

## Zayed Khan's COMEBACK

Once a target of online trolls and infamous for over-the-top interviews, Zayed Khan has reinvented himself after finding his own niche in the USA. The Daily Star talks to the hardworking star about his life, latest work, and future plans.

SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

**How did you spend this Eid?**  
I've lived in the United States for the past two years. I celebrate Eid here with friends and acquaintances, but I miss Bangladesh dearly. I think of my family, my parents' graves, and my colleagues all the time. Being here feels like I'm just living for the sake of survival. Life is what it is, and one must accept it and move forward. The Almighty has kept me well.

**The audience was pleasantly surprised to see you in 'American Dream'.**

I just did my best. People tend to forget that I have spent over two decades in this industry and have shared the screen with the likes of Nayak Raj Razaq *bhai* and Kabori *apa*. This was a chance to show my acting chops.

Honestly, everything I have done after joining Thikana has been a blessing for me—and the credit goes to Mushrath Shaheen, Rubin Hossain, Saad Al Amin, and the entire team at Thikana. The director of *American Dream*, Jon Kabir, also deserves appreciation. Their vision has turned the platform into a multifaceted success. I finally have the confidence to pursue my dreams seriously, with the love of the people and the blessings of the Almighty.

**Some of your comments in various interviews were often the target of trolls when you were in Bangladesh.**

I am a very media-friendly person; I have never misbehaved with a journalist in any situation

whatsoever. Most of those comments were either taken out of context or I was simply joking around with the reporters. I won't lie—it did really feel bad when people made fun of me. After all, I am human! But I have turned that sorrow into strength for now.

**Your body transformation is also something that takes people aback. How did you manage it?**

Sacrifice. Ninety percent of bodybuilding is the sacrifice of your previously favorite foods—I avoided *polao*, *shemai*, and *payesh* even on Eid, though it almost killed me to do so. Combined with working out earnestly, I could achieve the results that I had desired for a long time.

**What contribution to the Bangladeshi film industry are you the proudest of?**

When I was a panelist at the Chalachitra Shilpi Samiti, we gave it our all to aid the people of the industry during COVID-19. We sent food, provided support, and even carried the bodies of fellow artists on our backs when there were few who were willing to come forward. I will always consider those times a reflection of who I am.

**Since you already reside in the US, do you wish to try out for their film industry?**

Why not? Dreams should be limitless. At the risk of repeating myself, the support that I got from Thikana has boosted my confidence, and featuring in a Hollywood film is nothing that can't be achieved. I just want to be myself and move forward. I urge my fans and the people of Bangladesh to pray for me.



## 'DOMM' set for US release following Australia run

After its release in Australia, *Domm*, starring Alran Nisho and directed by Redoan Rony, is set for a wider international rollout in North America. The film will premiere in New York and Los Angeles on April 10, followed by a broader release across the United States and Canada on April 17.

Since its Eid-ul-Fitr release, *Domm* has seen strong audience response in Bangladesh, with many screenings running houseful.

Producer Shahriar Shakil and distributor Raj Hamid confirmed the expansion, noting growing interest among overseas audiences.

Director Redoan Rony expressed hope that the film's story, inspired by real events, will resonate with expatriate viewers.

Produced by SVF Alpha-i Entertainment Limited and Chorki, the film continues its successful run.



## Pantho Kanai will be seen with Shakib Khan in 'Rockstar'

Renowned musician Pantho Kanai is set to share the screen with Shakib Khan for the first time in the upcoming film *Rockstar*, marking a new step in his acting career. Although he confirmed his involvement, the singer declined to reveal further details.

Directed by Azman Rusho, the film has already begun shooting in Malaysia. It stars Sabila Nur and Tangia Zaman Mithila alongside Shakib Khan, with Tariq Anam Khan and Rosey Siddique playing his on-screen parents.

The first look of the film was unveiled on Shakib Khan's birthday, showcasing the actor in a striking new avatar.

*Rockstar* is slated for release during Eid-ul-Azha.

### WHAT'S THE HAPS?

## 'Golmatha ar Chokhamatha'

Spardha Academy's inaugural acting batch steps onto the stage with *Golmatha ar Chokhamatha*, a sharp Brechtian satire that interrogates power, identity and social conditioning.

Directed by Mohsina Akhter, the production turns a training milestone into a poised, politically alert debut shaped by discipline, ensemble craft and critical inquiry.

**Date:** Friday-Saturday | April 17-18, 2026

**Time:** 7:30 pm onwards

**Venue:** Bangladesh Mohila Samity



# NEWS

## Labour migration hits a wall

FROM PAGE 12

Saudi Arabia.

In fiscal 2024-25, Bangladesh received \$30.32 billion in remittances, of which \$4.26 billion or 14 percent came from migrant workers in Saudi Arabia, according to Bangladesh Bank data.

Experts say such heavy reliance on a single market raises economic risks for Bangladesh.

