

# The enigmatic Afzal Hossain

Artiste's new book makes its way to Ekushey Boi Mela

SHAH ALAM SHAHU

Afzal Hossain is often called the evergreen actor. Him and actress Suborna are often considered the most popular pairing in television drama history in Bangladesh. Even after acting in a few films, the actor continues to be deeply in love with the artform.

Aside from his work on television, Afzal Hossain has also performed on the stage, worked as a painter and also a director.

A man of many talents, he has also been active in the literary world for many years now, primarily writing poetry and prose. This year, his new book of poetry, *Amra Dhulokadar Amra Adarshalipir* made its way to the Ekushey Boi Mela.

Speaking on the momentous occasion, Ekushey Padak-winning actor Afzal Hossain spoke to The Daily Star.

Your new book of poems has been published and even went to the Boi Mela. How did you enjoy this year's



book fair?

People's love for books has been around for a long time. Once upon a time, many people would come to *Boi Mela* to buy books. Sometimes they would even visit just to smell the books. Now, in addition to buying books, a lot of people also come to visit and enjoy the fair. All in all, there is a need for such book fairs in the country. Such *melas* are needed to create even more readers. I have also noticed that many people take an interest in the *Ekushey Boi Mela*. What could be a better environment than this?

Were you able to properly observe this year's Boi Mela?

I was not able to visit all the stalls from the different publications, as I did not get the chance to do so. My book only made its way to the *mela* a few days ago. I only went to *Boi Mela* after my book of poems arrived. Then, I went for two more days. I have seen a lot of crowds, but I have primarily stayed in the stall. For a bit, I did venture out to visit the other stalls and then I went on

to unveil the cover of my book. From what I was able to see, I really enjoyed the environment.

Do you regularly write books nowadays?

I write regularly. Sometimes I write when I am feeling good, other times I am writing daily. While everything I write might not be published for the world to see, I do still enjoy writing. As much as I like to paint, I also love to write. My new book of poems is my fifth poetry book. Whenever people buy books—whether it is mine or someone else's—and read it with interest, I am overjoyed.

Could you tell us about your first

book?

My first book was a great experience for me. Imdadul Haq Milan and I go way back. A book, written by the two of us, was published many years ago.

This was my first book and it was named *Jubokdoy*. In the book, there was one story from Milan and another from me. At that time, we would spend a lot of time with our friends. The experience of writing a book was very different at that time. *Jubokdoy* was well received by readers when it was published in 1978.



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED



## Srabanti and Prosenjit to appear in 'Devi Chaudhurani'

After pairing up in *Kaberi Antardhan* this year, Srabanti Chatterjee and Prosenjit Chatterjee are gearing up to surprise fans in their upcoming film *Devi Chaudhurani*—based on Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's famed novel of the same name.

According to media outlets, Srabanti will be portraying the role of Devi Chaudhurani, while Prosenjit will be playing the role of Bhabani Pathak in the new project.

Directed by Subhrajit Mitra, the film will feature the Sannyasi Rebellion, which took place in the 1770s due to the British government placing a ban on pilgrims.

The new film adaptation of the book will be dubbed in six languages and is planned to hit theaters in 2024.

## Dipjol continues to oppose release of 'Pathaan' in Bangladesh



Recently, there have been discussions that Bollywood superhit *Pathaan* would soon be released in Bangladesh. To this end, 19 film associations have put forth several conditions pertaining to the release of the film.

Yesterday, during a Film Directors' Association meeting at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Film City in Gazipur, actor Dipjol had told The Daily Star, "Why do we have to import Hindi films? On what logic will Hindi cinemas run during the month of language? Hindi films are not the solution to fixing the state of our cinema halls. The people of this country want to see Bengali films, not Hindi films."

# NEWS

## Phulpuri refuses to meet BCL probe body

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"She narrated everything and brought allegations against Sanjida, Tabassum and three other students. We have earlier spoken to the accused BCL leader and activists.

"We will first send the report to the university BCL and then they will send it to the BCL central committee for further action."

Phulpuri said, "Chhatra League Central Committee President Saddam Hussain also called me and assured me that I will get justice."

She filed a complaint on February

14, 2023, accusing two Chhatra League leaders, Sanjida Chowdhury and Tabassum Islam, of physically torturing her for staying in a dormitory without informing them.

