



Sadia Ayman recalls beautiful 'meow'ments with feline co-stars

SHARMIN JOYA

Projects centred around furry actors remain a rarity in the local entertainment industry. Breaking that barrier, *Meu* received significant love from audiences, with the story revolving around a cat named Aloo—the real-life pet of actor Sadia Ayman. The film also featured Afsana Mimi and Azizul Hakim.

Continuing her experience of sharing the screen with furry co-stars, Sadia is set to appear in another OTT project this Eid. Titled *Love Sitter* and slated for release on Bongo, the project again features a furry character who connects the central roles. The Daily Star caught up with Sadia about working with furry actors, the project, and her Eid plans.

In Chorki's *Meu*, directed by Atiq Zaman, Aloo was featured. What was the experience like? How did you prepare him?

Working with Aloo has been a wonderful experience. Since coming into my life, he has been a source of comfort and healing, especially during difficult times. There was a period when my previous cat, Mio, went missing, which was a very traumatic phase for me.

Because of my bond with him (Aloo), sharing the screen felt very natural and pleasant. He turned out to be a wonderful co-actor—surprisingly responsible and quite professional in the way he did his work! I am a proud mother and a proud co-actor.

On set, we did not really have to prepare him separately for

anything. He is naturally very friendly. If someone visits our home, he lies down near their feet. He loves affection and has been raised with a lot of love and care. Because of that, he expects everyone to show him affection.



In *Love Sitter*, you have worked with another cat.

We worked with Chhotu, whose screen name is Hypnosis. Alongside my co-actor, Ziaul Haque Palash, *Love Sitter* follows a journey involving a cat, and it also touches on themes of sacrifice and love. This project has been written and directed by Amitabh Reza Chowdhury and Mushficia Maasud. It is also special because it is Amitabh bhai and Mushficia bhabi's first fiction work, so it holds significance for them as well as for me.

How accommodating are film sets for furry actors?

The team was very supportive in this regard. From keeping the make-up room clean to ensuring that unnecessary

visitors did not enter certain areas, they tried their best to maintain proper hygiene and a suitable environment.

I had informed the team beforehand about Aloo's needs—his food, toys, cat food pouches, and other essentials—and everything was arranged very thoughtfully. Since Aloo is my pet and I was one of the main characters in the project, perhaps he received a bit of special attention. But even if that was not the case, I believe this level of care should be given to any animal involved in a production. Many stories may require cats or dogs in the future, and maintaining hygiene and providing a clean, safe space for them is extremely important.

What touched me the most was that a few members of the team eventually adopted some of those cats. I found that incredibly kind. In a way, through this shoot, a few stray cats from the sets ended up finding homes. If people continue to show that kind of kindness towards animals, it would truly make the world a much better place.

What can audiences anticipate from you this Eid? How are you planning to celebrate it?

This Eid, I have not taken on too much work. The main project is the web film *Love Sitter*. Apart from that, I have also done a few other interesting projects. In terms of television

Sadia with Aloo in 'Meu' ▶

dramas, there's Sagar Jahan's *Chhikini*, Majumdar Shimul's *Ek Chhite Chhowa*, and Prabr Roy Chowdhury's *College Days*. I am now waiting to see how audiences respond to these projects.

As for Eid itself, I will celebrate it the way I usually do—with my family. This year will be a little different because many of my cousins who usually live abroad are now in the country. Towards the end of last year, one of my cousins had twin babies, and another had a baby boy, so our family has grown a little bigger. Because of that, Eid will feel a bit more special as we celebrate with the new family members.

And of course, Eid Mubarak to all of you at The Daily Star and to all my viewers.



PHOTO: COURTESY OF CHORKI

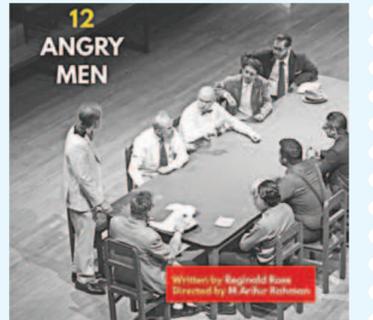
WHAT'S THE HAPS?

'12 Angry Men'

Open Space Theatre presents courtroom drama *12 Angry Men*, written by Reginald Rose and directed by M Arifur Rahman. The production brings the classic story of twelve jurors debating a life-changing verdict to the stage. It will be an intense and thought-provoking theatrical experience for the audiences.

