

Grateful to have been honoured whilst still alive

DOLLY ZAHUR



PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

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SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Dolly Zahur, a National Award-winning Bangladeshi actor and television personality, has solidified her status as a household name in the country through her illustrious career spanning decades in the Bangladeshi entertainment industry. Her portrayal of the character Nilu in the drama serial *Eishob Din Ratri* by Humayun Ahmed gained her immense popularity and was regarded as a pivotal moment in her television career.

Recently, this veteran actress was honoured with the prestigious Ekushey Padak 2024, the second-highest civilian award in Bangladesh. In celebration of this momentous occasion, Dolly Zahur graciously shared her reflections, and future aspirations with The Daily Star, along with some cherished personal anecdotes.

How are you feeling after receiving the Ekushey Padak?

I'm feeling great, actually quite euphoric! And I'm truly thankful to receive this honour

while I'm still alive, as many artistes are often recognised posthumously. It's important to prioritise honouring artistes while they are alive so they can fully appreciate their achievements. I'm overwhelmed with happiness to have received such a prestigious award.

Amongst the many artistes who have been honoured this year, whose recognition brings you the most joy?

I'm particularly thrilled about the posthumous award bestowed upon the legendary musician Andrew Kishore, who was not only a dear friend but also a former colleague of mine. Despite my lack of involvement in the music scene, Andrew and I once shared an office space, and I feel fortunate to have known him personally.

He was truly a brilliant and exceptional individual! While it would have been even more gratifying had he received this recognition during his lifetime, I'm still pleased to see him receiving the honour for his well-deserved contributions.

How is your family reacting to your

momentous achievement?

My entire family, particularly my son and daughter-in-law, are absolutely thrilled. They've showered me with well wishes and have been spreading joy to their own circles with sweets and gifts. Yet, the most cherished congratulations have come from my colleagues in the entertainment industry. I am over the moon with absolute happiness.

You've received both the Lifetime Achievement Award in the National Film Awards and now the Ekushey Padak. Yet, do you harbour any unfulfilled ambitions in life?

Not at all. I feel incredibly content with the blessings I've received in life. I've always been someone who finds joy in the simplest of things, and I've been fortunate to receive more than I ever asked for. The love and respect of my fellow countrymen are amongst the greatest gifts I've been bestowed with, and for that, I am deeply grateful to the Almighty.

What are your aspirations when it comes to life and your career in acting?

I believe I've pushed the boundaries of my craft in acting, having been a part of numerous exceptional films, projects, and roles that have resonated with audiences. I've explored various facets of acting and received love from ordinary people for my work. At this stage, my primary aspiration is to maintain good health and continue acting until my last breath.

BADSHAH to perform in Bangladesh



Dhaka is gearing up to host a music festival where Indian rapper and music artiste Badshah is set to perform. The grand event is scheduled to take place on March 1 at the International Convention City Bashundhara (ICCB, Expo Zone).

Aditya Prateek Singh Sisodia, known by his stage name Badshah, is famous for his Hindi, Haryanvi, and Punjabi songs. He has gained worldwide recognition due to his versatile talents, making a name for himself beyond the borders of India.

Bangladesh's musical acts Fuad and Friends, Pritom Hasan, Xeler, Black Zang, and Sanjoy are also set to share the stage with Badshah.



'Mujib' biopic to be screened across 160 upazilas

On Thursday, a press briefing took place at the Bangladesh Film Development Corporation (BFDC) to unveil the screening plans for the biographical film *Mujib: The Making of a Nation* across 160 upazilas in Bangladesh. This collaborative project between the governments of Bangladesh and India is helmed by acclaimed filmmaker Shyam Benegal.

During the press conference, BFDC Managing Director Nuzhat Yeasmin urged media professionals to support the promotion of this biographical film about the Father of the Nation. She stressed the significance of ensuring that individuals throughout Bangladesh have the chance to view the film. "A roadmap has been prepared for the public screening of the biopic *Mujib*," she affirmed.

NEWS

Yoghurt-seller by day

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Ziaul spent his days walking from town to town to sell yoghurt. For five continuous years, he saved up all the money he had earned from doing so.

