

RICHI SOLAIMAN returns to your screens

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SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Richi Solaiman, a once popular household name on television, is making her way into the realm of Bangladeshi web content with *Girgiti*. Known for her roles in numerous single dramas and serials during the early 2000s, she was one of the busiest artistes in the industry.

Currently, Richi resides in the US with her husband, Rashek Malik, a detective in the New York Police Department, and their two children.

The actress is poised to make her web debut with the film *Girgiti*. She recently wrapped up filming in Kolkata and has now returned to Dhaka.

In an interview with The Daily Star, Richi explained, "I stepped away from work to raise my kids. They have always been my priority, and now that they can take care of themselves, I decided to return to my career."

Proud of her children's independence, Richi considers it a significant achievement that they can manage their studies and other activities on their own.

About getting back to work, Richi shared, "It feels amazing to be back in front of the camera. I can't describe it in words. I'm returning to my roots and my audience, and I couldn't be happier!"

She also mentioned that she will be selective with her projects, aiming to take up one project a month. "The plot of *Girgiti* is women-centric, which is one of the main reasons I chose this project," she confirmed.

The film revolves around the lives of two women. "For the first time in my career, I will be playing a police officer, a role for which I prepared for about four months," she said.

Richi is confident that her return will be special. "Over the last few years, many people have asked when I would return, expressing how much they missed me. I missed them too. Even my son encouraged me to start working again to become actress Richi Solaiman once more. I want my comeback to be memorable, and I hope this project will make it worthwhile."



PHOTOS: COLLECTED



Produced by Bengal Multimedia Limited and directed by Bijoy Jana, the web-film will be released on the OTT platform Rtv Plus.

Richi Solaiman embarked on her acting career in the much-acclaimed mini-series *Iti Amar Bon* in 1992. The actress who is also a trained *kathak* dancer, used to dance in BTV programmes and during one of her rehearsals she caught the attention of Mustafizur Rahman. He was planning to direct *Iti Amar Bon* at that point. Although the series was a raging success, Richi didn't continue with acting. Instead she pursued her passion for dancing.

Eventually, she started feeling more inclined towards acting and as a result landed her first

role as an adult in Begum Mumtaz Hossain's *Bela Obela*.

Throughout her acting career, the actress has often been proud of her performance in women-centric roles, when we asked her which performance of hers is close to her heart. The actress revealed, "The serial *Nir* showed an interesting relationship between a woman and her mother-in-law. Anwara *apa* played my mother-in-law in it. That serial received positive reactions from many. I was also highly appreciated by people from all walks of life for my role in the serial *Nabila Chorito*. Many people told me that nobody could have pulled off that character better than me."

The actress further received praise for her performances in the serials *Nil Nirjone*, *Moyur Bahon* and *Tyag*.

Apurba nearly collapses while filming



Recently, Ziaul Faruq Apurba sustained serious hand and back injuries while filming action scenes for the spin-off series, *Golam Mamun*, which is awaiting release this month.

Sources report that Apurba injured himself during an outdoor action scene, exacerbating his back pain and nearly losing consciousness. Despite being advised to rest, he returned to the set after receiving first aid from a physiotherapist.

Project director Shihab Shaheen commented, "Apurba was seriously injured during filming. Despite receiving painkillers and being advised to rest, he resumed work to avoid delays."

Apurba said, "Many people are involved in a production, so focusing solely on me isn't feasible. Painkillers helped me feel somewhat better."



Gigi and Bella Hadid donate \$1m to support Palestinian families

Gigi and Bella Hadid, born to a Palestinian father, have consistently expressed their pride in their heritage and supported Palestine on social media.

According to The Hollywood Reporter, Gigi and Bella Hadid are donating USD 1 million to four organisations focused on children and families: HEAL Palestine, the Palestine Children's Relief Fund (PCRF), World Central Kitchen (WCK), and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).

These collectively provide humanitarian aid, including food, medical programmes, assistance to displaced families, and psychological services, amidst the Israel Palestine conflict.

NEWS

Celesty was supposed to receive Azim

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recovered body parts, suspected to be those of the slain lawmaker, from the septic tank of the flat based on the information provided by Celesty.

During interrogation, Celesty told investigators that she heard the sound of a toilet being flushed repeatedly on the second floor of the duplex flat. Based on that information, detectives asked the Kolkata CID to conduct a search in the sewerage line and septic tank of the flat.

Four people have so far been arrested in connection with the murder.

Jihad Howlader, a butcher who dismembered the lawmaker's body and dumped its parts later, is in custody of the West Bengal CID.

Amanullah, his nephew Tanvir Bhuiyan, and Celesty are in custody of the Detective Branch of DMP.

