



**Jharna Basak, known by her stage name Shabnam, was one of the most graceful actresses in Bengali cinema during the 60s. After her debut in the Pakistani film industry in the 70s, she reigned the scene for almost three decades. The actress has won 13 Nigar Awards in the category of ‘Best Actress’, which is a record to date. She announced her retirement from the silver screen in 1999 after appearing in Kazi Hayat’s “Ammajan”. Looking back at her years of success, experience, and innumerable memories, the actress reminisces about her journey with us.**

“Harano Diney” (1961) was my debut Bangla film, where I shared the screen with Golam Mustafa. I was paid 800 taka for the project. I often miss Ehtesham Shaheb, who gave me a break in the Urdu film industry with “Chanda” in the early 70s. This film was a turning point in my career as it brought me many more offers. While working in Pakistan, I had a hectic shooting experience, working four shifts for different films in a day. Though I was working in Pakistani films, I never forgot my Bangladeshi roots. I always tried to uphold my culture, even in the outfits I wore on screen. When we returned to Dhaka, I decided to live an ordinary life. I never try to play the ‘celebrity card’. I have learned to fit myself in any environment. From buying groceries to other household work, I do it all by myself. However, I miss the days when we used to reside in Old Dhaka – the sound of galloping horses, the rides on carriages, and the



Shabnam earned much popularity as the star of many Urdu films. PHOTO: COLLECTED

chit-chats around the corners of each street. A lot has changed in this city, but nothing has changed in my memories of that time. My husband Robin took away a part of me when he left us in 2016. He had a pure soul. I miss him every day. Our only son Rony, who came to visit me a few days ago, is settled abroad. I also dearly miss Khan Ataur Rahman. I once decided to quit this profession, but he came to my house to speak to Robin and my in-laws, convincing me to keep working. Among many other memories, I still clearly remember the day when Rahman lost his leg. We were shooting in Sylhet and had taken a day off. We were all keen on playing Ludo while he decided to roam around the city. We soon got to know about his accident and rushed to the hospital. He survived the accident, but the price he paid with his leg was too high. My last visit to BFDC left me in tears, as I was disheartened by the emptiness that has taken over the premises. The memories I have with my colleagues that we have lost over the years took over me. Since then, I have not gone back there.

Interviewed by Shah Alam Shazu

## Why did Lara Dutta turn down role in ‘The Matrix’?

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Bollywood actress Lara Dutta opened up about turning down a role in “The Matrix” in a recent interview.



As per reports, the “Bellbottom” actress was offered a part alongside Keanu Reeves in the 2001 movie. However, she turned down the job to look after her ailing mother. Recently, the actress won the Dadasaheb Phalke International Film Festival Award for her portrayal of Indira Gandhi in “Bell Bottom”.

## Farzana Chumki, Sallha Khanam Nadia to star in Indian film ‘Sunetra Sundaram’

SHARMIN JOYA

Indian filmmaker Shiv Ram Sharma is set to direct the film “Sunetra Sundaram”, which sheds light on hygiene issues faced by working women.

The film will star Bangladeshi actresses Farzana Chumki and Sallha Khanam Nadia in pivotal roles, alongside Parno Mitra as Sunetra.

“I was approached for this project a few days ago, I liked the plot and signed the film,” said Farzana Chumki.

Nadia shared that the story focuses on three women, who work together. “These women begin a movement to ensure hygienic and clean toilets in trains, as they have to spend long hours on public transportation,” she added.

The film’s shooting will begin from March 23, and both the actresses will go to Kolkata a day before. Some parts of the movie will be shot in Bangladesh as well.



Sallha Khanam Nadia.



Farzana Chumki.

# COUNTRYWIDE

## Road damaged a week after construction



PHOTO: STAR

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Just a week after construction of the three-kilometre portion of an important road in Kishoreganj upazila the carpeting wore away, raising question about the quality of the work. According to the upazila Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) Office, a tender was floated to construct the three-kilometre portion of the road, stretching from the upazila headquarters to the recreation park Vinnaya Jagat, under Rural Roads Protection and Maintenance Project four months ago. Nilphamari based construction firm Tahsin Construction got the Tk 1 crore work order and completed the construction work at the end of last month. During a recent visiting to the area this correspondent saw surface of the newly constructed road got damaged at different points. Labourers, engaged by the contractor concerned, were seen removing the rubbles from the surface of the road to avert public outrage. Sexagenarian Jamshed Ali of Musha village said they noticed use of substandard construction materials from the beginning. The ground development work was not done properly as there are many potholes on the surface of the road, another villager Enamul Huque said. Locals alleged that lack of monitoring by the officials concerned is one of the major reason for such low quality work. When asked, Mozaffar Hossain, owner of Tahsin Construction, denied the allegation of low quality work and said the construction work was done as per schedule. LGED Sub Assistant Engineer Jogobandhu Roy, who did the monitoring job, said the damage occurred due to plying of over-loaded trucks. Nilphamari LGED Executive Engineer Sujon Kumar Kor said he told the contractor concerned to repair the damaged portions.

## A parched Teesta sees many routes closed

Many boatmen in livelihood crisis

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

At least 25 out of 35 river routes in the Teesta river basin area under eight upazilas of Lalmonirhat and Kurigram have been closed due to a sharp decline in the water level during the ongoing dry season. The situation is not likely to change before the onset of the rainy season when the river will be replenished by waters from the upstream. Locals said once the mighty river remained navigable round the year but the situation has changed due to the withdrawal of a huge amount of water from the upstream in India over the last several years.

This year the situation is even worse. People are often seen wading through the knee-deep river as large chars (landmass emerged from riverbed) have sprung up. Boatmen said, with a large number of cargo and passenger boats lying idle, over two thousand boatmen and workers have become jobless and locals are undergoing immense sufferings as they have to either walk miles or take a costly ride on horse carts to reach their destinations. At present river communications between Lalmonirhat and Kurigram with distant docks of Rangpur, Gaibandha and Jamalpur districts are suspended, as the river routes have already dried up, they said. Boatman Sahed Ali at

Bagdora ghat in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila, said he has been jobless since the first week of January as there is no sufficient water flow for plying boat in the river. “Locals are now wading across the river” he said. “At least 20 boatmen were engaged in plying boats in this ghat, now all of them have become jobless,” he said, adding that boatmen are earning their livelihood by doing other jobs. Azizur Rahman, a boatman at Thetrai ghat in Kurigram’s Ulipur upazila said there is no sufficient water in the Teesta river now, therefore, boats cannot carry passengers and goods. At least 30 boatmen in this ghat have become jobless, earning their livelihood

working as day labourers. “We will return to our job when Teesta swells up again in the last week of June to the first week of July,” he said. “We are passing our days amid hardship as boats cannot ply the Teesta and adjoining canals due to acute water crisis,” said Mobarak Ali, a boatman of Gatiashyam village in Kurigram’s Rajarhat upazila. Mizanur Rahman, executive engineer of Water Development Board in Lalmonirhat, said Teesta gets a normal flow of water for only three months–July–October. A parched Teesta is having a bad impact on the livelihood of the boatmen.



Boatmen have lost their jobs due to non-navigability of Teesta. In this photo taken from Kalmati ghat in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila boats seen lying unused. PHOTO: S DILIP ROY