MONALISA

The smile that fans still remember

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

There was a time when Mozeza Ashraf Monalisa was instantly recognised wherever she went. She appeared in numerous popular advertisements and memorable television projects. She became one of the most familiar faces in Bangladesh's entertainment industry. Years later, although she has built a life in New York and stepped away from modelling and acting, the love of her fans has not diminished. In a conversation with The Daily Star, Monalisa looks back on the journey that made her a household name and talks about the life she leads today.

Looking back on her childhood, Monalisa recalls learning dance at Bulbul Lalitkala Academy in Dhanmondi during her school years. "I had a natural inclination towards dance from a very young age. My mother wanted me to pursue it. There was an advertising agency near our home, and someone from there approached my mother with a proposal for me to work as a model."

She remembers how the opportunity unfolded. "My mother and I visited the agency at a convenient time. They conducted a screen test and took some photographs. Actor Tariq Anam Khan was there as well. I was eventually selected and went on to model for a beauty product advertisement. That was a long time ago."

The advertisement changed her life almost overnight. "I became popular while I was still at school. Everyone knew me, and wherever I went, people recognised me. One advertisement brought me such widespread recognition. Gradually, I began modelling for several other brands, and my popularity spread across the country."

Her association with another popular brand later brought another wave of fame. "I did several advertisements for the brand, and they became immensely popular. People used to instantly recognise me wherever I went.

Recalling the overwhelming attention she received, Monalisa says hundreds of letters would arrive at her home. "I did not get around to reading most of them, but many were about love and admiration. Fans would also send sarees and flowers to our home, sometimes on my birthday and sometimes on ordinary days. It was quite something."

She particularly remembers how people would recognise her on the streets. "They would say, 'Look, there goes Monalisa!' One of the most common compliments was about my smile. People would tell me that my smile was as sweet as Monalisa's."

Having lived in New York for the past 10 years, she continues to receive affection from admirers. "Fans and well-wishers even travel from other states to meet me in New York. It feels wonderful to receive so much love."

Despite receiving numerous offers to act in commercial films during the peak of her popularity, Monalisa chose television and modelling instead. She made her acting debut in Arun Chowdhury's television drama ***Kagojer Phool***, opposite Mahfuz Ahmed.

Asked who played the biggest role in her journey, she does not hesitate. "My mother deserves the credit. Not just 100 percent, but 1,000 percent. I have come this far because she wanted me to."

Although she has stepped away from acting and modelling, Monalisa says the audience's affection has never faded. "Wherever I go, people treat me with respect and warmth. I have been living in America for many years, and I continue to receive that same love here."

Currently, Monalisa works as a manager at Tom Ford Cosmetics and also serves as a coordinator at a bank in the United States.

"By everyone's blessings, I am doing well," she says.



PHOTO: **SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED**

TRENDY STREAMS

Netflix:
Black Doves



Hulu:
Phony



Prime Video:
The Greatest



Apple TV+:
Stick



Hoichoi:
Pressure Cooker



OUT AND ABOUT IN DHAKA

'Non-duality'
October 30–November 10, 2026| 3:00pm–9:00pm
AFD, Dhanmondi



'Monpakhi'
November 6–12, 2026 | 3:00pm–8:00pm
Bhumi Gallery, Lalmatia



'Café de Volte'
November 20, 2026 | 6:00pm and 8:00pm onwards
Jatra Biroti, Banani





TV TALKIES

'Nobody Wants This'

Nobody Wants This is a romantic comedy about Joanne (Kristen Bell), an agnostic podcast host who meets Noah (Adam Brody), a Los Angeles rabbi, at a dinner party. The two hit it off, but dating a rabbi soon raises questions Joanne has never had to consider, including whether she would conver t to Judaism. Created by Erin Foster, the series also stars Justine Lupe as Joanne's sister and podcast co-host, Morgan, and Timothy Simons as Noah's brother, Sasha. The third season premiered on Netflix on October 22.



WHAT'S PLAYING

'SWIM' by BTS

BTS's ***SWIM*** turns perseverance into something quieter than a victory speech. The lead single from the group's fifth album, ***ARIRANG***, imagines life as water: unpredictable and impossible to control, yet still worth moving through. Rather than fighting every current, the song argues for continuing at one's own pace.

Its alternative-pop production keeps that message light on its feet. A steady rhythm and open arrangement give members room to trade lines without letting the track swell into the kind of oversized anthem often expected from a major comeback.

Arriving after BTS's long group hiatus, ***SWIM*** also carries cultural weight. It presents their reunion not as a return to where they left off, but as an acceptance that time changes everyone.



STYLE STATEMENT

Lewis Hamilton

Lewis Hamilton brought a sharp, contemporary edge to formal dressing at the opening gala of the Lucas Museum of Narrative Art in Los Angeles on September 19. The seven-time Formula One world champion wore an all-black Saint Laurent ensemble, designed under the creative direction of Anthony Vaccarello, that balanced classic tailoring with a relaxed, oversized silhouette. A double-breasted jacket with broad satin lapels and matching wide-leg trousers established the look.

Hamilton kept the accessories equally considered. A diamond necklace rested against his exposed chest, complemented by statement rings, a luxury wristwatch and oversized black sunglasses. The dark eyewear added an element of mystery, while the jewellery introduced a subtle contrast against the monochromatic outfit.