Aktaruzzaman, the alleged

mastermind behind the murder, is believed to be in the USA. Another suspect, Foyzal, is absconding.

Suspect Siam Hossain, who along with Jihad dumped the lawmaker's body, went to Nepal after the killing. He was arrested by police there.

Masud Alam, counselor at the Bangladesh embassy in Nepal, told The Daily Star, "Siam Hossain is in custody of Nepal police. An Interpol team, now in Nepal, is probing the murder."

He said further details about the investigation would be disclosed later.

POLICE TEAM IN NEPAL

A three-member team of Bangladesh Police, led by Harun Or Rashid, additional commissioner (DB) of DMP, went to Nepal yesterday to investigate the murder.

Speaking to reporters at the

Dhaka airport, Harun said, "We have heard about Siam's arrest in Nepal. Some other suspects may be hiding in Nepal."

Earlier, a three-member DB team, led by Harun, went to Kolkata on May 26 to probe the murder. The team returned home on Thursday.

Meanwhile, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan yesterday said that the murder of Azim took place in India, which is why the case was filed there.

The Indian authorities will also investigate the murder, he added.

"The mastermind flew to the United States. India has an extradition treaty with the USA. So, the Indian government will appeal to them [USA]," the minister said in response to a question from a journalist after attending a programme at Dhaka University's Student-Teacher Centre.

The frequent flyer that is the agri secy!

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for this? Isn't there any monitoring mechanism in place?"

VIOLATIONS OF DIRECTIVES

As per the 2011 PMO circular, foreign trips should only be made for matters related to national interest, like signing of MOUs, agreements or mandatory representation in international bodies.

It also clearly directed that for events like educational tours, seminars, symposiums and workshops, junior officers and field-level officials should be prioritised over secretaries.

According to documents seen by this newspaper, three of the agriculture secretary's trips last year violated the rules: twice for a workshop and once for contract discussions.

This year, Wahida already travelled five times: thrice in May, once in April and once in January. Two were for roundtables and discussions and three for signing contracts.

She went abroad six times to sign contracts in Singapore, China, Tunisia, Canada, Saudi Arabia and Morocco.

The expenses of these trips were covered by the agriculture ministry's operational budget, violating another directive that prohibited foreign trips funded by operational or development budgets.

From May 21-23 this year, Wahida led a delegation of five officials to Australia for a bilateral meeting and

a meeting on trade and investment.

On May 6, she accompanied Agriculture Minister Abdus Shahid to a roundtable in the Netherlands, against yet another PMO directive, which discouraged the minister and secretary of a ministry to go on foreign trips together.

It, however, said that exceptions may be made for national interests, such as meetings with the World Bank, International Monetary Fund or donor groups.

Between April 15 and 19, she was set to visit Kenya to learn about digital agriculture but had to cancel due to a minor accident.

In November last year, she attended a workshop in the Philippines.

From September 1-4 last year, the secretary joined a workshop in China; on August 1-5, she attended a discussion in Malaysia; and from June 4-9, she visited Canada for an existing contract.

"For contract signings, wing chiefs usually go; secretaries don't need to go unless there are major complications," said former secretary Awal.

Asked, the agriculture secretary claimed there is no such directive.

Awal further said, "In my tenure, I sent junior officers for trips, as they will serve the country for a longer time than I will ... The precedent set by the current secretaries will have a more negative impact in the future."

Speaking to The Daily Star, Wahida said the secretaries travel abroad in

the interest of the country, not for pleasure.

"You surely know that the approval for foreign trips of secretaries comes from the Prime Minister's Office. The secretary can travel as many times as deemed necessary in the interest of the country."

Regarding criticism, Wahida said, "I don't know who's making these criticisms, but I can't take anymore of what you [this newspaper] are saying. Everyone in our ministry knows the purposes of the trips."

Asked whether the files for the secretary's trips may have been sent to the PMO without his approval, he said, "Ask the secretary about that ... I act or settle things that come to me as per the rules."

He, however, admitted that some files do not reach him. "If the files don't come, what can I ask about them? ... If there is no discussion with me, I can't say what is right or not."

Firoz Mia, a researcher on public administration, said, "The minister's approval is required for foreign trips. If there's an exception, that might be another issue."

A minister, speaking anonymously, said, "Approval from the minister is needed for foreign trips. If there isn't any, it indicates a poor relationship between the minister and the secretary."

Benazir withdrew Tk 70-80cr

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short period of time."

THE ACCOUNTS AND THEIR HOLDERS

According to the ACC investigation team's source, they identified 33 bank accounts: six in Benazir Ahmed's name; five in Jissan Mirza's name; three for Farheen Rishta Binte Benazir; and one for Tahseen Raisa Binte Benazir.

