

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

I welcome reforms in the industry:

SHAHIDUZZAMAN SELIM

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SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Shahiduzzaman Selim, known for his versatility across stage, TV, film, and OTT, has remained a sought-after actor in Bangladesh’s entertainment industry for over three decades, consistently evolving while staying true to his craft.

In an exclusive interview with The Daily Star, the National Film Award-winning actor shares his thoughts on his recent projects, the rise of OTT, and what keeps him going after all these years.

The actor is set to begin filming two upcoming movies in October and November, along with a new web-film by Raihan Rafi. But what roles does this versatile star seek these days?

“I want to play any role that challenges my skills. A versatile actor should be able to take on any character, and that’s what I aim for. After more than 30 years in the industry, I still get excited to explore diverse characters,” says Selim.

In the film *Leela Manthan*, the multifaceted artiste takes on the lead role of a morally ambiguous man. “It’s a complex character,” he explains. “A cunning man, in a bizarre profession, who would do anything for money— even sell his child. It’s not the kind of role you play every day.” He chuckles before adding, “It’s the challenge that makes it so intriguing.”



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

Shakib Khan in the courtroom. “What’s interesting is that Shakib is also in *Borbaad*, but our dynamic is completely different this time. The film has a revenge-based storyline with an atypical plot. It will surprise audiences.”

Meanwhile, Selim reunites with director Raihan Rafi for the web-film *Black Money*, portraying a Member of Parliament—quite a shift from his usual roles. Having worked with Rafi on *Poran*, *Surongo*, and *Toofan*, Selim praises their collaboration.

“Rafi is a director who always pushes me in new directions. With *Black Money*, I’m stepping into a political role, which is quite different from what I’ve done before. But that’s what excites me—finding new layers in each character.”

Selim admits that the shift to OTT platforms has been one of the most significant changes in his career. “OTT allows for deeper storytelling,” he says. “There’s more room to explore characters, and the audience is also different—more demanding, I would say. They expect strong performances and stories, considering these platforms often have more budgets and better scripts.”

Selim believes there’s still untapped potential here. “We need to think bigger,” he says, his tone becoming more serious. “The OTT market has potential, but we need to focus on expanding it internationally. If we can tap into the global market, we’ll achieve even greater success.”

Selim then decidedly dismisses the idea of OTT overshadowing traditional television dramas. “Cinema, television, and OTT have their own audiences. Each medium offers something different, and there’s room for all of them to coexist. Television dramas aren’t going anywhere—they have their own dedicated viewers.”

Apart from his work on screen, the actor has been vocal about the ongoing demands for reforms within Actors Equity Bangladesh. Having once served as president of the organisation, Selim attended a recent special general meeting to discuss these reforms.

“I support the reforms,” he says candidly. “Most of us do. The actors calling for change have made some valid points, and they need to be heard. Tariq Anam Khan is now leading the interim reform committee, and I’m hopeful we’ll see positive changes after the upcoming elections.”

Selim is hopeful about Bangladesh’s cultural future, especially with Syed Jamil Ahmed’s appointment as the new director-general of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy. “Jamil bhai is dedicated and hardworking. I have high expectations for him in this role, and while we will see how he performs as an administrator, I’m optimistic,” Selim conveys.

As his journey continues, one thing is clear: there’s much more to come from this remarkable actor. Fresh off the success of films like *Priyotoma* and *Surongo*, he is ready to take on new challenges in *Borbaad* and *Leela Manthan*, conveying, “I’ve been doing this for over 30 years, but I feel like I’m just getting started.”



‘Latika’ to compete at major film fests in London and Baku

Samsul Islam Shopon’s documentary *Latika* continues to break boundaries, representing Bangladesh on the global stage.

Following successful screenings at prestigious festivals such as Switzerland’s Visions du Réel, and Moscow International Documentary Film Festival, among others, *Latika* is set to compete in two more major international festivals this fall.

The documentary will compete in the main competition at the Animal Nature Future Film Festival in London on September 27. Shortly after, it will travel to Baku, Azerbaijan, to participate in the non-main competition section of the DokuBaku International Documentary Film Festival, starting October 1.

At the heart of *Latika* is the story of a woman from the Malo community who, along with her husband, confronts the harsh realities of life on the banks of the Chitra River in Narail, Bangladesh.

Lady Gaga announces album for ‘Joker 2’



Lady Gaga and Joaquin Phoenix’s remarkable on-screen chemistry wowed audiences in the trailer of their upcoming movie *Joker: Folie à Deux*. Now, the singer-turned-actress is all set to drop two new albums.

Of which, one features the lead single from her upcoming seventh studio album, and the other, titled *Harlequin*, is a companion album to the film *Joker: Folie à Deux*.

Harlequin will feature 13 tracks, with titles such as *Good Morning, World on a String*, and *The Joker*, among others. The album will be released on September 27.

