



All the members of the Ilias-Nipun panel stood in solidarity with Nipun.

PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

Ilias-Nipun panel questions integrity of election officials

On Saturday, actress Nipun had requested a recount for the votes in the position of the Film Artistes Association election's General Secretary post, albeit unsuccessfully.

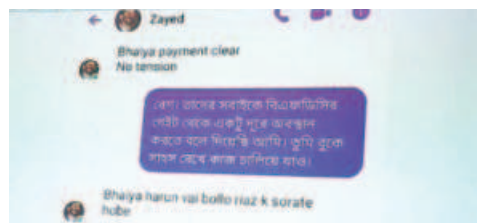
ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Zayed Khan, who by now has an iron grip over the association, still beat the actress by 13 votes.

Members of the Ilias Kanchan-Nipun panel called for a press conference at the National Press Club yesterday, where they accused BFDC MD Nuzhat Yeasmin and Election Commissioner Pirzada Harun of being biased towards the Misha-Zayed panel.

"Videos of Zayed Khan handing out money is viral all over the internet," said Nipun, "Yet, BFDC's MD and Election commissioner have taken no action. The rules say that any participant should immediately have to resign after such an incident, and yet they are silent after we repeatedly complained about these ill practices."

Nipun, who has filed a GD in the Banani Police Station, further accused the officials in charge of not letting noted directors, producers and other members of film organisations into the election. 17 film organisations called a strike yesterday, and took a stance outside BFDC to protest against the alleged corruption and bias.



Screenshots, allegedly showing conversation between Zayed Khan and a "top official", were shown at the conference.

"I request our honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to immediately look into the matter," said the agitated actress.

The actress also accused Pirzada Harun of misconduct, and that he "asked for two kisses on his cheeks" during the proceedings.

Ilias Kanchan, who has been elected President for 2022-24, did not hesitate to voice out against these malpractices as well. "We all stand in solidarity for Nipun, who is a victim of this corruption," he said. "Peerzada Harun has been missing since all these allegations, even after we tried to reach him multiple times." Kanchan told the media that

it should be possible to host another election for just the post of General Secretary, if allegations against Zayed Khan are proven.

Screenshots of Zayed Khan's alleged conversations that 'expose' him, were displayed at the press conference.

Sohanur Rahman Sohan, President of the Board of Film Directors, announced a lifetime ban on Peerzada Harun from films and dramas on behalf of 17 film organizations.

Soon after the press conference, Zayed Khan told the press that all the allegations were made up. "There has been no corruption, I won fair and square. I respect Ilias Kanchan a lot, and I urge him to come and work with me, instead of siding with these baseless allegations," said Zayed. "I will even work alongside Nipun, I have no qualms."

Pirzada Harun, when contacted by The Daily Star, also denied the allegations. "Why would Nipun say this? Is it even possible to talk like that in public? Please tell her not to slander me like this," he maintained.

BFDC's MD Nuzhat Yeasmin also maintained that the allegations had no solid ground, that Nipun's complaints were not solidified or proven in any way.



"Paap Punno" to release on Eid-ul-Fitr

SHARMIN JOYA

Film releases have come to a halt once again, due to the upsurge of Covid-19. As a result, the release date of Gias Uddin Selim's forthcoming feature "Paap Punno" has been postponed. The star-studded project, which features Chanchal Chowdhury, Afsana Mimi, Siam Ahmed and Farzana Chumki, among others, was previously scheduled to hit the theatres on February 4.

Creative producer of the film, Abu Shahed Emon, has confirmed to The Daily Star that they are planning to reschedule the release date. "We are now targeting to release the production Eid-ul-Fitr," he shared.

Produced by Impress Telefilm the film also stars Fazlur Rahman Babu, Mamunur Rashid, Gousul Alam Shaon and Shahnaz Sumi.



Tanjin Tisha and Manoj together in "Lohar Tori"

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Sanjoy Somadder's Valentine's Day special web film "Lohar Tori" features Tanjin Tisha and Manoj Pramanik.

The romantic thriller film will release on February 14, on the OTT platform iTheatre.

"The trailer of 'Lohar Tori' will be released on February 3, the film depicts a murder mystery on a cruise," informs the director. "We have shot the entire film on a cruise from Dhaka to Barisal, for seven days."

The film also casts Shahed Ali, Lenin Chekov and Donn Huq Donn, among others.

COUNTRYWIDE



Commuters suffer due to delay in construction of this 8.5km road in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila.
PHOTO: STAR

People suffer for delay in road work

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Thousands of commuters are facing untold sufferings for months due to delay in construction of 8.5-kilometre-long Thakurgaon-Farabari road, located on the northern part of the district headquarters.