There is one joint account shared by Jissan Mirza, one Mirza Monwara Reza and one Mirza Anwar Parvez.

Other accounts are held by entities such as Ekti Shishir Bindu, Stealth Industries Ltd, Savanna Farm Products, Savana Agro Ltd, Savana Park Resort and Country Club, and Bangla Tea Manufacturing Industries Ltd. There are also three unspecified accounts with Sonali Bank PLC and a Sanchayapatra worth Tk 30 lakh.

On May 23, Dhaka Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court ordered the freezing of all these accounts.

Benazir also has two beneficiary owners' (BO) accounts with IFCL Securities Ltd and Dragon Securities Ltd. Jissan Mirza has two BO accounts with Southeast Bank Capital Services Ltd and EBL Securities Ltd, while Tahseen Raisa has two with Dynasty Securities Ltd and EBL Securities Ltd.

The Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission on Monday froze the BO accounts.

"We have frozen the BO accounts following the ACC's request," said a senior official of the stock market regulator, requesting anonymity.

Officials said the BSEC have already asked Central Depository Bangladesh Ltd, which facilitates transfer and settlement of shares and other securities against BO accounts, to close the accounts.

BENAZIR OUT OF COUNTRY

On May 4, Benazir left to Singapore using his passport -- B00002095, an intelligence source confirmed to The Daily Star yesterday.

Meanwhile, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan yesterday said that he does not know whether the ex-IGP is in the country or not.

"We've not banned him [from travelling abroad] yet ... I still don't know for sure if he is here or not. I have to be sure."

Govt missteps led

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said it is indecent for the country to have a businessman like him. That businessman has "removed his name from the list of defaulters by depositing 2 percent."

Muinul said, "Money laundering is the biggest problem but no steps have been taken to control hundi."

Rather, he added, various benefits including tax exemptions have been offered to bring back the laundered money, but not a single taka has returned.

About loan money being laundered, he said, "Tk 5 lakh crore out of total Tk 18 lakh crore loans in the banking sector are defaulted. But Bangladesh Bank does not recognise it. Bank loans are being repaid with borrowed money. A loan is being rescheduled seven to eight times."

Speaking about the lingering high inflation, he said, "Other countries could reduce it, but Bangladesh couldn't. To the contrary, the prices have been pushed up further."

Muinul said now the names of the former police and army chiefs are being discussed. "They are being talked about only because the government wants them to be talked about. Where did former home minister Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir get the money to set up Padma Bank? Why is Bachechu (Abdul Hai) of BASIC Bank still missing? Where are the sons of Sikder who ruined the National Bank?"

He said that Russia has set up projects like Rooppur power plant in India at half the cost. "So why are we spending more money there? A lot of unnecessary infrastructure is being built. Money is being looted through it."

Muinul observed Sri Lanka has collapsed in the wake of massive

Woman dies

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On information, locals rushed to their aid and took them to the hospital and on May 29, the woman died but her husband survived.

On May 31, the woman's uncle filed a case with Rajibpur police accusing four people. The two other accused are Shukkur Ali, 59, of Karigarpara village, and Soleyman, 29, of Tangalipara village.

Contacted, OC Ashiqur said police were trying to arrest the other two accused.

unnecessary infrastructure. "We are also going in the same direction with such eccentricities. After 2008, there was no fair election in the country. All the elections were one-sided. Deviation from democracy is a bad sign for the country, and is affecting the economy."

Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon said, "We can understand the poor state of the economy through media reports as well as through our lifestyle. If you go to the market, you can feel how badly the economy is doing."

He added that syndicates are controlling the market. "The ruling party leaders are also saying the same. No one disagrees with this. But no attempt has been made to identify those who are in the syndicate. Most of the syndicates are close to the government."

The economy is controlled by a small section of military-civilian bureaucrats and wealthy elites and wealth is becoming concentrated in them, he said.

Workers Party Politburo Member Sushant Das and General Secretary Fazle Hossain Badsha also spoke at the event.

Flooding

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Jaintapur, Kanighat, Jokiganj, Beanibazar and Golapganj upazilas and 9 wards of Sylhet city were flood affected.

At least 550 shelters have been opened in the district in which 3,342 people moved in.

Deputy Commissioner Sheikh Russel Hasan said the lower areas of Sylhet city, Beanibazar and Golapganj upazilas were flooded again due to onrush of water from upstream.

Yesterday morning, former foreign minister Abdul Momen MP visited the flood-affected area in the suburbs. He blamed the Surma not being dredged for the flooding.

He said the river dredging project was taken up and work had begun but, after a few days, it was shut down for various reasons.

Had the job been completed, the water would have drained quickly, he said.

Sylhet City Corporation opened a 24-hour control room (01958284800) for emergency services of the city dwellers.