to generate enough revenue to return the full investment just yet. We are hopeful that the investment will be recovered gradually in the future. In addition, there are many other ways to make money from movies. We are really happy that we were able to distribute ‘Shaan’ in other countries like US, Malaysia and Paris for screening,” said Azad Khan.

“Shoshurbari Zindabad 2” director Debashish Biswas shared how Covid-19 impacted his film.

“The movie was released amidst the surge of Covid-19 pandemic, so it kind of hurt our film. However, it still ran for over 3-4 consecutive weeks in theatres. Many cinema halls have opened due to the release of the film. We were able to generate an investment of about BDT 25 to 30 lakh from the cinema halls,” said Debashish Biswas.

Efthakhar Suvo, director of “Mukhosh” believes it is completely absurd to assume that one can regain full investments through release in theatres in this industry.

“My movie has run across cinema halls and multiplexes for two months, but the investment has not been recouped. The film

industry has changed completely after the pandemic,” he says, commenting that they have to rely on OTT and television premiers to recoup their investments.

Zahid Hasan, head of Avi Kathachitra, a film distribution company, emphasised that the film industry has to change its way in the post-Covid era.

“People have become accustomed to watching movies in other mediums since the Covid-19 surge. At present, it is possible to recoup 30 to 50 percent investment from the cinema hall. The rest of the investment will come back from OTT platforms, digital media, sponsors, TV rights and movie releases abroad,” said Zahid Hasan.

“The movies that have released in the last few months have not been able to bring back the investment through the cinema halls. It has to be compensated by other means. Audiences have started returning to theatres with the release of films like ‘Mission Extreme’, ‘Mukhosh’, ‘Shaan’, and ‘Golui’. However, the investment will not return solely from cinema halls alone. We have to think of better ways to optimise more returns for the movies. I am not saying that the movies that are being released now are bad, but we have to come to terms with this harsh reality,” added Zahid Hasan.

# NEWS

## Bangladesh is owed an apology

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Japan International Cooperation Agency and Islamic Development Bank withdrew their support from the project.

“It is not right to believe the institutions just because they are big. Many a time, they resort to chicanery of various purposes,” said Momen, who joined in the event virtually.

Following the allegations, Syed Abul Hossain, who was the communications minister then, resigned.

Md Mosharraf Hossain Bhuiyan, the then secretary to the bridges division, was suspended and arrested for his alleged involvement in the corruption conspiracy.

Fingers were also pointed towards Prime Minister’s Economic Affairs Adviser Mashhur Rahman.

The corruption charges then went to a court in Canada, but the allegations were not proven.

“Many of our scholars danced to the tune of the foreigners. It is time for them to rethink their ways of thinking,” Momen said.

The WB worked inefficiently with regards to the allegations of corruption conspiracy, Rahman said.

It was not good form of the WB to take a major decision based on secret information, said Bhuiyan, who is now Bangladesh’s ambassador

to Germany.

“In fact, that was the time when I had told the World Bank that its jurisprudence was weak. That way of working can only humiliate people, not support them,” he said at the event.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s decision then to forge ahead with the project with own funds was correct as it was based on people’s welfare, the dignity of the nation and above all, patriotism.

The least-developed countries often are trapped in various forms of conditions set by the global lenders, said Shahriar Alam, the state minister for foreign affairs.

“Bangladesh’s success in

implementing the Padma bridge project would be an inspiration for the other LDC countries,” he added.

Apart from boosting connectivity in South and Southeast Asia, the Padma bridge would make Bangladesh’s position stronger in the regional geopolitical landscape, said Masud Bin Momen, the foreign secretary.

“We have implemented a number of mega projects and more are underway, but now we need to focus on mega social infrastructure that is education and health, to reap the full benefits of the projects,” said Selim Raihan, a professor at the University of Dhaka’s economics department.

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price hike by Tk 15 a litre.

According to the BPC, if diesel price was raised by Tk 10 a litre, the cost of commuting each kilometre by an individual in the capital and the port city would be Tk 2.23, up from the current Tk 2.15. For long-haul buses, the fare would be Tk 1.89 from the current Tk 1.80. Commuting costs would rise by Tk 0.16 and Tk 0.24 for each kilometre if diesel price was hiked by Tk 20 and Tk 30 respectively.

However, consumer rights groups said the rates fixed by the government are almost never followed by the transport companies and the people end up spending a lot more.

Nasrul Hamid, state minister for energy,

presided over the meeting attended by officials of Petrobangla, BPC, BRTA, BIWTA and transport associations leaders and filling station owners.

Multiple individuals who attended the meeting told The Daily Star that the state minister said the government would set the transportation fare before announcing the new fuel prices.

In November 2021, after the diesel price was hiked, transport companies kept the vehicle off the roads for three days, causing people to suffer immensely. Transport operation regained normalcy after the government raised the fares.

