

# I love the people of Bangladesh, eager to work here: Ritwick Chakraborty

LUBABA MAHJABIN PRIMA

Can anyone forget Madhu from *Nagarkirtan*, a flute player who loves a transgender woman? Who hasn't felt touched by the economic struggles of the man in *Asha Jaoar Majhe*, resembling that of any typical Bengali man? Was there ever a character in Bengali cinema like the caretaker in *Nirbaak*?

The man behind these classic performances is Ritwick Chakraborty, one of the most versatile and talented actors of Bangla cinema. He is currently visiting Dhaka for the premier of his movie *Mayar Jonjal*, where he acts opposite Aupee Karim. In an exclusive interview with The Daily Star, he talks about acting, cinema and more.

You've mentioned previously that your struggle as a newcomer in this industry was crucial to you. What would be your advice to youngsters who are struggling?

I worked as a medical representative, and didn't like the job at all. I knew I couldn't do that all my life and so I decided to take a risk. I left my job, and didn't really plan to be an actor. My love and appreciation for acting lead me to a journey. This path to be a professional actor was muddled with a lot of neglect. All of these made me a stronger human being. The perspectives these created was crucial to having an understanding as an actor.

How do you prepare yourself before any performance?

The work determines the preparation. I acted in this Hindi movie, *The Violin Player*, where I played the character of a person who plays violin in chorus. He came to Mumbai with a lot of aspirations, but couldn't achieve much and now plays in chorus

for background scores. As an individual, I've never played an instrument since childhood, and I don't understand tunes much. So, characters like this require special preparation.

I didn't learn violin, but to make the acting convincing, I took some training. Each character has its own demands. In *Mayar Jonjal* I play Chandu, a marginalised person. Despite struggling economically, he doesn't want his wife, played by Aupee Karim, to work. We have seen such people in real life. Hurt by male ego, he maneuvers life. So, while playing this character, I didn't take any such preparation alone. But we sat with our director Indranil Roychowdhury to understand his demands from this character. We talked about aspects of family and society. So I don't have a method as such. Sometimes I think of a backstory, sometimes I don't.

What is "Mayar Jonjal" about? What can the audiences expect from this movie?

I think the people portrayed in this movie are not usually depicted in our works. Even for a marginalised person, somewhere down the line, the main struggles of life are not economic. Those are universal. The love for family, personal ego, helpless in life are common emotions. We all know about loving out of hatred, hating out of love. All these evolve into a brilliant story in this movie. This movie is set in Kolkata, but not the Kolkata that comes to our mind when we hear the word. This city, like others, is expanding and this burgeoning part has a different character from the rest. *Mayar Jonjal* is a tale close to real life. It is a tale of time. The movie is inspired from two

stories by Manik Bandyopadhyay from the 1950s, when India was a newly liberated state. That context is no more existent. And yet this captures the present. I believe audiences will relate to this story and like the movie.

Mrinal Sen once told you that had he been physically fit, he would've worked with you. So, among the directors with whom you could actually work, who is your favorite?

There are many, I shouldn't name one. Kaushik Ganguly is one of my favorites, and I've worked in multiple movies with him, all of which were loved by audiences. I've worked with Pradipta Bhattacharyya in *Bakita Byaktigato* and some TV works. I've worked in three movies of Indranil Roychowdhury. I've worked in only one of Baudhayan Mukherji, *The Violin Player* but he is a favorite too. I also enjoyed working with Aditya Vikram Sengupta. I've worked only in one of his projects, but

his movie is truly a director's film.

What kind of cinema do you yourself enjoy? As a viewer, I would say I enjoy watching the kind of movies we work in, the kind which is not typically commercial. I enjoy the works of Naseeruddin Shah, Om Puri, Smita Patil - I'm not a hardcore audience of commercial movies, I watch them out of curiosity.

Where do you think the trend of growing OTT platforms witnessing joint ventures and cultural exchange leads to?

People of these two countries love the actors and works of each other. So, these joint ventures are crucial. As an actor, I can say I want to work in Bangladesh. Many actors from Bangladesh are working in Kolkata too, be it Jaya, Chanchal Da and others. OTT has expanded this path to enrich the culture. And I'm very hopeful.

I also love Bangladeshi people. I'm glad that this movie being released simultaneously in India and Bangladesh. This makes me very happy that audiences can directly watch my work here. Do come to the hall to watch this movie. And I'm eager to work in Bangladesh.



