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BIRTHDAY SPECIAL

I received more than I ever asked for: Ferdousi Mazumder

Legendary actress turns 83

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

As she prepares to celebrate her birthday today (June 18), legendary actress and cultural icon Ferdousi Mazumder, born in 1943, reflects on a remarkable journey that spans theatre, television, radio, film, literature, and education. A recipient of both the Independence Award and the Ekushey Padak for her contributions to acting, she has also been honoured with the Bangla Academy Literary Award for her writing.

Recently, The Daily Star sat down with the veteran artiste at her residence

for a candid conversation about love, legacy, theatre, and a life spent in service of the arts.

You are loved and admired by countless people. How do you feel about that?

Can that ever truly be put into words? I don't think it can. That's why I always say I have no regrets. I received far more than I ever hoped for. Sometimes I surprise myself and wonder what I did to deserve such affection from people. Then I think perhaps I must have done something right. I have been blessed

beyond measure.

You have spent a lifetime pursuing art. What has that journey been like?

Honestly, I hardly noticed the years passing because I was always working. I have done countless productions on stage. Some plays were performed a hundred times, some even two hundred. *Payer Awaj Pawa Jay* was staged repeatedly. Thousands of people watched these productions and showered us with appreciation.

I have been fortunate to work in memorable productions such as *Meraj*

Fakirer Maa and *Kokilara*, with outstanding writers and directors. Most of our productions were houseful. The audience embraced us with tremendous enthusiasm. The challenge today is that such productions have become increasingly rare.

What motivates you to continue acting after so many decades in the profession?

At my age, if someone creates a character appropriate for me, I would be delighted to do it. Age naturally affects one's energy and capacity. I have no interest in roles where I am simply placed in a corner with nothing meaningful to do. But if the role suits me and has substance, I would certainly consider it.

You are still actively involved in theatre. Yet many believe theatre does not receive the attention it deserves despite Dhaka's vast population. What are your thoughts on this?

Theatre is perhaps the most neglected art form in the country. We don't have enough proper venues, and performers often cannot work with the energy and commitment they would like. Earlier generations of actors devoted immense labour, love, and dedication to a role. Today, that level of concentration is less common. Strong scripts remain the most important thing, but the shortage of performance spaces is also a major problem.

How would you describe Abdullah Al Mamun's influence on your career?

It would have been very different without him. He cast me in numerous productions, including adaptations of Rabindranath Tagore's works. He constantly encouraged me and created new characters with me in mind. In fact, he sometimes wrote roles specifically after observing me. He had tremendous faith in my abilities, and his encouragement gave me confidence as

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an actress.

Your personal library is quite extensive. How would you describe your literary preferences?

Rabindranath Tagore has always been my greatest literary love. I began reading *Galpaguchchha* when I was a schoolgirl and was immediately captivated. I would marvel at how one person could excel in songs, poetry, drama, short stories, and novels. Even now, I sometimes think that if I spent my entire life reading only Rabindranath, I would still be content. My admiration for him is immense.

Between Bangladesh and West Bengal, whose theatre tradition is stronger, according to you?

They began earlier than we did. We came later and have faced many challenges. Theatre requires financial support, and patronage is often lacking here. Even when support exists, it is not always sufficient. Most of the time, we finance productions ourselves. We do it because we love theatre. Financial losses never become the primary concern.

You have acted under the direction of your daughter, Tropa Majumdar. How was that experience?

She has beautiful ideas and a very thoughtful, creative vision. Whether the director is your daughter, son, friend, or someone much younger than you, a director is still a director. Their authority must be respected.

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You received the Bangla Academy Literary Award for your writing. How did writing enter your life?

At a certain point, I felt compelled to write. I wanted to preserve memories—of my parents, my siblings, and the people who shaped my life. That led me to write *Mone Pore*, among other works. I also wrote *Obhinoyjibon Amar* and another memoir. Writing became a way of safeguarding memories for future generations.

Finally, how significant has Ramendu Majumdar's contribution been to your journey?

His contribution has been invaluable. He enormously encouraged me and stood beside me throughout everything I did. His support has been one of the greatest blessings of my life.

NEWS

Fossil fuel bias persists: CPD

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import duties on EV charging equipment and lower taxes on various categories of electric vehicles.

These measures represent a significant shift from previous budgets and could improve the competitiveness of renewable energy technologies and electric mobility, Preety said.

However, the CPD argued that fossil fuels continue to receive preferential treatment despite the new incentives.

According to the analysis, liquefied natural gas remains one of the least-taxed energy products in the country, enjoying full VAT exemptions and facing a total tax incidence of only 9.5 percent.

