



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

An evening of untold stories and reflections with SHARMILA TAGORE

Tripods, cameras, and an empty sofa awaited in anticipation at the Samson H Lounge at Dhaka Club for the arrival of an icon who has time and again broken conventional norms, working in iconic movies to leave an everlasting imprint in audiences' hearts. The room, once bustling with activity, hushed into silence as the legendary actress made her entrance. Taking her place in the front row, she cast a warm smile upon the expectant crowd, a room teeming with eager faces. In that moment, she seemed poised, ready to unravel untold stories and share the adventures she had experienced throughout her illustrious life.

RAKSHANDA RAHMAN MISHA

Taking the stage to introduce her was none other than the stalwart actor and Member of Parliament Asaduzzaman Noor. The *Kothao Keu Nei* actor candidly admitted to the legendary actress that he hadn't had many opportunities to watch all of her films.

In response, Sharmila gracefully replied, "Now, with the advent of digital systems and OTT platforms, we have the ability to watch all those old films."

She further added, "During the Covid period, when I had fewer projects, and my doctors advised me against commercial flight travel, I spent my time watching all my old movies. In the past, my busy shooting schedule left me with little time to reflect on my performances, and I sometimes felt I hadn't done justice to my roles. Thanks to OTT platforms, I had the chance to relive those cinematic moments once again."

When *Gulmohar* was announced, the media went crazy to see the actress back on the big screen after such a long time. However, the actress adamantly rejects the notion of calling it a "comeback," as she believes she never completely left the world of acting. "I dislike the term 'comeback' entirely. I never abandoned showbiz in a way that would

warrant a comeback. Whenever I find roles that resonate with me, I wholeheartedly embrace them. When Rahul V Chittella, the film's director, presented the script to me, I genuinely liked it. The film felt like a fitting portrayal for my age, and there was a sense of comfort that made me say yes."

When asked about which film holds a special place in her heart, the actress felt reluctant to talk about it. "Every movie I've been a part of has been approached and interpreted differently from the others. I maintain a kind of detachment from my work. In the past, I used to mention 'Safar' as my favourite film because it presented a woman's perspective—when accused of killing her husband, she didn't become a victim and refused to accept it. The character exhibited agency, and that drew me towards the film. However, after watching my old films during the pandemic, I realised that my performance in 'Namkeen' was a more mature one, and so it is my favourite work for now."

Sharmila Tagore also shared her experience of meeting Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. "She is such a wonderful person. Although she was really occupied with her responsibilities, she still managed time for us, and we shared a meal together."

In Satyajit Ray's cinematic masterpiece, *Nayak*, Sharmila Tagore portrayed the role of a journalist named Aditi. Reflecting on that time, the actress disclosed that she had interviewed Manik da (Satyajit Ray) in Kolkata when television was still in its nascent stages and she worked as a journalist alongside Karan Thapar.

"If I were to conduct an interview today, I would choose to interview Pankaj Tripathi as it's really hard to interpret his thoughts by looking at his face," added the actress.

When asked about the portrayal of women in Hindi cinema, she remarked, "I believe there has been significant improvement. Take 'Piku,' for instance. A film depicting a woman taking care of her father and managing the family with her own earnings was something many couldn't relate to in the past. Nowadays, there is a substantial shift, and we see the emergence of many commendable films. Though male dominance persists, a notable example such as Vidya Balan's 'Sherni' breaks through that narrative."

While dealing with criticism, the actress tries to deal with it calmly. "My personal life was kept very private. I didn't have many friends in the film industry, apart from Yash Chopra and Tanuja. Avoiding frequent social gatherings and parties helped shield me from the impact of criticism. Although negative remarks used to affect me initially, I eventually decided to stop reading those magazines altogether. In hindsight, I believe it's better to simply ignore negative comments about oneself."

On the topic of watching films in Bangladesh, she said, "As a judge for the Asian Film Competition segment at the DIFE, we had to watch 15 films—three films a day. Consequently, I didn't have the chance to watch other movies. However, I did manage to watch Jaya Ahsan's 'Fereshteh', and she is truly a wonderful actress," concluded the actress.

