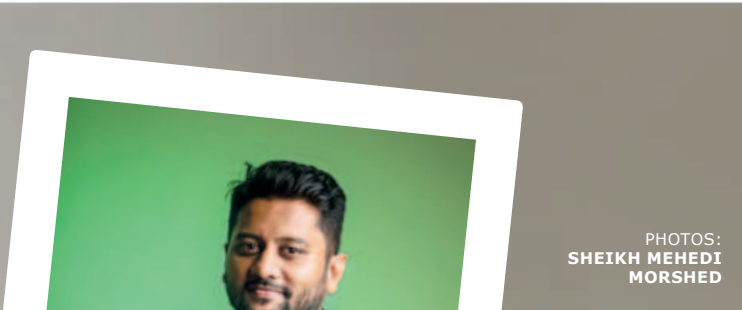


UNCOMPROMISING
VICKY ZAHED

Bangladeshi television projects were somewhat confined to genres, such as romance, comedy, and family drama. In this race, young director Vicky Zahed brought gothic, dark and parapsychological plots – unconventional themes that initially were a ‘risk’ for the tele-fiction industry.

PHOTOS:
SHEIKH MEHEDI
MORSHED

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Last year, the director announced that he would be directing the web-series ‘Adom’, based on a real-life incident. “We have completed shooting the series and the post-production. Since the plot is sensitive, we are taking time before bringing it to the screens.

SHARMIN JOYA

Beginning his television journey with *The Life of Jalil* in 2019, he went on to elevate the industry with hits like the *Punorjonmo* series, *Chirokal Aaj*, *Kaykobad*, and *Irina*, among many others. His directorial OTT projects – *Redrum*, *The Silence*, and *Ami Ki Tumi* – are some of the remarkable ventures in his career. This Eid-ul-Azha, two of his directorial small-screen projects were released—*Tithidor* and *Hajot*. Tomorrow, his short film *Ekti Khola Janala* will be released on Binge. The director dropped by The Daily Star to share insights on his way of direction, and spilled the beans on his future projects.

“If I am asked about my direction philosophy, I’ll say that I have always remained honest with myself,” shared the director. “During the initial stage of my career, many suggested that I should make popular genres such as comedy, however, I have always wanted to make gothic, dark, and psychological works, for which I had to wait. My never-compromising nature brought me where I am today.”

Vicky attempts to reach the audience’s mind in a way that brings some discomfort, and lingers for a long time. This Eid-ul-Azha, *Tithidor*, featuring Mehazabien Chowdhury and written by Jahan Sultana, left many audiences in tears, and especially the female audience could find a connection with Tithi, portrayed by Mehazabien. With no commercial elements in it, no thrill, and telling a linear story, Vicky succeeded. However, for a male

director, it is difficult to justify the portrayal of female psychology. How did Vicky cope with this? – “This project is very close to my heart for two reasons. The character of Tithi reflects one of my close acquaintances, and I have seen closely how she suffers in her life and faces many criticisms, such as being single in her mid-30s. Due to her skin tone and texture, she was even bullied. Yet, she wins all the challenges and smiles amidst all her pain. Secondly, our executive producer Masudul Mahmud Ruhan ended his life last May, which was shocking for us. Through this story, I wanted to say that suicide is not the solution and there are people who, despite numerous struggles, give life a chance; because once it is gone, there is no coming back.”

Vicky’s experimental project *Tikit*, was released on Chorki earlier this February. Unlike his other projects, this one didn’t engage viewers that much, and the director shared the reason behind this. “I wanted to try black comedy for the first time, and it was more of satire, which didn’t work for me; however, I have no regret since I got to experiment.”

“We have not yet revealed the protagonist of *Ekti Khola Janala*. He shares a resemblance

to a notorious criminal, who is alleged to have eaten raw human liver after digging them up from graveyards. This is a short film, and also one of my favourite types of projects.”