The think-tank also questioned the budget's emphasis on expanding

domestic coal production and advancing development activities at the Barapukuria and Dighipara coal fields.

The analysis further found that many components required for grid modernisation remain heavily taxed.

Transformers, conductors, transmission towers and electricity meters continue to face multiple layers of customs duty, VAT, advance income tax and regulatory duty, resulting in total tax incidence exceeding 60 percent in many cases.

Such high import costs could slow investments in transmission and distribution infrastructure at a time when Bangladesh needs a more flexible and modern grid to integrate larger volumes of renewable electricity, the

CPD said.

The fiscal commitments do not appear as strong as the government's political commitment to renewable energy, said CPD Research Director Khondaker Golam Moazzem.

"We heard many commitments in the budget speech, but when we examine the statutory regulatory orders, we find numerous conditions that make the incentives less attractive."

The overall policy framework sends mixed signals, he said.

"On the one hand, we are offering incentives for green energy. On the other hand, our fiscal structure continues to favour fossil fuels. That suggests we still prefer fossil fuel-based energy beneath the surface."

Man to die for murder of 5-year-old Ayat

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it greatly aggravates the gravity of the crime, which is an extreme disregard for human values and dignity. Such acts create fear and alarm within society. Any form of clemency toward this crime would be contrary to the principles of justice."

Following the verdict, Abir was sent to jail under tight security.

Court sources said arguments in the case concluded last month, after which it fixed yesterday for pronouncement of the judgment.

According to the prosecution, five-year-old Alina Islam Ayat, daughter of Sohel Rana, was abducted and

murdered in the Nayarhat area under the EPZ in the port city on November 14, 2022.

Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) identified the involvement of Abir, a neighbour of the victim, who was closely known to her family, and detained him.

During interrogation, Abir confessed that he had abducted the child for ransom before killing her.

PBI also arrested one of his friends, as well as Abir's parents and sister, in connection with the murder. Based on Abir's confession, investigators recovered the victim's severed head from a canal. Several drives were also conducted along the coast in the

Patenga area.

The incident sparked nationwide outrage, with people demanding exemplary punishment for those responsible.

Following investigation, PBI submitted a charge sheet on October 9, 2023, accusing Abir and his friend.

Investigation Officer Monaj Kumar Dey, an inspector of PBI Metro, recommended dropping the names of Abir's parents and sister from the case after finding no evidence of their involvement.

As the other accused is a juvenile, his trial is being conducted separately in a juvenile court.

Iran deal averted economic disaster

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lowest level since the opening salvos of the US-Iran conflict.

Speaking to reporters, a senior US official read out the text of the signed memorandum of understanding with Tehran but said the parties could still walk away until a binding deal is reached.

The 14-point draft, which had already circulated widely before its contents were published, extends a ceasefire announced in April by another 60 days to allow the two sides to negotiate a permanent truce.

The memorandum includes an immediate end to the war on all fronts, including Lebanon, the full resumption of maritime traffic in the Strait of Hormuz, the lifting of a US blockade of Iranian ports, the waiving

of international sanctions on Iran, and a plan worth \$300 billion for the economic rehabilitation of the Islamic Republic.

The text says that Washington "undertakes with regional partners to develop a definitive mutually agreed plan with at least \$300 billion for the reconstruction and economic development of the Islamic Republic of Iran."

The mechanism for that would also be part of the 60-day talks.

Iran also undertakes not to build nuclear weapons, reaffirming a vow it had made for decades. Senior US administration officials said Iran has agreed to dilute its enriched uranium stocks under the interim deal.

Despite his typically combative rhetoric, Trump appears to have

achieved little of what he said he wanted at the outset of the war.

Iran's theocratic government remains in place, its stockpile of highly enriched uranium has not been surrendered, its ballistic missile capabilities have not been destroyed and it has not ended its support for anti-Israel militias like Hezbollah in Lebanon.

However, G7 leaders hailed the agreement at their summit. They also demanded an immediate ceasefire in Lebanon.

Lebanese state media reported fresh Israeli air strikes and artillery fire in several southern towns throughout yesterday. Lebanese security sources said Hezbollah had also launched two drone attacks on Israeli forces in the south. The group did not publicly claim the attacks.

Rakhine stability key

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is vital to creating stability, and we are making efforts towards this end."

He added that preparations are at a final stage so that safe and sustainable repatriation can begin once conditions are favourable. While no specific timeframe can be given, the government's goal is permanent, safe, and voluntary repatriation of Rohingya Muslims, taking the right steps at the right time.

