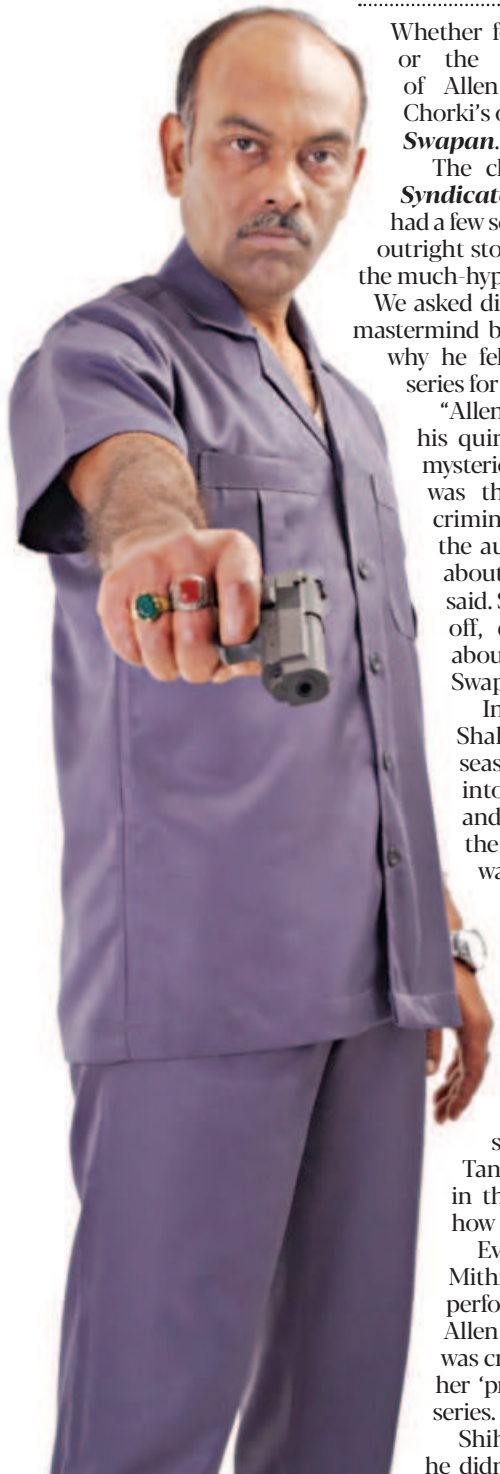


Wanted to explore the criminal, not the crime: Shihab Shaheen

ANTARA RAISA



Whether for the song *Boiam Pakhi* or the unpredictable personality of Allen Swapan, everyone loved Chorki's original series, *Myself Allen Swapan*.

The character was first seen in *Syndicate*, where Allen Swapan only had a few scenes, but Nasir Uddin Khan outright stole the show, culminating in the much-hyped spinoff.

We asked director Shihab Shaheen, the mastermind behind the character, about why he felt the need for a separate series for Allen Swapan.

"Allen simply won hearts with his quirky personality, accent and mysterious aura. Moreover, as he was the mastermind of all the criminal activities in the series, the audience demanded to know about this character's origins," he said. Since the release of the spinoff, everyone has been asking about what will happen to Allen Swapan in the next season.

In response to this question, Shaheen replied, "In the next season, we will dig deeper into the life of Allen Swapan, and show how he became the powerful kingpin that was shown in the series *Syndicate*."

"If you watch *Syndicate*, you will see that the person who is the assistant of Allen Swapan is the same person who beats him in the last episode of *Myself Allen Swapan*. In this series, he is the assistant of Tanzil, who is against Allen. So, in the next season, we will see how his allegiances changed."

Even though Rafiath Rashid Mithila put one of the best performances of her life with Allen Swapan's wife, Shayla, she was criticised by many because of her 'provocative' character in the series.

Shihab Shaheen explained why he didn't want to make Shayla an



Shihab Shaheen

PHOTOS: COLLECTED

innocent victim.

"When Shayla's husband dies and another person impersonates her dead husband, we begin to think how a woman will react in these situations. Will she try to do anything to survive in this city alone with her daughter? Will she try to find happiness out of all this? We wanted to delve into these questions while making the character," said the director.

