



Raisul Islam Asad



Pijush Bandyopadhyay



Tariq Anam Khan



Mamunur Rashid

PHOTOS: STAR

THE PRICE OF BLOOD

Veteran actors reminisce independence

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

March is pivotal in the history of our liberation. The three important dates in this month are March 7, when Bangabandhu gave his historic speech, March 25, when the Pakistani Army launched a shameless massacre on us, and March 26, when our independence was declared.

Today, as the country commemorates Independence Day, noted actors Raisul Islam Asad, Pijush Bandyopadhyay, Tariq Anam Khan and Mamunur Rashid reminisced about the momentous day.

Raisul Islam Asad

In 1971, Asad was an intermediate student at Jagannath College and lived in Paltan. On the night of March 25, when the Pakistani military suddenly attacked unarmed Bangalees, Asad was deeply anxious about the situation outside.

"I still remember the night of March 26. That time, our house was near Rajarbag Police Line. After the black night of March 25, our police started

fighting against the atrocious Pakistan Army with their rifles. Some of them who had run out of bullets took shelter in our house. They also left behind their weapons," said Asad.

"After March 26, I ran to Puran Dhaka to check up on my friends, especially my Hindu friends. The situation I saw at that time was indescribable. There were only dead bodies covered with blood. English road was burned down," he added.

Asad then recalled how he was desperately trying to find his friend, Ranjit at Thatari Bajar, and what motivated him to join the liberation war.

"There were dead bodies on the lawn of Ranjit's house. I was trying to find him but couldn't find his body. Later I found out, he fled to India with his parents before March 25. That time, I decided to join the liberation war.

Pijush Bandyopadhyay

After listening to the the historic speech of March 7, I went back to my hometown, Faridpur. I realized that the liberation war will be started soon. I

started to take preparation. Suddenly, on March 25, the Pakistani army attacked the Bangalees with heavy armory. That night, someone knocked on my door and gave me a note, telling me that Bangabandhu had declared independence. Then, we, those who were in favor of Bangladesh and loved Bangabandhu, gathered in Faridpur. We started the procession in the early hours of March 26. That memory is still vivid in my heart. I will remember this memory forever.

Tariq Anam Khan

It's been 52 years of our independence. We got an independent nation because Bangabandhu led us in the war.

After the historic speech of Bangabandhu on March 7, the Pakistanis realized that us Bangalees will never give up. That's why, they carried out the massacre on March 25. At that time, I was studying in college in Shatkhira. When I heard about the massacre by the Pakistanis, I felt an intense rage against them. I was then inspired to join the cause of our liberation.

Mamunur Rashid

In 1971, after completing my university life, I was writing dramas and screenplays for movies. So, on March 25th, I was at Green Road, at actress Rozi Samad's residence. I was planning to write screenplays for movies all night long, t I could see that tanks were going to Pilkhana in the afternoon, via Green Road.

Then the night came, and I could hear the sounds of gunfire. I have never witnessed such a terrible situation – I stayed awake all night. During the Fajr Azan, I thought as they were Muslims, now they would stop firing. However, it didn't happen.

Then, on March 26, the curfew went on. I was stuck in that house all day. It was dangerous to go out. Dhaka city was turned into hell by the Pakistani military. There was the smell of dead bodies all around.

On March 27, I went out and ran to Gulistan. Then, I went across the river because if I stayed there, I would have died. Later, I went to Tangail with great difficulty. I still remember the day.

I have a personal affinity towards ghost stories: Puja Chery



Scheduled to be released this upcoming Eid, *Jin* starring Puja Chery is set to terrify the audiences in theatres. Directed by Nader Chowdhury and produced by Jaaz multimedia, the film also stars Shajal Noor, Ziaul Roshan among others.

Speaking about the film, Puja Chery told The Daily Star, "I have worked in this film from my personal affinity towards ghost stories. Every artiste wants to work in different characters throughout their career. I have already worked in romance, action and a lot of other genres. I wanted to work with a horror plot and thus I ended up in *Jin*."

On the other hand, Puja's co-star in *Jin*, Shajal Noor had recently sat down for an interview, where he informed briefly that the plot of the film is indeed based on true events. Furthermore, this will mark his first ever pairing with Puja Chery.

Ash and Pikachu's journey ends after 26 years

Ash Ketchum and Pikachu, two characters who have been at the heart of the *Pokémon* franchise since its inception in 1997, finally aired its final episode yesterday.

The story ended in Pallet Town, where his journey began, and included several references to the early episodes of the series.

The Pokémon Company International announced in December that the two would be ending their run with *Pokémon Ultimate Journeys: The Series*, and that two new trainers named Liko and Roy would take over as the series' stars in *Pokémon Horizons*.



NEWS

Driver killed

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The SUV Samrat used to drive is owned by a rental company named RDB. It was used by NIKIMT-Atomstroy, a construction firm working at the nuclear power plant, said police.

