

I will always be a model first: Shirin Akter Shela

When Shirin Akter Shela walks into a room, one cannot help but gasp at her commanding presence. The former Miss Universe Bangladesh is no stranger to representing Bangladesh on the international stage, and this time, she won the Model Star Award in South Korea's Asia Model Festival, which she also judged. She gave an exclusive over-the-phone interview to The Daily Star, just after the event.

SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

Where are you right now?
I am still in South Korea, at the after party of the event. It has been exhilarating, to say the least. In 2019, I was a participant in the same event, and now I took the judge's seat – it is truly and honour. It is also very heartening to see the Bangladeshi contingent perform well here.

Who, among the Bangladeshi participants, did well?
Mir Maryam Ahmed reached the Top 10 of the 'Face of Asia' segment. Besides her, Hasnat Jami was also noticeable in the event.

Where is does the modeling industry in Bangladesh stand right now?

Despite our greatest efforts, there is a lot left to be desired in terms of events. For example, we used to have the Bangladesh Fashion week, which does not take place any more. Whatever achievements that we have in this field, it is the result of earnest efforts from a very limited number of people in this sector.

On that note, I would really like to thank Azra Mahmood for her constant mentorship and support for this programme.

You have achieved a lot at this young age. Do you feel like you could mentor some up-and-coming models in the future?

I cannot even think about mentoring someone, as so many seniors whom I idolize are still in their prime. I just mentioned Azra Mahmood, and there are many other talented individuals, who deserve the title of a 'mentor'. I am just happy to be able to represent Bangladesh.

We saw at a recent event by The Daily Star, that you are great at dance as well.

(Laughs) When Blender's Choice The Daily Star OTT and Digital Content Awards asked me to perform here, I was already learning Bharatnatyam for three months! I am glad that I was able to pull it off with limited experience, and after seeing that, Chorki also hit me up for a performance for their one-year anniversary programme.

You really came into your own as an actor in "Pett Kata Shaw". Do you want to sign up for more acting gigs now?

I might, but I want to state clearly that my identity will always be as a model. I have lived and breathed this industry for a long time. If I had to pick an alternate career, it would be to act, but I will never forget my roots.



Nora Fatehi denied permission to perform in Dhaka

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK



"Saki Saki" and "Dilbar" famed Nora Fatehi was scheduled to perform on November 18 in Dhaka, at the Global Achievers Awards, which is being organised by the Women's Leadership Corporation.

However, the visit has now been cancelled, due to the Ministry of Cultural Affairs denying Nora the permission to perform in Bangladesh.

This information was announced in a circular signed by the Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Mohammad Khaled Hossain.

According to the circular, Bollywood actress Nora Fatehi cannot be given permission to participate in the Global Achievers Award due to the current global condition and the dollar crunch.

Earlier, her visit for another private award ceremony in December was also cancelled due to the same reasons.



BTS stars to serve military duty in South Korea

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

K-pop sensation BTS will finally have to undertake their mandatory military service in South Korea. The group's representative, Big Hit Music confirmed the news through a statement.

According to South Korean law, all able-bodied men under the age of 30 will have to perform mandatory military service. Jin, who is the band's oldest member at 29 years of age, tried to delay his military service as much as he could—as he will turn 30 in December. So, Jin will likely be the first member of BTS to undergo mandatory military service.

BigHit Music, part of BTS' agency Hybe, revealed in their statement that, "The members of BTS are currently moving forward with plans to fulfil their military service."

NEWS

'Fat' parrot

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The kakapo was a favourite to win this year, scoring an endorsement from natural history icon David Attenborough, who described it as "loveable" and his favourite New Zealand bird.

But faced with a campaign of such soaring pedigree, organisers said they wanted to give less popular birds a chance.

"The decision to leave kakapo off this year's candidate list wasn't one we took lightly," Ellen Rykers, a spokesperson for environmental group Forest and Bird, told AFP.

"We know how much people love the kakapo. Bird of the Year is about raising awareness for all of New Zealand's native birds, many of which are in serious trouble," she said.

"We want to keep the competition fresh and interesting, and share some of the spotlight," Rykers added.

"It wouldn't be Bird of the Year without a few ruffled feathers."