COUNTRYWIDE

Sweet potatoes a boon for char farmers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

Farming of sweet potato has become a boon for growers in different upazilas of Jamalpur due to its less cultivation cost, but a satisfactory return.

Many farmers, especially in the river basin villages, have engaged themselves in sweet potatoes farming and earning a good profit by selling their produces as its production cost is quite low, compared to other crops cultivation.

According to Jamalpur Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE), last season farmers in seven upazilas of the district had cultivated sweet potatoes on 1,097 hectares of land, but this season the total areas are 43 hectares more than the previous season.

Of the land, 230 hectares are in Islampur upazila, 190 hectares in Madarganj, 48 hectares in Dewanganj, 15 hectares in Melandah, 20 hectares in Bakshiganj, 580 hectares in Sarishabari and 14 hectares in Sadar upazila.

Besides, Jamalpur DAE is expecting a production of 29,510 tonnes of sweet potato this year, about 1,157 tonnes more than the previous year.

Farmers said they have cultivated 14 different varieties of sweet potatoes,

including BARI-2, BARI-3, BARI-4, BARI-8, BARI-9, BARI-14, Kamola Sundari, Tripti, Okinawa, Murasaki, KKE-14, Purple Star, Morasaki.

But, compared to the other varieties of sweet potatoes, local variety is cultivated on more land, they said. Farmer Najim Uddin of Chinaduli village in Islampur upazila said he has planted two types of sweet potatoes on his seven bighas of char land, spending around Tk 1 lakh, and expecting a profit of nearly Tk 7 lakh.

Moinul Mia, another farmer from Parpara in Sarishabari upazila, said he has been cultivating sweet potatoes for the last three years as it is more profitable than the other crop cultivation.

Another Azad Ali of the area said he had already harvested 90 maunds of sweet potatoes from one bigha land, while each maund is currently selling for Tk 1,200 to Tk 1,400 in local markets.

The production cost was only Tk 15,000, but he had earned around Tk 1 lakh, Azad added.

Jamalpur DAE Deputy Director Zakia Sultana said though they have target to bring a total of 1,097 hectares of land under sweet potato farming this year, surprisingly the cultivation target has exceeded beyond their targeted areas.



Farm labourers harvest sweet potato from a field at Shuakoir village in Jamalpur's Sarishabari upazila. PHOTO: STAR

18 journalists attacked while covering polls violence

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candidate Ataur Rahman outside a polling station in Lalmonirhat, stated CPJ.

The journalists are MA Rahim, a correspondent for Ananda TV; Rimon Hossain, a camera operator with Ananda TV; Masud Rana, a correspondent with the online news portal enews71; Sumon Khan, a correspondent with Mohona TV; Elias Bosunia, a correspondent with Bangla TV; Minaj Islam, a correspondent with the newspaper Daily Vorer Chetona; and Hazrat Ali, a correspondent with the newspaper Dainik Dabanol.

CPJ stated that the perpetrators were led by the nephews of the incumbent parliamentarian of the constituency.

CPJ said 25 men cornered Sirajul Islam Rubel and Arafat Rahaman, journalists of The Daily Star, as they tried to leave a polling station in Dhaka after covering an alleged ballot stuffing attempt by AL supporters.

The men grabbed the journalists' phones, deleted their video footage and photos of the incident, and blocked their exit from the centre along with The Daily Star reporter Dipan Nandy.

Around 2:45pm, 20 to 25 men assaulted Prothom Alo correspondent Mosharraf Shah after he photographed and filmed alleged ballot stuffing by AL supporters at a polling

station in Chattogram, said CPJ. Shah told CPJ that while he was speaking to an electoral officer about the incident, the men approached him, took his notebook where he wrote what he observed, and deleted footage from his phone in the presence of police. The men repeatedly slapped and punched Shah before he managed to flee the scene after around 30 minutes.

Shah told CPJ that one of the perpetrators was Nurul Absar, general secretary of a local unit of the Chhatra League.

Around 4:00pm, a group of 20 to 30 men surrounded and assaulted

constituency.

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Saif Bin Ayub, a sub-editor for Daily Kalbela, and took his laptop, phone, and other personal items while he was photographing alleged ballot stuffing by AL supporters in Dhaka.

