



“Votes were rigged in the elections. So if we accept it now, we will have to go through a lot of problems in the future. To break the system, there will be disagreements. But I think we did the right thing.”

ZAHID AKBAR

Popular actress Nipun is awaiting the court's verdict for the post of General Secretary of the Bangladesh Film Artistes' Association. However, she is regularly participating in various activities, on behalf of the association. Nipun also runs a beauty salon.

She recently spoke to The Daily Star about her post-election plans surrounding her stance as the prospective general secretary, and her upcoming ventures.

New films are not being made. Nevertheless, many are seen to exert power and make claims regarding the post of General Secretary of the Film Artistes' Association. What is your take on this?

Votes were rigged in the elections. So if we accept it now, we will have to go through a lot of problems in the future. To break the system, there will be disagreements. But I

think we did the right thing.

So, the rumours surrounding power plays by members of the Film Artistes' Association are true?

I really don't know what power I showed. When people took legal action against me, I protested. Why would I sit quietly?

Police officials and ministers visit the BFDC regularly. What do you think is the reason behind this?

My father was a government official. So government employees have a soft corner for me, and often visit me at the BFDC.

Zayed Khan's brother is a former police officer. He visits him too, at times. I don't see anything wrong or negative here.

When are you planning to return on screen?

Four of my films are waiting to be released. Among them, "Birotto" and "Rasel Er Jonno Opekkha" are ready. The audience will know more when we finalise the release dates.

In recent times, you have been in discussions more for being a candidate of the Film Artistes' Association elections, than for your work in cinema.

I am aware of that. But I think my fans got to see a new side of me, owing to the elections. A lot of people from home and abroad have congratulated me and conveyed their love. They have come across my true persona through the elections.

What are your future plans for the development of the Film Artistes' Association?

We will be blessed if Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina visits the BFDC. However, we have to wait until the court matters are resolved.

The association's activities have never stopped and never will. I am taking care of everything from the salaries to the iftars, events, and helping those in need.

I am doing what needs to be done politically in the association. I am trying my best and hope that I succeed in pulling off my duties.

Sonam Kapoor's Delhi residence robbed

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK



Sonam Kapoor and Anand Ahuja's home in New Delhi was broken into, and cash plus jewelry worth Rs 1.41 crore were stolen. Sonam's mother-in-law reported the crime.

Delhi Police officials have formed investigation teams for the case.

According to reports, Sonam and Anand's staff are being questioned as part of the investigation. 25 employees, as well as 9 caretakers, drivers, gardeners, and other personnel, are being questioned by the Delhi Police.

The crime scene, which is Sonam and Anand's Delhi residence, is being investigated by both the Delhi Police and the FSL.

Nisho turns KIDNAPPER for Sabila

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK



Director Kajal Arefin Ome is set to release the thriller tele-fiction, "Kidnapper", featuring Afran Nisho and Sabila Nur in the lead roles, on Eid-ul-Fitr.

The project will be out on the YouTube channel of Sultan Entertainment. It will have exciting cinematic elements.

In the tele-fiction, Nisho abducts Sabila and takes her to a jungle, where another group kidnaps her.

Due to rain, filming of the production

was put on hold. Nisho resumed the shoot after nearly three months.

"Kidnapper" also features Shahed Ali and Pavel, among others.

COUNTRYWIDE

TRANSFORMER THEFT Irrigation in Boro fields faces setback



Irrigation in 2,500 hectares of Boro fields in Nilphamari seems uncertain in the ongoing season as criminals have stolen 124 transformers in the district, much to the worry of farmers. The photo was taken from Uttar Gobindapur village in Nilphamari Sadar upzila.

PHOTO: STAR

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Irrigation in 2,500 hectares of land in Nilphamari is facing setback in the ongoing Boro season as transformer theft has become rampant which may lead to production fall.

The dry season paddy needs massive irrigation using power-run shallow pumps or deep tube-wells but criminals continued stealing transformers, much to the worry of farmers in the district.

According to sources, total 124 transformers have been stolen in Nilphamari this year. Of them, 42 have been owned by Barind Multipurpose Development Authority (BMDA) and 26 by Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC) respectively to irrigate with deep tube-wells while individuals own 56 to operate shallow pumps.

Due to this, irrigation to 2,500 hectares of land faces uncertainty as each deep tube-well can cover 30 hectares and shallow pump five hectares.

In mid-December, thieves stole two transformers of the deep tube well owned by farmers' association at Uttar Gobindapur village in Nilphamari Sadar upzila under BADC at early stage of transplanted period.

Monzurul Islam, manager of the association, said as per rule of Rural Electrification Board (REB), farmers should pay for replacement of stolen transformers as each 10 kva transformer costs Tk 65 thousand.

"We couldn't transplant Boro saplings in time as power connection restored two months later in mid-February. It happened as we failed to pay in time but finally REB considered our case and allowed payment in installments," he added.

Project stakeholder farmer Babul Roy said, "Due to late plantation, production in each bigha may drastically fall to 12-15 maunds as usual yield of Boro is averagely 25-28 maunds."

"We got replacement of stolen transformer only after 12 days but by this time saplings turned reddish for want of irrigation water as it was

their growing stage," said farmer Ershad Ali of Ranachandi Abiler Bazaar Farmers' Association in Kishoreganj upazila under BMDA, adding that their transformer was stolen in January.

