



(From Left) Anjan Chowdhury, Runa Laila, Ferdausi Rahman, Sabina Yasmin and Asaduzzaman Noor.



Afran Nisho won Best Actor (Television).



Mehazabien Chowdhury was awarded as Best Actress (Television).

Meril-Prothom Alo Awards 2021

A dazzling celebration of the best in showbiz

Runa Laila and Sabina Yasmin were visibly moved, when it was time to receive their Lifetime Achievement honours. “Why are you giving me the Lifetime Achievement Award, my life is just starting,” jested Runa Laila.



Siam Ahmed won Best Actor (Popular Choice) for his role in “Mridha Banam Mridha”

SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

The image of legendary artistes Runa Laila and Sabina Yasmin being given Lifetime Achievement Awards by an emotional Ferdausi Rahman -- will be immortalised as one of the most meaningful, significant and iconic moments in the history of the Meril-Prothom Alo Awards.

The 23rd iteration of the prestigious award function was held at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre's (BICC) Hall of Fame, on Friday night.

As stars poured in donning unique attires, the event became a melting pot of the best that our showbiz world has to offer -- actors, directors, musicians, cinematographers and journalists made it a unique entertainment hub, that went sorely missing for two years due to the pandemic.

The show opened with a heartfelt speech by Matiur Rahman, Editor of The Daily Prothom Alo, followed by a vote of thanks by the Managing Director of Square Toiletries, Anjan Chowdhury.

A minute of silence was observed for Aly Zaker, Sarah Begum Kabori, and all other stars that we lost, during the two-year hiatus of the programme.

The event, hosted by Riaz, Ferdous and Nusraat Faria, progressed with mesmerising performances, one after another. A mashup of timeless songs originally sung by the Lifetime Achievement Awardees were



For ‘Alatchakra’, Jaya Ahsan won Best Actress (Popular Choice).

soulfully voiced by Dilshad Nahar Kona and Sanzida Mahmood Nandita. Animes Roy and Pantha Kanai rocked the stage with Coke Studio Bangla's “Nasek Nasek”, on which Siam Ahmed and Bidya Sinha Mim performed a brilliant choreography.

Runa Laila and Sabina Yasmin were visibly moved, when it was time to receive their Lifetime Achievement honours. “Why are you giving me the Lifetime Achievement Award, my life is just starting,” jested Runa Laila. Eminent actor Asaduzzaman Noor adorned the awardees with ceremonial scarfs. As the legends serenaded the audience, they proved that they had not missed a beat. “Thank you Meril-Prothom Alo for this honour. The fact

that I get to receive it from Ferdausi *apa* makes it even better,” said Sabina Yasmin.

The award function in itself was a jubilant celebration of new and old, with the likes of Jaya Ahsan and Siam Ahmed establishing their dominance with their wins as best actors respectively (Popular Choice) -- and the stars of television and OTT, including Mehazabien Chowdhury, Afran Nisho, Tasnia Farin, Manoj Pramanik leaving a mark, as they were awarded for their powerful on-screen performances.

After becoming a sensation in the Cannes Film Festival last year, “Rehana Maryam Noor” bagged two awards for Best Actress (Badhon) and Best Film in the Critics' Choice category. OTT sensation “Mohanagar” director Ashfaq Nipun was also awarded in this category. Fazlur Rahman Babu added to his legacy, as he won Best Actor (Critic) for his role in “Khanchar Bheto Ochin Pakhi”. N Rashed Chowdhury was rewarded as Best Director for “Chandrabati Kotha”.

Talented rising musicians Abanti Sithi and Tanveer Evan made their presence felt, as they won awards for best singers in the Popular Choice category.

Performances continued to woo the audience, as Afran Nisho, Mehazabien, Sabila Nur and Tanjin Tisha performed in an energetic medley of songs, proving to the film fraternity that the small screen could go toe-to-toe with them when it comes to panache.

An inspired and content audience walked out of BICC on Friday -- getting to watch, interact with and even take selfies with their favourite stars -- as the industry looks to have bounced back from the dire times of the pandemic.

READ THE ONLINE VERSION FOR THE FULL ARTICLE AND LIST OF WINNERS.

Meet Sriya Lenka, the first Indian K-pop star

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

18-year-old Sriya Lenka has made history by joining South Korean group, Blackswan. She, along with new member Gabi Dalcin from Brazil, after the duo trained for months under the group's label DR Music.

After the exit of Hyeme in 2020, the label hosted global auditions to find new members to join the group. Sriya, born in Odisha, was scouted from over 4,000 applicants.

The news was announced on May 26, by the label's Instagram account.

Blackswan comprises of Youngheun and Judy from Korea, Belgium-based Senegalese rapper Fatou, and Japanese-Brazilian singer Leia. They debuted as RANIA in 2011, and then took the name of BP RANIA in 2016. They debuted as Blackswan on October 16, 2020 with the full album Goodbye Rania.



