

# 'When I came to Dhaka, I had nothing'

20 years ago, Sharmin Sultana Sumi came to Dhaka from Khulna with very few things to her name. During her time in Dhaka University, the vocalist, along with some talented musicians, would form Chirkutt. Making music her only strength, the band quickly rose to fame with their poetic lyrics and unique compositions, eventually going on to earn international acclaim.

ANTARA RAISA

How does it feel that your band, Chirkutt, just celebrated their 20th anniversary?

You know when you reach the peak of a hill, after climbing it for a long time, and it feels that you could now die in peace? Well, that is exactly how I feel right now. I never thought we would complete 20 long years, but here we are. Everyone deserves credit, from the person who used to give us tea every day to the person who patted our backs and motivated us. I am overjoyed that I have been able to do what I love for the last 20 years. Not many people have this type of opportunity.

Looking back, how has your journey been?

In all these years, I have gone through many struggles and hardships. However, one thing I learned is to never

complain about these things. Never glorify your struggles. I swallowed every hurdle that life gave me and made it my strength. Sometimes, it was the people closest to us—our friends and fellow musicians—who hurt us the most. However, I forgot those things and moved on. I am grateful to my amazing team, without them, none of this would be possible.

What is it like to be the female vocalist of a leading band?

I don't see myself as a female vocalist in the band. Rather, I see myself as an artiste, irrespective of my gender. It feels great to see girls and women being motivated by my work. When a teenage girl from a village hugs me and tells me that she has been inspired by me after seeing me perform on television, it makes my journey worthwhile. Being able to inspire thousands of women with my work is really beautiful.

When you started Chirkutt, did you

think the band would still be here 20 years later?

I never plan for anything. When I started the band, I did it because I felt like it. I have grown up in a musical family, where the craft was my only inspiration. When I came to Dhaka from Khulna, I had almost nothing to my name. When I love something, I feel like an invisible power guides me. So, when I came to Dhaka, I started writing and composing my songs. I didn't even know any musical grammar or have institutional training. But I still started anyway.

As a female artiste, did you ever face any discrimination in the Bangladeshi music industry?

I have faced a lot of challenges as a female artiste in the music industry, but I don't want to glorify myself by talking about them. I am a solutions-based person. Whenever I am hurt and face any hurdles, I try to find the positive side of the problem and make it my inspiration. However, one thing that I always faced was that I had to prove my excellence in every step I took, compared to my male counterparts. As a woman, I always had to prove myself.



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED



PHOTO: SHAHBAZ NAHIAN

## SAG Awards 'Everything Everywhere All at Once' dominates ahead of Oscars

The Screen Actors Guild (SAG) Awards witnessed a massive win for *Everything Everywhere All at Once* as it dominated the ceremony with four wins—including Michelle Yeoh taking home the



award for Female Actor in a Leading Role; the award for Outstanding Performance by a Cast in a Motion Picture; the award for marquee Ensemble in a Motion Picture and Best Supporting Actor awards for Jamie Lee Curtis and Ke Huy Quan.

Meanwhile, Brendan Fraser won the award for Outstanding Performance by a Male Actor in a Leading Role for *The Whale*.

The movie *Everything Everywhere All at Once* has broken the record for most SAG Awards by a single film. Only four films have won three SAG Awards since the ceremony began in 1995.

## Puja Chery drifts further apart from Shakib Khan

In recent times, Puja Chery has decided to distance herself from Shakib Khan. The actress was initially slated to star opposite Shakib in the government-granted project, *Maya*. However, Puja has now seemingly withdrawn from the film.



Puja Chery took to her verified Facebook account to write, "The production house had initially approached me to star in the project. I have seen many people talking about me being in the film, *Maya*. I just wanted to tell everyone that I have no agreement to be in the movie. For me, if I like a film's story, I will definitely want to work in it. For me, the story is more important than the co-star."

Earlier, Shakib Khan and Puja Chery had worked together in the government-granted film, *Golui*. At the time, there were rumours that the two co-stars were dating while working on the film.

## NEWS

### Argentina reopens

FROM PAGE 12

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen welcomed Cafiero at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport around 8:00am.

In the evening, the two ministers held a meeting and Momen later hosted a dinner for the Argentine delegation.

Cafiero, who is leading a 20-member business delegation, will meet Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi today.

Argentina recognised Bangladesh in 1973 and then opened its embassy a year later. However, in 1977, an Argentine dictator closed the embassy.

Addressing the inauguration ceremony, Shahriar Alam said Bangladesh is the world's 35th economy which definitely attracted Argentina to reopen its embassy here, but the love of Bangladeshis for Argentine football also was a triggering factor.

