

# Artistes are assets, should not be blindly dedicated to power: Mamo

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

National Film Award-winning actress Zakia Bari Mamo has been vocal in support of the student movement against discrimination from the very beginning. She has taken a stand in favour of the students everywhere, from posting on Facebook to even being present at Shaheed Minar and Shahbagh. She spoke to The Daily Star about the issues.

"I have always supported the students' rightful demands. I will stand by their rightful demands for my entire life. I stand against violence or division. I do not want any form of division. I urge everyone not to create any disunion."

Mamo further said, "It is our country, and as responsible citizens, we have to come forward to make the country beautiful."

The former Lux Superstar expressed her concern over the ongoing communal attacks. "What can we possibly achieve with such division? How can we accept the inhuman attack on musician Rahul Ananda's house, for instance?"

When asked what she expects from a new Bangladesh, Mamo said, "Let it be a government of the people. Corruption at all levels must be stopped and we must be concerned about the elimination of corruption at all levels."

In response to being asked what she is looking forward to from the students? She said, "They (the youth) are extremely wise and talented. I have faith in them. They will play a leading role in shaping a beautiful country."

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directly opposed the student movement's interest and put them in the crosshairs of the british authoritative regime. "Stepping down from my position in the association was a personal decision. However, that doesn't mean

I have severed ties with any of the artistes in the organisation. I have a good relationship with everyone, and it will remain so. My decision will not affect my friendship with them."

Regarding her opinion on some artistes, poets, and writers getting directly involved in politics, Mamo remarked, "Everyone can have their own opinions and preferences. Positions can differ. Blind dedication towards anything leads to overall deterioration. Even in love, it ends the relationship. Artistes, poets, and writers are assets of the country. Everyone loves them. They should move forward together and work accordingly."

Mamo believes that upholding ethics and controlling greed is a way to organise a beautiful country. She expressed, "May wisdom lead us to the right path."

Sharing her expectations from the interim government, Mamo concluded the conversation, saying, "Millions of students have made demands. Now, there will be an interim government. I hope this government will run the country according to those needs."



## Akcent holds Bangladeshi flag up high

On August 5, the nation celebrated the end of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina's 15-year regime. However, this celebration was marred by incidents of vandalism and arson, as miscreants took advantage of the situation to loot innocent civilians.

As the country strives to recover and move forward, Adrian Claudiu Sina, the lead singer of the Romanian dance-pop group Akcent, expressed his support for Bangladesh by sharing old photos from a concert he held in the country. In the pictures, he proudly displayed the Bangladeshi flag.

The singer captioned the photos, "Bangladesh, stay strong! I believe in you! More power to you all."

## Don't replace one fascist regime with a greater one: Parambrata



Addressing the recent state of affairs in Bangladesh, Kolkata actor Parambrata Chattopadhyay broke his silence in an article published by Anandabazar.

The actor expressed admiration for the students' demands for the former government's resignation, acknowledging the importance of such a bold stance.

Calling the day a "day of pride" for Bangladesh's citizens, Parambrata wrote, "We, too, feel the pride! It's undoubtedly a day of celebration! But do not tarnish the joy of overthrowing tyranny! Do not replace one fascist regime with a greater one! Honour this pro-democracy movement with a democratic establishment, not by force or coercion."

# NEWS

## Mood in Bangladesh

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on for our colleagues who are Bangladeshis and for the people of Bangladesh," Lewis said, highlighting Bangladesh's progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

"Young people and people from every range of life across Bangladesh came out on the streets to celebrate," Lewis said, referencing the public response to Hasina's resignation.

She acknowledged that some celebrations turned violent, leading to destruction, attacks on police stations, and the killing of police officers deemed "aligned with the government".

Over the past weeks, more than 300 civilians have been killed and

over 20,000 injured in student-led protests, marking some of the worst bloodshed in Bangladesh's history, she added.

Relative calm returned yesterday morning, but Lewis warned that the situation remains uncertain until a transitional government is fully established.

When asked how the protests led to the demands for the prime minister to be removed, she said that political frustration had been brewing since the controversial election in January, which many believed was not free and fair.

Economic issues, such as rising food and fuel prices, further exacerbated the situation, pushing marginalised Bangladeshis deeper

into poverty, she added.

Young people, in particular, were affected by a court order in June on civil service job quotas favouring the elite, making employment prospects bleak for the two million young Bangladeshis entering the workforce annually, Lewis said.

