

## I have given my all in 'Pressure Cooker': Azizul Hakim

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Azizul Hakim enjoyed an enviable presence on the small screen during the 90s. Over the course of his career, he has appeared in numerous dramas. Alongside professional success, he has earned the love of millions of viewers. Maintaining that success, he continues to act in television dramas, films and web series.

He has appeared in several films, including *Joyjatra*, *Shankhanil Karagar*, *Padma Nadir Majhi* and *Golui*, receiving praise for his performances. Recently, he completed shooting for a new film titled *Pressure Cooker*, directed by Raihan Rafi.

Speaking about working on the project, the actor said, "Rafi understands a story very well. He is extremely sincere and gives complete attention to his work. This is my first project with him. He has shown considerable craftsmanship and designs his work beautifully."

He added about the film, "I have portrayed a different kind of character. Audiences will see me in the role of a businessman. I have played many types of characters in my career, but not this kind. I have acted with great dedication."

Commenting on the team behind *Pressure Cooker*, he described it as "well-organised" and "a very good team".

Regarding Raihan Rafi's body of work, he said, "I have watched his other films. He makes outstanding cinema, which is why audiences go to see his films. I have watched them myself. Rafi means diversity and something new."

On his co-actors in the film, Azizul Hakim mentioned that several artistes were involved, including Shahiduzzaman Selim, Gazi Rakayet and Nazifa Tushi. "Everyone has delivered excellent performances," he said.

Despite acting in numerous television dramas over his long career, why has he appeared in comparatively fewer films? In response, he said, "At the time when I should have done films, or when I received offers, I was extremely busy with television dramas. My career was at its peak then. It was an impossibly busy period. For that reason, I did not want to work in both mediums simultaneously."

He continued, "While working in television, I wondered whether audiences would buy tickets to watch me in cinemas. After all, they were already watching my work at home every month. I had these

thoughts. Moreover, I did not want to undermine my television career."

Other than television and film, he has also worked on OTT platforms. His performances in web series like *Redrum*, *Silence*, *Ararat*, and *AKA* have also been discussed widely. At the same time, he continues to act in dramas produced for YouTube channels.

Speaking about audiences, he said, "We must never consider viewers to be foolish, because they understand everything. At the end of the day, audiences watch good work."

Azizul Hakim's wife, Zeenat Hakim, is a popular playwright. When asked about her contribution to his career, he replied, "My wife's role in my career is one hundred per cent. Her contribution is immense," he concluded.



PHOTO: SHEKH WEHEDI MORSHED



## Netflix unveils first teaser for 'Pride and Prejudice' adaptation

Netflix has unveiled the first teaser for its six-episode adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*, offering a first look at Emma Corrin as Elizabeth Bennet and Jack Lowden as Mr Darcy. The series, set to premiere this autumn, has been adapted by author Dolly Alderton and directed by Euros Lyn.

The teaser features sweeping visuals, including Elizabeth standing at sunset before Darcy's dramatic arrival on horseback. The cast also includes Olivia Colman, Rufus Sewell and Freya Mavor, among others.

Based on Jane Austen's 1813 novel, the project aims to honour the original while introducing the story to a new generation. Alderton previously described the work as the "blueprint for romantic comedy", calling the adaptation a rare privilege.



## Sadia Ayman's pet cat Alu debuts in 'MEU'

Chorki original film *Meu* presents an emotional family narrative that explores the complexities of human relationships while raising a compassionate question about how we care for the animals that depend on us. Directed by Atiq Zaman, the film stars Sadia Ayman, Afsana Mimi, Afzal Hossain, Ishtiaq Ahmed Rumel, Rakib Hossain Eyon and Azizul Hakim, among others.

At its core, the story revolves around a family, with the presence of a pet adding a distinct emotional dimension. The special attraction of the film is Sadia Ayman's real-life pet cat, Alu, who appears in *Meu*, lending authenticity to the performance. The film premieres at midnight on March 4 on Chorki.

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## NEWS

### Urban voters show ballot box apathy

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were also noticed elsewhere: Dhaka-5 recorded 48.75 percent turnout, 10.69 percentage points below the average; Dhaka-6 saw 47.69 percent, 11.75 points below; and Dhaka-7 registered 48.16 percent, 11.28 points below the average.

The trend continued across other constituencies. Dhaka-9 turnout was 47.23 percent, while Dhaka-11 showed 44.72 percent, Dhaka-13 recorded 44.67 percent, and Dhaka-14 reported 46.12 percent.

Dhaka-16 turnout was 46.08 percent, Dhaka-17 dropped to 44.30 percent, and Dhaka-18 stood at 44.76 percent, Dhaka-8 registered 43.74 percent, Dhaka-10 recorded 43.39 percent, and Dhaka-15 saw 44.00 percent.