CPJ reported that the men also beat him up. The perpetrators then dragged him out of the building as he requested help from police present at the scene.

Officers did not intervene and the beating continued outside for around 15 minutes, the journalist said, adding that he received his phone and broken laptop back later that day but not his wallet and other items.

At around 4:30pm, eight to 10 men — including electoral officials and

teenagers wearing AL badges — pushed Sam Jahan, a Reuters videographer, out of a vote counting room in a polling station in Dhaka.

Two of the teenagers then chased Jahan out of the station, he told CPJ.

Four journalists with the New Age newspaper also reported being cornered by AL men during their coverage of a polling station in Dhaka.

CPJ said that unidentified perpetrators pelted bricks at Mohiuddin Modhu, a news presenter and correspondent for Jamuna TV, after the journalist tried to speak to a young teenager who attempted to cast a ballot in Dhaka's Nawabganj.

Bangladeshi

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Later, pedestrians took him to a local hospital, where he succumbed to his injuries while undergoing treatment.

Liton was scheduled to come to Bangladesh on February 15.

Contacted, Daganbhuiyan Sadar Union Parishad Chairman Belayet Hossain said Liton's father is a retired government employee.

"The family has been overcome with shock and grief. Preparations are being taken to bring Liton's body back to Bangladesh."

Prof Yunus

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The four were also fined Tk 30,000 each, in default of which they must serve 25 more days in prison, and directed to comply with the Labour Act, 2006, within a month.

The case against Prof Yunus and the three others was filed by Labour Inspector (general) SM Arifuzzaman on September 9, 2021.

Sabalenka retains

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control she has built in the last 12 months.

"I didn't want to be a player who won it and disappeared," Sabalenka said. "I wanted to show I'm able to be consistently there and I'm able to win another one."

Sabalenka's rip roaring form has helped her reach at least the semifinals at the last six majors including at Wimbledon last year, having missed the 2022 event at the All England Club due to Russian and Belarusian players being banned.

Like last year, the trophy will not mention where Sabalenka comes from as she is competing without national affiliation under conditions imposed on Russian and Belarusian players in tennis since Russia's 2022 invasion of

Trump to ask higher court

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media. "THIS IS NOT AMERICA!"

Carroll, 80, left the courthouse with her arms around two of her lawyers. "This is a great victory for every woman who stands up when she's been knocked down, and a huge defeat for every bully who has tried to keep a woman down," Carroll said in a statement.

The former Elle magazine advice columnist sued Trump in November

Trump to ask higher court

2019 over his denials five months earlier that he had raped her in the mid-1990s in a Bergdorf Goodman department store dressing room in Manhattan.

Carroll testified that Trump's denials "shattered" her reputation as a respected journalist who told the truth.

The jury of seven men and two women, whose members were kept anonymous, awarded Carroll USD18.3 million in compensatory damages, including USD11

Ukraine.

Zheng, meanwhile, cut a disappointed figure as she pondered what might have been.

"I wasn't playing my best tennis, I wasn't feeling that good out there," she said.

"I think I can learn more with the loss today and then I hope next time I can come back as a better tennis player and come back stronger."

million for harm to her reputation. Carroll also was awarded USD65 million in punitive damages, which she said was needed to stop Trump from continuing to defame her.

Trump, 77, maintained that he had never heard of Carroll, and that she made up her story to boost sales of her memoir.

His lawyers said Carroll was hungry for fame and enjoyed the attention from supporters for speaking out against her nemesis.

One Bangladeshi onboard

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Reuters yesterday reported that a Houthi anti-ship missile damaged an oil tanker in the Gulf of Aden on Friday but no injuries were reported and a US Navy ship was providing assistance, the US military said.

The Marshall Islands-flagged Marlin Luanda issued a distress call and reported damage, US Central Command said in a post on X, formerly Twitter. The USS Carney and other coalition ships were providing assistance to the oil tanker, it said.

About eight hours later, the US military destroyed a Houthi anti-ship missile that was aimed into the Red Sea and ready to launch, Central Command said.

The missile "presented an imminent threat to merchant vessels and the US Navy ships in the region," it said.