"Back then, there were only a few yoghurt-sellers around apart from us, and so I was able to earn and save a good amount of money."

He was then confronted with two choices: To keep the money and live a good life, or to put it to other use.

"Though I had enough money to buy a land for myself, I decided not to bask in that luxury. I instead chose to make use of the money to ensure help for those struggling to continue education."

With his savings, Ziaul began buying textbooks and distributing them among the students of Mushribhujia Primary School in his village.

"When Sheikh Hasina's government made [primary and secondary] school textbooks free, I began donating to high school and college students and dropouts."

However, something inside Ziaul told him textbooks were not enough.

"I realised that societies don't flourish only through academic textbooks. So, I began buying storybooks, novels, books of poetry, non-fiction, and religion as well."

With 14,000 books, he ultimately went on to build a library in his home and named it "Ziaul Haque General Library".

Saving Tk 50,000-1,50,000 per year, he used it all on helping those who may suffer the same fate as he did.

People soon began noticing Ziaul's social activities. Inspired, many people and organisations came forward with donations.

"With those donations, I was able to expand my work."

Even before the government's Ashrayan project, he built and provided tin-roofed homes for 17 poverty-ridden people in his area.

He then went on to set up the Mushribhujia School and College in his village, along with seven madrasas and three orphanages. He installed 17 tube wells in different areas of the Barind region that were facing drinking water crisis.

He even organised eye camps, where some 72 people were given free cataract surgeries.

Every year, he donates Tk 20,000-50,000 to the institutions he

established.

Now, at least 450 students, who Ziaul had provided books to, are serving in different government and private institutions across the country, he said.

One day in 2004, Ziaul was having lunch at a streetside restaurant in Mohishalbari area of Rajshahi's Godagari upazila when a man, who looked like a beggar, appeared.

"The man didn't utter a single word. His hair and clothes were smeared with so much dirt, the restaurant owner was about to kick him out."

Ziaul took pity and sat the beggar next to him at his table, fed him and took care of him for the day.

After a year, Unilever Bangladesh awarded him with the "Shada Moner Manush" award.

"At the award ceremony, which was held in Dhaka's Sheraton Hotel, a man approached me and asked if I could recognise him. He was the 'beggar' from that restaurant! He was actually a Unilever official named Nawshad Karim, who came disguised as a beggar to see if I'm someone they could give this award to."

After the death of his first wife, he married Farida Haque in 2004. Their son Mohabbat Haque is currently an HSC student.

Between 1962 and 2023, Ziaul spent a whopping Tk 3.75 crore in helping others.

However, his noble works were not always appreciated.

"Some people who lived in my area were furious. They feared they will face a crisis of house helps or farmhands if I continue to educate the children. They tried to burn down my house and library as well, for which I had to shift from Chama Mushribhujia to Mushribhujia Bottola area."

Contacted, Md Rashedul Islam, upazila nirbahi officer of Bholahat, said, "His own efforts earned him countrywide fame and the prestigious medal for social service."

Ziaul is set to receive his award from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Ekushey Padak award ceremony at Suhrawardy Udyan on the eve of February 20.

"When I meet the prime minister, I will urge her to nationalise Mushribhujia School and College and also ask for help to furnish my library."

Inflation

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pushed their interest rates speedily and sufficiently – many to record highs – to make loans expensive, thus bringing inflation largely under control. But the BB acted in a cautious manner and insufficiently.

The central bank visibly got down to work in June last year when it raised the policy rate to a record high, scrapped the lending rate cap of 9 percent, and put in place a new interest rate-setting mechanism.

Since inflation showed no signs of cooling, the central bank announced an array of measures in the middle of January.

The central bank raised the benchmark policy rate by 25 basis points to 8 percent to raise the cost of funds. This was the eighth straight spike since the tightening cycle began in May 2022.

It also lowered the private sector credit growth target.

All these measures are aimed at bringing down inflation to 7.5 percent by the end of the current fiscal year.

Analysts described the measures as inadequate.

Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of the Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh, said the supply situation has not improved and the prices of basic items have remained at an elevated level.

"The items that have been seen import duty cuts have also witnessed a spike in prices. There is supply shortage and imports are also lower."

Mansur thinks the central bank's measures are yet to have an impact. "It will take time."

Case handed

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before a Dhaka court with a five-day remand petition on February 7, but the court asked the police to interrogate the couple at the jail gate instead and submit a report in three working days.

Police produced the couple before the court again on Monday with a 10-day remand petition, but the court granted four days' remand in police custody.

Preeti's death comes about six months after a six-year-old house help at the same couple's house suffered injuries as she tried to flee through an opening at the eighth-floor flat.

The victim's family filed a case over the incident, but police gave final report as they did not find any evidence to bear out the charges in the case, filed under child repression act.

NHRC calls for justice for Preeti's death

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result, a culture of impunity for domestic worker abuse is prevailing in society. Because of this, getting justice is a challenge for common people," he said.

The NHRC chief said that while journalists are considered the mirror of society, the death of Preeti at the residence of Syed Ashfaul Haque was "cruel, shocking and a gross violation of human rights".

"Such a brutal incident is a slap on our conscience," he said, adding that this incident is not new, it is a repeat of an incident that took place at the same residence last year.

On August 6 last year, a six-year-old house help of the same residence suffered injuries as she tried to flee through an opening of the flat.

Bangladesh-Russia ties won't be affected

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Hasina reached Berlin yesterday afternoon (local time).

Mantytskiy, at an event organised by the Diplomatic Correspondents Association, Bangladesh (DCAB) at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday, said Russia appreciates the balanced foreign policy of Bangladesh.

"When the US and some of its Western allies reiterated their stance on Bangladesh's democracy ahead of the last national elections, Russia and China termed those as interference in Bangladesh's internal affairs. India, too, was supportive of a stable, democratic, and progressive Bangladesh."

Asked if Russia follows India's track regarding its relations with Bangladesh, Mantytskiy said, "We pursue our policy, as written in our doctrine of foreign policy. We don't look at Bangladesh through the eyes of India or any other country."

The Russian envoy said Bangladesh has working relations with all the countries and will not sacrifice the relations of one country for the relations with another.

On Myanmar's position on Rohingya repatriation, he said Russia favours the repatriation, but there should be suitable conditions in Myanmar.

Asked why Russia exports

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PROTEST PROGRAMMES

Speakers at a human chain yesterday demanded a fair and impartial investigation into Preeti's death.

They also demanded the suspension of Syed Ashfaul Haque from his post.

The human chain was organised under the banner of "Niproner Biruddhe Shahbagh" in front of the capital's National Museum in the afternoon.

Speaking at the event, lawyer Jibanananda Joyanta, alleged that police did not take prompt action following Preeti's death.

Bangladesh Juba Union's President

Khan Asaduzzaman Masum, columnist Ilira Dewan, Bangladesh Chhatra Union's President Dipok Sil, Writer and Publisher Robin Ahsan, Kushita Islamic University's Assistant Prof Farha Anjum Titil, and Bangladesh Chhatra Front's General Secretary Nasir Uddin Prince also spoke at the event.

Separately, a human chain was organised in front of The Daily Star Centre yesterday demanding justice and a fair investigation into the incident.

The human chain was held at 11:00am under the banner of "Shocheton Nagorik Shomaj". Participants, carrying banners with different messages and chanting slogans, formed the human chain for around 30 minutes. They demanded punishment to those responsible for Preeti's death.

Metro to be more

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kept on standby during peak hours.

Seven trains run during off-peak hours and one is on standby.

Replying to a query, he said they started taking action against those flying kites along the rail lines.

A kite landing on the lines suspended metro service for an hour on Wednesday.

He added that they handed over two people to police and six children to their parents for Wednesday's "offence".

In reply to another question, the DMTCL MD said they were yet to get any formal proposal from the National Bureau of Revenue about the imposition of VAT on metro tickets.

He, however, said if the VAT is imposed, fares will go up.