



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

# 'JONGLI' was challenging, I completely immersed myself: Siam Ahmed

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SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Popular Bangladeshi actor Siam Ahmed is gearing up for a transformative role in the much-anticipated upcoming film *Jongli*, set for a possible release this Eid-ul-Azha.

Known for his successful career armed with several hit films, Siam is now preparing to appear in a completely new look for this action-packed movie with another prominent actress Shobnom Yesmin Bubby.

In an interview with The Daily Star, Siam Ahmed delves into his transformative journey, his evolution as an actor, and deep insights into his character alongside the M Raahim directorial film *Jongli*.

**You have invested a lot of time in preparing yourself for 'Jongli'. Can you tell us more about it?**

Yes, I dedicated over six months to preparing for *Jongli*. I was so invested in the process that I hadn't shaved during this entire period, pouring all my time and effort into this film. My entire focus has been on *Jongli*, and I believe, it will be something special and fresh

for the audience.

**What is the genre of the film 'Jongli'?**

It is an action thriller film. The new look for my character has already been revealed, and there are more surprises ahead. The story is unique as it can be interpreted as either contemporary, say around a 10-year-old story, or even as a futuristic tale. It will depend on the audience's perception but the film will nonetheless be truly entertaining.

**How did your family react to your new unshaven look?**

My child initially couldn't recognise me and was a bit scared. I sometimes had to return home after every 10-15 days due to the shooting schedule. Gradually, everything fell into place, and now it's all fine.

**How do you feel about embodying the character in the way that you had to?**

I have had to completely immerse myself in this character. As a nation, we are emotional, and I am no exception. I am deeply invested in *Jongli*. I believe that regardless of the number of projects I end up doing, *Jongli* will remain

memorable to the audience for a long time.

**What are your expectations from this film?**

The audience here always waits for a good story. This film has a compelling narrative. I am very hopeful that it will be well-received.

**Have you faced any challenges during the filming of 'Jongli'?**

Maintaining the same grungy look for six months was very challenging. One night, I shot until 2:30am and had to resume early the next morning. During a night-action scene, I injured a finger and hurt my leg too. I sought medical advice around dawn and despite the pain, I continued shooting, because I didn't want the entire unit to suffer due to my injury.

We also filmed during the severe heatwave, which caused three crew members to suffer heatstroke. Despite the harsh conditions, we persevered because the work had to be completed in time. The entire unit worked with great dedication.

**How was it working with your co-stars?**

Everyone performed excellently in their roles. I was very impressed with their behaviour and hospitality. As for Bubby, she is a very supportive actress. She was immensely helpful during the shoot.

**What can you tell us about the director, M Raahim?**

The director, who was also the chief assistant director of *Poramon 2*, has put his best efforts into this project. He is dedicated and has been working to his full potential to make *Jongli* a success.



## Shironamhin takes legal action against G-Series for copyright violation



Bangladeshi band Shironamhin has filed a copyright violation complaint against audio production company G-Series.

Shironamhin has accused G-Series of unauthorised commercial exploitation of their songs on YouTube and other platforms, despite a 2018 Bangladesh Copyright Board ruling granting the band copyright over at least 30 songs from their first three albums: *Jahaji*, *Ichchhe Ghuri*, and *Bondho Janala*.

Band lead Ziaur Rahman Zia stated that G-Series ignored the copyright ruling and continued to monetise Shironamhin's music online.

In response to this complaint, the Bangladesh Copyright Office sent a letter on May 26 to G-Series CEO Nazmul Hoque Bhuiyan, demanding a written explanation.

## Lady Gaga describes her Harley Quinn in 'Joker: Folie à Deux' as 'authentic'



Singer-actor Lady Gaga stated that her portrayal of Harley Quinn in the upcoming film *Joker: Folie à Deux* is distinct from past versions of the character.

She revealed her portrayal to be a fresh interpretation, distinct from DC comics and other films in the franchise.

"My version of Harley is mine, and it's very authentic to this movie and these characters. I've never done anything like I've done in this movie before, so it's all going to be completely brand new and really fun," shared the Oscar-winning singer with international media.

# NEWS

## Airfare to Malaysia

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The Bangladeshi migrant workers. It also operates one daily regular flight on this route.

US Bangla, on the other hand, operates two daily regular flights from Dhaka to KL.

Furthermore, allegations of bribery during ticket purchase have also contributed to the almost fivefold price increase.

ATAB President Abdus Salam Aref said around 45,000 to 50,000 Bangladeshi workers will have to reach Malaysia by May 31.

"But the fact is that nobody, including the expatriates' welfare ministry and civil aviation ministry, was aware of this. If they had taken measures beforehand, other different airlines could have moved to operate extra flights to meet the additional demand."