Industry insiders have pointed out several key reasons for the weakening of Bangladesh's labour migration system – fraudulent practices in the migration process, aggressive recruitment, bribes for visas and syndicate control.

**MALAYSIA: NO BREAKTHROUGH**  
Nearly 450,000 Bangladeshi workers migrated to Malaysia between August 2022 and April 2024 after the country reopened its labour market in 2021.

However, more than 18,000 workers missed their departure deadline and remain stranded.

Upon taking office, the interim government held a series of talks with the Malaysian authorities and urged them to resume recruitment. During a visit to Malaysia, the then adviser Asif Nazrul said the country would recruit a large number of workers from Bangladesh.

Instead, Malaysia imposed 10 stringent conditions for recruiting workers.

Several high-level meetings, including one involving Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim during his Dhaka visit in October 2024, produced assurances but no concrete results.

Expressing his frustration, one of the stranded workers, Khijir Islam from Manikganj, said, "We have been hearing promises for months. How long are we supposed to wait?"

### UAE RESTRICTIONS

The UAE, Bangladesh's second-largest labour market in the Middle East,

has remained largely shut since 2013. Unofficial estimates suggest that around 12 lakh Bangladeshis currently work there.

In July 2024, the UAE quietly restricted both work and visit visas after some migrants protested there in solidarity with the quota reform movement in Bangladesh.

During the World Governments Summit in Dubai last year, Muhammad Yunus, the then chief adviser, urged UAE ministers to lift the ban, but no progress followed.

An official from the expatriates' welfare and overseas employment ministry confirmed that no visit or work visas were issued last year, indicating that the restrictions remain in place.

Many workers aspiring to go the UAE are on the verge of losing hope. One of them is Abdul Hashim from Khulna.

"I submitted my passport more than a year ago, but my application for a work visa has not been processed yet," he told this correspondent.

### SHRINKING MARKETS

Over the past decade, Oman, Bahrain, the Maldives, Libya, and Brunei have periodically closed their labour markets to Bangladeshi workers.

Oman suspended recruitment in September 2024 due to document forgery and violations of visa conditions, while the Maldives halted visas, citing irregularities.

Prof Tasneem Siddiqui, acting executive director of the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit, said there should be a proper study to identify the causes of these closures.

"Accountability must be ensured if recruiting agencies send workers abroad without job confirmation."

She underscored the need for strengthening pre-migration training and aligning workers with suitable jobs.

Shariful Hasan, associate director of BRAC's Migration and Youth Initiatives Programme, said Bangladesh's

labour market is shrinking day by day due to fraud, visa "trade", and poor governance.

He further said that geopolitical tensions in the Middle East could further disrupt labour demand.

"If conflicts involving Iran, Israel and the US escalate, it could affect regional economies and reduce labour recruitment in Gulf countries," he warned.

Pointing out Bangladesh's heavy dependence on Saudi labour market, he said, "Any shock to that market would put enormous pressure on Bangladesh's labour sector and remittance flow."

Ali Haider Chowdhury, former secretary general of the Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies, said that during the interim government's tenure, no meaningful steps were taken to reopen closed markets.

"Promises were made, but the final result was zero," he said.

### GOVT PLAN

Md Nurul Haque, state minister for expatriates' welfare and overseas employment, said the government is making diplomatic efforts to reopen overseas labour markets, including Bahrain, Oman and the UAE.

Regarding the Malaysian labour market, he said a list of companies, which have met the recruitment conditions, has already been sent to the Malaysian authorities, but they are yet to respond.

The government will step up efforts to expand opportunities for skilled migration, he said, citing an agreement to send 100,000 workers to Japan over five years.

However, experts warn that unless Bangladesh reforms its overseas recruitment system and diversifies labour destinations, ongoing geopolitical instability and market closures could place even greater pressure on the country's overseas employment sector.

## 2 Bangladeshis tortured to death in Libya

FROM PAGE 12

on March 18 and Ilias on March 23. News of Faruk's death reached his family on March 25, while Ilias's relatives were informed on March 26 by a broker.

The families further claimed that traffickers in Bangladesh threatened them, warning that if they filed police cases or went to court, the bodies would not be returned. Out of fear, they have not yet taken legal action.

Faruk's mother, Maleka Begum, told reporters yesterday that she did not know what happened inside the detention cell. "My son is gone. He has two small children. Who will look after them now?"

His mother-in-law, Nazma Begum, said brokers warned the family against contacting law enforcement, which is why they stayed silent.

Faruk had previously worked as a mason in Bangladesh before migrating to Saudi Arabia.

Ilias's father, Kalam Hawlader, said his son went to Libya without informing the family.

"I somehow managed to pay Tk 20 lakh to broker Habib Master. Even then, my son died," he said.

He added that the broker met the family in Dhaka on Friday and promised to repatriate the body and

provide compensation, though without specifying when.

Attempts to reach the alleged broker, Habibur Rahman Khondakar, for comment were unsuccessful despite repeated phone calls and text messages.

Contacted, Md Jahangir Alam, Additional Superintendent of Police in Madaripur, told The Daily Star, "We've learnt that two men from the district had died in Libya after torture."