Though the quota scheme was rescinded, protests evolved into broader calls for prime minister Hasina's resignation, with demonstrators from various societal sectors demanding change and transparency they felt were missing.

Lewis stressed the importance of inclusive dialogue and the formation of a responsive interim government to address the nation's challenges and aspirations.

## Taiwan ex-soldier held in China returns home

AFP, TAIPEI  
A former Taiwanese military officer held in China for nearly five months after he was rescued by Chinese authorities during a fishing trip finally returned home yesterday.

The angler, surnamed Hu, from Taiwan's outlying Kinmen islands was found with a friend on March 18 by the coast guard of China's Fujian province after the engine of their boat failed.

His friend was repatriated to Kinmen a few days later, while Hu — an active member of Taiwan's military at the time — was held as Chinese authorities accused him of intentionally concealing his identity.

Yesterday, Kinmen lawmaker Chen Yu-jen accompanied Hu's parents and daughter on the first ferry service to the Chinese city of Xiamen — located just five kilometres (three miles) away — to bring him back.

Chen live-streamed their return around noon on her Facebook page, showing Hu holding his daughter's hands as they disembarked from the ferry.

"I miss home, I miss home very much," he told reporters gathered at the dock.

"This was just an accident and it's good that it can be resolved smoothly."

## Sacked Maj Gen Ziaul

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was a major. He was elevated to the rank of lieutenant colonel the same year and took charge as director of Rab's intelligence wing on August 27, 2010.

He was made Rab's additional director general (operations) on December 7, 2013 after being promoted to colonel.

Allegations of enforced disappearances, killing people in contract and crossfire started piling up against Rab when Ziaul served as its intelligence chief and additional DG.

Despite various allegations, the Awami League government promoted Ziaul to the rank of Brigadier General and made him director (internal affairs) of National Security Intelligence.

In 2017, he was later made the director of the National Telecommunication Monitoring Centre (NTMC), an intelligence agency under the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence.

The agency is responsible for monitoring, collecting and recording information and communication data as well as for the interception of electronic communication such as phone calls, emails and social media accounts.

On July 21, 2022, a new post of director general of NTMC was created when Ziaul was promoted to the rank

of major general; he became the first DG of NTMC.

During the peak of the student protest on June 17, the NTMC closed down mobile internet. A day later, it instructed International Internet Gateway companies to stop supplying bandwidth to broadband service providers, leading to a complete internet blackout in the country.

Although the BTRC is tasked with regulating the internet in Bangladesh, NTMC overstepped its authority to suppress the protesters, according to sources.

The NTMC, which began its full-fledged operation on January 1, 2017, has been monitoring all telecommunication service providers around the clock.

Since 2019, it could also block and filter content of the social media and websites critical of the government.

Earlier, on June 1, 2022, the Cabinet Committee on Government Procurement approved the proposal for the 'Part Procurement of Integrated Lawful Interception System - Geo Location System and Related Services' at a cost of Tk 172 crore.

The geo-location system can perform intelligent analysis by examining data from various sources.

The platform covers the geographical boundaries of the entire country, enabling the NTMC to identify the exact location of any person by analysing past location data.

## Stop violence against minorities

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Rights Commission. It urged the law-enforcing agencies, civil society and students to play an effective role in maintaining communal harmony.

A statement by 29 eminent citizens said they received reports of attacks on Hindus in at least 35 districts, including Khulna, Jashore, Satkhira, Jhenaidah, Dinajpur, Thakurgaon, Narail, Munshiganj, Noakhali, Meherpur and Dhaka.

Ahmediyya people in Panchagarh and Rangpur, ethnic minorities in Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Naogaon, Chapainawabganj and Patuakhali, and Hijra community people in Jamalpur also came under attack, according to the statement.

They called upon the president and the army chief to deploy troops with specific directives in all districts and upazilas to prevent violence and looting.

The signatories of the statement include Sultana Kamal, Hameeda Hossain, Khushi Kabir, Rasheda K Choudhury, Syeda Rizwana Hasan, ZI Khan Panna, Saleem Samad, Shahnaz Huda, Shireen Huq, Kajal Debnath, Tabarak Hussain, Subrata Chowdhury, Sumaiya Khair, Faustina Pereira, and Shamsul Huda.

