



Iresh Zaker, Moutushi Biswas, Shampa Reza, Chanchal Chowdhury, Shankha Dasgupta and Shahed Ali.

PHOTOS: PALASH KHAN

# Artistes' royalties in Bangladesh: Pipe dream or imminent reality?

Top stars in the industry discuss

SHARMIN JOYA

**“The viewership is driven because of the face value, and not for the product quality, having said that, the concept of royalty will always be more beneficial to the lead artistes.”**

Iresh Zaker

International artistes have long rallied for proper royalty disbursements, a fight that has been successful in bringing long-term security to their professional and creative lives.

Despite that, it is deeply saddening to see some of Bangladesh's most prominent artistes suffer in the twilight of their careers, and even after retirement, due to the lack of financial stability.

In a roundtable discussion held at The Daily Star, prominent faces from our entertainment industry—Shampa Reza, Chanchal Chowdhury, Moutushi Biswas, Iresh Zaker, Shahed Ali, Tanim Noor and Shankha Dasgupta—engaged in a heated conversation about the prospects of introducing royalties for artistes in the Bangladeshi film and television industries.

At the



beginning of the discussion, eminent actress, singer, and model Shampa Reza highlighted that the most important aspect of artistes' rights is for them to be aware of these rights in the first place. “Unfortunately, we are ignorant about our own rights”, said the cultural activist.

The people of the film and television fraternities put their hearts and souls together to make intriguing productions. However, when they age, they end up being called ‘distressed artistes’, having to seek funds for their survival or treatment.

National Film Award-winning actor Chanchal Chowdhury pointed out the

industry's underlying problem. “Some people even request us to work for free! We are working in an unprofessional industry,” he states. “Artistes are in the practice of compromising with so many things, including negotiations about remunerations. This is absurd, art is not a free service, when are we going to realise this?”

The actor brought up an example of how international artistes raise their pay according to their demand and experience, and how the scenario is completely different here.

“Unfortunately, aged artistes have to

live on the pity of ‘funds’ and have to depend on financial help for their medical treatments, either from the government or from their colleagues.”

However, he sees positive changes in web platforms. “Since OTT services usually follow an international format in terms of contracts, it is a commendable step towards professionalism.”

Actor Shahed Ali shed light on the troubles they often experience as media professionals. “We are not eligible for benefits like provident funds, medical or any other insurance. Also, no private

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