New Zealand's Bird of the Year contest has proven highly contentious over the years.

Past polls have been beset with irregularities -- from a suspicious number of Russian votes, to neighbouring Australians openly attempting to rig the contest.

The reigning champion is the pekapeka-tou-roa -- a bat.

Bandarban bans

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surrender peacefully. They had distributed leaflets containing the directive.

The operation of tourist vehicles was suspended yesterday, said Md Nasirul Alam, president of the district's micro-jeep-mahindra owners' cooperative association, adding that there was no certainty when the ban would be lifted.

3 Bangladeshis

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Bill Gremmel told Australian media.

"It goes from quite a wide two-lane road [John Gorton Drive] down to a narrow, single-lane each way road [Coppins Crossing Road] very quickly and it's on the downhill," he continued.

Police investigations into the crash continue, said the report, adding that the spot where the accident happened is a "known crash spot".

Still clueless why

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to collect his personal belongings.

"There must be some reasons. The state might have the answers," said Mokbul, adding that he conveyed the matter to Information Minister Hasan Mahmud the same day.

The public administration ministry issued a circular saying Mokbul was sent into retirement under Section 45 of Bangladesh Service Rules 2018.

Upon the president's approval, the government can send an employee, who has completed 25 years of service, into retirement in public interest, without showing any reasons, according to the section.

Mokbul said, "Parents admonish their children first and then punish them. If I had been involved in any wrongdoing, I should have been cautioned for that. I would have corrected myself ... the decision could have been taken if I had failed to rectify myself."

"Some day you will learn why the decision was taken."

Seeking anonymity, an information ministry official told The Daily Star that the minister and the secretary have not been on good terms lately.

"The minister was unhappy. But I cannot say for sure whether the minister's unhappiness led to the forced retirement of Mokbul Hossain," said the official, adding that the decision would create a bad precedent in the civil service.

Mokbul observed the government made the decision within the legal framework, and that he was not considering taking any legal steps.

"I have served the country enough. I respect the decision of the government," he said.

There has been an allegation that the action was taken against him as he met BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman in London.

About the allegation, Mokbul said, "I went to London with a team

in March. Ashequn Nabi Chowdhury [press minister at Bangladesh High Commission in London] was in charge of the press wing. If you [journalists] ask him, you will get to know the facts.

"If the allegation is true, it [the meeting with Tarique] happened in March. This is October. Why this question wasn't asked all these months?"

"I don't remember whether I have ever seen Tarique Rahman in person ... I have no wish to meet him either."

Asked if he had met Tarique during the BNP government's tenures, he said they never met. "He was neither a minister nor a lawmaker. I saw him only on television ...

He added, "Until today [Monday], I was not aware of any allegations against me. Now, all these allegations are surfacing."

Moments before Mokbul talked to the media, the information minister said he was still unaware of the reasons behind the secretary's forced retirement.

"I don't know the underlying reasons behind it. Since the public administration ministry issued the circular, it can explain better," he said, skirting a direct answer.

Earlier in 2009, the government sent the then information secretary ATM Fazlul Karim into forced retirement for writing a poem demeaning Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family members.

Mokbul joined as the secretary of the information and broadcasting ministry on May 31, 2021.

Earlier, he had worked as a registrar at the office of the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms. He also worked as an additional secretary at the textiles and jute ministry.

He joined Bangladesh Civil Service in 1991 as an officer of the 10th batch of the BCS (administration) cadre. He worked in administration for most of his career.

AL-backed candidates take 48

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as "no irregularities and violence were reported".

"We didn't see anything [through CCTV cameras] also.... We are satisfied," he told reporters after monitoring voting from the CCTV monitoring cell at the Nirbachan Bhaban in the capital's Agargaon.

He said it was their responsibility to ensure the environment so that voters could cast their votes.

The CEC said they halted the Gaibandha-5 by-polls on Wednesday after seeing irregularities while monitoring the elections via CCTV cameras.

"We believe this had a positive impact on the [zilla parishad] elections,"

BARISHAL INCIDENT

Barishal City Corporation Mayor Serniabat Sadiq Abdullah was involved in an incident with Barishal Sadar Upazila Nirbahi Officer Md Moniruzzaman at a polling centre yesterday.

