



PHOTO: COURTESY

# Shohel Mondol returns to his roots

After a year-long hiatus, Shohel Mondol is all set to return to the theatre stage with 'Let Me Out'. The actor will take on the role of a police officer in the latest production of the theatre troupe, Tarua.

AKHLAKUR RAHMAN

Directed by Bakar Bakul and written by Runa Kanchan, the play is scheduled to be staged at the Neelima Ibrahim Auditorium of Bangladesh Mohila Samity.

Speaking about his comeback to the theatre stage, Shohel Mondol shared his thoughts and excitement with The Daily Star.

You have been a member of the famed theatre troupe Prachyanat for over a decade. Tell us a bit about your journey into the troupe?

Theatre is where I honed all my acting skills and prowess. I joined Prachyanat in 2009 and have remained a dedicated member of the group ever since. However, my involvement in theatre predates that, and I have also collaborated with Tarua in several plays.

My last staged play was *Raja Ebong Onyanno* back in September 2021.

How does it feel to return to the stage after such a long hiatus?

I feel exhilarated! For me, theatre is a platform where an actor can directly connect with the audience and deliver their finest performance.

Due to my commitments to visual media, I haven't been able to focus on the theatre much.

Nevertheless, I am a theatre artiste at heart, and my passion for it has never waned. My heart yearns to be with my troupe Prachyanat, every day, but we need to make a living as well.

Could you tell us a bit about your play 'Let Me Out'?

*Let Me Out* draws inspiration from a real missing child case that occurred in Los Angeles in 1928. It sheds light on the corruption and abuse of power within the judicial system, issues often overlooked by the general populace. The play is an adaptation of that case, with connections to contemporary situations of our society.

What role will you be playing in the play?

I will portray the character of a corrupt police officer overseeing the case, one who abuses his authority and harasses the parents of the missing child. Some might label it as a negative role. However, I believe there is no such thing as negative roles—there are only the psychological complexities of a character and how they navigate their surroundings.

In your own words, what's the most

captivating aspect of theatre?

The most enchanting aspect of a theatre play is immersing myself in the character. We forget our regular selves when we are on stage and embrace the role while performing before hundreds of audiences.

As an emerging star from a theatre background, how do you think we can bring this medium back to the mainstream limelight?

Compared to television or web content, theatre audiences are relatively lower worldwide. Several factors contribute to this. Theatre productions require effective promotion, suitable venues, and compelling stories. Moreover, just as we need better cinema halls, we also need more spaces for staging theatre plays.

Did you know that most theatre plays in our capital are held at either Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy or Bangladesh Mohila Samity?

Our situation with the cinema halls is steadily improving; hopefully, theatre plays will undergo the same progress.

When can we expect to see you back on the silver screen?

I already have two new and upcoming films in the pipeline—*Shyama Kabya* and *Bonolatashen*. We have already completed the production process for *Shyama Kabya* and hopefully, it will be released next year. There is a bit of shooting left for *Bonolatashen*, which will be wrapped up soon.

Shohel Mondol and his theatre troupe will be staging *Let Me Out* for three shows from September 14 to 15. Theatre enthusiasts can purchase advance tickets for the play through Tarua's Facebook page.

## Tasnia Farin to star in Kolkata film again



With her silver screen debut in the Tollywood industry with Atanu Ghosh's *Aro Ek Prithibi*, Tasnia Farin has earned critical appreciation for her performance. The actress is now gearing up for another film in Kolkata, directed by Biplab Goswami. The news was confirmed by Farin to The Daily Star.

The *Karagar* famed actress also informed that the film titled, *Patri Chai*, will begin its shooting soon. She will be sharing the screen with actors Sabyasachi Chakraborty, Arjun Chakrabarty and Mamata Shankar, amongst others. The project will be produced by Kolkata-based production company, Promod Films.

Director Biplab is also one of the scriptwriters of, *Laapataa Ladies*—a film produced by Aamir Khan and directed by Kiran Rao.

## 'Pushpa 2: The Rule' release date revealed

Film enthusiasts are counting the days for the much-anticipated sequel, *Pushpa 2: The Rule*, starring Telugu sensation Allu Arjun. The excitement reached a new height on Monday evening as Mythri Movie Makers, the film's producers, unveiled the official release date.