At a rally under the banner of "Pratibadi Samajik Sangkritik Sangathan" outside the National Museum at Shahbagh in Dhaka at 4:30pm, 31 social and cultural organisations also condemned the vandalism of sculptures.

Mofizur Rahman Laltu, general secretary of Bibartan Sangskritik Kendra, called upon everyone to unite to resist the attacks, while Zakir Hossain, president of Gono Sangskritik Kendra, described the miscreants as "agents of fascism".

Harunur Rashid, a physician and leader of professionals, requested everyone not to divide people in the name of religion.

Amit Ranjan Dey, general secretary of Bangladesh Udichi Shilpigoshthi, read out a declaration on behalf of the 31 cultural and social organisations, presenting their vision for the type of government they want in the country.

Dipok Suman, chief of Tirandaz Natya Dal, and poet Hasan Fakir recited poetry at the event. Charan Sangskritik Kendra, Udichi Shilpigoshthi, Democracy Clowns, and Bibartan Sangskritik Dal performed songs.

In a press statement, Manusher Jonno

Foundation, or MJF, expressed support for the change towards democracy, but added that they are "deeply concerned" over the violence.

Shaheen Anam, executive director of MJF, said they were "delighted with the joy of liberation from the culture of a lack of democracy and misgovernance".

She congratulated the young generation on this victory and expressed "profound" respect for those who have been martyred.

Emphasising MJF's long-standing commitment to defending marginalised communities, Shaheen Anam "strongly" condemned the attacks on religious minorities and marginalised communities, and police stations, political offices, and statues as "completely unacceptable".

The Workers' Party of Bangladesh criticised the army chief for not playing a visible role in maintaining law and order even after promising to protect people.

It called on the student leaders to take a vigilant and active role so that their victory does not go astray. It also urged all leftist, progressive, secular and anti-imperialist forces to take united action to restore peace and order in the society.

## Uphold rule of law, respect democracy

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The US embassy also issued a security alert advising the US citizens to take shelter in safe places, and urged them to strongly consider returning to the US when safe to do so. The advisory said the situation in Bangladesh is unpredictable and volatile due to lack of law enforcers' presence.

In a statement, Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong, meanwhile, called on all parties to de-escalate and respect universal rights.

"We urge a full, independent

and impartial investigation into the events in recent weeks," she said on Tuesday, expressing deep concern over the violence and tragic loss of lives in Bangladesh. She offered deepest condolences to the families and friends of all those killed.

Australia continues to stand by the people of Bangladesh and supports their calls for an orderly and peaceful return to a democratic and inclusive government.

Australia also increased the level of security alert and advised Australians

## No detainees

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disappearance, had a meeting with the DGFI.

The rest of the delegation included Odhikar Secretary Adilur Rahman Khan, women's rights activist Shireen Huq and academic CR Abrar.

After the meeting, Shireen told the families of some victims, "DGFI said that there are no detainees in its Dhaka facility at the moment. They invited us to visit the facility. They also said that they will form a joint commission to arrange visits for rights activists to 23 other facilities across the country to see if the victims of enforced disappearance are there."

"We have sought an appointment with the army chief to discuss formation of an inquiry committee," she said.

Families who had gathered in front of the DGFI office at Dhaka Cantonment were left disappointed by this development.

Nadira Sultana, wife of Ataur Rahman who went missing on December 8, 2011, had rushed to Dhaka from Madaripur yesterday hoping to get back her husband.

"I left Dhaka after my husband went missing. I told everyone I am going to Dhaka to bring back my daughter's father. I left Madaripur at 3:00am," she said.

Another delegation of rights activists

not to travel to Bangladesh.

It advised the Australians to move to a safe place and follow the advice of local authorities and avoid large gatherings.

Russian foreign ministry in a statement on Tuesday hoped the situation in Bangladesh will return to normalcy soon.

"We look forward to the internal political processes in that friendly country returning to the constitutional norms as soon as possible," it said.

According to the Russian embassy in Dhaka, no injuries of Russian citizens were reported.

had visited the DGFI headquarters on Tuesday but they were told that the authorities would give an update on the victims of enforced disappearance the following day.

After visiting the DGFI office, some of the protesters led by Sanjida Islam Tulee visited the DB detention cells on the seventh floor of an eight-storey building on the DB office premises. The building also houses the office of the DMP's Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime Unit.

"All the cells were empty, but it was evident that those were used until recently. There were some bottles of water and bedding," said Tulee.