Vicky’s landmark series *Punorjonmo* reached such heights that to date, wherever he goes, people ask about a spin-off possibility. For the readers, he spilled the beans: *Hajot* is the prequel of the *Punorjonmo* universe. Since Rafsan Haque’s character has reached the mass audience, this time we plan to make it larger than life. Hence, for that, we need time to create something special.”

Last year, the director announced that he would be directing the web-series *Adom*, based on a real-life incident. “We have completed shooting the series and the post-production. Since the plot is sensitive, we are taking time before bringing it to the screens.”

Recently there has been a rumour that Afran Nisho and Vicky Zahed are set to collaborate for a silver screen project. To that, Vicky responded, “Nothing has been finalised, as of yet. We are in the initial planning stages. I do believe that the audience deserves our collaboration on the big screens, but only time will tell.”



Dhallywood stars support Shakib Khan’s new business venture

Pori Moni, Mim, Dighi, Puja Chery, and Keya Payel have solidified their positions in Dhallywood. They recently united at a press conference to support Shakib Khan’s latest venture, Aponjon.

Held at a five-star hotel in Gulshan on last Saturday, the actresses stood cheerfully by Khan as he unveiled the Aponjon logo, representing his business initiative aimed at supporting small traders.

Actor Eamon, the executive director of Remark, also attended. With this venture, Shakib Khan is expanding his influence beyond the film industry, making significant strides in the corporate world to benefit small traders in the country.

‘Padatik’ to premiere simultaneously in Bangladesh and India



The much anticipated Srijit Mukherji directorial film, *Padatik*, based on the life of legendary Bengali filmmaker Mrinal Sen, is set to premier in India and Bangladesh on the same day.

Produced on the occasion of the centenary of the iconic filmmaker Mrinal Sen, the biopic features Chanchal Chowdhury in the lead role. He portrays Sen in both his youth and later years, while Korak Samanta plays the teenage Sen.

The film is set for an August 15 release in West Bengal and Bangladesh, coinciding with India’s Independence Day.

Chanchal described the role as particularly challenging due to Sen’s distinctive personality.

NEWS

The poor priced out of fresh veggies

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Shewrapara, Ibrahimpur, Kochukhet, Farmgate, and Karwan Bazar kitchen markets echoed the same.

This has left the poor and the low-income group to make do with the low-quality, stale vegetables.

Low-quality vegetables often exhibit signs of spoilage such as wilting, discolouration and a lack of flavour, making them less desirable for consumption.

Thanks to the sudden spike in demand for stale vegetables, even their prices have increased by Tk 10-15 a kg in the capital’s kitchen markets.

“How will we survive if stale vegetables become dear?” said Ramij Ali, a rickshaw driver who buys low-quality vegetables from the Farmgate kitchen market.

Food inflation stood at 10.42 percent

in June, the third straight month to witness double-digit figures.

If the prices rise the way they have, Ramij might have to cut out vegetables from his diet. “Vegetables were the last option we had,” he said.

Bablu Miah, who sells low-quality vegetables near the Ibrahimpur kitchen market, acknowledged that the prices have surged by Tk 10-15 a kg within one week.

He sells brinjal at Tk 80-100 per kg, whereas the fresh ones are selling at Tk 100-140 per kg.

The long beans at his stall cost Tk 80-100 per kg; the fresh ones are selling for Tk 100-120 in the kitchen markets.

Bablu is selling stale spiny bitter gourd for Tk 80-90 per kg, whereas the high-quality ones cost Tk 100-120 per kg.

He is charging Tk 70-80 a kg for the low-quality sponge gourd at his stall,

whereas the fresh ones can be found at Tk 120-130 a kg.

The vegetable wholesalers though maintain they have no other option but to give in to the law of demand and supply.

“We used to bring vegetables from Manikganj but due to the continuous rains, all vegetable fields are submerged,” said Mohammad Yeasin, a vegetable wholesaler at Karwan Bazar.

