

‘I just want my son to be a good human being’

APU BISWAS

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

The showbiz industry is buzzing about the revelation of Shakib Khan and Bubly's two-year-old son, Shehzad Khan Bir. Many have tried to reach out to Apu Biswas, whose name is unwillingly being linked to this news. The actress, who recently went to Kolkata with her and Shakib's son, Abraham Khan Joy, talked to The Daily Star, about her upcoming projects and work. However, she refuses to open up about recent events.

Did you go to Kolkata to celebrate Puja?

Yes, I am here with my son Joy and my sister – we are staying at my aunt's house. We are spending a wonderful time here, even though we did not have the time to meet all our relatives.

How are you spending the holidays there?

We went to many places for sightseeing and shopping. There is a place called Rajbari, where one of the most beautiful and elaborate Puja mandaps is made. I went there this time.

Kolkata, at this time of the year, is absolutely beautiful. The decorations, the music, the smell of vegetarian food – they all resonate in a splendid manner.

Do you go to Kolkata every year for Puja?

Not really, we have come here after many years. Usually, I spend time in Bangladesh with friends and family.

When I was little, I used to come here with my parents. My father used to tell me to hold his hand, or else I would get lost! His words still ring in my ears.

Tell us about your latest film, ‘Isha Khan’.

‘Isha Khan’ is a historical film, and it was just released this week. We have worked really hard on it, and I would have been there for promotions if I was in the country. I am urging everyone to see this film, and support it.

You have surely heard of the events that happened in Bangladesh, regarding Shakib Khan and Bubly.

Please, I don't want to talk about it. My life goes on with my son Joy, and all I want is to see him grow into a good human being. So, no comments on this.



Sacheen Littlefeather, the activist who rejected Oscar on Brando's behalf, dies

Sacheen Littlefeather, the Native American actress and activist—who is most famous for declining to accept an Oscar on Marlon Brando's behalf—has passed away.



The news was announced by the Academy of Motion Pictures. Littlefeather was initially blacklisted by Hollywood, after taking to the stage of the 1973 Oscars on Brando's behalf, and refusing to accept the award he had won in the 'Best Actor' category for his performance in ‘The Godfather’.

Giving a powerful speech, Littlefeather had rejected the award as part of Marlon Brando's own protests of Hollywood's depictions of Native Americans.

Earlier in 2022, 49 years after the event, the Academy issued an apology to Littlefeather.

‘Punorjonmo 3’ trends number 1 on YouTube



Notorious chef, Rafsan Haque (Afran Nisho) is back, and his hunger for the human body remains unquenched.

At the end of Vicky Zahed's film, ‘Shuklopokkho’, we saw Rafsan Haque's admirer and fellow cannibal, Kamal (Abdullah Al Sentu).

The director's cinematic universe came to a head with ‘Punorjonmo 3’, one of the most anticipated projects on television and YouTube.

After release, the Channel-i tele-fiction has garnered almost two million views, as of writing this article. ‘Punorjonmo 3’ has also reached the number 1 position on Bangladesh's ‘trending’ category on the platform.

The director and the cast are overwhelmed by the reception for their work. Vicky Zahed credited the audience and their ability to accept the project, with a highly unusual plotline.

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Canals grabbed

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But nothing has been done so far.

Bagerhat DC Mohammad Azizur Rahman said after investigation necessary steps will be taken soon.

Farmer Nizam Sheikh of Mitradanga area said Mozahar Mallik and his son Arif had been farming fish, occupying Petnikhali and Badiarjan canals, for long and no one dares to protest it.

A number of locals, seeking anonymity, said earlier many villagers used to catch fish in the two canals for livelihood, but they cannot go to the canals now.

They demanded that the canals be freed for the villagers.

Complainant Azahar Ali said he has appealed to the district administration thrice to free the two canals.

Contacted, Arif Mallik said he was not the only person who was fish farming in government canals. Many others were also involved.

Refiners slash

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from \$737 a tonne in June, according to World Bank Commodities Price Data.

In Bangladesh, prices, however, did not fall to that extent as refiners blamed spiralling cost of dollar.

Yesterday, retailers sold a litre of bottled soybean oil at Tk 185-Tk 195 in the capital. A five-litre container was selling at Tk 910-Tk 945, according to market prices data compiled by the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh.

Last month, the commerce ministry reduced prices of loose super palm oil by Tk 12 a litre to Tk 133, and packaged and loose sugar by Tk 6 a kg so that the consumers can benefit from the declining prices of these products in the international market.

The commodities were selling at higher prices than the government declared rates yesterday.