Bangladesh to be celebrated as ‘Country of Focus’ at Mumbai Int’l Film Festival

Bangladesh is the “Country of Focus” at the 17th Mumbai International Film Festival (MIFF), which begins today. India is honouring 50 years of Bangladesh's independence at the event.

Around 11 films including “Hasina: A Daughter's Tale” will be screened at MIFF 2022. Netflix's “Mighty Little Bheem: I Love Taj Mahal” will have its world premiere at the prestigious festival.

The NEAI restored version of Satyajit Ray's documentary “Sukumar Ray” is supposed to be premiered at the event.

The ‘Golden Conch’, the highest honour of the festival, will be awarded to the best film.

The MIFF 2022 will be held till June 4.



NEWS

Connectivity is a priority

FROM PAGE 1
Conclave”, in Assam's Guwahati in India yesterday.

A Shillong-based think tank called Asian Confluence, in collaboration with the Union External Affairs Ministry, Act East Policy Affairs Department of the Assam government, North Eastern Council organised the NADI (Natural Allies in Development and Interdependence) conference.

Momen said, over time much of the connectivity the two countries had between their rivers had been suspended but a lot of it is in the process of revival.

He mentioned that over the years, Bangladesh and India have re-established river, road and railway networks that are connecting India to Northeastern India.

Bangladesh, located between South and Southeast Asia, is eager to be the bridge between the rest of South and Southeast Asia, including Myanmar and Thailand, and landlocked Nepal and

Bhutan, to ease the means of trade, he said.

“River routes are more important because they are cost-effective and environment-friendly.”

India and Bangladesh have been facing similar natural disasters, Momen said, citing examples of recent flash floods in Assam and Sylhet that have caused havoc to much of the infrastructure and crops.

“We can have a strong regional weather forecasting system to take measures well ahead of time,” Momen said.

He added that Bangladesh and India have 54 transboundary rivers, and a common approach of managing the rivers and navigation can greatly help both the countries.

While meeting Jaishankar on the sidelines of the conference, Momen also spoke of signing the Teesta Water-sharing Agreement, which was left hanging due to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's last-minute opposition.

Dhaka and Delhi are

working on the water-sharing of six small rivers.

Meanwhile, Jaishankar said an India more connected to the Northeast and Southeast more connected to India's neighbours will mean a complete transformation of the regional economy.

He also spoke of the restoration of six historical rail links with Bangladesh, overland movement of goods using 28 notified Land Customs Stations, and the Maitree Bridge over the Feni River that connects Bangladesh and Tripura.

Jaishankar added that the intricate and intertwined cross-border geography is being synergised by agreements on the movement of goods from Indian ports through the Chattogram and Mongla ports in Bangladesh, and from there overland to Tripura and other parts of the Northeast.

“What happens when the Northeast, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar get more deeply intertwined? Each of them stands to

benefit from more access, opportunities, resources, and markets. These endeavours will literally bring the ASEAN closer to us.

“It is definitely within our ability to overcome geography and rewrite recent history if only we can get the policies and the economics right.”

DHAKA SEEKS DELHI'S HELP

At the event, Momen said there are more than a million Rohingyas in the country, many of whom may turn to extremism. He sought help from India and other neighbouring countries to repatriate them to Myanmar.

“They have been temporarily sheltered in Bangladesh for the last five years and they all want to go back. Since repatriation has not yet begun, they are getting frustrated and many are getting involved in criminal activities.”

He said all should work together to maintain stability and security of this region by repatriating the Rohingyas from Bangladesh to Myanmar.

World's loneliest

FROM PAGE 12

Positioned about 10 kilometers from the nearest road, the Desert Post Office of inner Mongolia doesn't see too much human traffic. But in the age of the internet, that's not an insurmountable hurdle. Ms Zhang and her friend, Luo Meng came up with the idea of a ghostwriting business for people who wanted to send letters and postcards from the world's loneliest post office,

without actually visiting the place.

Zhang's idea turned out to be a big hit, especially during the pandemic, with people unable to travel to see their loved ones. Now, she and her colleagues at the post office can hardly keep up with the online requests from people asking for cards to be shipped both around China and to countries like Singapore or Australia.

Bringing this remote

post office back to life was somewhat of an adventure. First, Ms Zhang and her friend, Luo Meng, had to convince a few other people to help them rebuild it.

At first, they planned to build a wooden structure and transport it into the desert, but that proved too difficult to pull off, so they ended up transporting the building materials there and building the shack on the spot, which took 20 days to complete.

After building the structure, they filed an application with China Post, and after review, the wooden shack became one of over 700 post offices in China. Every day, letters and postcards are written here, adorned with the post's special desert-themed stamp, transported 10 km to the nearest road, from where they are picked up by a post truck and then sent all over the world.