Meanwhile, the probe body formed by the university authorities submitted its report yesterday, our Kushtia correspondent reports.

The committee, formed on February 15 and headed by Prof Reba Mandol, submitted it to the university's registrar in the morning.

During the investigation, the IU

authorities took depositions of 40 students, including the victim, two accused, two house tutors, and four staffers of the dorm.

At the same time, two other probe bodies, one formed by the hall authorities and another by the district administration, are carrying out separate investigations into the incident and are supposed to submit their reports in this regard soon.

(Our Pabna and Kushtia correspondents contributed to the report.)

## Dhaka keen to expand trade, ties

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out of LDC by 2026, when some trade privileges may be curtailed. Also, with the disruptions of supply chains following the Russia-Ukraine war, all countries are looking for diversified sources and markets. Bangladesh is no exception," he added.

"Similarly, countries like Argentina and Mexico are also eager to boost relations with us. Bangladesh is also a large and growing market," Mozammel Haque said.

In January, Bangladesh's foreign ministry opened a new wing for South America. Two Latin American countries—Argentina and Mexico—are expected to open their embassies in Dhaka soon.

In Latin America, Bangladesh currently has embassies in Brazil and Mexico. Only Brazil, among Latin American countries, has its embassy in Bangladesh.

Argentine Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship Santiago Andrés Cañero is arriving in Bangladesh today on a three-day visit. He is expected to open his country's embassy here today.

The minister's first announcement on social media during the FIFA

World Cup created a huge buzz as the Argentines were overwhelmed by the positive response from Bangladeshi fans supporting Argentina's national football team.

During his visit, Argentine foreign minister will call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen, and Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi.

There is also the possibility of signing visa exemption agreements for diplomatic and official passports, and MoUs on cooperation in agriculture and diplomatic training academies between the two countries, Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Sheli Sabrina told reporters on Thursday.

The two countries are also working on an MoU to facilitate football training and exchange programme.

According to foreign ministry sources, Bangladesh wants to enter South America's powerful economic alliance Mercosur, the southern common market.

This can help boost Bangladesh's export to the region, they said.

Bilateral trade between Bangladesh and Argentina stood at around \$900 million last year, when Argentina exported products worth \$875.66

million to Bangladesh.

Foreign ministry officials said Bangladesh has a demand for lithium, olive oil, processed food, and raw materials of gold that Argentina could supply, while Argentina has a demand for textiles that Bangladesh could export.

Meanwhile, Mexican Minister for Interior and Exterior Relations Marcelo Ebrard will be visiting Bangladesh on March 7-8.

He is set to announce the opening of the Mexican embassy in Dhaka.

"In the past five years, the two-way trade multiplied by 100 percent to about \$500 million, and Mexico is now eager to import pharmaceutical and IT products," said Federico Salas, Mexican Ambassador to Bangladesh, who is based in Delhi, told this correspondent during his recent visit to Dhaka.

Bangladesh's trade with Brazil has also increased significantly in recent times.

Import from Brazil went from more than \$1.8 billion in 2021 to about \$2.4 billion in 2022.

The export from Bangladesh to Brazil was about \$110 million, which means there is a lot to do to increase exports.

## BCL men torture

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of the President Block asked some students of the 49th batch to go to Room 219.

"There, they assaulted them physically and mentally. They made my friends squat, holding ears. Then, they also called me and asked me about various things, such as why do I not participate in political programmes and why I am not present at the guestroom. When I mentioned the reasons, they got angry, beat me physically, and asked me to leave the hall."

"When I refused to leave the hall, they again started to beat me. My friends brought me to another room," he added.

A student from the same hall said, "The victim was called to the room around 2:00am. I saw some students beating him in front of Room 219. Atiq, Rana, and others beat him severely."

Junaid Hasan Rana, one of the accused named in the complaint, said, "Nothing like that happened. That student [Sakibul] is an addict. He instructed one of his friends to leave the room. We are seniors, so we called him and asked for the reason."

Asked about the matter, JU BCL President Aktaruzzaman Sohel said, "Chhatra League always follows zero-tolerance policy against ragging. After investigation, organisational action will be taken based on evidence."

Professor Nazmul Hasan Talukder, provost of Rabindranath Tagore Hall, said, "That night the student called me around 5:30am. I asked him to meet me in the morning. I received a written complaint today. We will investigate the incident and take action accordingly."

