

You can choose Sabila’s fate this Eid

Sabila Nur’s “Chol” will be the first ever interactive web-series in Bangladesh, where the audience will get to decide what happens to her character. She plays a drug addict in this series, which will be available on Bongo BOB.

RAKSHANDA RAHMAN MISHA

Sabila Nur etched her way into the audiences’ hearts of audience by playing bubbly and charming characters on the small screen. As she grew as an actress, her range as an artiste also improved immensely. She was recently seen in the music video of Imran’s “Tomari Achi”, which has garnered immense views.

In a conversation with The Daily Star, Sabila talks about her upcoming Eid ventures, web series, and more.



Tell us about your experience working on your first music video. “Tomari Achi” is a beautiful love story, wonderfully voiced by Imran Mahmudul. Fans have been appreciating our work, and we are getting a lot of good response. Imran has this uncanny, alluring power in his voice.

We shot the entire music video within 2 days

around Dhaka, and its nearby areas. It was definitely a memorable experience for me.

What are your upcoming Eid projects? I have done a lot of projects this Eid, and most of them were with one of my favourite co-artiste, Apurba *bhai*. Audiences will get to see us in Shihab Shaheen’s “Runu Bhai 2” and “Oghoton”, CMV’s “Digbazi”, Rubel Hasan’s “Priyo Kheyal Ey”, among others.

I will be also starring alongside Yash Rohan in Bongo BOB’s web-series “Chol”, which is Bangladesh’s first ever interactive web-series.

An interactive web series? How does that work?

The catch is, the audience can decide what will happen to my character, with the power of a click! We had a great time shooting for “Chol” in Mawa. It was amazing working with Yash Rohan, Antik Mahmud and Sayed Zaman Shawon.

I am playing the role of a drug addict, and the plot revolves around searching for my lookout.

Most of your Eid projects are with Apurba this year. What’s the secret to your on-screen popularity as a duo?

There is a sense of comfort and ease, working with him on projects. He is such a cooperative artiste, that its’ easy to channel our chemistry on-screen.

Audiences love our pairing and we are truly blessed that fans wants to see us more in Eid fictions and web-series.

No other web films this year? My last web-film was Ashfaq Nipun’s “Koshtoneer”, which was released in Hoichoi in 2021. After that, I got many offers, but there washardly anything that interested me.

I want to do roles that I haven’t done much on television, something that helps me evolve as an artiste.



Gal Gadot to sing and dance as Snow White’s Evil Queen

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK



Noted Hollywood actress Gal Gadot recently teased her singing and dancing scenes in the upcoming live-action adaptation of Disney’s “Snow White”.

Gadot is best known for her role as Wonder Woman, having led two standalone films with a third currently in its early stages of production with director Patty Jenkins. The star’s next big project will see her take on the role of the Evil Queen in Disney’s latest addition to their live-action line-up.

“Snow White” will also see “West Side Story” actress Rachel Zegler take on the film’s titular role, with the star recently revealing that director Marc Webb is dedicated to portraying a “hero-princess” for his daughter.



Karan Johar announces release date for ‘Rocky Aur Rani Ki Prem Kahani’

Karan Johar’s next directorial, “Rocky Aur Rani Ki Prem Kahani”, features Ranveer Singh and Alia Bhatt in the lead roles.

The upcoming film, which also stars Jaya Bachchan, Shabana Azmi and Dharmendra, is set to hit theatres next year on February 10.

Unveiling the release date, Johar posted a gorgeous photograph with the film’s lead stars on Instagram, and wrote a fun poem, praising the “Gully Boy” famed pair.

NEWS

There’s room

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without an appointment letter, he said, adding that the owners will have to pay salaries, allowances and gratuities.

The act will empower journalists to take legal steps for illegal dismissals, he said, a section of owners do not want an act for the protection of journalists.

Immigration

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Faridul Haque Khan yesterday at another programme announced that people aged above 65 won’t be able to perform hajj this year according to a decision of the Saudi government.

A total of 57,585 Bangladeshis are scheduled to perform hajj this year, to be held in early July. Of them, 4,000 will perform the rituals under government management while the rest under private management.

About 10 lakh people from across the world will be allowed to perform hajj in Saudi Arabia this year.

At the meeting yesterday, Hajj Agencies Association of Bangladesh demanded the airfare for the pilgrims be fixed rationally. The airfare was not finalised in the meeting, meeting sources told The Daily Star.

Different other issues including announcement of hajj packages, hajj flight schedule, allotment of space to Saudi immigration authorities at HSI, and issuance of air tickets through hajj agencies were discussed at the meeting.