Elsewhere, Gazipur-2 recorded 44.69 percent, 14.75 percentage points below the national average. It was 57.41 percent turnout in Narayanganj-3, while 56.57 percent turnout was recorded in Narayanganj-5.

Sylhet's three seats also fell short

of the national average: Sylhet-1 recorded 47.81 percent turnout (11.63 percentage points below the national average), Sylhet-2 saw 44.59 percent, and Sylhet-3 recorded 49.20 percent.

In the port city, Chattogram-5 witnessed a turnout of 43.56 percent, 15.88 percentage points below the average. Chattogram-10 saw 43.49 percent, while the turnout was 47.04 percent in Chattogram-8.

Barishal-5 saw 52.36 percent turnout, 7.08 percentage points below the average, Cumilla-6 (52.84 percent), Gazipur-1 (53.02 percent), and Mymensingh-4 (54.50 percent).

Khulna-3 saw a voter turnout of 59.84 percent, slightly higher than the national average.

The constituencies in the northern area told a different story.

Rangpur-1 recorded 60.71 percent, edged 1.27 percentage points above the average turnout, Rangpur-3 (63.71 percent), and Rajshahi-2 (63.73 percent). The strongest performance came from Rangpur-2, where turnout soared to 68.59 percent, 9.15 percent

points above the national average, the highest in any city corporation seat.

Talking to this newspaper, Dhaka University Prof Sabbir Ahmed said many urban voters feared violence at polling centres. "They thought that if, for any reason, the Awami League tried to assert control, violence might erupt. Out of this fear, many stayed away."

Another factor was the AL's own support base. "Only a small number went to cast votes. Those from the lower middle-class groups of the Awami League cast ballots, but the middle-class and upper middle-class supporters largely refrained. This absence significantly affected the turnout percentage," he noted.

He also pointed to the four-day holiday during the election period. "Urban residents rarely get such long breaks, so many took the opportunity to travel. This further reduced voter turnout. Many people thought during this long holiday, 'What difference does my one vote make?' and simply left town, contributing to the lower turnout."

### Barishal Bar chief held

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of Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate SM Shariatullah. His fellow lawyers sought his bail. But the court rejected his bail petition and sent him to the District Judge's Court lock-up, said the police commissioner.

Around 5:00pm, Linkon was taken to jail, said Al Mamun-ul-Islam, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station.

Protesting against the arrest, pro-BNP lawyers demonstrated on the court premises, halting the judicial activities.

They have been demonstrating since Monday, protesting the recent bail of AL leaders and activists, which hampered judicial proceedings and created tensions on the court premises.

Around 2:30pm on Tuesday, a group of lawyers, led by Linkon, allegedly entered the courtroom of the Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, created chaos, and carried out vandalism to protest against the release of former AL MP Talukder Md Yunus, who got bail immediately after surrendering before the Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate SM Shariatullah's Court on Monday.

A video clip of the incident went viral on social media.

Following the incident, a meeting was held involving the metropolitan sessions judge, other judges, and law enforcement officials, according to court sources.

The case was lodged yesterday morning.

In another incident, a Barishal court granted bail to former MP Jebunnesa Afroz and two AL leaders on February 17.

Yesterday, the HC issued the contempt rule against nine lawyers, including Linkon, for carrying out vandalism in the courtroom and making derogatory comments about the judge, who granted bail to the former ALMP.

In the rule, the court asked the lawyers to explain within 10 days why contempt of court proceedings should not be initiated against them and why they should not be punished for contempt.

The eight others are Barishal Bar Association Secretary Mirza Riazul Islam; public prosecutors Abul Kalam Azad and Nazimuddin Panna; and lawyers Mohsin Montu, Mizanur

Rahman, Abdul Malek, Sayed, and Hafiz Uddin Bablu.

The bench of Justice Fahmida Quader and Justice Md Ashif Hasan issued the rule on a suo moto (voluntary) move after the Supreme Court Registrar General's Office placed a letter describing the incident and an inquiry report from Barishal Metropolitan Sessions Judge Mir Md Amtajul Huq before the bench, Shafiqur Rahman, deputy attorney general, told The Daily Star.

Meanwhile, a group of SC lawyers yesterday demonstrated on the Supreme Court Bar Association premises in protest against the incident of vandalism at the Barishal court.

Lawyers Chanchal Kumar Biswas, Subir Nandi Das, Cumar Debul Dey, Tamanna Ferdous, Ujjwal Hossain, Md Russel, Biplob Kumar Das and Aslam Miah, among others, spoke at the programme.

In a statement, National Lawyers Alliance Convener SM Azmal Hossain Bachchu and its Member Secretary Muhammad Ershadul Bari Khandaker condemned the incident.

[Our Barishal correspondent contributed to this report.]

### India stands with Israel

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to visit Israel in 2017, during which he and Netanyahu took a barefoot stroll on a beach in the northern port city of Haifa.

