

Mostafa Sarwar Farooki on 'Shonibaar Bikel'



ELITA KARIM

Considered a pathbreaker in the field of Bangladeshi TV visuals and cinema, Mostafa Sarwar Farooki seems to be in focus once again for his much awaited film, 'Shonibaar Bikel' (Saturday Afternoon). Recently winning the Fazlul Haque Smirti Award, the storyteller decided to have a quick chat with us about the film and the controversies surrounding it, invented and spread by overrated groups on social media.

PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSED

Congratulations! First looks of the movie 'Shonibaar Bikel' (Saturday Afternoon) have been released officially from Jaaz Multimedia. Does this mean that the movie will be released soon worldwide?

Thank you! Well, we have completed the film and submitted it to the censor board. Once we get a clearance, we will start planning the release.

Is it true that the story of the film is based on the 2016 Holy Artisan attack in Dhaka? It's loosely inspired from the Holy Artisan attack but it's not a portrayal of the actual events. This is hundred percent a work of fiction. Like many other fictions, the story has

taken seeds from real life, eventually flourishing on its own.

Many online groups on social media are criticising the film, citing that the first look gives out a wrong picture of religion. Can you clarify the story here?

We have also noticed this propaganda being spread like wildfire. It's really unfortunate that some people are imagining the storyline according to their own will, fanning religious sentiments and seeking a trial of the director without even watching the film! We have tried to clarify this via our social media handles. We are reiterating it here. Whatever is being written about the characters and the storyline is absolutely untrue. Furthermore, we haven't

insulted any religion in any way whatsoever and we don't have any intention of doing so. We urge people not to fall prey to such misleading propaganda and wait for the film to be released.

The whole film was shot at one go, uncut. How long did it take you to finish this herculean task?

Yes, certainly! Technically, it was a difficult task but I thoroughly enjoyed it. Thanks to our superb international and local teams. But to me, this film is special for something beyond its technicality. The veins of the film, with all its empathy, tried to portray the complex mosaic of our nation. This is what makes it special to me.

Sabila Nur's first web series in the offing

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Sabila Nur has carved a space for herself in the showbiz industry with her remarkable acting skills. Known for her striking confidence, the young star has many critically acclaimed television ventures to her credit. She opens up about her upcoming projects in a recent chat with The Daily Star.

Tell us about your first project in 2019.

My first project this year was a one-hour tele-fiction, for which I shot till the early hours of the morning. It is a horror tele-fiction where I play the role of a ghost. It was a completely new experience for me and I thoroughly enjoyed it.

Are you working on anything for the forthcoming Valentine's Day?

I will begin shooting for a web series directed by Ehsan Kabir. This is the first time that I will be starring in a web series. The story of the series revolves around weddings and I will be going outside of Dhaka for the shoot. It is one of my numerous projects for Valentine's Day.

Have you always wanted to be a part of the showbiz industry?

Not really. When I was younger I wanted to be a doctor, but that did not pan out. I also wanted to study English Literature, as it is a subject that I really love.

How would you describe your aspirations as an actor?

I will always prioritise quality over quantity. I want to work with honest people and continue being a part of good stories. I want to play characters that are strong and well-rounded.



PHOTO: STAR



Sydney Levin addresses the audience.

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'Two Strangers Versus Oleander Flower' at Shilpakala

ZAHANGIR ALOM

An acclaimed theatre production titled, 'Two Strangers Versus Oleander Flower' will be staged at the Studio Theatre Hall of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy on January 17 and 18. The 40-minute long play is set to be staged in two shows (7 pm and 8 pm) every day.

Space and Acting Research Centre produced the symbolic play

that was premiered at Alliance Française de Dhaka last year on October 12. The director of the play Ashish Khondker has designed the play into two versions, studio and environmental.

The story, which begins on a time-less surface, revolves around two strangers who have been travelling this surface, living a life on the road. In their own enigmatic ways, the strangers are out to explore the earth

and nature of law and order. Both of them are bound by a set of mysterious laws that they cannot get rid of. A man with no name tells them that their father has disappeared and the audience is left wondering if the two strangers are brothers. Awful dangers trigger them along the way.

The cast of the play includes Mita Muni, Drik Arefin, Omar Faruq Khan, Mostak Ahmed, Rabby, Kamol Sarkar and others.



PHOTO: COURTESY

'West Meets East' at DIFF

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

As part of the Dhaka International Film Festival's (DIFF) information exchange segment titled, 'West Meets East', hosted by the Festival Director Ahmed Muztaba Zamal, renowned producer and writer Sydney Levin also participated this year. She is rather popular in the online film community as well. She addressed the audience, which comprised of various directors, producers, filmmakers, distributors and others.

According to Sydney Levin, there often seems to be a misunderstanding amongst filmmakers that, in order for a film to be successful in the international market, it must comprise of a stellar cast. In fact, what is more vital is for the script to convey a message that is relatable. She says that what we finally see on the screen is what matters the most.

Along with the newcomers, multitalented local filmmakers were also amongst the speakers at

this year's DIFF. During his address, Tauquir Ahmed mentioned that one of the prime factors that imposed a restriction on the quality of local films is the budget. Comparatively, the Western films tend to be more appealing to the audience due to the hefty budget allocated for the making. Mostafa Sarwar Farooki said that filmmakers should be selective about their stories. He emphasised on the necessity to identify the content accurately and

also to formulate stories based on an international context. According to young producer Abu Shahed, Netflix is scooping a large sum of money from the Bangladeshi subscribers, despite having no investment locally. He hoped that the company would soon invest and assist the local film community to flourish.

The event concluded with a thank you note from filmmaker Samia Zaman.