



Becoming Major Sayem

Siam’s “Operation Sundarban” releases tomorrow

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Siam Ahmed's new movie “Operation Sundarban” will be released in theatres on September 23. The audience will see him play the role of Major Sayem, in the film.

In a recent interview with The Daily Star, Siam shares his experiences while working for the movie.

Do you feel pressurized, having to follow up hits like “Hawa” and “Poran”?

Ever since the release of my second film “Dohon”, nothing stresses me out as an actor. This is because I know what my aspirations are. I only have time to focus on how well I can merge with the characters I am presenting on screen, and I have the liberty to do so because Bangla cinema is currently flourishing. I hope we get to see the industry continue prospering with the release of every movie.

Many are under the impression that “Operation Sundarban” is a RAB documentary. What is your opinion regarding this?

This is completely inaccurate. “Operation Sundarban” is essentially a commercial film. It has action sequences, emotional scenes and love songs like any other mainstream movie. While the story is about them, it is nowhere near being a documentary.

This movie is also a dream come true for me. I've put a lot of effort into it, and I hope it can strike a chord with the audience.

How did you transform from Siam Ahmed into Major Sayem?

I feel very deeply attached to the role that I am playing for this film. I connected with Major Sayem on an emotional level. The action scenes were difficult to perform, because I had to wear real combat boots and carry actual weaponry.

We had to visit remote locations in Sundarbans for the movie, and the shooting was often interrupted and rescheduled because of the sightings of tigers.

Overall, it was all a challenging affair.

Are there any updates on your Bollywood debut?

The shooting of “In the Ring” is scheduled for February next year. I have another meeting next month, to discuss the plot and characters. You will get the shooting dates soon.



Badhan to play drug dealer in ‘Guti’

Shankha Dasgupta's Chorki original web-series, “Guti”, will feature Azmeri Haque Badhan in the lead role. This will mark Badhan's first appearance in a local OTT platform. Previously, the actress worked in Hoichoi's web-series, “Robindronath Ekhane Kawkhono Khete Aashenni”.

“It was a very challenging role and I am grateful to Chorki for producing such strong, female-centric content,” said Badhan.

Badhan also reflected upon the strong plot of the series.

“Shankha Dasgupta has arranged the story beautifully. It has a very unique plot and different characters. I play the role of Sultana, a drug dealer, who gets engrossed in risky business,” added the actress.

The shooting for “Guti” will start soon, in various locations across Dhaka, Chattogram and Cumilla. The makers are planning on hiring local artistes to be a part of the series.

Comedian Raju Srivastava dies at 58

Popular Indian comedian Raju Srivastava passed away yesterday at the age of 58. The artiste breathed his last at around 10:20 am in the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi. The comedian was admitted to the AIIMS on August 10, after he suffered a heart attack.

Raju suffered the heart attack while he was in a gym at South Delhi. The comedian underwent an angioplasty the same day, but was put on a ventilator afterwards.

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‘This is not a bluff’

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In an interview with Reuters, Nato Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg denounced Putin's threat to use nuclear weapons as “dangerous and reckless rhetoric”.

The mobilisation plan demonstrated “that the war is not going according to his plans” and it was clear that the Russian president had made “a big miscalculation”, Stoltenberg said.

In a pre-recorded address to the nation early yesterday, Putin accused the West of trying to “destroy” his country through its backing of Kyiv. Russia needed to support those in Ukraine who wanted to “determine their own future”, he said.

The Russian leader announced a

partial military mobilisation, with Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu telling state television that some 300,000 reservists would be called up.

“When the territorial integrity of our country is threatened, we will certainly use all the means at our disposal to protect Russia and our people. This is not a bluff,” Putin said.

An EU spokesman said the mobilisation was proof Putin wanted an escalation of the conflict, not peace.

The Russian leader said that through its support for Ukraine the West was trying to “weaken, divide and ultimately destroy our country”. Shoigu said Moscow was “fighting not so much Ukraine as the collective West” in Ukraine.