Tickets sold for Tk 25,000-30,000 even in the middle of this month, he told

this newspaper, adding that when many people rushed to buy tickets together, the airlines grabbed the opportunity and hiked the prices.

"It's the expatriates' welfare ministry's responsibility to know the number of workers and the demand for air tickets... It just sat idle."

The ATAB chief further said that US-Bangla was the airlines that charged over Tk 1 lakh for tickets through their four online travel agencies.

Kamrul Islam, public relations manager at US Bangla, said the demand for tickets on this route is very high compared to the availability of seats, and this has impacted the ticket price.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Shaful Azim, managing director and CEO of Biman, said the expatriates' welfare ministry should have written or visited KL to request that the deadline for the workers to reach Malaysia be extended for several days.

"The ministry didn't tell us anything

about the increasing number of migrant workers. We somehow figured it and contacted the Malaysian authorities about operating four special flights on this route.

"We're trying to get permission for three more special flights."

Azim said the ticket price for special flights would be high as the return flights are fully empty.

Md Salahuddin, marketing director at Biman, said, "Airfare on the special flight starts from Tk 69,000 and goes up to Tk 72,000... We are not selling tickets at Tk 1 lakh."

However, ATAB President Salam said, "The Biman price range does not make a difference for the workers," adding that the cost still reaches around Tk 1 lakh when the tickets are purchased through the agents.

This correspondent made repeated attempts to contact the expatriates' welfare ministry's Secretary Ruhul Amin for comments but did not get any response.

## HK arrests 6 for sedition under new law

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countries including the US that they could damage Hong Kong's international financial hub credentials.

Britain handed Hong Kong back to China under a "one country, two systems" formula which guaranteed its freedoms, including freedom of speech, for 50 years.

The arrests come despite criticism that an ongoing crackdown since 2020 that has silenced dissent and shut down liberal media outlets and NGOs has sapped Hong Kong's dynamism and hurt the city's economic prospects.

The Hong Kong and Chinese governments say the national security legislation has restored stability to the city after months of sometimes violent

pro-democracy street protests in 2019.

Later this week, the city's high court is expected to deliver a landmark verdict that will decide the fate of 16 leading Hong Kong democrats that could see them jailed for an alleged plot against the government.

Chow is alleged to have used the five others to "publish posts with seditious intent" focused on an "upcoming sensitive date", the statement added. It also alleges they had the "intention of inciting netizens to organise or participate in illegal activities in a later period".

The offence carries a maximum jail term of seven years.

Local media cited sources as saying the "sensitive date" was June 4, the

anniversary of a bloody crackdown on Chinese pro-democracy protesters in and around Beijing's Tiananmen Square in 1989.

Those arrested were between 37 and 65, but Tang did not name the other five. Chow was formerly one of the leaders of the Alliance - a pro-democracy group that used to organise an annual candlelight vigil to commemorate June 4 in a downtown park.

Chow is currently serving several jail terms, including one linked to unauthorised assembly convictions for June 4 commemorations in recent years.

The Alliance was forced to disband under a security crackdown, and the vigils were banned.

## This phase also set to see low turnout

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Badiul Alam Majumdar, secretary of Sushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Shujan), said, "Only a small number of voters are turning up at the polling stations as the majority of them have lost faith in the electoral system that has nearly collapsed."

He added that voters still worry whether they will even be able to cast their ballots freely.

Meanwhile, Election Commissioner Md Alamgir said the matter of voter

turnout did not depend on the EC's efforts, as it only dealt with the issue of ensuring security for voters and candidates.

"The EC has asked security personnel to strictly maintain law and order at the polling stations during the election."

Initially, the EC was scheduled to hold elections in 112 upazilas in the third phase. But it suspended elections in 22 upazilas due to Cyclone Remal. It also withheld elections in two

upazilas due to High Court orders and deaths of candidates.

Furthermore, there will be no elections in Pirojpur's Bhandaria upazila since all chairman and vice chairman candidates were elected unopposed.

A total of 1,152 candidates - 397 for chairman, 456 for vice chairman, and 299 for vice chairman reserved for women posts - are contesting in the polls, during which some 2.08 crore voters are expected to vote at 7,450 polling centres.

## Why tidal surges were so high

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Another villager, Md Hasan Sheikh, said, "Not a single house in our area is spared. Most people sought shelter inside the nearby buildings built on higher ground."

Talking to this newspaper, Biswajit Nath, a professor of Geography and Environmental Studies at the University of Chittagong, said, "We misjudged this cyclone and its impact. Many things coincide with cyclones.