For example, retail prices of loose super palm oil were Tk 135-Tk 140. Loose sugar prices were fixed at Tk 89 a kg, but was trading for Tk 90-Tk 92 yesterday, according to the TCB.

EC to propose

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basis to the practice.

If the proposal becomes law, over 1 percent of voters at a polling booth will not be able to vote if their fingerprints do not matched.

There have been allegations that the election officials sometimes misuse this authority and allow even up to 25 percent voters in a polling booth to cast votes in cases of fingerprint mismatch.

5 districts fall far behind

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He said that as part of an earlier literacy programme, they had provided basic education to 18,000 adults of each Naliatbari and Jhenaigati, and 22,000 adults of Sreebardi.

“The programme helped push up the literacy rate several years ago.”

Poverty is another big factor, he added.

“If a child works at a bidi factory, they might get Tk 1,000-1,500, while the school stipend is a meagre amount. To encourage children to come to school, the stipend amount has to be increased.”

Razu Kumar Sarkar, additional director of Sunamganj BNFE, said the out-of-school-children project is currently benefitting 4,200 children with non-formal education in two of the 12 upazilas.

Jamalpur BNFE's Kazi Saifuzzaman and Sherpur BNFE's Syed Moktar Hossain suggested continuous literacy programmes that should also provide skills development training for jobseekers.

24 indicted in BCL leader

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read out the charges to the accused during the hearing. The accused pleaded not guilty.”

Court sources said the 24 accused are on bail and 23 were present in the court yesterday. As accused Abu Jihad was absent, the court cancelled his bail and issued an arrest warrant for him.

The other accused are: Moktar Hossain, Amir Hossen, Khairul Nur Islam, Faisal Ahmed Pappu, Rubel Kanti Dey, Salauddin Lavlu, Rajibul Islam, Mamunur Rahman Rabbi, Ibrahim Khalil, Ainul Kader Chowdhury, Jahidur Rahman, Jiaul Haque, Nizam Uddin, Mainuddin Hanif, Mizanur Rahman, Didarul Alam Masum, Md Shamim, Mozammel Haque Murad, Md Mamun, Tipu Sultan, Niaz Morshed Nipu, Amzad Hossain and Abdul Rab Nowshad.

Of them, Didarul is the general secretary of Lalkhan Bazar ward unit AL, while others are activists of BCL,

Moktar also said social movements, commitment from political leaders, and formations of union literacy committees are needed to help increase the literacy rates in the districts falling behind.

Nuruzzaman Sharif, acting director general of BNFE, said the basic literacy project was recently completed and another such programme providing non-formal education is being implemented.

“So, the districts falling behind, along with the rest of the country, will see improvements in terms of literacy rates.”

“Currently, we do not have upazila level officials. So, we will have to chalk out new initiatives to improve countrywide literacy rates.”

According to the 2022 census, the literacy rate in the urban areas is 81.28 percent, while in rural areas, it is 71.56.

The rate is higher among the male population, which is 76.56 percent. Among the female population, it is 72.82.

The highest literacy rate – 78.09 – was in Dhaka division.

and Jubo League.

In the charge sheet, PBI mentioned that Didarul ordered his men to kill Sudiopto over political rivalry while Nipu led the attack on him.

Sudiopto, a master's student of Government City College and an assistant general secretary of the city unit Chhatra League, was beaten to death in front of his house in Sadarghat area on October 6, 2017.

Sudiopto's father Meghnath Biswas filed a case with Sadarghat Police Station accusing seven to eight unknown people on that day. After probe, PBI pressed charges against the 24 on February 9, 2021.

Meghnath told The Daily Star yesterday, “I'm happy that the court framed charges after a long time. The accused are powerful and wealthy.”

“I'm a just a teacher. My financial condition is not good. I had to struggle to hire a lawyer. I want everybody's cooperation so that my son gets justice,” he said in an emotion-choked voice.

Twin terrors for the minorities

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concluded that his religious sentiments were decidedly hurt.

While Pritom languishes in jail, artisan Bhaskar Ranjan Pal of Satkhira's Agardari village still does not know who vandalised his workshop and destroyed as many as 53 idols in the making.

The incident happened in the middle of the night on January 24 this year. The photos of the attack show idols under construction with heads and arms askew after being battered with blunt objects.

Bhaskar said he closed his shop at 9:00pm and went home. He found his workshop vandalised when he went back the next morning.

“I am an over-60-year-old poor artisan, working for 35 years. I don't have any enemies. I don't know who did this and why. Nothing like this has ever happened before.”

He estimated his losses at Tk 42,000.

Even though a case was filed, nobody was ever apprehended because none of the criminals could be identified, said Swapan Kumar Shil, who leads Satkhira's Puja Uddjapan Parishad.