DATE: THURSDAY | MARCH 26
TIME: 4 PM & 7 PM

VENUE: STUDIO THEATRE HALL, BSA



Bangladeshi migrants perform in Lisbon

A theatre production portraying migrant life is currently being staged in Lisbon, featuring performances by eight Bangladeshi expatriates.

Titled *Um Inimigo do Povo* (Enemy of the People), the play opened Thursday at the Centro Cultural de Belém and will conclude today. Written and directed by Portuguese filmmaker Marco Martins, the production is inspired by Henrik Ibsen's play *An Enemy of the People*.



Palestinian actor unable to attend Oscars due to travel ban

Actor Motaz Malhees, one of the stars of the Oscar-nominated film *The Voice of Hind Rajab*, will not be able to attend this year's Academy Awards due to a US travel restriction affecting Palestinian passport holders.

Malhees, who portrays a call centre operator trying to help a five-year-old Palestinian girl trapped in a car under fire in Gaza, said he cannot enter the United States because of his Palestinian citizenship. In an Instagram post, he wrote, "You can block a passport. You cannot block a voice."

The restriction was introduced during the administration of US President Donald Trump, barring Palestinian passport holders from entering the US.

NEWS

180 RMG factories at risk of failure

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"We are coordinating with all stakeholders. Our intelligence wing is also monitoring attempts by some individuals to provoke unrest, and we hope they will not be able to create trouble," he added.

Regarding the 180 factories flagged for possible payment problems, BGMEA President Mahmud Hasan Khan said around 40 to 50 factories were still facing difficulties in clearing dues.

"Efforts are underway, and we hope these problems will not remain unresolved in the end," he told this newspaper.

Khan said in some cases factory owners were abroad, but the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association was working on those cases as well.

"We hope those problems will also be resolved eventually," he said.

He added that some factories were facing financial shortfalls, but those could be managed. "We are monitoring the matter closely."

SPILOVER RISK

The report said some owners might fail to clear wages and bonuses before shutting factories for the holidays, a situation that could trigger worker anger, vandalism, absenteeism, and road blockades.

Workers may also gather on highways and at places such as the Secretariat and the National Press Club to demand unpaid dues, raising the risk of a deterioration in law and order, it said.

Mass leave declarations could

further increase pressure on roads during the Eid rush, while withholding part of workers' dues on the assumption that many may not return after the holidays could deepen discontent, the report added. It also warned of outside attempts to provoke workers.

Gazi Jashim said even a small number of factories facing payment disputes could create a wider problem.

"If even five factories have disputes and workers come out onto the streets, it can create a significant situation," he said.

He added that the ministry and law enforcement agencies had taken precautionary steps and were coordinating with BGMEA, BKMEA, and BTMA.

TALKS, SURVEILLANCE SUGGESTED

The report recommended resolving disputes at vulnerable factories through tripartite talks involving owners, workers, and the government, and ensuring payment of wages, bonuses, and advance March wages before Eid.

Where owners are unable to pay, it suggested arranging funds through the labour ministry, financial institutions, or other factories under the same ownership group.

It also called for close monitoring of those trying to provoke workers, tighter surveillance across garment zones, maximum alert for Industrial Police intelligence units, and extended banking hours in industrial areas to facilitate payments.

Nazma Akter, president of the Sommito Garments Sramik Federation, told The Daily Star that workers in some

areas had already begun protesting over delayed payments as many factories had yet to clear wages.

She said the government should investigate why some owners failed to pay Eid bonuses by March 12 as directed, even after receiving Tk 2,500 crore in export incentives and some loans.

"The government must monitor the issue and take immediate steps," she said.

CONSTITUENCY-WISE LIST

Labour and Employment Minister Ariful Haque Choudhury yesterday warned against any complications over workers' dues, saying all outstanding wages and Eid bonuses must be paid before the holidays.

At a high-level meeting at his Bailey Road residence, he said a constituency-wise list of factories at risk of unrest would be prepared and shared with MPs so they could press owners to clear payments quickly.

He also ordered the preparation of a list of absconding owners and their factories.

Mahdi Amin, labour and employment adviser to Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, said the head of government had instructed officials to address workers' problems through close monitoring.