A video shared by the mayor on Facebook showed that he with a group of public representatives tried to enter Barishal Zilla School polling centre and the UNO, who was carrying out duties as an executive magistrate, prevented him.

"Have I entered the polling centre yet? Why are you creating a scene? Am I a child who doesn't know the

rules? Why are you talking like a stupid person?" the mayor asked Moniruzzaman.

Shocked at this, the UNO told the mayor that he didn't say anything to him.

Speaking to journalists later, the UNO said, "You have seen the video. The presiding officer of the polling station will be a better person to talk about the incident."

Presiding Officer Masum Billah said there was "a little misunderstanding" and he brought the situation under control.

On August 18 last year, Mayor Sadiq got into a heated argument with then Barishal Sadar UNO Munibur Rahman over removing banners. Gunshots were fired during the incident, and three cases were filed with the local police station over the matter.

NATORE MP ENTERS POLLING CENTRE

Shafiqul Islam Shimul, lawmaker from Natore-2 (Sadar, Naldanga), reportedly entered Dighapatia MK College polling centre during yesterday's elections, violating the electoral code of conduct.

He entered the centre around 11:15am and stayed there for a while.

"I visited the centre as a public representative. I didn't influence anything," Shimul told The Daily Star. Natore Deputy Commissioner

Shamim Ahmed, also the returning officer, said, "A lawmaker cannot do this in any way. We will take action after looking into the incident."

In the morning, Shimul's personal secretary Akramul Islam was also seen entering the same polling centre with a press card shortly after the voting started.

Asked about this, Akramul said he is the editor of local daily Sangbad Protikar.

In Moulvibazar, member candidates Aatur Rahman and Hasan Ahmed Javed bagged 80 votes each in the zilla parishad polls.

Now a lottery will be held at the returning officer's office to decide the winner, said Azedur Rahman, presiding officer of Hilalpur Government Primary School polling centre.

The EC in August announced the schedule for the elections to 61 district councils. Later, the court suspended elections to Chapainawabganj and Noakhali district councils.

This is the second time zilla parishad polls are being held in the country. The maiden elections took place on December 28, 2016.

AL-backed candidates became chairman in 46 districts and 21 of them were elected unopposed. AL leaders running as independents won in 11.

Tories will try to oust Truss

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to Graham Brady, the head of the Conservative Party's committee which organises the leadership contest, the Daily Mail reported, quoting unnamed sources.

Britain, engulfed in a political crisis, has lost three prime ministers since it voted to leave the European Union in 2016.

The MPs will urge Brady to tell Truss that "her time is up" or to change the political party rules to allow an immediate vote of confidence in her leadership, the report said.

Brady is said to be resisting the move, arguing that the Truss, along with newly appointed Chancellor Jeremy Hunt, deserve a chance to set out economic strategy in a budget on Oct. 31, the report added.

Separately, The Times reported that some lawmakers have held secret

discussions on replacing Truss with a new leader.

Truss, who won the Conservative Party leadership last month after promising to slash taxes, is fighting for her political survival after ditching key parts of the programme.

The chaos has fuelled discontent in the party, which is falling behind the opposition Labour Party in opinion polls.

New finance chief Jeremy Hunt's move to axe almost all of its debt-fuelled tax cuts leaves Truss' position in a precarious state after a series of embarrassing U-turns.

Hunt estimated the tax changes would raise about £32 billion (\$36 billion) per year, after economists estimated the government faced a £60-billion black hole. He also warned of tough spending cuts.

The chancellor of the exchequer

said no government could control markets -- but stressed his action would give certainty over public finances and help secure growth.

"We will reverse almost all the tax measures announced... three weeks ago," Hunt said in a televised statement, conceding last month's budget from his predecessor had harmed the public purse.

"The most important objective for our country right now is stability," he added in a contrite statement, ahead of setting out further details in parliament later yesterday.

Hunt scrapped plans to axe the lowest rate of income tax, and curbed the government's flagship energy price freeze -- pulling the plug in April instead of late 2024.

After April, his department will "review" its energy support package, he said.