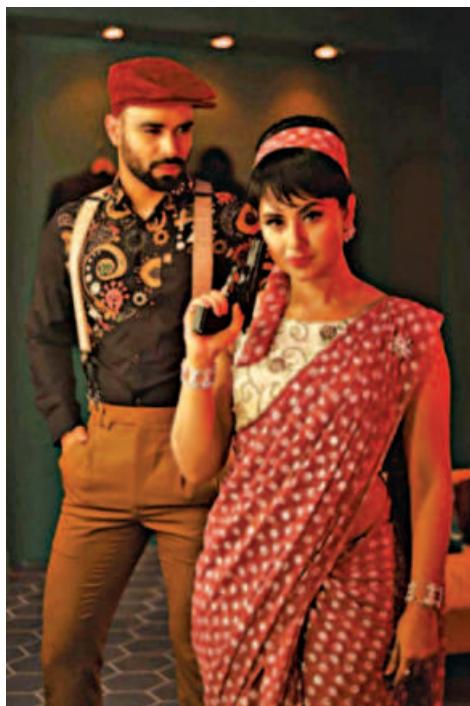




Snippets from 'Floor Number 7'



'FLOOR NUMBER 7' crew happy with response

"Consciously appearing subconscious before the screen is key to achieving perfection while performing a certain character, and this is what I learned from my first film," he adds.

ASHLEY SHOPTORSHI SAMADDAR

A struggling actress trying to make her dreams come true, a superstar, a love story gone wrong – this is what Raihan Rafi's web film "Floor Number 7" opened with to its audience.

Bagging record-breaking subscriptions, the Chorki original was released worldwide this Eid. Marking its release date, streaming platform Chorki sold a record-breaking subscription among the audience.

With high expectations and a promising star-cast featuring Tama Mirza, Shobnom Bubly, Sumon Anwar, Shahriar Nazim Joy and the debutant Raaz Mania, "Floor Number 7" has earned both positive and negative reviews from its viewers.

While the audience lauded the performance by some of the artistes, some claimed that expressions were too loud to be natural. Nevertheless, the overall reception "Floor Number 7" received was quite overwhelming for the team.

Director Raihan Rafi feels seems to be

happy with "Floor Number 7". "As a director, I feel criticisms teach you more than praises," he asserts. Thus, I wholeheartedly welcome suggestions from my spectators. At the end of the day, its them I make films for."

Nevertheless, the maker also was commended for showcasing variation when it comes to characterisation. Alongside incorporating the cherished characters Pakhi (played by Tama Mirza) from "Khachar Bhitor Ochin Pakhi" or Abony from "Taan" (played by Shobnom Bubly) in a completely new form, this production also marked the OTT debut of Shahriar Nazim Joy and the acting debut for Abdullah Al Mahfuz, known by his stage name Raaz Mania.

"I always try to put forward a star in a way that the audience has not seen him before," adds the director. "New faces and portrayal of old faces in a new avatar always excite me."

Tama Mirza was praised for her performance in this project. "I believe that I still have a long way to go, and feel that this was not my best," shares the actress. "This

time, 'Pakhi' has many layers, and I had to tone down my expressions to fit the role."

The actress also had very minimal dialogues in this production. "When it comes to acting, I feel one's face should speak louder than their dialogues and that is what I aimed at in this project."

Debutant Raaz also showed promise in the role of Sadman Chowdhury. "I had been waiting to work for a director who would assure that the production quality will be delivered to the audience as promised. Working with Raihan Rafi was no less than a dream for me," says Razz, who had auditioned alongside 40 other artistes for this role.

"Consciously appearing subconscious before the screen is key to achieving perfection while performing a certain character, and this is what I learned from my first film," he adds.

Regardless of criticism, the project does deserve a watch for the audience to decide for themselves.

NEWS

Law may enable govt

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According to TIB's analysis, as many as 25 guidelines needed to be passed in the case of the Digital Security Act to prevent abuse, but only one has been passed so far.

It also said that the law contains many discrepancies in the area of data localisation and cross-border transfer.

The Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross Border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific was signed by Bangladesh and came into effect from February 2021.

The UN agreement, meant to accelerate trade digitalisation by the electronic exchange of trade-related data across borders, requires exchange of personal data, pointed out TIB.

It is unclear whether commercial data will be excluded," said Alam.

No internet service can be availed without the exchange and processing of sensitive personal data, he stated.

"The law is quiet on direct marketing,

whistleblowers, witness protection and cookies," said Alam.

In the law, the penalties for companies are disproportionate, they said. Violations of the law can be punished with fines up to 25 percent of the annual turnover of the company.

TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said, "While trying to protect the rights to personal data of citizens, the law runs the risk of giving the government bureaucratic control over citizens' data."

Trusting the businesspeople was a mistake

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Though the businesspeople didn't increase edible oil prices during the Ramadan, the millers, refiners, dealers, wholesalers and retailers hoarded the item 10 days before the Eid as they knew the prices would be hiked after the Eid. This caused severe disruption to the supply chain and led to an artificial crisis.

He further said that if necessary, his ministry would seek to engage the Rab in maintaining a stable supply of edible oil in local markets.

Bangladesh (CAB), said the commerce ministry's lack of appropriate measures led to the edible oil crisis.

The minister should have been aware that a section of unscrupulous traders might take advantage of the situation, as edible oil prices were on the rise over the last few months.

"This happened because appropriate action was not taken timely," he noted.

Rahman further said the minister relied solely on businesspeople's

commitments, but they didn't keep their word. The government should have intervened in the edible oil market at the appropriate time.

It should hand out exemplary punishment to those responsible for the artificial crisis so that they don't dare to do it again, he said.