The victim used to chauffeur for a high official of the firm, said Mohsin Hossain, officer-in-charge of Kumarkhali Police Station.

On Thursday, Samrat dropped off the official at work and then went missing.

The next day, owner of the rental service, Anisur Rahman, reported the matter to Ishwardi Police Station, said OC Arbinda.

Yesterday morning, residents of the remote Char Sadipur area called police after noting a strong stench coming out of a white vehicle left on the bank for over a day.

Kumarkhali police then rushed to the spot and recovered the body, the OC said, adding that the body was handed over to Ishwardi Police Station after autopsy at Kushtia General Hospital morgue.

[Our correspondents from Pabna and Kushtia contributed to the report.]

Cancer cells

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of the disease in the early sixties.

"The last 15 years, however, have revolutionised our understanding of the biological complexity of these tumours, with exciting potential new therapies entering clinical trial at last.

"Experiments such as D(MG)2 aboard the International Space Station will improve our understanding of how cancer cells interact with each other within three-dimensional structures, and hopefully lead to new ideas for disrupting tumour growth that we can take forward back in the lab."

Diffuse midline glioma is an aggressive and incurable brain tumour that most commonly presents in children.

It has a poor prognosis – most children die within 18 months of being diagnosed.

The researchers want the experiments to be conducted in microgravity because they believe the conditions will allow their 3D cultures to grow to much larger sizes than on Earth.

They're too afraid

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Chowdhury, activist Tabassum Islam and several others tortured her for staying at the Deshratna Sheikh Hasina Hall without their "permission". The BCL women allegedly tortured her from 11:00pm to 3:30am.

Seeking anonymity, several students said that Sanjida and her supporters on many occasions misbehaved with other students. She even called their families to complain about them.

One such victim is a student of the 2017-18 session. She said one of the acolytes of Sanjida called her family and made false allegations about her character and activities on campus.

Students complained that BCL leaders and activists barred them from having a hall seat even after the authorities' approval. Some leaders of the pro-Awami League student front even extorted money from students to permit them to stay at dormitories.

An honours third-year student (2018-19 session) of Lalon Shah Hall said he was granted permission to be a resident of the dormitory about a year ago.

After repeated requests, the hall authorities in the presence of an assistant proctor showed him his seat in July last year.

"When I went to the room the next morning, Chhatra League leaders barred me from taking my seat. They said that I have to stay in the Gono Room and be active on campus with the seniors. Only then I would be allowed to have a seat," he added.

The IU student said he later went to a Chhatra League leader who demanded Tk 5,000 for the seat.

"I know at least eight students who have managed seats at the Lalon Shah Hall after paying Tk 3,500 to Tk 7,000 each," he told The Daily Star.

He said he couldn't stay at the hall even after being allocated a seat by the university authorities. "Many Chhatra League activists were occupying others' seats."

The student then informed the hall provost about the problem, but he asked him to write another application.

Contacted, Hall Provost Prof Obaidul Islam said he didn't receive specific complaints "officially". "We take steps only after getting specific complaints."

He said he was not aware of any

student failing to have a seat and facing harassment and mental torture.

Asked about the BCL's obstruction, he said: "Many conversations take place regarding the matter. I don't know about that."

On October 20 last year, some BCL activists beat up a female student of the 2016-17 session of Khaleda Zia Hall near the main gate of the university.

The victim and other senior students informed the matter to the hall authorities that day.

Saima Rahman, a student of the 2020-21 session, at one point called his friend, who is also a Chhatra League leader. The friend along with some other BCL men assaulted the victim.

This newspaper obtained a copy of the written complaint submitted to the hall authority on October 21 by over 150 students. It said that Saima misbehaved with the victim and some other seniors.

They demanded punishment for Saima and her friend.

"Chhatra League never did this," said Nasim Ahmed Joy, general secretary of IU Chhatra League.

He said if anyone gets involved in ragging, that person will have to take responsibility for it.

"We never bar anyone from having a seat. We as students' representatives rather try our best to help the administration," he added.

Asked about the BCL's involvement in ragging and harassment, IU Vice Chancellor Shaikh Abdus Salam said they are not aware of all the incidents.

"We show 'zero tolerance' to ragging and harassment. We have formed an anti-ragging committee to run a campaign and motivate students to stay away from ragging," he added.

The ruling party-backed student fronts mainly devise different ways to show their muscle power on campuses, said Nur Khan, executive director of Ain o Salish Kendra, a national legal aid and human rights organisation.

"Ragging is one of the ways of showing strength. There is an atmosphere of fear across society. The situation at Islamic University is nothing different. No one on the campus dares to talk about the issue."

This newspaper could not reach Saima for comments as she did not respond to calls.

Modi scared

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would not bow to intimidation.

"I will do whatever I have to do to defend the democratic nature of this country," he told reporters.

"They are used to everybody being scared of them," he said, in reference to the ruling party. "I am not scared of them."

The removal from the parliament of Modi's chief opponent comes at a time when the prime minister's relationship with Gautam Adani, one of India's most powerful industrialists, has been under scrutiny.