Speaking there, the state minister for religious affairs said the authorities have to ensure a better hajj management by working with utmost sincerity.

State Minister for Civil Aviation Mahbub Ali and Biman Bangladesh Airlines Managing Director and CEO Abu Saleh Mostafa Kamal were present, among others.

Russia ‘failed’

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said Moscow had sent a diplomatic note demanding a halt to US arms shipments to Ukraine.

Russia has consistently denied intending to overthrow Ukraine’s government. Western

countries say that was its objective from the outset but it failed in the face of Ukrainian resistance.

Just weeks ago, Kyiv was a frontline city under curfew and bombardment, with tens of thousands of Russian troops massing on its northern outskirts and

Police press on with construction

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Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela); Transparency International Bangladesh; Nijera Kari; Ain O Salish Kendra; Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust; Nagarik Udyog and Bangladesh Udichi Shilpigoshthi.

They also demanded that the government keep the Tentultala playground open to all and stop the construction of a police station there.

Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of Bela, said, “Police could have arrested her [Ratna] after filing a case if they deemed that she had broken a law. Then things would have progressed according to a legal process...”

“But police cannot pick up anyone at will, and they certainly cannot detain her under-18 son and put him in lockup.”

Mentioning that police claimed that Ratna had created obstacles to a government work, Rizwana asked whether it’s a government work to construct a police station on a playground.

“Is detention of a woman and her under-18 son without following legal procedures a government work?”

“We do not think this is a government work. There is no scope for legalising illegal activities in the name of government work,” she stated.

Mubassar Hussain, vice president of Bapa, said, “Police are friends

of people, and if that’s the case, their first duty would be to protect the playground. But we are seeing a different picture.”

Tentultala has been used as a playground, Eidgah and a place for recreation. How can this place be turned into a police station? he asked.

Terming the police move a might-is-right attitude, Bapa Joint Secretary Iqbal Habib said detention of Ratna and her son for 13 hours without following any legal procedure is a violation of law and the country’s constitution.

Referring to the law for conservation of playground, open spaces, parks and water bodies, he said no one can change the characteristics of a playground. Since the place has been used as a playground for five decades, it would be illegal to change its characteristics.

Rights activist Khushi Kabir moderated the press conference.

On January 31, Dhaka Deputy Commissioner’s Office handed over the playground to Dhaka Metropolitan Police for constructing a building for Kalabagan Police Station. At present, a rented place on 30 North Road is being used as the police station.

Over the years, Tentultala playground, which covers one bigha of land, has been in use in multiple ways. It has been used as a playground,

residents sheltering from artillery in its metro stations.

Today, the nearest Russian troops are hundreds of miles away, normal life is returning to the capital, Western leaders have been visiting and countries are reopening their embassies.

Eidgah and a place for namaz-e-janaza.

Residents of the area refuse to give up hope of retaining the playground. For several months, they’ve been demonstrating with the demand to keep it as it is.

Yesterday afternoon, a rally was held at the playground, demanding steps so that locals can perform Eid jamaat there as in the previous years.

Meanwhile, 19 eminent citizens protested the detention of Ratna and her son.

They asked why a person has to be detained for staging protests, and said this type of barrier to freedom of speech is “bringing the country to a standstill”.

In a statement yesterday, they also protested the undertaking which police took from Ratna before releasing her, and demanded its scrapping.

They suggested that the authorities find an alternative place to construct the police station and keep the Tentultala playground as it is.

The signatories are Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury; Syed Hasan Imam; Anupam Sen; Ramendu Majumdar; Sarowar Ali; Ferdousi Majumdar; Abed Khan; Selina Hossain; Abdus Selim; Laila Hasan; Mohtul Haque; Mamunur Rashid; Muntassir Mamun; Nasiruddin Yusuf; Harun Habib; Shahriar Kabir; Sara Zaker; Shimul Yusuf and Shafi Ahmed.

Casino

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is a former general secretary of Wanderers’ Club. They lost the posts after they were accused in the case in 2019.

Of the other convicts, Tuhin Munshi, Nabir Hossain Sikder, Saiful Islam and Abul Kalam Azad were present at the court while Shahidul, Rashidul, Merajul and Pavel Rahman were absconding.

Iqbal Hossain, lawyer of the convicts, said the verdict would be challenged at the High Court.

On September 24, 2019, Rab members raided the house of Enu’s employee Abul Kalam Azad and found Tk 2 crore in a vault.