## Mystery of salt deserts'

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space, forming the patterns.

However, neither theory explained the consistent size—always one to two metres—and the honeycomb shape.

Dr Lucas Goehring, associate professor in physics at Nottingham Trent University's School of Science and Technology, said: "In salt deserts the first thing you see—almost the only thing you see—is an endless patchwork of hexagons and other ordered shapes."

"The surface patterns reflect the slow overturning of salty water within the soil, a phenomenon somewhat like the convection cells that form in a thin layer of simmering water."

## Men posing as DB officials

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detaining them.

An official of Savar Police Station asked the families to wait for about 24 hours and look for them before filing a general diary, claimed Shamim.

Hakim Mia, elder brother of Shawpan, said, "My brother is just a garment worker. He is not involved in any political party and has no previous criminal record."

"My brother's phone is still open. Sometimes, someone from the other end received the call but did not talk. I do not know what to do now," he said.

Talking to our Savar correspondent, Sub-inspector Abdur Rahim Raju, duty officer of Savar Police Station, said, "Some people verbally informed us that three garment workers were picked up."

They were advised to file a general

"Although beautiful, wind blowing over salt deserts is a major source of atmospheric dust, and our results will help understand processes like this in desert environments."

The scientists conducted laboratory experiments to see how saline water moves in sandy soils and analysed the patterns under different conditions.

The salt deserts in which these patterns occur are not dry and the highly salty groundwater often reaches up to lie directly below the salt crust.

Over time, the resulting crust forms the raised humps and edges that create the honeycomb salt pattern.

## 59 migrants killed

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diary, he said. Contacted, Riaz Uddin Bilpab, officer-in-charge of Dhaka District North Detective Branch, said they did not pick up anyone by such names.

The line, which starts from Gabtoli and ends at Dasherbandi via Kalyanpur, Shyamoli, Asad Gate, Russel Square, Panthapath, Karwanbazar, Hateerjheel, Rampura and Aftabnagar, will have 15 stations.

Out of 17.3km, 13.1km would be underground and 4.2 elevated. The deadline of the project is 2030.

Meanwhile, Dhaka Mass Transit Company Ltd (DMTCL), the implementing agency of metro rail projects, yesterday organised the second stakeholders' workshop on MRT Line-5 (southern route) at a city hotel.

At the event, Abdul Wahab, project director of the line's southern route, said the estimated cost of the project was \$4.7 billion, when the US dollar rate was Tk 102 in November last year.

The ADB has agreed to give \$2.5

## Southern route to cost 35pc higher

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The DMTCL has carried out the feasibility study for fourth line—MRT Line-5 (southern route)—under a project funded by Asian Development Bank (ADB).

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billion as loan, he said, and requested the ADB official present at the workshop to provide a \$300 million additional fund to avoid co-financers for the project.

The rest will be borne by the government, he added.

When this correspondent enquired about this huge difference between the implementation costs of the southern and northern routes, he gave several reasons.

The costs of MRT-1 and MRT-5 northern routes—both approved in October 2019—were estimated following the rate schedules of 2018/19, but the southern route's project cost was estimated based on rate schedule of June 2022, which is seven to 10 percent higher.

He said the market turmoil following the Ukraine war started after June 2022, which resulted in a massive hike in the prices of rod, cement and stones.

Besides, when the MRT-1 and MRT-5 northern route projects were approved, the dollar rate was Tk 84/85,

but regarding the southern route, the cost was estimated at a time when the dollar rate was Tk 102, he added.

"If all these things are taken into consideration, then our project cost was supposed to be increased by 30 to 35 percent. So, it is still relatively low."

However, the cost of the southern route project is likely to increase as the dollar rate currently stands at Tk 107.

DMTCL Managing Director MAN Siddique told The Daily Star that they are preparing the Detailed Project Proposal and expect to submit it to the road transport and bridges ministry within the next month.

They will use the dollar rate of the day they will submit it, he added.

About whether project costs of MRT-1 and MRT-5 northern routes would be increased, he said, "The project costs will increase if the dollar rate does not come down."

Road Transport and Highway Division Secretary ABM Amin Ullah Nuri and ADB's Deputy Country Director Jiangbo Ning also spoke at the workshop.