"We see Shayla as a little self-centered, a woman who not only thought of her child, but also thought of her happiness too. She is a multi-dimensional and grey character. We didn't want to make her a 'typical' Bengali woman," he added.

Some audiences wanted to see more of the lead character's shady businesses and rise in the crime world, rather than the relationship between Swapan and Shayla.

"When a drug dealer leaves his hometown and comes to an unknown city where he tries to erase his former identity, it's important to show

how he did it. How he convinced his brother's wife and eventually made her his wife, to create a different identity for him," he said, in response to those audiences.

He also wanted to tell the story of a drug dealer, rather than drug dealing itself. He wanted to delve into the psyche of a criminal and how he brutally commits a crime.

"In the last episode, when the character faces a brutal consequence, he did nothing because hiding his identity was more important to him. We wanted to show how brutal and selfish these criminals are," said the director.

Shihab Shaheen is working on the second seasons of *Syndicate* and *Myself Allen Swapan*. He is also gearing up to start shooting for the psychological thriller series, *Ashur*, based on the life of Roshu Kha, who was considered to be the first serial killer in Bangladesh. Between 2007 and 2009, Roshu Kha raped and murdered 11 women, according to his confession to the police.



I lost weight for myself, was tired of taunts: Dighi

Parthana Fardin Dighi had to face immense criticism in the past for her weight, with many deeming her unfit to be an actress.

Dighi took hold of the criticism and took on the challenge to lose weight within eight months. Recently, in a Facebook post, she included the before and after picture of her physique. In a detailed post, the actress chronicled her journey and thanked everyone involved.

Concluding the post, Dighi wrote, "What I have done and will do, all these things are for myself, and no one else in this world. I do what I love and never regret doing the things that I love."

'Antarjal' poster revealed



Dipankar Dipon has finally released the official poster of his much-awaited cyber-thriller film, *Antarjal*.

The six people who can be seen in the poster include Siam Ahmed, Bidya Sinha Mim, Sunerah Binte Kamal, ABM Sumon, Mashrur Enan and Amit Sinha.

The poster has been released on the film's official social media page, where a lengthy caption prepared audiences for what to expect and simultaneously announced the film's release date, which will be during Eid-ul-Azha.

COUNTRYWIDE

School for hearing impaired in a sorry state

KONGKON KARMAKER

Dinajpur Badhir Institute, a school for the speech and hearing impaired children in the northern district, has been limping amid lack of fund support since its inauguration over three decades ago.

The welfare organization, established at a small place in Gunjabari area of Dinajpur town in 1990, secured its registration from the Social Welfare Department the same year.

The then chairman of Dinajpur Municipality late Aminul Haq was founder president of the organisation.

Meanwhile, two other social workers and businessmen of Dinajpur—Badiul Alam Patwari and Abul Hossain Patwari—had also played an important role in establishing the school.

Soon after its establishment, the institute received a massive response from all, and within a decade it became the most trusted institute

to the parents of the children with speech and hearing impairment in the northern region.

Providing cost free education and skill development training to the children with disabilities was the only goals of the institute, said Azaharul Azad, a former secretary of the institute's managing committee.

Till now it is the only residential institute for children with speech and hearing impairment in Rangpur division, he said.

But, a massive development work took place when Taiyaba Majumder, mother of the then Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, became the president of the institute's managing committee in 2003.

After arranging funds, she procured 40 decimals of land at Gunjabari in Dinajpur town and constructed a four-storey building, comprising of academic, administrative and residential arrangements in 2006.

The same year, the authorities concerned recruited 10 teachers,

hostel supers, night guards and peon.

But despite assurance, payments of the teachers and staffers remained halted since the political changeover in 2007.

During a visit to the institution this correspondent saw the entire complex wore a dusty look.

While talking, Naznin Akter, head teacher of the institute, said she has been serving the institution for the last 18 years without getting her monthly payments.

Besides, other teaches and staffers of the school are also not getting their salaries for years.

At present the institution has 50 residential students, of them 23 are girls.

"We have been trying to avail the payment order from the social welfare ministry since 2007, but we are yet to get any nod from the government," she said.

In order to pay all the expenses they need at least Tk 2.5 lakh per month, the head teacher added.



This school for the speech and hearing-impaired children in Dinajpur town has been suffering from various problems amid serious fund crisis.