Immediately after the World Cup, Hasina congratulated the Argentine president.

"Reopening the embassy is not only a diplomatic gesture but an emotional one as well. It is a reflection of the strong bond that exists between our peoples," Shahriar said.

In 2022, the bilateral trade between the two nations was \$765 million. Argentine exports reached \$742.9 million and imports from Bangladesh totalled \$22.1 million.

Cafiero said while trade is definitely an issue why Argentina is reopening its embassy, it is the love and dignity for people that are especially needed in times of war and austerity.

"Give me the strength to make my love fruitful in service... Give me the strength never to disown the poor or bend my knees before insolent might," Cafiero read stanzas from Tagore, before ending his address.

Bangladesh and Argentina signed a visa exemption agreement for diplomatic and official passports, an agreement to facilitate football training and cooperation, and a memorandum of understanding between the foreign service academies in the field of diplomatic training.

"I am confident the agreements will lead to fruitful cooperation," Foreign Minister Momen told reporters after a meeting at the state guest house Jamuna.

Momen told the Argentine minister that Bangladesh improved its infrastructure, and streamlined regulations and that the country's location, skilled workforce, and natural resources make it an attractive destination for business and investment.

### CPJ urges govt

FROM PAGE 12

"Islam's work, for which she received the United States Department of State's Anti Corruption Champions Award in 2022, is a public service, not a crime, and should be protected under Sections 4 and 5 of the Disclosure of Public Interest Information [Protection] Act," it says.

The CPJ and rights groups urged the Bangladesh authorities to respect and protect the journalist's human rights.

"We urge the authorities to fully respect and protect the human rights of journalist and human rights defender Rozina Islam, including her right to a fair trial, and to immediately cease all forms of judicial harassment against her, facilitating the return of her passport from judicial custody, and ensuring that she is not subjected to further retaliation for her work."

Rozina, a special correspondent of the Bangla daily Prothom Alo, wrote several in-depth reports on corruption in the health sector during the Covid-19 pandemic.

### HC orders the ACC to probe

FROM PAGE 12

submitted the petition as a public interest litigation to the HC seeking its directive on authorities concerned to probe allegations against Abdus Sobhan Miah Golap of purchasing multiple homes in New York and amassing huge illegal wealth at home and abroad by abusing his power, position and through any other means, and concealing information about his wealth in his election affidavit in 2018.

Sayedul Haque Suman submitted the petition based on a report published in The Daily Star on January 16 this year under the headline "AL MP Golap owns nine properties in New York City."

The report said, "Awami League lawmaker Abdus Sobhan Miah Golap concealed information about being an American citizen and owning nine properties in New York City in his election affidavit in 2018, found an investigation by a global media agency—raising questions about his seat in the parliament."

"Golap, who was given the post

of central committee's publicity and publication secretary in the AL's national council last month (December last year), bought the properties between 2014 and 2019, according to a report by the Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP), a global network of investigative journalists," The Daily Star report said.

"Of the nine properties, which cost Golap about \$4 million, eight were bought with upfront cash payments. His last purchase—a semi-detached house in Jackson Heights that cost \$1.18 million—was made through a small mortgage and cash in 2019, after he became an MP, according to the report, published on Friday (January 13)," the report said.

Petitioner Sayedul Haque Suman himself moved the petition, while Senior Advocate Khurshid Alam Khan and Deputy Attorney General AKM Amin Uddin Manik represented the ACC and state during the petition's hearing yesterday.

She was confined to the health ministry inside the Secretariat for more than five hours on May 17, 2021, before being handed over to Shahbagh Police Station. The journalist walked out of jail on bail almost a week after her arrest. The organisations that signed the public letter include Amnesty International, Anti-Death Penalty Asia Network, Capital Punishment Justice Project, Coalition For Women in Journalism, Committee to Protect Journalists, CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma Free Media Movement, Front Line Defenders, International Federation for Human Rights, International Federation of Journalists, International Women's Media Foundation, Overseas Press Club of America, Pakistan Press Foundation, PEN America, PEN Bangladesh, PEN International, Reporters Without Borders, Robert F Kennedy Human Rights, South Asian Journalists Association, and World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT).

### Govt moves

FROM PAGE 12

10kg of rice to each of over one crore families under the Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) programme during the upcoming Ramadan.

Contacted, commerce ministry Senior Secretary Tapan Kanti Ghosh said they will hold a meeting with the food ministry as the OMS programme is run by them.

"We will discuss how the essentials can be distributed among the people under a package," he said.

Yesterday, the cabinet also passed a proposal on issuance of a Statutory Regulatory Order (SRO) by the Security Services Division, that would enable Bangladeshis to acquire citizenship (dual citizenship) of 44 more countries, including Brazil and Argentina.