Local people find it hard to live in the roadside houses and continue their businesses due to thick dust of brick-chips in the air as the road construction work remained suspended for over six months now.

According to Thakurgaon Local Government Engineering Department (LGED), construction firm DE-R-B-JV got the Tk 10.15 crore work order in July, 2020, to complete the 8.5-kilometre road, under Rural Connectivity Improvement Project (RCIP).

Although, the work was scheduled to be completed by January this year, after doing some development works the contractor suspended the work six months ago citing bitumen crisis.

During a recent visit, this correspondent saw the entire area's air is thick with dust due to dumping of brick-chips, now turned dust.

Makbular Rahman, lecturer at Abdur Rashid Degree College, said due to delay in the construction work the air of the area is got thick with dust and causing breathing problems.

Easy-bike driver Khayrat Ali said his daily income has dropped as passengers try to avoid the dusty road due to health risk.

Md Ibrahim, who runs a roadside grocery shop, said the contractor concern was supposed to spray water two times a day to minimise the dust, but he is not following it.

Al Sabbir, supervisor of the construction farm, said the work is currently suspended due to crisis of bitumen. Thakurgaon LGED Executive Engineer Shaharul Alam said the contractor has been asked to spray water regularly.

Pushti Apa making a difference in safe pregnancy

S DILIP ROY

Aklima Begum, 22, wife of farmer Mohor Ali of remote char 'Karai Barisal' in Chilmari upazila of Kurigram, gave birth to her first child four years ago suffering from various complications.

Both Aklima and her child suffered from malnutrition. She is now pregnant with the second child. But this time, Nutrition Sales Agent (NSA), the community nutrition promoter, who is affectionately called 'Pushti Apa' regularly measures her blood pressure, weight and advises her to eat nutritious food. Pushti Apa is also giving necessary medicines at market price.

Now, Aklima and her unborn child are healthy and she is hoping to give birth to a healthy child.

Deljan Begum, 26, a mother of three children from the Char Patrakhata area, said she had become the mother of two children before Pushti Apa started working in the char.

A child was born with physical disabilities. However, with the care and attention of Pushti Apa, she gave birth to her third child in November last year. She and her child were healthy and they still are doing fine.

"We don't have to pay for measuring blood pressure and weight but if necessary, we get vitamin and mineral tablets from Pushti Apa at market



NSA Rokeya Begum is selling fortified food items and vitamin pills to a woman in Kurigram's Chilmari upazila. A total of 18 NSAs affectionately called Pushti Apa are making a huge difference in ensuring safe pregnancy and child birth in char areas.
PHOTO: STAR

A total of 18 women have been working at 30 remote chars in Kurigram's Chilmari upazila, under a project titled 'Sustainable Opportunity for Nutrition Governance (SONGO)' funded by the European Union.

price," she said adding, that "Women in char are now able to give birth to healthy children thanks to Pushti Apa."

Since September 2018, a total of 18 women have been working as Nutrition Sales Agent in 30 remote chars in Chilmari upazila of Kurigram, under a project titled 'Sustainable Opportunity for Nutrition Governance (SONGO)' funded by the European Union and the project is being implemented jointly by RDRS Bangladesh and ICCO Co-operation Part of Cord Aid.

All of the NSAs have undergone month-long training on nutrition, pregnancy and care of neonatal.

Rokeya Begum, an NSA, said now the pregnant women of char areas are very conscious about nutrition.

"If a pregnant woman suffers from

complications, she is taken to a local community clinic or a hospital in the mainland. Not only the pregnant women, all the people of char affectionately call us Pushti Apa," she said.

Afroza Begum, another NSA, said they earn a small amount selling vitamin and mineral pills at market price to the pregnant women in Char areas and receive a small honorarium from the NGO. Char women do not have to pay for measuring blood pressure and weight.

"We are trying to keep the mothers and children of char areas healthy. The women of char areas are coming out of the prejudices," she added.

Ahsanul Kabir Bulu, Chilmari upazila coordinator of the SONGO project, said

each Pushti Apa provides services to pregnant women and children living in remote chars of the Brahmaputra river.

The women of char areas are giving birth to healthy children as the NSAs are working diligently from house to house, he said adding that at least 1200 mothers and children received services in the last three years.

Chilmari Upazila Health and Family Planning Officer Dr Aminul Islam said due to the development of awareness on nutrition, the infant and maternal mortality rate is declining and the risk of children being born with disabilities has reduced in the char areas. The pregnant women's healthcare in the char area is being ensured because of the service of the NSAs working in char areas.