NEWS

Yunus calls

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in investing in Bangladesh’s textile and leather sectors.

The chief adviser proposed launching youth exchange programmes between the two countries.

The two countries also discussed renewing foreign secretary-level talks and reactivating the joint commission between the two countries.

Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain was present during the talks.

Pakistan Prime Minister’s Office in a statement said that Shehbaz on Tuesday night (New York time) attended a ceremony marking the completion of 50 years of Bangladesh’s membership in the United Nations at the invitation of the chief adviser.

The two leaders agreed to promote bilateral cooperation. There was a positive discussion regarding the expansion of bilateral relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh, the statement added.

Yesterday, South Africa President Cyril Ramaphosa greeted Chief Adviser Yunus at the UNGA.

Meanwhile, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk also met Prof Yunus yesterday.

They discussed areas of work of mutual interest in Bangladesh towards securing justice, freedom, and human rights.

Turk lauded the interim government’s continuing reform initiatives.

Harris

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Harris entered the race after President Joe Biden folded his reelection effort following a poor debate performance against Trump in June. Trump at the time was widely seen as the frontrunner, partly based on his perceived strength on the economy after several years of high inflation under the Biden administration.

Reuters/Ipsos polling between April and June also showed voters picked Trump over Biden on the economy, unemployment and jobs by between five and eight points.

Trump has still had wide leads in some measures of confidence in his economic stewardship. A Reuters/Ipsos poll from August asked voters which candidate had a better approach on the “the US economy” - without specific reference to jobs or unemployment - and Trump led Harris by 11 points, 45 percent to 36 percent.

Ex-industries minister

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Islam also ordered police to interrogate the accused at the jail gate, said defence lawyer Khandaker Abdul Halim.

On August 4, Jahangir Alam, vice-president of ward-4 unit of Madhabdi municipality Sramik Dal, was shot during the protests. He later died at a hospital.

Jahangir’s cousin Amir Hossain on August 9 lodged the case with Madhabdi Police Station against 127 people, including the former industries minister.

Police produced Humayun before the court around 11:45am and sought five-day remand for him. Azizur Rahman, investigation officer of the case and also a sub-inspector of Madhabdi Police Station, submitted the remand application.

The court rejected the remand prayer saying that police could quiz

him at the jail gate. It ordered police to send the accused to jail.

Rab arrested Humayun in the capital’s Gulshan area on Tuesday night.

After the court’s proceedings around noon, supporters of deceased Jahangir exchanged heated words with the followers of the accused. Police bundled Humayun into a prison van and left the court premises.

Plaintiff’s lawyer Abdul Kader said, “The accused committed various crimes, including attack, vandalism, and murder, in different places of Narsingdi directly and indirectly.”

Defence lawyer Halim said, “Nurul Majid Mahmud Humayun is innocent. He was not present at the scene when the violence took place. Considering his age, the court did not place him on remand. We want his unconditional release.”

Legitimate reforms

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events, with Zaman saying he meets the head of the interim government each week as the military backs its stability efforts.

The two main political parties, Hasina’s Awami League and its bitter rival, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), have both called for elections to be held within three months of the interim government taking office in August.

The South Asian nation’s unelected interim government led by Nobel peace laureate Muhammad Yunus has promised reforms in the judiciary, police and financial institutions before elections, but has not set a date for the exercise.

On Wednesday, Yunus’ office said the government would hold talks with political parties after receiving recommendations from the six reform panels it has set up.

“Once the consensus on the reforms is reached and the voter list is prepared, the date for the vote will be announced,” it said in a statement.

The BNP said it would like elections held at the earliest opportunity.

Joy, who lives in Washington, said neither he nor the interim government had reached out for talks on the way ahead for the country of 170 million.

“It’s impossible to have legitimate reforms and elections by excluding the oldest and largest political party,”

he added.

Hasina has been sheltering near Delhi since she fled last month. Many other senior Awami League leaders have either been arrested on accusations of having roles in the strife that killed more than 1,000 people, or have gone into hiding.

Many Awami League activists have been killed since Hasina’s downfall, Joy added.

Representatives of the interim government did not immediately respond to requests for comment on his statements.

The head of an election reform panel, Badiul Alam Majumder, said it would make recommendations within three months following a review.

“It’s up to the government to decide whether to hold talks with the Awami League or determine the timing of the elections,” he added.

Last month, Joy told Reuters that Hasina was ready to face trial at home, a demand made by students who led the uprising, and that the Awami League would like to fight the elections.

On Tuesday, asked when Hasina might return home, he replied, “That will be up to her. Right now I want to keep my party people safe, so I want to raise international awareness on the atrocities being committed against them by this Yunus regime.”

Jaishankar

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of various kinds which have been good for both of us. Economic activity overall has picked up, and logistics of that region has improved.”