"Tides were higher when the moon was full. The full moon, or the flower moon, as it is known, was observed on May 23 when the earth, the sun and the moon were all in the same alignment.

"These astronomical tides have triggered this huge tidal surge during the cyclonic time. It continues in the Bay of Bengal and will continue for the next two days," he said.

There's another culprit - the ocean surface temperature that has increased by about 2 degrees Celsius since 2020 when Cyclone Amphan caused widespread damage in India and Bangladesh. Scientists observed that the ocean surface temperature was 29.5 degrees Celsius during Cyclone

Amphan, compared with 31-32 degrees Celsius in the northern Bay of Bengal now.

Disaster experts tend to conclude every cyclone or storm is unique though patterns within the atmosphere may look similar. Cyclone Remal also stood out by bringing more ominous and lengthy downpours as the atmosphere was warming.

"And Bangladesh is likely to face more cyclones in future because of the warming nature of the ocean and we have observed a two-degree temperature rise in the Bay of Bengal since 2020," Nath said.

Cyclone Remal turned into a depression on Monday morning. The deep depression reached Sylhet on Tuesday afternoon and headed to the Indian state of Assam yesterday evening, leaving the Bangladesh territory.

"The effects of depression lingered for 34 hours. During the whole period, it caused high-impact rainfall across the country," said Abul Kalam Mallik, a meteorologist at Bangladesh Meteorological Department.

Earlier, Cyclone Fani spent 39 hours after making landfall in 2019, Amphan

30 hours in 2020, and Aila 24 hours in 2009.

Before that, a severe cyclone in 2002 and another very severe cyclone in 2000 lasted 24 hours in Bangladesh, according to the weather office.

Citing research titled "Slower decay of landfalling hurricanes in a warming world" conducted by Lin Li and Pinaki Chakrabarty, Mallik said, previous cyclones used to lose 75 percent of their energy after making landfall. Now, cyclones lose barely 50 percent of their energy due to a rise in land surface temperature.

"The cyclones coming to land with extra energy have more gusts and rains and more damage," said Mallik.

Nature, a scientific journal, published a related research conducted by James Kossin in 2018. Kossin found that, worldwide, hurricane translational speeds have slowed down by an average of 10 percent.

Experts say the slowdown effect gets worse when hurricanes reach land, allowing more time for precipitation to fall over a given area. This is one of the primary factors for waterlogging and flooding.

## Govt to take up two projects

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restoration of forests, and development of infrastructure.

Since 2017, the government has been discussing with the global lender about supporting the Rohingya and host communities.

At one point, the WB proposed funding only for the Rohingyas, but the government wanted funds for the host communities as well.

Planning Minister Salam said the World Bank initially proposed giving funds solely for the Rohingyas, but the premier did not agree to that since the host communities have also been suffering immensely.

Talking to journalists after the meeting, Satyajit Karmaker, member (senior secretary) of the Programming Division, Planning Commission, said the grants will have to be spent within a year.

Satyajit said the WB earlier said it would not provide any grants for the host communities and would only give loans to support the Rohingyas.

"But the government said it would not be possible to help the Rohingyas with the loans, as it would be a huge

burden for the government to pay the interest."

Later, the government began negotiations with the WB and held multiple discussions, resulting in the loans and grants, he added.

He told journalists that the tenure of the loans for the host communities would be four years and the interest rates were low.

Under cluster projects, the cost of the first project, titled "Host and Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals (FDMN)," is Tk 4,182 crore, with the global lender providing Tk 3,815 crore in loans and grants.

The cost of the second project, titled "Inclusive Services and Opportunities (ISO) for the host communities," is Tk 4,401 crore, with the WB funding Tk 3,904 crore in the forms of loans and grants.

Apart from the two projects, the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecneec) also approved nine more projects involving over Tk 5,854 crore.

According to UNHCR, the number of registered Rohingyas living in the country is 10 lakh.

## Two ex-cops, accomplice jailed

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the court recorded the statements of seven people, including the complainant in the case.

According to the case statement, Monirul Islam, SM Jullikar Ali, and their accomplice Sumon stopped the car of Uber driver Khandakar Nuruzzaman at Malibagh Intersection under Shahjahanpur Police Station on the night of July 24, 2019.

The accused put five yaba pills in his car and snatched a mobile phone and Tk 20,000 cash from Nuruzzaman by threatening to implicate him in a drug case.

Following the incident, the victim filed an extortion case against the trio with Shahjahanpur Police Station in this regard.

After an investigation, Sub Inspector Abu Siddique of Shahjahanpur Police Station submitted a charge sheet against the accused on October 31, 2019.