Modi has been a close associate of Adani for decades but the latter's business empire has been subject of renewed attention this year after a US investment firm accused it of "brazen" corporate fraud.

Gandhi's opposition Congress party has for weeks demanded a proper investigation by parliament on the allegations.

"I have been disqualified because the prime minister... is scared of the next speech that is going to come on Adani," Gandhi told reporters.

"I will continue to ask the question – what is the prime minister's relationship with Mr. Adani?"

Congress supporters held small protests in several cities around the country on Saturday to protest against Gandhi's removal as a lawmaker.

Gandhi is the leading face of Congress, once the dominant force of Indian politics but now a shadow of its former self.

He is the scion of India's most famous political dynasty and the son, grandson and great-grandson of former prime ministers, beginning with independence leader Jawaharlal Nehru.

But he has struggled to challenge the electoral juggernaut of Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its nationalist appeals to the country's Hindu majority.

The lower house of parliament ruled him ineligible to continue sitting as an MP on Friday, a day after his conviction in the defamation case.

The prosecution stemmed from a remark made during the 2019 election campaign in which Gandhi had asked why "all thieves have Modi as (their) common surname".

His comments were seen as a slur against the prime minister, who went on to win the election in a landslide.

Funding snag

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missing links: one is the Padma Bridge and the other the Kalna Bridge, formally named Madhumoti Bridge, in Narail, which was open to traffic last October.

But the road from Bhanga to Benapole via Jashore is a two-lane highway, which is failing to meet the growing demands, as a major shift in the movement of vehicles, including those for cross-border trade, has been taking place since the opening of the two bridges.

Bangladesh in October 2017 signed a \$4.5 billion LoC agreement with India, which is the third such deal between the two countries. The Bhanga-Jashore-Benapole road expansion is among the projects to be financed from the third LoC, RHD officials said.

According to the Planning Commission's document, although the pre-DPP of the project mentioned "LoC and other sources" as possible

sources for foreign loan, the DPP mentioned the LoC as the only source.

"The DPP didn't mentioned any information about how much loan the LoC authorities will provide for the project and in this given situation, the meeting can discuss how to ensure foreign funding," it added.

A top RHD official said they usually send a DPP, which is supposed to be implemented with foreign loan, to the Planning Commission upon getting confirmation about funding from the particular agency, although loan agreements are often signed after the approval of a project by the Ecneec.

"But this project [Bhanga-Benapole] is different as there is a bilateral commitment between the two countries," he said, wishing not to be named.

He added, "The meeting is actually called to know about the latest finance-related issues from the ERD and discuss the next steps regarding the project."

Relief to some of middle class

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Tk 10 per piece.

While visiting some points where cheaper milk, meat and eggs were being sold this morning, this correspondent spoke with people waiting to buy the products and found that there were more people with jobs and steady incomes than those with low incomes.

Although prices have been fixed at a rate cheaper than the market rate, they were still out of reach for most.

Mazedur Rahman, who works at the Ministry of Religious Affairs, has come to the mobile sales centre on the road opposite the Bangladesh Secretariat. He had planned to purchase chicken and eggs at lower prices but he returned home only with a dozen eggs and one kg of chicken.

Another Secretariat staffer, Kaizul Haque, bought 30 eggs, 1 kg beef and 1 kg chicken from the van. But he could not purchase mutton as the meat was sold out.

Md Jashim, a banker, was in the middle of the line at the Segunbagicha sales centre. He bought milk, eggs, and meat around 10:30am yesterday.

He said the beef was Tk 750 to Tk 800 outside. "It is a relief that we are getting the daily essentials here at a cheap rate."

Arohi, a housewife, said the way the prices of daily commodities have increased, it is difficult to manage the

family's expenses. "Now, the family expenses will be reduced to some extent. I got milk, meat, and eggs. Everything seems fresh. Better than the market."

Masud Rana, the cashier of the sales centre opposite the Bangladesh Secretariat, said hundreds of people purchased products from the van yesterday.

"We sold 100kg of beef, 50kg of dressed broiler chicken, 1,500 eggs, 150 litres of milk and 20kg of mutton. We don't know who is rich or poor. I sell products to those who stand in line," he added.

The Department of Livestock will sell milk, eggs and meat at affordable rates at 20 spots in the capital, until the 28th day of the holy month of Ramadan.

The places where the items will be sold are Abdul Gani Road, Khamarbari, Japan Garden City in Mohammadpur, Mirpur's 60-foot road, Maternal and Child Health Training Institute in Azimpur, Noyabazar in Old Dhaka, Arambagh, Notun Bazar, Kalshi in Mirpur, Khilgaon Raigate, Lucas Mor in Nakhalpara, Kitchen Market in Segun Bagicha, Bosila in Mohammadpur, Diyabari in Uttara, Jatrabari, Gabtoli, Hazaribagh, Korail Slum in Banani, Kamrangirchar and Rampura.