Two more temples – a Swaraswati temple in Habiganj and the Shri Shri Shitla O Tara Ma temple in Narayanganj – were vandalised the very next month.

Then in March, three more temples came under attack in Dhaka and Chattogram's Banshkhali, followed by a temple in Noakhali being vandalised in April.

In July, there were as many as six attacks on religious sites.

These include a Ram Krishna temple in Gaibandha's Damodarpur, the Bhushondi Rathkhola temple in Tangail, temples in Dighalia of Narail, Shibajoy of Manikganj and Rangunia of Chattogram.

In addition, devotees praying inside the Shri Shri Jalakumari temple in Chattogram's Chandraghona were also attacked.

In August, household temples in Kurigram's Nagdanga, Barguna's Shibganj and Satkhira's Shibpur were vandalised.

In September – the month leading up to the Puja celebrations – four incidents of vandalism and looting took place in temples across Dhaka's Nababganj, Magura's Dariapur, Kushtia's Lahini Karmakar Para and Barishal's Chanpur.

This is according to data collected by Bangladesh Puja Uddjapan Parishad, which maintains that nobody has been arrested in these cases, nor has there been a conviction.

On the other hand, school teachers Hridoy Mondal of Munshiganj and Swapan Kumar Biswas of Narail were arrested in April and June respectively for “hurting religious sentiments”, with the former serving jail time, and the latter publicly made to wear a garland of shoes.

Only Swapan got some form of a legal remedy, with action being taken against those who publicly humiliated him.

Hridoy's only consolation was being granted bail and release from prison.

In addition, a Hindu house in Bagerhat's Morrelganj upazila was vandalised over a rumoured Facebook post made by 20-year-old Kaushik Biswas, who was arrested for “hurting religious sentiments” in April.

A carnage in Narail's Dighalia's Sahapara left several Hindu houses burnt to embers and shops vandalised, all because a teenage boy allegedly uploaded a Facebook status.

Both the boy and his father were detained and the former was taken on a three-day remand under the DSA.

In August, Jhumon Das was arrested in Sunamganj's Shalla, in a second DSA case, with his first being when he was arrested for posting against fallen Hefazat leader Mamunul Haque.

This time too he was booked for a Facebook status that allegedly threatened religious incitement.

The Puja Uddjapan Parishad reported another case in Satkhira in September, in which a man named Mihir Mondal himself allegedly sought police custody after a Facebook post by him “incited” the community of Ashashuni village.

One of the directives given by the Parishad prior to the celebrations this year include “refraining from activities that hurt the religious sentiments of others.”

As Pritom's brother Piya told The Daily Star, “As the minority here, we have to be careful about what we say.”

The Parishad has maintained that attacks on temples are meant to hurt religious sentiments of the Hindu community.

In a statement on September 24, it said, “Using fabricated allegations of hurting religious sentiments,

radical forces have been attacking, vandalising, looting and setting fire to temples and Hindu homes.”

Advocate Zahirul Islam Khan Panna, human rights expert, pointed out that even the violent attacks that took place during last year's Puja celebrations have not yet seen the light of justice.

“There was supposed to be a judicial enquiry, but it never took place because the Appellate Division stayed it recently due to an ongoing departmental enquiry.”

On the flipside, the DSA cases filed against Pritom and the others are discriminatory and exploitative, he said.

Panna, who has represented many accused under the DSA, stated, “These cases are targeted. If you are a religious minority, if you are vulnerable, you are more likely to be a victim of the DSA. Has there been any cases filed concerning hate speech against minorities, which we see all over social media?”

“In the case of Jhumon Das, I read out his social media [post] in an open court and said that if I posted it, it would be considered patriotic. But since Jhumon said it, he was sued and arrested.”

“There were six cases filed concerning the 2016 [religious] violence in Nasirnagar. In one of those cases, a poor fisherman, Rasraj, was sued for hurting religious sentiments. He cannot even operate social media but his case is actively at the trial stage, with Rasraj being charge-sheeted. Meanwhile, the other cases have gone nowhere.”

In other instances of violence against religious minorities, a notable one was the 2012 Ramu violence, in which local mobs carried out a series of attacks on Buddhist monasteries, shrines, and houses in Cox's Bazar's Ramu upazila. This 10-year-old attack has yet to see the light of justice.

Sweden's Paabo

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said: “No, I have received a couple of prizes before but I somehow did not think that this really would qualify for a Nobel Prize.”

Paabo, son of a Nobel Prize-winning biochemist, has been credited with transforming the study of human origins after developing ways to allow for the examination of DNA sequences from archaeological and paleontological remains reaching back to the dawn of human history.