"No family member has contacted us yet, but we are taking the matter seriously. Local police have been sent to speak with the families, and legal action will follow based on the investigation."

## 'We, the people, will rule

FROM PAGE 12

"Nobody's attacking us," Taylor said. "We don't need to be there."

In Minnesota, a flashpoint in Trump's crackdown on illegal immigration, a massive rally was held outside the state capitol in Saint Paul. Many held aloft posters bearing photos of Renee Good and Alex Pretti, US citizens fatally shot by federal immigration officers in Minneapolis this year.

Minnesota Governor Tim Walz, the Democratic vice presidential nominee in 2024, told the crowd that their resistance to Trump and his policies makes them "the heart and soul" of everything good about the U.S.

"They call us radicals," Walz said. "You're damn right we've been radicalised – radicalised by compassion, radicalised by decency, radicalised by due process, radicalised by democracy, and radicalised to do all we can to oppose authoritarianism."

US Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont, a Trump critic who

sought the Democratic presidential nomination in 2016 and 2020, also addressed the event in Minnesota. Musician Bruce Springsteen performed his song "Streets of Minneapolis" – a ballad criticising Trump's immigration crackdown and lamenting the deaths of Good and Pretti.

"We will not allow this country to descend into authoritarianism or oligarchy in America," said Sanders, an independent. "We, the people, will rule."

The National Republican Congressional Committee criticised Democratic politicians and candidates for supporting the rallies.

"These Hate America Rallies are where the far-left's most violent, deranged fantasies get a microphone, and House Democrats get their marching orders," committee spokesperson Mike Marinella said in a statement.

In New York, a crowd that police estimated at tens of thousands stretched more than 10 blocks in midtown Manhattan. Actor Robert

De Niro, one of the organisers, said that no president before Trump has posed "such an existential threat to our freedoms and security."

Holly Bemiss, 54, said she and other New York rally attendees were acting in the same spirit as her ancestors who fought in the American Revolution.

On the National Mall in Washington, the crowd chanted pro-democracy slogans and held anti-Trump signs. Outside a high-rise assisted living centre in Chevy Chase, Maryland, a group of elderly people in wheelchairs held signs encouraging passing cars to "Resist tyranny," "Honk if you want democracy," and "Dump Trump."

Thousands attended a Dallas event that had clashes between No Kings demonstrators and counterprotest groups, including one led by Enrique Tarrio, the former leader of the far-right organisation the Proud Boys.

Minor scuffles erupted when counterprotesters blocked streets. Dallas police eventually made several arrests.

## Nepal court extends

FROM PAGE 12

people, though neither man has been charged, and both deny responsibility for the violence.

"The court has decided to permit five days extension," Kathmandu District Court information officer Deepak Kumar Shrestha told AFP.

Shrestha noted that the court has also said the former prime minister should get the medical care he requires.

Oli appeared in court via video-link from a hospital yesterday, where he was admitted on Saturday following a procedural check-up.

Police said Oli has heart and kidney issues. AFP reporters saw him being taken to a hospital on Saturday after his arrest, surrounded by a heavy police guard.

The Supreme Court is due today to consider a petition for Oli and Lekhak's release, court spokesman Arjun Prasad Koirala said.

The arrests of Oli and Lekhak came after an inquiry commission recommended that the four-time ex-prime minister and other

officials be prosecuted for failing to stop security forces from firing on demonstrators.

The report says that statements given to the commission by Oli and Lekhak suggesting they did not know about the violence were part of a bid to shift responsibility and amounted to "criminal negligence".

It recommends that they be investigated under a law that deals with death caused by recklessness.

Ex-energy minister Deepak Khadka was also detained yesterday "in a case relating to money laundering", Central Investigation Bureau spokesman Shiva Kumar Shrestha said.

The unrest in early September began over a brief social media ban, but tapped into longstanding fury over economic hardship.

It spread nationwide the following day as parliament and government offices were set ablaze, resulting in the collapse of Oli's government.

Oli's CPN-UMI Marxist party has called the arrests "a revengeful act" and has called for protests.

## Two aid boats safely reach Havana

REUTERS, HAWANA

Two sailboats carrying humanitarian aid from Mexico arrived safely in Havana on Saturday, the Mexican Navy said, concluding a journey in which the vessels were delayed by bad weather and briefly reported missing.

The navy confirmed the sailboats docked safely in the Cuban capital after authorities monitored their final approach to the port.

After being reported missing on Thursday, a maritime surveillance aircraft spotted the sailboats on Friday, approximately 80 nautical miles (148 km) northwest of Cuba, the Mexican Navy said earlier on Saturday. The crews reported they were in good health but had been slowed by unfavorable weather, particularly winds.

The two boats are part of a convoy seeking to deliver food, medicine, baby formula and other supplies to the Caribbean's largest island, amid a U.S. blockade on shipments of oil and other supplies that has worsened power outages and led the state to ration services.