Rab then filed a case with Wari Police Station over money laundering.

Enu and Rupon were arrested in Dhaka’s Keraniganj on January 13, 2020. According to law enforcers, they were planning to flee to Nepal using fake passports. They used to bring casino equipment from Nepal.

Ten witnesses testified against the accused during the trial.

At least 11 other cases against the two brothers remain pending at different courts.

Israel retaliates after projectile fired from Lebanon: IDF

AFP, Jerusalem

A projectile was fired from Lebanon into northern Israel, prompting a retaliation, the Israel Defense Forces said early yesterday.

The projectile fell in an open field near a kibbutz, Israel’s army said in a statement which made no mention of casualties.

TIB report on Covid baseless

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watchdog published its research report titled “Governance Challenges in Tackling Covid-19 Crisis: Inclusion and Transparency”. The research found that the Covid vaccination programme cost the government Tk 12,993.16,721 crore, less than half the sum claimed by the health minister.

The minister on several occasions had said the cost was about Tk 40,000 crore.

Yesterday, he said, “There was a misunderstanding. Once I said that people of Bangladesh have received vaccine doses worth about Tk 40,000 crore. This doesn’t mean that the government spent Tk 40,000 crore. The government spent about Tk 20,000 crore, including transportation, storage, syringe, waste management and campaigning costs.

“Then what about the rest Tk 20,000 crore? We’ve added the value of 9.5 crore free vaccines worth about Tk 25,000 crore.... We’ve said that about Tk 40,000 crore was spent in total.”

Regarding the purchase of vaccines, the minister said the government took highest precautionary measures to ensure transparency in the vaccine procurement process.

“We bought vaccines from India. You know the price of it. Since we signed a non-disclosure paper, we are bound not to reveal the price of vaccines procured from China. I’m giving you a hint that the price would be close to the rate of vaccines procured from India.”

The minister said the TIB did an “intransparent job”.

“What saddened me most is that the report said 7.8 percent Covid patients

died without treatment. About 20 lakh people got the virus and about 1.5 percent of them died.... Had 7.8 percent people died, the death toll would have been 1.5 lakh.”

According to the TIB report, delayed services due to inadequate medical support caused deaths of 7.8 percent and increased complications of 11.6 percent of the total patients who sought service at hospitals.

Zahid said the study’s sample size was too small compared to the whole group.

He said Bangladesh is holding a prestigious position in the world in terms of Covid control and vaccination.

“We have administered 13 crore first doses of Covid vaccine, 11.60 crore second doses, and 1.19 crore booster doses,” the minister added.

Carriers’ duopoly over Hajj

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congested religious sites.

Apart from Biman and Saudia, third carriers including Emirates, Gulf Air, Qatar Airways, Kuwait Airways, Yemen Air, Jet Airways, GMG Airlines (now defunct), Pakistan International Airlines, Flynas were allowed in Bangladesh until 2011 to fly pilgrims to Saudi Arabia, according to aviation sources.

In 2012, an agreement was signed between Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia. It said the national airlines of the two countries will be able to operate hajj flights, creating the scope for duopoly.

ATAB President SN Manzur Murshed told The Daily Star, “We are fed up with the way Biman and Saudia behave with different travel agencies during hajj operations. And this happened only

because of their duopoly. This must come to an end.”

ATAB and HAAB sources said India allows at least four of its airlines including Air India, Spice Jet, IndiGo and Air India Express and two from Saudi Arabia for hajj flights.

PIA and Shaheen Air from Pakistan, Lion Air and Garuda from Indonesia and four to five airlines from Malaysia can carry pilgrims to Saudi Arabia.

The ATAB president said the government should request the Saudi government so that it allows a third carrier for the betterment of hajjis.

“If a third carrier is allowed, the price of air tickets will reduce due to competitiveness in the market,” the ATAB president said.

HAAB boss Taslim said: “We have long been demanding a third carrier as Biman and Saudia

charge huge airfare from hajjis. Besides, the two airlines charge various other fees.”

For example, he said, if any hajj wants to change his travel date or if any travel agency wants to correct or change names of hajjis in case of death of hajjis or wants to replace hajjis, Biman charges at least \$300 for every case.

HAAB has sent letters to the religious affairs and civil aviation ministries to press home their demand for a third carrier.

Contacted, State Minister for Religious Affairs Faridul Haque Khan on Saturday said the government will sign the yearly agreement over operations related to the congregation with Saudi Arabia by early next month.

“After inking of that agreement, I will be able to speak on this issue,” he added.