So the prices have gone up, he added. Nowhere was this more evident than in the case of green chilli, whose price have surged by as much as Tk 100 a kg in a week. Green chillies are now selling for Tk 240-320 per kg.

“We only received 20 kg of green chillies from Rangpur three days ago—we are now mostly dependent on imported green chillies,” said Selim Hasan, a green chilli trader at Karwan Bazar.

30pc quota a right of FFs’ descendants

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three months from the date of receipt of this order.

The court, however, said the government can change, reduce or increase the ratio or percentage of the quotas in public jobs, if necessary, and can fill the vacant posts from the general merit list if any quota in government recruitment is not fulfilled.

“We noticed that several writ petitions were filed to maintain the quota reserved for freedom fighters, by different freedom fighters and their children, and in all writ petitions, this hon’ble court clearly held that the 30 percent quota reserved for freedom fighters and their children should strictly be maintained.

“... Since the Appellate Division has already settled the matter and affirmed the judgment and order of the High Court Division with the modification as quoted above, the same is binding upon us as well as all authorities of the state machinery as per articles 111 and 112 of our constitution and violation of the same is contemptuous,” said the HC bench of Justice KM Kamrul Kader and Justice Khizir Hayat in the 27-page verdict.

On June 5 this year, the bench declared illegal the circular, issued by the public administration ministry on October 4, 2018, which cancelled the quota system in government jobs, as it was issued without lawful authority.

The court delivered the verdict after a writ petition was filed by Ohidul

Islam Tushar and six other children of freedom fighters challenging the legality of the circular.

The circular said that in the case of direct recruitment to the posts of 9th grade (formerly class-1) and 10th to 13th grades (formerly class-2), the appointments should be made based on merit.

Protesting the HC judgment on June 5, students staged demonstrations at different educational institutions, including Dhaka University. They took to the streets on July 1, demanding the reinstatement of the 2018 circular.

Students intensified their protests across the country since July 4 as the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court did not stay the HC verdict following a government petition.

The protesters are carrying on demonstrations, demanding reforms of the quota system through the formulation of a law.

“Quotas reserved for the freedom fighters and affected women were introduced absolutely on clear recognition to the freedom fighters for their heroic contribution to the nation, which has also been extended to the children and grandchildren of the freedom fighters, a clear recognition that the freedom fighters have achieved.

“Thus, it cannot be said to be a mere policy of the government as the same is absolutely given as recognition to the freedom fighters for their heroic contribution for emancipation of Bangladesh, which cannot be and

should not be taken so lightly equating with other citizens of the republic.

“The heroic contribution of the freedom fighters, and suffering and pain sustained by the freedom fighters and their offspring during the nine months of our Liberation War and after August 15, 1975, to till 1996 – 21 years – cannot be ignored, and the nation must have the highest regard to the freedom fighters, and anything is done derogatory or taken away the right and privilege should be treated as illegal and unconstitutional.

“Such constitutional and legal right of freedom fighters, their children, and grandchildren and others – districts, women, physically challenged persons, tribes, minor races, and ethnic groups – are not being inconsistent with articles 28(4) and 29(3)(a) of the constitution, and the same cannot be taken away by the stroke of a pen as policy decision of the government,” the HC said.

“The freedom fighters are pride of our nation. Thus, we are of the view that during the period of August 15, 1975, to 1996, the freedom fighters, their children and grandchildren have been suffering socially, economically and politically, which makes them one of the most backward sections of the citizen of this country,” the HC judges observed.

They further said the respondents (the government) may take necessary steps by making rules or guidelines to ensure participation of backward sections of the citizen in the recruitment process of the government.

Alcaraz retains Wimbledon in style

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the men’s and women’s game.

But he had no answers in the Centre Court sunshine as the electric Alcaraz pounded him from the back of the court and treated the crowd to an array of his trademark drop shots.

Alcaraz seized the initiative in a first game of breathtaking quality lasting 14 minutes, taking advantage of his fifth break point.

