

## This year has been educational for me: Zakia Bari Mamo

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Zakia Bari Mamo, the National Film Award-winning actress has been part of two recent films, *Ora 7 Jon* and *Radio*, in addition to featuring in several web-series, including *Mercules*, released this year. Nowadays, she is actively engaged in acting for web-series and television dramas.

In 2023, Mamo has been occupied with both drama and web-series projects. When asked about how the year has been, she responded, "It was quite good—spent immersed in work."

Playfully, the *Daruchini Dwip* actress remarked, "This year has been educational for me. Life itself has been my teacher."

Notably, Mamo has worked under the direction of Mostofa Sarwar Farooki this year, which marks her first-ever collaboration with the director. "It's been a fantastic experience for me. I won't divulge details about the project at the moment, but what I can say is that working under Farooki *bhai's* direction was a positive experience. Audiences can expect something good," the actress shared.

Concerning her hope for the upcoming year Mamo said she aspires to engage in more fulfilling work.

Moreover, yesterday (December 19) marked the actress' birthday.

When inquired about how her birthday went, Mamo shared, "I spent time with my mom on my birthday. I am here because of my mother; children exist for their parents. I am an integral part of my mother, and my heartfelt gratitude goes to her. My love for her is profound."

Mamo further mentioned that her special day is dedicated to family. "I didn't schedule any shoots for the day. Instead, I chose to spend quality time with my family. The day was beautifully spent with my parents, brother, sister-in-law, my child, and my brother's child. We usually all gather on such occasions to go out somewhere."

Meanwhile, her friends have been wishing her a happy birthday on social media for three days to which she said, "My friends are amazing. They love me dearly. Due to their affection, they have been celebrating my birthday for three days by sharing and posting various positive statuses. I appreciate and love them."

Mamo said, "I reciprocate love with love, just as my friends do. There's nothing else to offer but love."



PHOTOS: ORCHID CHAKMA

## Celine Dion loses control of her muscles battling stiff person syndrome



Celine Dion's battle with stiff-person syndrome, a rare neurological disorder, has worsened. According to her sister Claudette Dion in an interview with 7 Jours, the singer "lacks control over her muscles."

Celine, renowned for timeless hits such as *I'm Alive*, *My Heart Will Go On* and *Because You Loved Me*, disclosed her diagnosis a year ago. Despite her health challenges, she was recently featured in the film *Love Again*, alongside Priyanka Chopra.

Stiff person syndrome, also known as SPS or Moersch-Woltman syndrome, is a rare autoimmune movement disorder impacting the central nervous system.

## Pori Moni and ABM Sumon pair up for Valentine's Day special

Get ready for a fresh on-screen pair as ABM Sumon and Pori Moni are set to star together for the first time in a romantic tale directed by the popular director Mizanur Rahman Aryan.

On the occasion of Valentine's Day, Bongo is set to unveil an anthology of web-films, titled *Love Stories*, with *Booking* being one of the highlights. Aryan is set to captivate audiences with *Booking* based on a heartwarming love story, starring Pori Moni and ABM Sumon.

The production will be available for streaming on the Bongo app. Aryan is optimistic about delivering content that resonates with the audience.



## NEWS

### Work unitedly for establishing peace

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invitation letter to Hasina to attend the 8th Doha International Maritime Defence Exhibition and Conference (DIMDEX) to be held on March 4-6, 2024, in Qatar.

Receiving the invitation letter, the PM said if she wins the upcoming national election to be held on January 7, she will join the exhibition.

The exhibition takes place every two years under the patronage of the Emir of the State of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani.

Speaking on Gaza, Seraya Ali Mahdi Saeed said this year his country didn't celebrate its national day on December 18 and sent the celebration budget of USD 50 million to the people of Gaza. In this context, the PM said Bangladesh also sent relief items, including dry foods and clothes, to the Palestinians.

Noting that the Palestinian physicians who graduated from Bangladesh were also imparted security training here, she said the doctors are now working in hospitals

there in Palestine. The Qatar ambassador said the world can know the situation in Gaza as the Qatar-based Al Jazeera media network is broadcasting news on the Gaza issue.