Jaishankar’s remarks came a day after his first meeting with Bangladesh Foreign Affairs Adviser Touhid Hossain on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly.

Jaishankar said, “Every country will have its own dynamics. In foreign policy, you try to read, anticipate and then respond to it. I’m very confident at the end of it all, in our neighbourhood, the realities of interdependence or mutual benefit and our ability to get along will serve both our interests. Those realities will assert themselves. That’s been the history.”

He said that “something” happens in the region every few years and people suggest that there is “some kind of irretrievable situation out there.”

“You then see the correctives beginning to manifest themselves. So, I would take it in that spirit and am quite confident that in both these cases, our relationship would continue to be positive and constructive,” he said.

About Sri Lanka, Jaishankar said India stepped forward when Colombo was facing a very deep economic crisis, and “very frankly, when nobody else came forward.”

“And I’m very glad we did it. We did it in a timely manner. We did it on scale. We put out \$4.5 billion effectively,” he said, adding that the move stabilised the Sri Lankan economy.

“The rest of it was up to them. At that time, we did it, it was not like we had a political conditionality which accompanied that. We were doing it as a good neighbour who did not want to see that kind of economic meltdown at our doorstep.”

Jaishankar said that what happens politically in Sri Lanka “is for their politics to work out.”

HSC results

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The remaining exams were postponed, and after the fall of the Hasina-led government, the interim government rescheduled the exams for September 11.

However, amid protests by some HSC candidates, the remaining exams were cancelled on August 20.

Over 14 lakh students were registered for this year’s HSC examinations under nine general education, technical, and madrasa boards.

Political parties

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supporting the government from the very beginning and it will continue to do so,” he said.

Jamaat-e-Islami Assistant Secretary General Hamidur Rahman Azad refused to comment on the army chief’s statements.

“We want an election after the implementation of necessary reforms. The goal [of the interim government] should be transferring power to an elected government following a democratic process. This should be done in line with the expectations of the people who brought about a massive change.

“The job should be done within a reasonable time. You can’t hurry on this or delay it.”

Jatiya Party Chairman GM Quader said that the army chief made the remarks about the period of democratic transition based on his own assessment of the situation.

“People have different opinions about the reasonable time for the democratic transition -- it could be one and a half years, two years or two and a half years. The army chief has made his own assessment.”

He said that it is quite difficult to make a prediction about the timing of the next general election as many reform initiatives are still at the primary stage. “It is tough to say when all these works will be complete.”

About Waker’s assurance that the army will back the interim government in any situation, Quader said this is only normal.

“The army wanted stability in the country. They provided support to the interim government to take office. They think that some reforms will be carried out to fulfill the desire of the people. I think people also expect that the army will stand up for the interim government in any situation,” he said.

Communist Party of Bangladesh General Secretary Ruhin Hossain Prince said the army chief’s statement on the time frame for democratic transition will play a role in this regard.

“Although we all want to know about the roadmap for democratic transition, the interim government is yet to announce it.

“From the army chief’s interview, we have come to know two things -- he talks with the chief adviser once a week and the army’s attitude towards the democratic transition,” he said.

Gazi Aatur Rahman, senior joint secretary general of Islami Andolan Bangladesh, appreciated Waker’s comment on the time frame for a democratic transition.

“There was a confusion over the timing of the next parliamentary polls. He [army chief] has cleared the confusion,” said Aatur, also the spokesperson of the party.

He said that it would have been better if the chief adviser clarified the issue.

The Islami Andolan leader said the interim government was formed as per the people’s wishes.

“It is the army’s duty to assist the incumbent government. It is also quite normal that the army will stand by the government.”

Hold conference

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should seriously support the justice and accountability mechanism to address genocidal crimes committed against the Rohingya. “Otherwise, it might put the entire region in trouble, not just Bangladesh.”

UN refugee agency (UNHCR) chief Filippo Grandi said the international community must strive to end the Rohingya people’s discrimination, statelessness, and exile.

Amy Pope, director general of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), said the Rohingya people must not be forgotten, reports UNB.

“We must do more and continue to provide much needed assistance and long-term solutions,” she said.

Foreign Adviser Md Touhid Hossain, ICC Prosecutor Karim AA Khan, Principal Coordinator on

SDGs Affairs Lamiya Morshed, Chief Adviser’s Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam, and CA’s Special Assistant Mahfuj Alam, among others, spoke at the event.

US TO PROVIDE \$199 MILLION
US under secretary of state for civilian security, democracy, and human rights, Uzra Zeya, on Tuesday announced nearly \$199 million in new assistance for Rohingya and their hosting communities in Bangladesh and the region.

This funding includes nearly \$70 million through the Department of State’s Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) and over \$129 million from USAID.

The US provided more than \$2.5 billion for the regional Rohingya response since August 2017, including more than \$2.1 billion in Bangladesh.