

“Love stories are better told in the time of xenophobia”

Mostofa Sarwar Farooki

SHARMIN JOYA

Internationally acclaimed director Mostofa Sarwar Farooki is arguably one of the finest filmmakers from Bangladesh. He is currently working on his forthcoming project, *No Land's Man*, a predominantly English film.

No Land's Man stars renowned actor Nawazuddin Siddiqui, who is also one of the producers of the movie. It also has noted singer-turned-actor Tahsan Khan in a prominent role. The principal photography of the project wrapped up recently. The film is set in three different continents: America, Australia and Asia.

No Land's Man is the second film in Farooki's identity trilogy. The first film in the trilogy is *Saturday Afternoon (Shonibaar Bikel)*, which was screened internationally in festivals like Busan, Sydney, Munich, Moscow, and recently at Vesoul International Film Festival, and won the NETPACK award and the High School Jury award on its concluding day, along with several others. In the course of its festival journey, the film bagged two independent jury awards in Moscow. However, the theatrical release of the film was banned by the Film Censor Board of Bangladesh. About the updates of the film, he replies "I can't make any comment. I can only remain silent". There probably lies a message within the director's silence.

Farooki first introduced *No Land's Man* at Asian Project Market, Busan in 2014. From there, he went on to win the Motion Picture Association of America - APSA Film Fund and the Best Project Award in Film Bazaar India in the same year. He thought the film was going to go on the floors very soon. However, he found it very difficult to raise funds for such an ambitious project. At one point, he had lost all hope and started to concentrate on other projects. Consequently, after *Doob (No Bed of Roses)*, he got busy with the development of *Memoria*, his third his in the identity trilogy,



Tahsan Khan clicks a selfie with the cast and crew of 'No Land's Man'.

PHOTO: COURTESY

which revolves around the Rohingya crisis.

In March 2019, he was having a final production meeting with the team of *Memoria* at his office. During the meeting, he talked about a dream that he had that day, while he was taking a nap after lunch. "I don't know whether it was a signal for me or not. I saw Nawaz in my dream today. I saw him standing in front of Worli Bridge and he looked sad. Does it mean I should pause *Memoria*'s shoot and go ahead with *No Land's Man* instead?" Farooki asked his team at the meeting.

While they were dealing with this dilemma, Farooki received a text message from an unknown number, which happened to be Nawaz's. Farooki quickly saved the new



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

number, called Nawaz, and shared what he was discussing with his team a few minutes ago. Both of them had a conversation about the film and later, met up in Mumbai. After many discussions, they knew that *No Land's Man* was set to begin its journey.

Besides Nawazuddin's Magic If Films, Farooki, National Award winning actor Nusrat Imrose Tisha, art patron Anjan Chowdhury, and Spirit Award winning US producer Shrihari Sathe are producing the film. Popular content platform BongoBD is one of its co-producers, while UK based filmmaker Ahsan Zaman is the co-executive producer.

"It really doesn't matter how popular an actor is. For me, what matters is their capability to portray the character," says Farooki. "Having said that, I think Nawazuddin Siddique is one of the best actors in world cinema right now. He is a prepared, yet an effortless artiste, who makes you feel that acting is the easiest job in the world."

Tahsan Khan will be seen as a Non Residential Bangladeshi living in America. Fans of the artiste will get to see him in a new light in the film.

No Land's Man is also the debut feature film of Megan Mitchell, an Australian actor, primarily known for theatre.

According to Farooki, our world is going through a strange phase of identity fascism and conflict right now. People are carried away with confused ideas about racism, religion and food habits, among other things. "I would be glad if, after watching the film, the audience feels compelled to think about what, how and why they have done things to this world," Having said that, "I must also add that I wanted to make a love story, because I believe that love stories are better told in the time of xenophobia."

No Land's Man is expected to be released this year, depending on the pace of the post production.

EKUSHEY SPOTLIGHT

Rudra Goswami spreads love through 'Ghum Bhangchei' and 'Obhijog Nei'

ASHLEY SHOPTORSHI SAMADDAR

Celebrated writer Rudra Goswami has managed to win a million hearts with his love poems over the years. Two of his new ventures, *Obhijog Nei*, his 5th poetry collection, and his second novel *Ghum Bhangchei*, were released at the Ekushey Boi Mela 2020, recently. In the candid chat, the writer shared his thoughts and expectations with *The Daily Star*.

Published by Anindya Publishers, both the book covers are designed by Charu Pintu. His much awaited release, *Obhijog Nei*, features poems grounded on the refrains of love, nature, friendship,



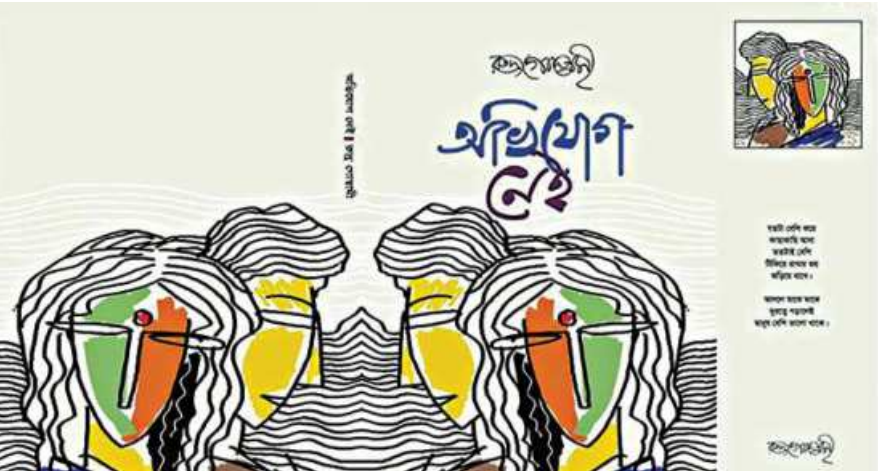
PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED



communal harmony and bonding. "I only believe in love and therefore, always try to spread it in my readers through words," mentions the writer. "My prime aim is to depict positivity in simple youth narratives which, in turn, will compel the youths to turn towards literature."

Rudra Goswami intends to keep providing his readers with realistic insights through his work in his best form of expression—literature. "Each and every person has the capacity to express their emotions, thoughts, and principles. I choose to express it in poetic verses," he asserts. "I also believe, silence is the best form of expression as it conveys a lot more than words or sounds."

Both the books, *Obhijog Nei* and *Ghum Bhangchei*, are available at pavilion no 31 for BDT 112 and 180, respectively (under 25 percent discount) at the Ekushey Boi Mela 2020. The writer also visits the fair every day between 4 pm and 7 pm, to meet and greet his readers.



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