Farmers' Association managers Aminur Huq Shah of Tupamari village in Sadar and Kamrul Islam Sona of Chilahati village in Domar upazila said farmers lodged complaints to local police stations seeking recovery of stolen transformers but got no result.

BMDA's Zonal Engineer in Nilphamari Alamgir Md Ruhul Islam said, "Transformer stealing causes concern. I have requested police to take action in this regard."

"For sake of food production, we instantly replace stolen transformers with new ones by allowing farmers to pay small amount as first installment and the rest even after Boro harvest," said General Manager of REB Sultan Nasimul Huq.

Officer-in-Charge of Sadar Police Station Abdur Rouf said they were raiding different areas to arrest the criminals.

Banglabandha

FROM PAGE 12

death rates rose again in India.

The authorities later allowed Bangladeshis with business and medical visas to cross the border, but tourists had to wait longer.

OC Nazrul said 81 people entered and 80 left Bangladesh through the port in the last two days.

Number

FROM PAGE 12

72 hours before their departure for Saudi Arabia.

In early March, the kingdom nation lifted most Covid restrictions including social distancing in public spaces and quarantine for vaccinated arrivals, moves that were expected to facilitate the arrival of Muslim pilgrims.

Before the pandemic, Muslim pilgrims were the key revenue earners for the kingdom, bringing in some \$12 billion annually.

Rival forces in South Sudan clash again

AFP, Juba

Fresh fighting erupted Friday between

government and opposition forces in South Sudan just days after both sides pledged to uphold a ceasefire and try to save a teetering peace deal.

The clashes in oil-rich Unity State were the latest in recent weeks between forces allied to President Salva Kiir and those loyal to his deputy, veteran opposition leader Riek Machar.

The pair rule in a power-sharing government which was brokered in the aftermath of a civil war that left nearly 400,000 people dead before a peace agreement paused the bloodshed in 2018.

Costly cart before horse

FROM PAGE 1

Aviation expert ATM Nazrul Islam said Biman needs to assess whether there are enough Dhaka-Toronto passengers.

Around 1 lakh Bangladeshis live in Canada, but they do not fly to Bangladesh as often as the migrants do from countries in Asia, he added.

"Biman previously operated flights to Frankfurt, New York, Yangon, and other destinations. But those routes were abandoned because Biman did not have proper planning and feasibility studies done," said Nazrul Islam.

WHY DIRECT FLIGHTS

WON'T SUSTAIN

Not many Bangladeshis are likely to choose Biman, paying an additional \$200-300 on tickets to fly directly, Nazrul said.

About half the individuals on the maiden flight on March 26 were officials of Biman, the civil aviation ministry, and the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh. Biman's Planning Director Mahbub Jahan Khan said it cost the state-owned company Tk 4 crore.

Hours before the Dreamliner left Dhaka on March 26, Biman said its assessment showed direct flights to Toronto would be commercially viable.

Biman officials said a feasibility study was done. The study said the plane would not be able to carry more than 130 people to be able to fly directly to Toronto without needing to refuel.

But sources at the airlines said Biman had assessed the viability of the direct flights through "secondary sources".

Currently, Biman has four Boeing 777-300ERs, four 787-8s, two 787-9s, six 737-800s, and five De Havilland Canada Dash-8 Q400s. The 777s and 787s are long-range aircraft and the 737s are short to medium-range planes while the Dash-8s are short-haul aircraft.

Will the highways be ready?

FROM PAGE 12

RHD PLANS AKM Manir Hossain

Pathan, chief engineer of the RHD, yesterday met his top officials and project directors and gave some directives to keep the highways ready.

Talking to this correspondent, he said the authorities concerned were asked to complete all road maintenance works.

The original deadline to complete the works was April 15, but as some divisions could not catch up, they were asked to complete the works by April 20 maximum, meeting sources said.

One major concern for those going to the north-western districts is the ongoing expansion works

of 190km Elenga Rangpur highway, which has been witnessing regular congestion in recent times.

The situation may worsen once the pressure of vehicles increases, commuters said.

Waliur Rahman, project director of the expansion work, said they have prepared a plan to divert all vehicles from Elenga to a bypass-road that goes through the Elenga municipality towards Bangabandhu bridge.

The vehicles towards Dhaka would be diverted to the Bhuapur road from the east end of the bridge to avert congestion. They have made necessary renovations on the bypass roads for this, he added.

However, police will take

a decision in this regard considering the situation, he told this correspondent.

He added they will also open the two existing lanes of the under-construction Nalka bridge before April 25 and keep them functional, while another two lanes are being added. "This will have a positive impact."

They will also open a four-lane bridge at Chandrakona and expand the narrow corners at Hatikamrul intersection.

However, traffic movement may be a problem in Gobindaganj town as the project authorities could not start the works of a flyover there, he added.

The RHD is also making plans to make the Dhaka-Gazipur highway functional ahead of Eid.

Ukraine faces 'hard battle'

FROM PAGE 2

backed separatists since 2014.

Air attacks are likely to increase in the south and east as Russia seeks to establish a land bridge

between Crimea - which Moscow annexed in 2014 - and the Donbas but Ukrainian forces are thwarting the advance, the British Defence Ministry said in an intelligence

update.

Russia's military yesterday said it had destroyed an ammunition depot at the Myrhorod Air Base in central-eastern Ukraine.