Although Allu Arjun's appearance is yet to be unveiled, the teaser poster has already been released, featuring his ominously bloodstained hand adorned with rings and bracelets.

*Pushpa 2: The Rule* is slated to be released in theatres on August 15, 2024.



# COUNTRYWIDE

## Julfikar finds success in persimmon farming

AZIBOR RAHMAN, Jhenidah

Persimmon, a Japanese fruit variety, is being cultivated for the first time in the Jessore region, thanks to the favourable growing conditions.

Alongside Japan, China and South Korea are also the top producers of persimmon.

Julfikar Ali, a nursery owner from Hizli village in Jashore's Chowgachha upazila, started persimmon farming experimentally in the area on his seven decimals of land in 2020.

While talking to this correspondent, Julfikar said he has been running nursery business for the last 30 years.

In 2020, he collected 30 persimmon plants for Tk 1,500 to Tk 2,000 each from Natore, after he came to know that persimmon plants are available there.

After three long years, his trees have started bearing fruits this year.

Every single plant is bearing around 400 persimmon fruits, weighing around 70 to 90 grams each, and will continue to provide the fruit for around 25 years.

If someone walks by Julfikar's plantation, it would seem to him that the trees are holding apples.

With its orange and yellow hue, the fruit also looks a lot like tomato, in fact from the inside it looks quite like ripe tomato when cut. There is no seen inside the fruit, and can be eaten with the peel.

A closer look, however, will reveal that it is an entirely different fruit.

A fruit seller from the capital's

Karwan Bazar has express his interest in buying the fruits at Tk 800 per kilogram, but he refused to sell any fruit this year, he added.

"I have a plan to distribute the first yield of this unknown fruit among people of my locality," Julfikar said.

Flowers started blooming in March and the trees borne fruits in August and September.

Julfikar collects seedlings, seeds and trees of exotic varieties of fruits and first made mother trees in his nursery.

Later he produces seedlings from the mother trees and sell those to others.

"I have also produced around 50 saplings so far and sold those among several villagers," he further said.

Shahin Hossain of Madhabpur village in the upazila said he has purchased five saplings from Julfikar for Tk 800 each.

Another Jahangir Hossain, who bought 10 saplings from Julfikar, said this unknown fruit is quite tasty, sweet and juicy.

Dr Mohammad Ashrafuzzaman Zahid Hossain, chairman of Department of Nutrition and Food Technology at Jashore Science and Technology University, said persimmons are the national fruit of Japan and the fruit is a good source of potassium, phosphorous and vitamin C.

Chowgachha Upazila Agriculture Officer Mossabir Hossain said they have been supporting Julfikar in farming the rare fruit variety from the very beginning.



Julfikar Ali takes care of his persimmon trees at Hizli village in Jashore's Chowgachha upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

## Paramilitaries kill 17 civilians in Sudan capital

AFP, Wad Madani

Sudanese paramilitaries killed at least 17 civilians yesterday in northern Khartoum, a medical source said, as the United Nations warned the conflict between two rival generals has "broken the nation".

Witnesses reported shelling by the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces in the Karary district of Omdurman, a part of greater Khartoum that has seen fierce battles between the RSF and the regular army.

A medical source told AFP "17 civilians were killed" in the attack, five months into the conflict between the army under General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and RSF commanded by his former deputy, Mohamed Hamdan Daglo.

Nearly 7,500 people have been killed in Sudan since the conflict broke out on April 15, according to a conservative estimate from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data project.

## All ongoing

FROM PAGE 2  
He said digital surveys will be conducted in phases.

**BILL**  
The land-related forgeries have been covered in the Land Crime Prevention and Remedy Bill 2023. It also has provisions for curbing the related crimes.

The bill also includes a provision for disposal of land-related disputes through arbitration.

According to the bill, the maximum punishment for a land-related forgery is seven years' imprisonment while the minimum punishment is a two-year jail term.

## A growing health hazard

FROM PAGE 12

Explaining the reason for the rise of NO<sub>2</sub>, the report said this increase is likely driven by a reliance on fossil fuels for energy production, expanded industrial activity, and increases in the number of vehicles over the last decade.