This month, the average price of each barrel, about 159 litres, of diesel was \$171, octane \$148 and crude oil

\$115 in the international market, officials said.

The BPC claimed that it was losing Tk 36 and Tk 55.15 for each litre of octane sold at Tk 89 and diesel at Tk 80.

After refining crude oil, BPC now spends Tk 96.87 for a litre of petrol but sells it for Tk 86.

BPC annually imports 62 lakh tonnes of fuel, 72 percent of which is diesel, 4.8 percent octane and six percent crude oil.

Contacted, Prof M Shamsul Alam, energy expert and vice president of Consumers Association of Bangladesh, said the BPC or the energy division has no right to set fuel prices because the “BPC itself is a business organisation. We have earlier demanded a proper audit of the company...

There are many anomalies and manipulations in their accounts.”

He added that the association would sue the secretary of energy division and the chairman of Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission for not following the law.

Only the BERC has the legal right to set fuel prices, he said, adding that the association has a writ petition pending with the High Court in this regard.

Economist Zahid Hussain said the BPC has been making profit since fiscal 2014-15. “When you made profits, you didn’t lower the prices, but when you are making losses, you want to hike the prices. It is not acceptable. People are already bearing the brunt of inflation.”

## Fuel prices may go up by at least Tk 10

## Form commission within 30 days

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directed to form an enquiry commission to identify the “culprits who made up stories” about corruption regarding the Padma Bridge project and why it should not be ordered to bring those behind such stories to justice.

The then HC bench of Justice Quazi Reza-

Ul Hoque and Justice Mohammad Ullah had issued the rule following media reports citing a Canadian court’s decision to acquit all three accused of corruption conspiracy charges.

The World Bank, which was supposed to be the main financier of the project, raised the

allegation in 2011 and eventually pulled out of the scheme. Later, Canadian police sued some top officials of SNC-Lavalin, a Canadian construction firm.

On Sunday, Deputy Attorney General AKM Amin Uddin Manik prayed to the HC bench of Justice Md Nazrul Islam Talukder

and Justice Kazi Md Ejarul Haque Akondo for hearing and disposal of the rule.

Lawyer Abdun Nur Dulal appeared for Bangladesh Bridge Authority while senior lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan argued for the Anti-Corruption Commission during the hearing on the rule yesterday.

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on user-submitted data and the figure there is conservative.

These crowdfunded ventures were initiatives taken, more often than not, by friends and families of those affected.

Meanwhile, social media influencers like Syed Sayedul Haque Suman claimed to have raised Tk one crore in two days.

While government representatives on the field continue to say the allocated relief they got from the state is enough, flood victims strongly disagree.

These correspondents of The Daily Star were able to reach flood affected areas while traveling with private organisations providing relief.

Speaking to them on Friday, Md Lokman, union parishad chairman of

Tawakkul in Sylhet, said, “What we have is enough and we are hopeful of getting more in the future.”

As he spoke, hundreds of people banged on the gates of the parishad office demanding relief.

Several residents said they had either not received relief, or received a paltry amount only once.

On Thursday, Abdul Latif, union parishad member of Darbast, also insisted that the government relief they got is enough.

“I got 24 sacks of rice. The government is really helping the people of my union.”

His union has 1,100 families.

On that particular day, multiple residents of the Uttar Gardhana village of the union told this newspaper that they had received no relief at all.

## Mask mandate back again

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At a programme, Health Minister Zahid Maleque said around 2.20 crore children aged between five and 12 years will be inoculated against Covid-19 soon.

“The World Health Organisation had not authorised [child vaccination for this age] earlier; now we have got it and we already have vaccines suitable for children,” he said while addressing the event at Bangabandhu Sheikh

Mujib Medical University in the capital yesterday.

The minister said, “Official statistics said there are 2.20 crore children aged between five and 12. They have to register on Surokkha app using birth registration certificates.

“Since the countrywide inoculation campaign against Covid-19 began on February 8, 2021, people are required to register on www.surokkha.gov.bd using national identity cards, birth certificates or

passports.”

The minister urged the guardians to ensure registration for their children as early as possible.

In another development, three Covid-19 patients died yesterday, said a press release of the Directorate General of Health Services.

Besides, the DGHS reported 2,087 new cases, a decrease from the previous day’s 2,101.

With this, the total number of deaths reached 29,145 and the confirmed

cases 19,69,361.

Against yesterday’s 13,489 tests, the positivity rate was 15.47 percent. Of all confirmed cases yesterday, the highest 1,795 were in Dhaka city, according to the release.

Of the three deaths, one was man and two were women. One was in Dhaka division and two were in Chattogram division.

The Covid cases started rising early this month after the positivity rate dropped for months.