The Bangladesh premier expected the Emir of the State of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani, to visit Bangladesh in 2024. "We look forward to welcoming His Highness the Emir at the earliest."

The Emir of Qatar accepted an invitation to visit Bangladesh from the president of Bangladesh in May 2020.

### 28 injured in police-BNP clashes in

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activists are being falsely blamed. It is clear who masterminded this heinous crime," said Rizvi.

In Gaibandha's Palashbari, pickets vandalised a bus on the Bogura-Rangpur highway in Jundah area around 12:30pm.

A clash broke out there when police fired teargas shells and blank shots to disperse the agitators. The incident left three cops, including a sub-inspector of Palashbari Police Station, injured, said Uday Kumar

Saha, assistant superintendent of Gaibandha police.

Abul Kalam Azad, joint secretary of Gaibandha BNP, claimed that at least 20 BNP activists were wounded.

In another incident, BNP activists took out a procession in support of the hartal in Senbagh Road area of Noakhali's Senbagh around 8:30am. A clash broke out there when police used truncheons to drive them away.

At least five BNP leaders and activists were injured in the incident, said party's central leader Kazi

Mofizur Rahman. In Narayanganj, BNP activists demonstrated on the Dhaka-Chattogram highway at Shimrail after pouring petrol on the road and setting fire.

On information, police went there and brought the situation under control, said Abu Bakkar Siddique, officer-in-charge of Siddhirganj Police Station.

[Our correspondents in Bogura, Noakhali and Narayanganj contributed to this report]

### ADB projects lower growth for Bangladesh

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In the first five months of the fiscal year, exports fetched \$22.2 billion, up 1.2 percent year-on-year, according to data from the Export Promotion Bureau.

Inflation averaged 9.7 percent between July and November, a long way off the government's target of 7.5 percent for fiscal 2023-24, according to data from the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

Despite downward revisions in the growth forecast for Bangladesh and Maldives, the ADB maintained the forecast for South Asia at 6 percent.

"South Asia's other economies are mostly on track to meeting their projections for growth made in the September outlook."

The inflation forecast for South Asia was revised up to 6.7 percent on the back of higher inflation forecasts

for Bangladesh and Nepal.

"Despite several efforts to reduce inflation, the monthly rate in Bangladesh was close to double digits in July-October due to rising food inflation. Inflation is expected to ease in the coming months on continued contractionary monetary policy, measures taken to secure a market-based exchange rate, lower global commodity prices and a better crop outlook."

### SC lets AL picks Shamim, Enamul

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chamber judge's orders, their lawyer Shah Monjurul Hoque told The Daily Star.

Justice Enayetur passed the orders following two petitions filed by Shamim and Enamul challenging the HC orders that upheld the cancellation of their nomination papers by the EC.

Senior lawyers M Yusuf Hossain Humayun, Mohammad Sayed Ahmed Raza and Shah Monjurul Hoque appeared for Shamim while Probrir Neogi and Tanjib-Ul-Alam argued for AK Azad, an independent aspirant for Faridpur-3, who challenged the candidature of Shamim in the EC and SC.

Meanwhile, the SC chamber judge upheld an HC order that backed the EC's decision to cancel Shammi's candidacy due to her dual citizenship.

The court passed "no order" on a petition filed by Shammi seeking stay on the HC order.

a writ petition filed by Shammi challenging the EC's decision.

Md Momtaz Uddin Fakir, Mohammad Sayed Ahmed Raza and Shah Monjurul Hoque appeared for Shammi, while Mahbub Shafique argued for independent aspirant Pankaj Nath before the SC chamber judge during the hearing of the petition yesterday.

Pankaj had challenged Shammi's candidacy in the EC over her dual citizenship.

The same court yesterday stayed another HC order that overturned the EC's decision to cancel the candidacy of Sadiq Abdullah in Barishal-5.

The SC decision means the former Barishal city mayor cannot take part in the January 7 polls.

Justice Enayetur passed the order following a petition filed by Zahid Faruk, the AL candidate for the same constituency, challenging the HC order, EC's lawyer Khan Mohammad Shameem Aziz told The Daily Star.