Ritwick Chakraborty and Aupee Karim from the sets of "Mayar Jonjal".



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

## NEWS

### Two Rohingya

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Inspector General Syed Harunur Rashid, commander of the 14th Armed Police Battalion (APBn).

Mohammad Zubair, president of the Arakan Rohingya Society for Peace and Human Rights, said the clash broke out between Nabi Hossain Group, involved in crimes like human trafficking and drug peddling, and ARSA activists.

He said the fighting might have been ensued over taking control of illegal drug business at the camp.

### Govt to buy 1.60cr litres soybean oil

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against the previous price of Tk 178.45.

Mahub said that following two separate proposals from the Ministry of Industries, Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) would procure some 30,000 tonnes of bagged granular urea fertiliser from KAFCO, Bangladesh with around Taka 110.20 crore where per ton fertiliser would cost \$345.125 against the previous price of \$500.125.

Besides, the BCIC would also procure some 30,000 tonnes of bulk granular urea fertiliser from SABIC Agri-nutrients Company, Saudi Arabia at a cost of around Taka 115.53 crore. Under this consignment, per ton fertiliser would cost \$361.83 against the previous per ton price of \$470.

He also informed that the day's CCGP meeting approved a proposal from the Power Division under which the M/S J&C Impex Ltd Dhaka has been awarded the contract for collecting and installing related machineries of gas turbine for Shikalbaha 150MW peaking power plant and for providing necessary consultancy services with around Tk 91.85 crore.

The Cabinet Division additional secretary said that the package number PW-03 under the project for Cox's Bazar-Teknaf Road Development (2nd revised) has been awarded to Max Infrastructure Ltd with around Tk 169.48 crore.

Besides, the meeting also approved a variation proposal of the Road Transport and Highways Division.

### 'We stand up for BBC'

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Updating the House of Commons on the issue, the minister also highlighted that BBC is "operationally and editorially independent", the minister said the public broadcaster plays an important role and the FCDO funds services in 12 languages, including four Indian languages: Gujarati, Marathi, Punjabi and Telugu.

"It will continue to do so, because it is important to ensure that our voice - and an independent voice, through the BBC - is heard throughout the world," he said.

Pressed on by opposition MPs on the "deeply worrying raids" and asked about discussions with the Indian government, the minister added: "It is because of our broad and deep relationship with India that we are able to discuss a wide range of issues in a constructive manner with its government. As part of those conversations, this issue has been raised and we continue to monitor the situation."

Meanwhile, the Northern Ireland MP Jim Shannon branded the raid as a "deliberate act of intimidation following the release of an unflattering documentary about the country's leader" and sharply criticised the UK government for failing to make a statement on the issue.

"The raids happened seven days ago. Since then - I say this respectfully - there has been silence from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. No government statements have been issued, and it has taken an urgent question to encourage the government to condemn this blatant attack on press freedoms," said Shannon, a member of Parliament for the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP).

British Sikh Labour MP Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese expressed his concerns that "India, a nation with which we have shared values of democracy and press freedoms, decided to conduct a raid on the BBC offices after the airing of a documentary critical of the Indian

prime minister's actions".

"These issues have absolutely been raised as part of those conversations (with Indian government)," Minister David Rutley responded to the concerns.

"We need to ensure that our views on media freedom are communicated clearly with other governments. We have those conversations not only with the government of India, but across the world. We think these are very important principles and, as I said, they are essential elements for robust democracies," the minister said.

"Our broad and deep relationship, guided by the comprehensive strategic partnership and the 2030 road map for India-UK future relations, allows us to discuss a wide range of issues in a constructive manner with the government of India. We continue to follow the matter closely," he added.

Conservative Party MP Bob Blackman, a vocal supporter of the Indian government, asked the minister to confirm if the IT authorities in India have been investigating the BBC for seven years.

David Rutley, however, declined to comment on "an ongoing investigation that the BBC is actively engaged in".

The Indian income tax department said in a statement following the survey that the income and profits disclosed by the organisation's units were "not commensurate with the scale of operations in India".

### SC upholds

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that the death sentences of Salahuddin and Asaduzzaman have already been executed in line with the SC verdict.

Younus was tried in absentia as he was on the run. He was arrested after the trial court delivered the verdict.