Meanwhile, some consumers told this correspondent that they were grappling with the rising prices of soybean oil that is still in short supply.

Sayed Ali Sheikh, a resident in Mirpur Eastern Housing area, said his family's consumption of edible oil has come down considerably due to the increase in soybean oil prices.

He said his family of eight has already cut the consumption of vegetable and fish to free up money to buy cooking oil.

The government should revise down the prices of edible oil so that people with fixed income can afford it, he added.

Budget carrier Flynas

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government allowed a third carrier which they thought would create scope for delivering better services to the pilgrims.

M Shahadat Hossain Taslim, president of HAAB, alleged that Biman and Saudia make and change decisions almost arbitrarily without considering the pilgrims' problems.

"Pilgrims will now have another choice. They will be able to buy tickets at a competitive price," he told The Daily Star.

He demanded that the government allow more Bangladeshi and

foreign carriers to ferry hajj pilgrims to ensure a better and smooth hajj management.

Some neighbouring countries, including India, Pakistan, Indonesia and Malaysia, are allowing third carriers to operate hajj flights.

The HAAB president said if more airlines are granted permission, hajj agencies would be able to offer more hajj packages, including those with shorter stays in Saudi Arabia, which would ultimately benefit the pilgrims.

Currently, the pilgrims need to stay in the Gulf

country for at least one month to perform the rituals under a hajj package.

This year, a total of 57,585 Bangladeshis will perform hajj, likely to be held on July 9, subject to sighting of the moon. Of them, Biman will carry half of the pilgrims and the rest would be ferried by Saudia and Flynas.

In 2019, around 1.27 lakh Bangladeshis were allowed to perform the ritual. Due to the pandemic, the largest annual congregation of the Muslims was held on a limited scale in the last two years.

Debt servicing may become tricky in three years

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multilateral lenders are being replaced with costlier bilateral loans.

And the bilateral loans are coming at a higher interest rate and shorter grace and repayment periods due to Bangladesh's graduation from the low-income bracket.

"There is \$50 billion of concessional and semi-concessional foreign assistance in the pipeline and yet I am going after bilateral loans," he said, while lamenting the low utilisation of the cheap funds.

At least \$10.5 billion against the high-value loans and supplier credit from

bilateral sources would become due soon as their grace period ends.

"The repayment implications for the macroeconomy will become evident from 2024-25 onward."

External private debt is posing to become a sore point too, he said.

As of last fiscal year, external private debt is \$18.69 billion after it increased by \$4.6 billion in fiscal 2020-21.

"It is growing exponentially. And our domestic borrowing situation is no less worrying."

Domestic debt increased by \$7.27 billion on average for the past three years and

in fiscal 2020-21 alone it surged by \$9.6 billion.

Although Bangladesh's debt-GDP ratio at 34.7 percent was among the lowest in South Asia in fiscal 2019-20, it misses several elements like private external debt, sovereign guarantees, contingent liabilities and intra-governmental liabilities.

The economist differed with the figure and said the country's total debt stood at 44.1 percent of GDP last fiscal year.

The government's tendency to borrow sees a spike ahead of national elections, according to the CPD's analysis.

"This happens in many

countries. If there is weakness in the democratic process, visible development projects are used to cover the shortcoming. And many of the projects are not economically justifiable. It remains to be seen whether the current trend will be continued or we will be cautious in borrowing."

The government has so far formulated 10 separate debt management policies in the last several years including preparing the Public Debt Act 2021 as well as publishing quarterly debt bulletin issues by the finance division.

"And these documents used while taking borrowing decisions?"

He went on to express dissatisfaction that the finance division has published two quarterly bulletins until September last year and none after that.

Bhattacharya, however, is confident that Bangladesh would not become ensnared in a situation like Sri Lanka.

"The comparison is unreasonable. But surely there are lessons to learn from Sri Lanka."

Sri Lanka's major debt is tied to sovereign bonds, which Bangladesh has resisted so far.

"And the experts in Sri Lanka spoke against the Hambantota Port but the government did not pay heed."

PM quits after violent clashes

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call(s) on the government to conduct a full investigation, including the arrest & prosecution of anyone who incited violence".

Mary Lawlor, UN special rapporteur, said she had heard "disturbing reports... of repression & disproportionate use of force against peaceful demonstrators who

are protesting against allegations of corruption & widespread impunity in Government".

After the Colombo violence, anti-government protesters who had been demonstrating peacefully since April 9 began retaliating across the island, despite the curfew.

MP Athukorala's car was surrounded by thousands

of people in the town of Nittambuwa as he returned home from the capital after the clashes.

He shot two people before fleeing to a nearby building and then "took his own life with his revolver", a police official told AFP by telephone.

Athukorala's bodyguard was also found dead at the scene, police said.

Angry mobs set alight the homes of at least three pro-Rajapaksa politicians, along with some nearby vehicles, while buses and trucks used by the government loyalists in and around Colombo were targeted for destruction.

Doctors at Colombo National Hospital intervened to rescue wounded government supporters, and razed it to the ground, police said. Two wax statues of the Rajapaksa parents were flattened.

On Friday, the government imposed a state of emergency granting the military sweeping powers to arrest and detain people, after trade unions brought the country to a virtual standstill.

Sri Lanka's crisis began after the coronavirus pandemic hammered vital income from tourism and remittances, starving it of foreign currency needed to pay off its debt and forcing the government to ban many imports.

This in turn has led to severe shortages, runaway inflation and lengthy power blackouts.

Overwhelming support for Nato bid among Finns: poll

AFP, Helsinki

More than three quarters of people in Finland now support joining Nato, a new poll showed yesterday, after opinion on the military alliance flipped following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.