According to the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, 2,127 factories are currently operating in Dhaka and Chattogram. Of them, 1,964 factories (92.34 percent) have paid February wages, while 1,535 factories (72.17 percent) have paid Eid bonuses.

BNP unmoved by Jamaat's threat

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that the campaign is to force the ruling party to commit to a timetable of the opposition's choice.

"If anyone wants to take to the streets, they can do that—that is their freedom," said Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed.

The BNP leaders stressed that constitutional reforms should be debated and passed in the parliament, where elected MPs can participate and decide on such matters.

"We will move forward by following the constitutional process," said a standing committee member on condition of anonymity.

Under the July charter order, members of the 13th parliament are expected to perform the dual role of lawmakers and as members of a Constitution Reform Council to deal with 48 constitutional provisions outlined in the July charter within 180 working days.

For this purpose, the MPs were required to take two separate oaths:

one as members of the parliament and another as members of the council.

However, uncertainty remains over the formation of the council, proposed under the July National Charter (Constitution Reform) Implementation Order, 2025, as two-thirds of the lawmakers are from BNP and its allies and they did not take the oath as members of the council.

However, 77 members of Jamaat alliances took both oaths.

The crisis became more complex, as Jamaat demanded the convening of the council session by President Mohammed Sahabuddin in line with the July charter implementation order.

According to the order, the first session of the council shall be summoned, in the same manner as the first session of the parliament, within 30 calendar days of the declaration of the election results. Gazette of the results were issued on February 13.

However, while convening the parliament on February 23, the president did not mention anything about convening a session of the reform council.

Regarding Jamaat's call for convening the session of the council, Salahuddin said: "We have been elected as members of the parliament. We have taken oath as members of parliament. The president has called the session of the national parliament. The president has not called the Constitution Reform Council. So we are attending what has been called, according to the constitution."

The council as proposed may conflict with the constitutional structure if it operates outside the authority of parliament, said a BNP policymaker on the condition of anonymity.

The BNP will only support and implement the reform proposals on which they did not submit a note of dissent during the discussion of the July National Charter.

Rains pile misery on potato farmers

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told The Daily Star that 30 hectares of potato fields were submerged in Shibganj due to heavy rain over two days. "Additionally, 10 hectares of vegetables were affected, and banana orchards on about eight hectares were damaged by the Nor'wester."

Sadiqul Islam, deputy director of Joypurhat DAE, said, "We repeatedly urged farmers to harvest their potatoes, but many delayed because of the low market prices. We are now advising those with affected fields to harvest immediately. Potatoes left in water for two to three days are highly likely to rot."

The untimely rain also affected many farmers in Thakurgaon, while potatoes on around 6,000 hectares of land are yet to be harvested, officials of the DAE said.

Farmers said the crop could be severely affected if strong sunlight

follows the rainfall, as heat generated from the soil may further damage the potatoes.

Rafiqul Islam, of Yakubpur village in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila, told The Daily Star that he spent around Tk 6.5 lakh to cultivate potatoes on six acres. So far, he has harvested only 1.5 acres, while the rest of the fields remain waterlogged, putting the crop at risk of damage or rotting.

In Rangpur as well, continuous heavy rainfall over three days submerged potato fields in several areas, increasing farmers' worries.

According to the Rangpur Met office, approximately 49 millimetres of rainfall was recorded in the region from Wednesday to Friday.

Altal Hossain, a farmer from Fakirpara village in Taraganj upazila, said that he suffered nearly Tk 200,000 in losses from potato farming last year.

"Hoping to recover that loss, I cultivated potatoes on two acres this season. I was scheduled to start harvesting potatoes on Thursday, but heavy rainfall on Wednesday night and Thursday morning submerged the entire field."

Sirajul Islam, additional director of the Rangpur regional DAE, said, "The accumulated rainwater in the potato fields is not permanent; it will naturally recede over time. Most fields have already seen a reduction in water. Farmers who were harvesting have paused and will resume according to weather conditions. However, if it rains over the next two to three days, the emerging crop may suffer some damage."

Meteorologist Md Omar Faruq told The Daily Star yesterday that the forecast suggests Nor'westers, thundershowers, or hailstorms may continue in various districts until March 17, after which the rainfall is expected to subside.