Bangladeshis currently can obtain citizenship in 57 countries. After the issuance of the SRO, the figure will go up to 101.

Among the 44 new countries, 19 are African, 12 South American, and 12 Caribbean island countries. The other country is from Oceania.

The African countries are Egypt, South Africa, Kenya, Algeria, Sudan, Morocco, Ghana, Rwanda, Burundi, Tunisia, Sierra Leone, Libya, Congo, Liberia, Central African Republic, Eritrea, The Gambia, Botswana and Mauritius.

Twelve countries of South America are Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Venezuela, Suriname, Argentina, Peru, Ecuador, Chile, Uruguay and Guyana.

Bangladeshis will also be able to become citizens of Cuba, Dominican Republic, Haiti, the Bahamas, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Dominica, Saint Lucia, Barbados, Saint Vincent, and the Grenadines, Saint Kitts and Nevis and Fiji.

The cabinet approved in principle the draft of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (Amendment) Act 2023. The proposed law seeks to bring some changes to the existing law, including extensions of the tenures of BSMU vice chancellor, pro-vice chancellor and treasurer to four years from three years.

The meeting cleared the draft of Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan 2022-2041 putting emphasis on the climate change issues.

A fund of about \$80 billion will be required to implement the plan, said the cabinet secretary.

### 5 BCL leaders, activists

FROM PAGE 12

The committee found the five BCL leaders and activists guilty.

Prime accused Sanjida was the vice-president of the university BCL and a student of the statistics department.

The other accused are Halima Akhtar Urmi of the fine arts department; Israt Jahan Mim of the law department; and Tabassum Islam and Muabia Jahan of the banking and finance department.

"This is an initial step we have taken following the probe body's recommendations. We submitted the report to the university authorities. It will be forwarded to the High Court. We will act as per the High Court directive," Professor Shamsul Haque told The Daily Star.

Phulpori, a first-year non-residential student, alleged that Sanjida and other BCL activists tortured her on the night of February 12 for staying at the Deshratna Sheikh Hasina Hall without their "permission".

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

On February 14, the victim lodged a complaint with the university proctor, student adviser and the hall provost.

The next day, the university authorities formed a three-member probe body, headed by Prof Reba Mandol of the law department, and the hall administration formed a separate committee.

Following an earlier High Court directive, Kushtia district administration also formed another three-member body, comprising Kushtia Additional District Magistrate ANM Abuzar Giffari, Kushtia Senior Judicial Magistrate Mahmuda Sultana and the university's Assistant Professor Shahub Alam.

The university authorities' and hall authorities' probe bodies submitted separate reports to the acting registrar.

The two reports were then submitted together to the Attorney General's office yesterday to place before the High Court.

The district administration also submitted its report to the Attorney General's office yesterday.

"I have received two enquiry reports, one from the deputy commissioner

of Kushtia and another one [joined reports of the hall authorities and university authorities] from Islamic University this [yesterday] afternoon. I will submit them before the High Court tomorrow [Tuesday]. Both the reports are intact and so I can't say what the contents are," Deputy Attorney General Tushar Kanti Roy told The Daily Star yesterday.

Contacted, Sanjida told the Daily Star that they will go to court regarding the decision taken by the hall authorities and have nothing to say regarding the probe report. "But we want justice and that is why we will go to court."

Phulpori expressed contentment with the first course of action and wanted her torturers to be punished appropriately.

BCL PROBE BODY  
Meanwhile, the four-member probe body of the university BCL has found "some truth" in the allegations of Phulpori being tortured.

The committee, headed by the IU BCL Vice-President Munshi Kamrul, submitted its report to the BCL central committee on Sunday night.

"We have found evidence that Sanjida [the accused] and her followers misbehaved with Phulpori, verbally abused and intimidated her, even though the girl had stayed at the hall after consulting the provost. We also found evidence that the incident was videotaped," said a probe body member, seeking anonymity.

"Sanjida had gone too far with Phulpori. What happened with the girl is not acceptable. What happens and who stays at the halls is not BCL's to see," said another member of the committee.

### 'Forbidden planet'

FROM PAGE 12

(3,127 degrees Celsius) in temperature compared with the sun's blazing average of 9,980 F (5,527 C).

An M dwarf star is smaller, cooler and redder than our sun. These dim stars are some of the most common in the universe, and in recent years, astronomers have discovered that M dwarf stars are more likely to have planets orbiting them.

But astronomers weren't expecting such small stars to host giant planets—and that's exactly what they found when they took a closer look at the TOI-5205 planetary system.