The Spaniard settled quickly into his routine on serve and went up a double break when Djokovic double faulted in the fifth game.

The shellshocked Serbian, playing in his 10th Wimbledon final, held serve to love to close the gap to 5-2 but dumped the ball into the net to hand the Spaniard the first set.

Alcaraz was immediately on the front foot in the second set, forcing a break in the first game and fending off pressure on his own serve to take a 2-0 lead.

A Djokovic backhand into the net in the seventh game handed Alcaraz another break point and a double fault put the defending champion 5-2 up and on the cusp of a two-set lead.

Frauds, criminals get govt jobs due to question leaks

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Syed Abed Ali, who was arrested on July 8, mentioned the names of many others involved in the question-leak syndicate.

The HC bench said Abed Ali is not as powerful as those like (former IGP) Benazir Ahmed. “But those who are behind the leaks and sale of question papers are powerful.

“Does the investigating agency have the power to arrest them? If there is no power of arrest, then the order shall be made accordingly.”

DAG Shaifuzzaman said that around five lakh candidates participate in public examinations every year.

Of them, around 20,000 pass and then around 2,000 give the viva. Therefore, what the petitioner is

The Centre Court crowd, including Catherine, Princess of Wales, looked on in disbelief as their hopes for a titanic tussle evaporated.

Djokovic fended off another of clutch of break points early in the third set to stay alive and showed signs that he was finding his range.

But the Spaniard carved out three break points in the ninth game, arrowing a passing shot past his stranded opponent to move 5-4 ahead.

Alcaraz stepped up to serve for the championship but squandered three match points, missing a straightforward drive volley as Djokovic broke for the first time in the match.

But he recovered his composure quickly as the set went to a tie-break.

Djokovic went wide with a forehand to give Alcaraz a 5-3 lead and the Spaniard won the title with his fourth championship point.

The result means Djokovic has still not beaten a top-ten player this year and has yet to win a title.

The Serbian will now turn his attention to the Paris Olympics as he seeks to win gold for the first time.

Three ex-bank

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sentenced to five years; and Azmal, Jahidul, and Mosharof were sentenced to seven years in jail each, ACC Public Prosecutor (PP) Abul Kalam Azad told the Daily Star.

“The court also ordered the convicted to return the embezzled money.”

According to the case statement, the convicted worked together to embezzle over Tk 2.59 crore from Rupali Bank’s Mahasthangarh Branch using pay orders between April 6 and April 9, 2017.

After the discrepancy in the accounts was found, the bank conducted an internal investigation, which followed a case filed by Habibur Rahman, the bank’s deputy general manager at the time.

Univ teachers

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themselves since July 1, and the introduction of a separate pay scale for public university teachers.

While holding a four-hour sit-in at the university premises, Sheikh Mashrik Hasan, general secretary of Jagannath University Teachers’ Association, said, “We’ve decided to continue the movement until our demands are met. All teachers are in agreement. Although we held a meeting with a government representative on Saturday, we did not get any hopeful outcomes.”

He said teachers will return to classrooms as soon as their demands are fulfilled.

Meanwhile, the Inter-University Officers’ Federation, which had joined the work abstention over the pension scheme, also decided to continue their movement.

On Saturday, the teachers’ representatives discussed their demands with AL General Secretary and Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader. After the meeting, the teachers said the meeting “went well”.

Quader said there was confusion regarding the “Prottoy” pension scheme to be effective from July this year, but it would be in force from July next year.

Hamas ‘pulling out’

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described the area as “a sandy 14-square-kilometre (5.4-square-mile) agricultural land, where people are left out in the open with little to no buildings or roads”.

“The claim that people in Gaza can move to ‘safe’ or ‘humanitarian’ zones is false,” said Lazzarini on social media site X.

Israel said it had targeted Deif, the head of the Al-Qassam Brigades, as well as Rafa Salama, a brigade commander, in a strike on Saturday.