Dhaka should

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On Tuesday, acting foreign secretary Admiral (ret'd) Khurshed Alam told foreign diplomats in Dhaka that Myanmar should not be allowed to destabilise the region and hamper Rohingya repatriation, including the 7.5 lakh Rohingyas who fled the brutal military crackdown in 2017.

Prof Imtiaz, also director of Centre for Genocide Studies at DU, said the issue should be strongly raised at the ongoing UN General Assembly. Bangladesh can also think of reporting the matter to the UN Security Council, he said.

Meanwhile, the United League of Arakan (ULA), the Arakanese political organisation whose armed wing is the Arakan Army, said at a press conference on September 19 that they would accept Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh if the ULA could establish a relationship with the international community “as a government”.

ULA, which controls a large part of Rakhine State, said it is calling for recognition from the international community, including Bangladesh.

Asked how Bangladesh could go about it, Prof Imtiaz Ahmed said there are various ethnic groups fighting Myanmar military for autonomy, and Bangladesh should not be get involved in Myanmar's internal issues.

“Our objective is Rohingya repatriation, stopping any violation of border sovereignty, and a stable region,” he said.

If needed, Bangladesh should go for military diplomacy – something the Myanmar military may be more comfortable with, he added.

Nay San Lwin, co-founder of the Free Rohingya Coalition, said Myanmar's allegation that ARSA is fighting Myanmar military along with Arakan Army is baseless.

“The ideologies of the two groups are different,” he told this correspondent from Germany.

He said the Arakan Army is very active in Myanmar and the fighting is basically in Maundaw, Rathedaung and Buthidaung, where basically the Rohingyas used to live before the military crackdown in 2017.

“My strong belief is that the fighting is meant to prevent Rohingya repatriation,” Lwin said.

He suggested that UN peacekeepers or other international forces be deployed in Rakhine to ensure security of the state for safe Rohingya repatriation. Bilateral negotiation between Bangladesh and Myanmar is not going to help the Rohingya repatriation.

Higher inflation, lower GDP this fiscal

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a tightening bias to contain inflation.

This along with the increased food and agriculture subsidies and a cut to 15 percent from 62.5 percent in customs duties on imported rice are expected to constrain food inflation.

In another stroke of bad news, ADB revised down its growth forecast for Bangladesh for this fiscal year to 6.6 percent from its earlier 7.1 percent projection.

“Bangladesh's economy registered robust GDP growth of 7.2 percent in fiscal 2021-22. While economic growth is expected to moderate slightly to 6.6 percent in the next fiscal year, it remains very robust compared with other countries in the region.”

The lower forecast reflects lower consumption expenditure on weaker export demand and income, an uncertain outlook and domestic production constraints, it said.

Domestic power and energy shortages, together with rising input and transport costs, will weigh on industrial production.

The economic fallout and uncertainty over the war in Ukraine will slow growth in key export destinations and substantially reduce export momentum and growth in the coming months, according to the Manila-based lender.

Public investment will slacken on government austerity measures prompted by slowing revenue growth and higher import costs. Lower private investment will also slow growth, it said.

“The government is navigating

the prolonged external economic uncertainties relatively well and has implemented appropriate policies to reduce the external imbalance,” said Edimon Ginting, ADB's country director for Bangladesh.

The trade deficit is forecast to widen to \$37.5 billion (7.3 percent GDP) this fiscal year on faster growth in imports than exports.

Remittances will rebound and are forecast to increase by 9.5 percent. Inflows will be buoyed by the 253 percent growth in Bangladeshis going abroad for employment in fiscal 2021-22.

Despite a wider trade deficit, the current account deficit is forecast to narrow slightly to 3.6 percent of GDP in fiscal 2022-23 due to increased remittances.

The main downside risk to the outlook is a weakening in exports caused by global uncertainty over the prolonged war in Ukraine. Adverse weather events are perennial risk, the report added.

“Turbulent times like these are also a good time to accelerate reforms that would improve the country's growth prospects in the medium term,” Ginting said.

Reforms include improving domestic resource mobilisation, deepening the financial market and enhancing competitiveness to promote the creation of productive jobs in the private sector.

Uncertainties in the international energy market provide a good momentum to accelerate reforms to achieve the country's climate change goals and expand domestic renewable energy supply to reduce dependence

on fossil fuels, said Ginting, who assumed his current role in October last year.