PHOTO: STAR

AL mulls expelling Zahangir for life

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The meeting resolution will be sent to AL President Sheikh Hasina for the final decision regarding the suspended mayor, said sources.

Zahangir, elected Gazipur mayor in 2018 on the AL ticket, also became the general secretary of the party's Gazipur city unit.

On November 19, 2021, he was expelled from the party after he was heard in a viral footage making derogatory remarks on Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and questioning the number of the Liberation War martyrs.

Seven days after his expulsion, the government suspended him as the GCC mayor. The ruling party, however, granted him amnesty on January 21 this year on the condition that any further violation of organisational rules by him would be deemed unforgivable.

In the latest development, ignoring the party directive, Zahangir decided to run for the Gazipur city polls to be held on May 25, against AL candidate Azamat Ullah Khan.

The Election Commission later cancelled his nomination as Zahangir was a defaulter as a loan guarantor. Now he is campaigning for his mother Zaida Kahtun, an independent

mayoral candidate.

Yesterday's meeting also discussed the feuds within the party in Rajshahi, Barisal and Sylhet ahead of the city corporation polls and opined that central leaders should sit with the grassroots to resolve the internal conflicts.

A central leader told the meeting that unity within the party is needed before the national election slated for

Yesterday's meeting also discussed the feuds within the party in Rajshahi, Barisal and Sylhet ahead of the city corporation polls and opined that central leaders should sit with the grassroots to resolve the internal conflicts.

January next, said sources.

The meeting discussed the preparation for the national polls and ways to strengthen the organisation. It also stressed the need for announcing complete district committees and all sub-committees.

The meeting summoned 27 district unit leaders at the party headquarters on Bangabandhu Avenue on May 18.

Of the 27 units, nine failed to hold councils on time even after the expiry of the incumbent committees.

On the other hand, councils were held in another 18 districts but these units didn't announce full committees within 45 days, which is a violation of the party charter.

The meeting came up with two recommendations about the formation of sub-committees—those involved in AL politics abroad and not active in the country shouldn't get into sub-committees; immediate-past Chhatra League leaders can't hold posts in sub-committees before serving the party for three to four years.

The meeting also discussed the anti-government agitations of the BNP and opined that the opposition party might go for destructive activities to foil the polls and all have to stay alert to its evil design, said sources.

The meeting decided to hold colourful celebrations of Sheikh Hasina's homecoming day on May 17 across the country. On this day in 1981, Hasina returned after six years in exile, losing her father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and most of her family members in the bloodbath of 1975.

Economic troubles won't clear without reforms

FROM PAGE 1

This will increase the interest rate by 1-2 percentage points.

"But the hike is not enough to tackle the current instability in the financial sector," said Mansur, also the chairman of Brac Bank.

In addition, the central bank has not allowed the market to truly determine the floating exchange rate.

"This is why the existing instability in the foreign exchange market is persisting," he said.

The central bank is injecting dollars into the market regularly to prop up the exchange rate and in the process, draining the foreign currency reserves.

Between July 1 last year and May 10, the central bank supplied a record 12 billion to banks in contrast. In fiscal

2021-22, it provided \$7.62 billion.

As of May 10, reserves stood at \$30.34 billion, down 28.1 percent year-on-year.

The central bank should implement the floating exchange rate in the market, said PRI Chairman Zaidi Sattar.

"If the exchange rate is controlled, the reserves will fall further," he said.

The central bank has already taken several measures to bring down import payments to safeguard the dollar stockpile, Mansur said.

"But there is no scope to cut it further, or else it will take a heavy toll on the economy."

In the first nine months of the fiscal year, import bills dropped 12.33 percent year-on-year to \$53.93

billion.

Bringing back the confidence of both the local and foreign investors is highly important to give a boost to the economy.

"Otherwise, the existing deficit in the financial account can't be narrowed," Mansur added.

The financial account includes foreign direct investment, portfolio investment and the Bangladesh Bank's reserve assets such as gold, currency, derivatives, special drawing rights, equity and bonds.

In the first nine months of the fiscal year, the financial account registered a deficit of \$2.21 billion in contrast to a surplus of \$11.92 billion a year ago.

The deficit was \$1.97 billion in the first eight months of the fiscal year.