Younus did not file any appeal with the HC challenging the trial court judgement, but he submitted an appeal to the Appellate Division through a lawyer.

### Earth's innermost layer

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observations of seismic waves originating from powerful earthquakes traveling back and forth from one side of the globe to the other up to five times like a ricochet," said study co-author Dr Thanh Son Pham, a seismologist and

postdoctoral fellow at the Research School of Earth Sciences at the Australian National University in Canberra, in an email.

The reason this layer had not been previously observed in more detail is because its composition is so similar to what lies above it, Pham said.

### Dhaka seeks details from ambassador

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in terms of voting patterns in the UN General Assembly and there will be another resolution in the GA. We are considering it. But we will let you know officially tomorrow [Thursday] regarding yesterday's meeting in Moscow," he said.

Quoting the Russian foreign ministry, TASS reported, "We drew the attention of the head of the diplomatic mission to the reports about the decision of his country's authorities to ban Russian ships carrying cargoes for Bangladesh from calling at Bangladeshi ports."

"This step runs counter to the traditionally friendly character of

bilateral relations and can have a negative effect on the prospects for our cooperation in various spheres."

Last week, the Russian embassy in Dhaka told TASS that 69 Russian (sanctioned) ships had been barred from calling at Bangladeshi ports.

However, according to the embassy, this step did not mean that Bangladesh had banned imports of Russian goods.

Later, Russian foreign ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova said Bangladesh had made this decision under the threat of US secondary sanctions, according to a TASS report.

In January, Bangladesh told the

Russian side that they could send any ship, except the sanctioned ones, carrying equipment for the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant.

Bangladesh hoped that Russia would now send non-sanctioned ships.

### Teacher in jail

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him and this was the result.

Mohsin Hossain, officer-in-charge of Kumarkhali Police Station, said Saleh was produced before a judicial magistrate's court, which later sent him to jail.

### Key accused apologised, says Phulpori

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that Phulpori's allegation of torturing her is untrue," Sanjida told The Daily Star.

Seeking anonymity, a probe committee member told this correspondent that the victim and the accused became involved in an altercation while giving their statements.

On February 14, Phulpori, a first-year non-residential student,

alleged that Sanjida and Tabassum Islam, a BCL activist, tortured her on the night of February 12 for staying at university's Deshratna Sheikh Hasina Hall without their "permission".

They allegedly tortured her from 11:00pm till 3:30am.

The victim lodged a complaint with the university proctor, student adviser and the hall provost, demanding punishment of those

involved in the incident.

Following that, three committees were formed to investigate the allegation.

The probe body of the Deshratna Sheikh Hasina Hall authorities has already recorded the statements of the victim and the accused.

Besides, a three-member committee formed by the district administration is separately investigating the incident.

### Govt doctors can see patients after hours

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For example, physicians at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) serve at private chambers at the hospital from 3 pm to 6 pm once a week by rotation.

They also serve at private healthcare institutions outside.

In the BSMMU model called "afternoon specialised consultant service", one or two specialist physicians, assistant professors and above, from each of around 40 departments serve during the private sessions from 3:00 pm to 6:00 pm every day except Friday.

As many as 550-650 patients receive service on an average daily and each of them pays Tk 200 to the BSMMU, according to Md Rezaur Rahman, director (Hospital) at the BSMMU.

"It is a piecemeal initiative and will create complete chaos," said Rashid-E-Mahub, former president of the Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA).

The ground reality is that those related services are broadly unavailable in different public hospitals, he said.

Among the non-government hospitals in the country, Birdem General Hospital and National Heart Foundation follow the institutional practice system where their physicians are not allowed to practice outside.

It is widely practised in different countries across the world including India, Canada, the UK and Australia.

In most states in neighbouring India, doctors are offered incentives called "non-practice allowance",

according to a report published by India Times online in June last year. Sometimes, junior doctors are allowed to serve for extra hours at public hospitals.

Ahmed Abu Saleh, a professor at the microbiology department at the BSMMU, however, pointed to the positive side of private practice at public hospitals.

"It is better than nothing. Because, many patients get the consultation from the specialist physicians at a cheaper cost," he said.

Ehteshamul Haque Chowdhury, BMA's secretary, sees the move positively.

"Both the physicians, especially the juniors, and the patients will benefit from the initiative - It will also increase the utilisation of the hospital infrastructure."