“If Bangladesh wants to be an upper middle-income country by 2031, if you look at the experience of many other countries in the region, to move from lower middle-income country to upper middle-income, the source of growth needs to be different – it has to be innovation and productivity.”

Productivity would come from enhanced aptitude of its people, he said, while urging the government to ramp up its investment in human resource development.

To facilitate greater expenditure for human capital development, resource mobilisation has to be accelerated.

“We need to tax more for that growth.”

Thanks to Bangladesh's economic progress, there is now a larger middle-income demographic. “They need to be in the tax basket.”

He went on to advise the government to harness the power of technology to collect more taxes.

“The bottom line of all this is good tax administration. Improving the tax administration is the key to increasing domestic resource mobilisation.”

Logistics infrastructure and regulatory framework must improve if the country is to become an upper middle-income country.

“Formalisation is also one side of moving up to the upper middle-income bracket. It is easier to tax the formal sector than the informal sector,” he added.

Swindling was the goal

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“We have said in the audit report that Evaly has been established through fraudulence. Its only intention was to collect money from people through fraudulence and to embezzle their money. There are no documents on how much money has been collected and refunded by Evaly.

“Crores of taka had been transacted by Evaly but there are no specific accounts, statements or documents in this regard. From this, it can be assumed that Evaly may have laundered money.”

He added, “We, however, did not declare Evaly bankrupt, as new people can invest money in the e-commerce platform in order to run it. We have appointed five members to form the [new] board of directors for Evaly, in line with the High Court directives.

“The new directors include a representative from the commerce ministry, another from the E-commerce Association of Bangladesh, its former chairman Shamima Nasrin, her mother and her brother-in-law.”

Justice Manik, a former judge of the Supreme Court's Appellate Division, also said they decided to resign on Tuesday and did so yesterday morning.

The HC, on August 24, ordered the board of directors to include the e-commerce platform's former chairman, Shamima Nasrin, her mother and brother-in-law as its members.

The order said the board appointed

by this court shall be at liberty to submit their resignation, and directed it to turn in a report after complying with the directive by September 25.

The HC bench delivered the order on this issue following three separate applications filed by Shamima Nasrin, her mother and brother-in-law.

In those, Shamima said they had found investors and wanted to run the company on their own. She also promised to pay back the money Evaly owes its customers and vendors after reviving the business.

The central bank found that Evaly's dues were Tk 404 crore as of the mid-March last year, including Tk 214 crore liabilities to customers.

Following a petition filed by Farhad Hossain, an Evaly customer, the HC on October 16 last year formed the five-member board to run Evaly in the absence of its jailed directors and to give the government a way to pay back the company's long line of creditors.

On September 22 last year, the company bench issued an injunction order restraining Evaly, which allegedly has liabilities amounting to over Tk 1,000 crore, from selling and transferring its assets until further order.

Shamima, who was arrested on September 16 last year during a drive at their residence in Dhaka's Mohammadpur in an embezzlement case, was released on bail from Kashimpur Women's Central Jail in Gazipur on April 22 this year.

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freedom of citizens, which is a clear violation of articles 31, 32, and 43 of the constitution. “No law permits this.”

Fakhrul said in recent times it has been observed that police are harassing BNP and opposition party leaders and activists in the name of gathering personal information even from remote areas of the country.

He also alleged that police in various areas are also seeking information about one activist from

another, committee members of the BNP and its front bodies.

Fakhrul said they are also gathering information about the relatives of leaders and activists of the BNP and other opposition parties across the country, creating panic.

He urged the police to stop this and carry out the constitutional responsibility bestowed upon them.

In reply to a query, Fakhrul said even police came to his house to collect information, but they failed to

produce any valid documents in this regard.

The BNP leader said the proposal of the Election Commission to purchase two lakh electronic voting machines (EVMs) is a “mockery”.

“When people want that the next election should be held under a non-partisan government and almost all the political parties except for the ruling Awami League are against the use of EVM in the polls, the Election Commission's such decision is nothing but a mockery.”