The minister said the Awami League government sought donor funds by highlighting the humanitarian disaster instead of resolving the crisis. He said this approach diverted global attention from the plight of the Rohingyas and made the crisis more complex and prolonged.

To bring the issue to international attention, the interim government invited UN Secretary-General António Guterres to Bangladesh in 2025, when he visited Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar. On August 25, 2025, a special stakeholder conference was held in Cox's Bazar, followed by a daylong conference at UN Headquarters in New York on September 30 that year, which helped place the Rohingya crisis at the centre of global humanitarian debate.

Khalilur said Bangladesh has emphasised justice and accountability in resolving the crisis, and has supported The Gambia's case at the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

Verification of Rohingya identities is ongoing as the basis for repatriation. Bangladesh has sent data on 8,29,036 Rohingyas to Myanmar in six phases; Myanmar has verified 3,93,503 and officially recognised 2,83,086 as "the person who lived in Myanmar previously".

The government is also exploring third-country resettlement, though the foreign minister stressed this is not a permanent solution. "The only lasting solution is the safe, voluntary, and sustainable repatriation of Rohingyas to Rakhine state," he said.

On the Agreement on Reciprocal Trade (ART) between the United States and Bangladesh, Khalilur said yesterday the pact is expected to boost foreign investment, strengthen energy security, and enhance Bangladesh's position in global supply chains.

The deal was signed on February 9 this year, just three days before the national election.

The minister, in a scripted response to a query from AKM Fazlul Haque Milon in parliament, said that under the agreement Bangladeshi apparel made with US cotton would enjoy zero-tariff access.

Khalilur said that expanding export markets, diversifying exports,

attracting international investment, and achieving employment-oriented economic growth are among the government's top priorities.

To this end, the foreign ministry, Bangladesh Investment Development Authority, Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority, and the commerce ministry are working in coordination to advance economic diplomacy.

He added that alongside traditional markets in Europe and America, Bangladesh has strengthened its commercial presence in emerging markets across the Middle East, Africa, Southeast Asia, South America, Central Asia, and Eastern Europe.

To secure market expansion and tariff benefits, Bangladesh is pursuing Preferential Trade Agreements (PTAs), Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), and Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreements (CEPAs) with various countries. Talks on a CEPA with the United Arab Emirates have begun, while negotiations for FTAs with Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand are progressing.

The minister noted that diplomatic initiatives are opening new opportunities in agriculture and non-traditional export sectors. Recently, Bangladesh gained the opportunity to export potatoes to Vietnam, while work is ongoing to export mangoes to Malaysia.

No goal for Ronaldo as Portugal held

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car crash last year.

Portugal got off to the perfect start, with Neves powering home a header from Pedro Neto's cross in the sixth minute.

However, despite dominating possession they lacked a cutting edge and well into time added on in the

first half their opponents made them pay.

Wissa rose unmarked to head past Diogo Costa in the Portuguese goal sparking wild celebrations on the pitch, the bench and among the Congolese fans in the stadium as the Newcastle forward registered his country's first ever World Cup goal.

Bernardo Silva had started the day by joining Real Madrid on a free transfer but he ended it by watching from the bench after Martinez took him off at half-time.

Ronaldo finally had a chance to shine when presented with a chance by Francisco Conceicao's pass but he fluffed his lines sending it wide.

7-yr-old killed

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arrested on Tuesday, a day after the killing. After the confession, the court sent both of them to jail. Mamata remains at large.

Quoting Bidhan's confession, OC of Aditmari Police Station Nazmus Sakib Sajib said the dispute had erupted between the two families about two months ago.

"A village arbitration was held over the matter. Out of resentment, Bidhan killed the child to take revenge. His father and mother helped him secretly bury the body in a maize field," the OC said, quoting the statement.

He added that police are verifying all information from the confession.

The investigation officer said police recovered a spade yesterday, allegedly used to dig the pit where the child's body was buried. According to the preliminary investigation, the child was strangled to death.

However, speaking to reporters, the victim's father alleged that his daughter had been raped before being murdered, saying the autopsy report would reveal the truth.

According to police, the child went missing on Monday afternoon after leaving home to play. Her body was

recovered the following morning from a sack in a nearby maize field.

An hour after the recovery, police detained Bidhan and Ranjit on suspicion of involvement in the murder.

However, locals later formed a mob and attacked police in an attempt to snatch the suspects. The violence left several police officers injured, government vehicles vandalised, and houses torched.

Lalmohirhat Superintendent of Police Md Asaduzzaman said investigators aim to submit the charge sheet within the next seven working days and will seek a speedy trial.