As many as 564,739 vehicles were due for regular fitness checks but did not take clearance as of April 30, according to Bangladesh Road Transport Authority data. More than 50 lakh vehicles are plying the streets, and most of them are old.

Experts said that incompetent combustion of fuel, old and unfit vehicles, and low-quality fuel are the key reasons for the rise of NO<sub>2</sub> levels in the air.

Prof Abdus Salam of Dhaka University's chemistry department said old vehicles and traffic congestion are the key sources of NO<sub>2</sub>, which can be checked by using clean energy and allowing only fit vehicles on the roads.

"As the usage of cars increases, the combustion

of fossil fuels is also on the rise, as is the concentration of nitrogen dioxide in the air," he said.

When asked whether the government is taking any steps to reduce it, he said "One may find something on paper but in reality, there is nothing."

Government officials said they know the sources of the air pollution, but to address the problem, a holistic approach is needed.

Department of Environment officials said that the air quality improves in the rainy season in Bangladesh due to showers, but in recent years it has been observed that the air quality remains poor even in the rainy season too.

"Over the years, vehicles have become a major concern for air pollution in the big cities, and that's why we see that air quality does not improve at an expected level in the rainy season," said DoE Director Md Ziaul Haque.

He also said the BRTA does not have any mechanism in place to do emission tests on the

vehicles, and vehicles that are 25 years old must be taken off the road.

The report said air pollution is the leading environmental risk factor for poor health in South Asia.

At the population level, the disease burden of air pollution can strain healthcare systems and have a broader impact on communities and economies, it added.

Speaking on the matter, Dr Pallavi Pant, head of global health at the Health Effects Institute, said, "Data on air pollution levels and the associated health and economic impacts point to the need for long-term, sustained air quality management in Bangladesh and across South Asia. These data also point to the fact that it is crucial to plan multi-pollutant mitigation strategies and not focus on individual pollutants such as PM2.5. Also, since the sources are similar across the region, cooperation on both scientific research and policy action can spur faster action."

## Nobel laureate Maria Ressa acquitted

FROM PAGE 12

in 2020 for cyber libel in one of several cases against the website filed by government agencies. She maintained those cases were politically motivated.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr, who has been in office for 14 months, has said he would not interfere in the court cases against Rappler.

Rappler is still operating unhindered pending its appeal against a closure order from the securities regulator.

Francis Lim, one of Ressa's lawyers, said the team hoped the latest acquittal would lead to the dismissal of the other cases, including the closure order.

The Philippines is ranked 132 out of 180 countries in the World Press Freedom Index, describing its media as "extremely vibrant despite the government's targeted attacks and constant harassment" against journalists that are "too critical".

## High prices of eggs and chicken to blame

FROM PAGE 12

he said his apprehension had come true for that month.

Asked why the inflation in Bangladesh is going up despite the fact that Sri Lanka managed to tame it, Mannan said Sri Lanka's inflation is runaway inflation.

"Our inflation increased gradually and it will subside in the same way. But Sri Lanka saw a rapid rise in inflation and it subsided in the similar way. The living standard of the Sri Lankan people remains unchanged like it was before the rise in inflation. They kept a tight grip on inflation," he added.

Shamsul Alam, state minister for planning, said if the government had taken any drastic measures like Sri Lanka did, it would have led to a negative growth. The current job openings in the country would not have been there if the government had taken such initiatives, he added.

"Sri Lanka hiked their policy rate by 10 percent. If we had followed that policy, our growth would have seen a negative trend. We are trying to contain the inflation keeping the growth rate unharmed.

"The government had not been sitting idle over

the last one year. The duty on rice imports has been cut twice after increasing the policy rate twice, which now stands at five percent. The imports have been controlled. Hopefully, the inflation will drop in November," the state minister said.

Shahnaj Arefin, secretary of the Statistics and Informatics Division at the planning ministry, said Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics only calculates the inflation and it is not responsible for analysing the increase or decrease in inflation.

The BBS calculates

inflation based on 749 commodities, including 242 food items, she said.

According to planning ministry data, the overall inflation was 9.92 in August while the food inflation was 12.54.

Planning Minister Mannan said that the issue of availing \$1 billion financing from climate fund was discussed recently between French President Emmanuel Macron and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

The Sundarbans would get the highest priority in getting funds, said the minister.