Trading a lake for houses

FROM PAGE 1

If it's filled up, where would the rainwater from the areas go?”

He said the pond is also earmarked as waterbody in the revised DAP, yet the Caab did not take any objection certificate (NOC) from Rajuk before starting to fill it up.

Anisur Rahman Nayeem, councillor of ward-47 of Dhaka North City Corporation, said waterlogging has already been worsening in these areas due to the move.

“For the last 50 years, the waterbody has been used as a rainwater retention pond. Filling it up would increase waterlogging problems,” he said.

Water bodies in and around the capital have indiscriminately been filled up in the last few decades, primarily due to rapid urbanisation and unplanned growth.

According to a 2019 study by the Bangladesh Institute of Planners (BIP), individuals, businesses, real-estate developers, organisations, and even government agencies have gobbled up 1,072 acres (57 percent) of the 1,879 acres of flood flow zones in Dhaka metropolitan areas in that

decade.

Since the official gazette on the city's Detailed Area Plan (DAP) was issued in 2010, the core city lost 3,440 out of 9,556 acres of flood flow zones, water retention areas, and water bodies till 2019, it said.

Experts say the unrelenting stress on water bodies, along with the poor drainage system, exposes the city dwellers to severe waterlogging even after moderate rain.

“The master plan of Dhaka is not safe in the hands of the government. This is because the government agencies fill up water bodies at will and tend to justify it as being done in public interest,” said Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association.

“If filling up wetland contrary to the master plan is done by the government, it causes two long-term damages. First, it weakens the moral authority of the government to punish violators, and second, it devalues the sanctions of the master plan,” she told The Daily Star.

Both are dangerous for a city already ranking very low in the livability index,

she added.

Adil Mohammad Khan, former general secretary of Bangladesh Institute of Planners, said a government body like Caab cannot violate the DAP and fill up a waterbody.

“This is an immoral practice and they cannot fill up water bodies without taking NOC from Rajuk,” he told this newspaper.

He further said many government agencies do not conduct proper impact assessment before taking up development projects. As a result, they end up filling the water bodies, he said.

Adil said there is a directive from the prime minister to keep around 12 percent waterbodies while building any housing project in any area.

It is not only Rajuk's duty, but Caab also has to keep 12 percent waterbodies in the areas that are under its jurisdiction, he added.

Councillor Anisur Rahman Nayeem said the city corporation had repeatedly requested Caab not to fill it up and also informed the matter to the DNCC mayor.

“Caab is a government organisation. If they do not follow the wetland

protection act, who will punish them? Who will hold them accountable?” he asked.

“Under the leadership of the DNCC mayor, we have been cutting a lake for the last couple of weeks on the eastern side of the Hajj camp as an alternative, to reduce the waterlogging problem in the areas,” he said.

Selim Reza, chief executive officer of DNCC, said they will take necessary steps in this regard after getting information from the field level.

Caab Chairman Air Vice Marshal M Mafidur Rahman told The Daily Star that they are implementing the housing project without affecting the environment.

“We have appointed a foreign consultant for structural design of the housing project and the work is going on accordingly.”

Mafidur also said they are not violating the Playground, Open Spaces, Gardens, and Water Bodies Conservation Act 2000.

He said the land on which the housing project is being implemented is Caab's own land.

“This is not Rajuk's land,” he said.

Russia willing

FROM PAGE 12
he has raised in conversations with the Italian and Austrian leaders in recent days.

The Kremlin chief also warned Macron and Scholz against ramping up arms supplies to Ukraine, saying they could further destabilise the situation in the pro-Western country.

Ukraine and Western countries have accused Russia of weaponising the food crisis created by its invasion of Ukraine, which has sent the prices of grains,

cooking oils, fuel and fertilizer soaring.

Russia has blamed the situation on Western sanctions against it, and on the mining of Ukrainian ports.

The Kremlin said Putin also said Russia was willing to resume talks with Ukraine.

“Special attention was paid to the status of the negotiations that are frozen because of Kyiv. President Vladimir Putin confirmed the Russian side's openness to resume dialogue,” it said.

JCD protests go

FROM PAGE 12

of law enforcement agencies, such incidents will recur. Most of those involved in campus violence are not students there. They raise no demands on students' rights. Implementation of political parties' agenda by student bodies is creating instability on campus.”

He said law enforcement agencies and the university administration need to take adequate measures to avoid further violence. Otherwise, large clashes may take place.

government and the university administration, he said, “Why should students carry rods, sticks, and weapons?”

DU Vice Chancellor Prof M Akhtuzzaman said, “A certain quarter always tries to destabilise the campus and create panic to make political gains. We expect that educational environment on campus will always remain favourable.”

Asked about the demand for calling a meeting of the Parishesh Parishad, he declined to comment.

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