Both still in power nearly nine years later, the two leaders, who describe one another as friends, are expected to hold talks on artificial intelligence as well as defence at a time when Israel is seeking to increase its military exports.

An Israeli government official said Modi's visit would "pave the way for new partnerships and collaborations across many fields." Bilateral ties were on the cusp of a significant upgrade, an Israeli foreign ministry official said.

Modi is visiting as the United States deploys a vast naval force near Iran's coast ahead of possible strikes on the Islamic Republic, with the two countries at an impasse in talks over Tehran's nuclear programme. The Pentagon has also deployed an aircraft carrier to the

Mediterranean, bound for Israel's coast.

A US attack on Iran could draw Iranian retaliation against Israel as well as US military facilities in Gulf Arab countries, where millions of Indians live and work and send home billions of dollars of remittances each year.

In his speech to lawmakers, Modi vaguely spoke about the challenges facing stability in the region, acknowledging that the landscape had become more challenging in recent years, but made no mention of the US military build-up, or of Iran.

He backed the US plan to end the war in Gaza, telling the parliament that it could lead to peace "for all people of the region, including by addressing the Palestinian issue."

"The road to peace is not always easy. But India joins you and the world for dialogue, peace and stability in this region," Modi said.

### Israel behind two-thirds

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military drones, the highest annual number of journalist deaths in the war since 15 were killed in 2022.

Journalists are increasingly vulnerable due to a persistent culture of impunity, the CPJ said, noting a lack of transparent investigations into killings.

In Mexico, six journalists were killed in 2025 and all the cases remain unsolved. The Philippines saw three journalists shot dead.

Others were killed following their reporting on corruption, such as a

Bangladeshi reporter hacked to death by suspects linked to a fraud ring, according to the CPJ report.

Similar organized crime related deaths were recorded in India and Peru.

In Saudi Arabia, prominent columnist Turki al-Jasser was executed by the state after being convicted on several charges that the CPJ likened to "spurious national security and financial crime allegations" used to punish reporters.

It was the Gulf state's first documented killing of a journalist since the 2018 death of Jamal Khashoggi.

### Show bailed pro-AL leaders

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further instructions and applies specifically to leaders and activists of banned organisations who, after being granted bail, are deemed capable of reorganising the group, strengthening it, or actively engaging in field-level activities.

The notice also instructed all concerned to strictly follow existing laws and regulations regarding protocol and protection.

Following the mass uprising in 2024, the Awami League has been described by rival political parties and activists as "fascist". On May 12 last year, the interim government suspended all activities of the Awami League and its affiliated bodies over allegations of killings, genocide, crimes against humanity, and

other grave offences during the July uprising, pending the completion of trials against its leaders.

Contacted, Assistant Inspector General (Media) AHM Sahadat Hossaine of Police Headquarters told The Daily Star he was unaware of any centrally issued instruction of this kind and said the Rajshahi Range DIG could comment on the matter.

Speaking to this newspaper, DIG Mohammad Shahjahan said the notice would be enforced in cases involving banned or suspended organisations and clarified that it applies to any organisation whose activities have been prohibited.

Officials in the Dhaka and Chattogram ranges said they had not issued similar directives.

### Rabiul's memo

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Ministers and state ministers should be given training on this issue," he said.

A former cabinet secretary told The Daily Star, "Neither a junior officer of another ministry nor the secretary of that ministry can send a letter to the cabinet secretary on any issue related to the cabinet. Only a minister can do that."

"Yet, a copy of an order signed by a senior assistant secretary has been sent to the cabinet secretary. What more can I say? I have no words."

He added that even if a minister does not know the matter properly, the secretary should know.

"These matters should be taken seriously. Otherwise, similar examples may be seen in other areas in which people act as they wish without knowing the rules," he said.

When attempts were made to reach Minister Rabiul, his phone was found switched off.

The public relations officer of his ministry did not pick up the phone either.

Ajit Deb, the senior assistant secretary who signed the memo, could not be reached over phone. He did not respond to texts.

### Bank official dies

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Narcotics Control, said Samiul had been admitted to the centre on February 13 for rehabilitation from his long term addiction.

"The centre's authorities claim Samiul had stopped eating on Tuesday afternoon and became unresponsive in the evening, after which they rushed him to the hospital."

"Authorities are reviewing the facility's CCTV footage. Legal action will be taken if evidence of criminal negligence or torture is found," he added.

Samiul's family alleged he was subjected to torture at the facility. His brother-in-law, ATM Farhad, told local journalists that though Samiul was struggling with mental health issues when he was admitted to the facility, he was physically healthy.

"He was tortured to death.... There are injury marks on many parts of his body."

The executive director and manager of the rehabilitation centre were unavailable for comment as they are in police custody.