The EC had cancelled Sadiq's candidacy over his dual citizenship. Senior lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan appeared for Sadiq, while Ahsanul Karim argued for Zahid.

### 382 independents

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According to primary data from the EC, 1,895 candidates are running this time. Of them, 1,512 have been nominated by 27 registered political parties, including the AL and its 14-party alliance partners.

Seventeen political parties, including the BNP and like-minded parties, are boycotting the polls, saying that a free and fair election is not possible under the incumbent government.

Jatiya Party has fielded the highest number of candidates (265), followed by AL (263), EC sources said.

Thirty-two AL nominees pulled out of the race as the party left their constituencies for the candidates of the main opposition Jatiya Party, Workers Party of Bangladesh, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, and Jatiya Party (Manju).

### Asset values that don't fail to amuse

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Mallik's affidavit shows he owns a five-katha government plot. He did not mention the location, but stated that it is worth Tk 400, which cannot buy even 3 litres of cooking oil.

Mallik also has 30 bhoris of gold worth Tk 40,000.

But this does not seem an understatement when compared to the value of the gold that state minister for youth and sports Zahid Ahsan Russel's wife owns.

The AL pick for Gazipur-2 stated that the 148 bhoris of the gold is worth Tk 40,000.

Currently, gold price is over Tk 100,000 per bhoiri (22 karat).

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President Hasanul Haq Inu has a 10-katha plot in Purbachal and his wife has 40 bhoris of gold, according to his affidavit, which shows the value at Tk 16.1 lakh and Tk 12,000, respectively.

Inu's own gold, 25 bhoris of the

precious metal, is costlier—Tk 25,500.

Pabna-3 sitting MP Mokbul Hossain announced ownership of 20 bighas of land worth Tk 2,000, which cannot buy even two kilograms of mutton today.

In Dhaka, how Quamrul Islam bought land and flats so cheap is anyone's guess.

The former minister showed the value of his four-katha land in Mirpur Tk 3.61 lakh and that of his 10-katha land in Purbachal Tk 39.48 lakh. The value of his two flats on 1.75 kathas of land was shown Tk 4.36 lakh.

**'MULTI-LEVEL DECEPTION'**

"These are examples of multi-level deception, fraud and abuse of power for illicit accumulation of wealth. The documentations of ownership of properties involving mind-boggling undervaluation may have taken place in all likelihood involving collusive illegal transactions to evade taxes," said Dr Iftekharuzzaman, executive

director of Transparency International Bangladesh.

He added that despite public frustrations, the Election Commission, Anti-corruption Commission and National Board of Revenue have failed to take action against accumulation of illicit income disproportionate to legitimate sources.

"All these have in effect lead to impunity of abuse of power and to further deepening and widening of corruption," he noted.

Contacted, EC Secretary Jahangir Alam said, "Candidates reveal some information in their affidavits in line with the Supreme Court order, and we upload it on our website. We just make the information public."

He said the ACC or the NBR may take steps if they think fit.

Asked if the EC ever requested the NBR or the ACC to investigate, he said, "This is not our job. Our job is to make the information public."

### Gaza crisis 'moral failure' of world

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on her home that killed her family.

"So where do children and families go? They're not safe in hospitals, they're not safe in shelters, and they're certainly not safe in so-called safe zones," he said.

Margaret Harris, World Health Organization spokesperson, described the situation in Gaza hospitals as "unconscionable."

"The very basics, they do not have them. One of my colleagues described people lying on the floor in severe pain, in agony, but they weren't asking

for pain relief. They were asking for water," she said. "It's beyond belief that the world is allowing this to continue."

The conflict has spread beyond Hamas-ruled Gaza, including into the Red Sea where Iran-aligned Houthi forces have been attacking vessels with missiles and drones. That has prompted the creation of a multinational naval operation to protect commerce in the area, but the Houthis said they would carry on anyway, possibly with a sea operation every 12 hours.

the Palestinian issue, whether a naval alliance is established or not," Houthi official Mohammed Abdulsalam told Reuters, saying only Israeli ships or those going to Israel would be targeted.

Announcing the naval operation, US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said in Bahrain that joint patrols would be held in the southern Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, which encompass a major East-West global shipping route. "This is an international challenge that demands collective action," he said.