

Will ‘Saturday Afternoon’ ever see a theatrical release?

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SHARMIN JOYA

Our film industry is relishing a new wave of life, steering the audiences back towards it. In recent times, films like “Poran” and “Hawa” have often been going houseful in theatres, breaking individual records for halls around the country. There are a number of films that are slated to get approval from the censor board, while some are preparing for release. In this race, many have forgotten about films that never saw the light of day, which includes Mostofa Sarwar Farooki’s “Saturday Afternoon”.

Based on the gruesome terrorist attack in Dhaka’s Holey Artisan Bakery in 2016, the 83-minute film was shot in one take.

Farooki submitted the project to the censor board on January 9, 2019. After reviewing the film, the board members had expressed their impressions as mostly positive to several media outlets at that time. Mushfiqur Rahman Gulzar was one of the jury members to appreciate the film.

A day later, however, controversy started brewing over social media about how the film might hurt religious sentiments of Muslims in the country, owing to Zahid Hasan’s beard and Nusrat Imrose Tisha’s hijab.

The film was scheduled to be re-screened by the censor board on January 15, 2019. Peculiarly, they denied the film’s theatrical release, on the grounds that it may deepen the religious divide in the country, and distort Bangladesh’s image globally.

Bangladeshi artistes, in this regard, have raised their voices against the verdict several times. Recently, the issue was raised once again, on social media. Many also claimed that the censor board is still following the rules under the Film Act of 1963 – and have demanded to reform the outdated act.

Moreover, there is no specific reason why the film was ‘rejected’ on the second screening by the Film Censor Board of Bangladesh. In a recent live video conversation with Shahriar Nazim Joy, Farooki described the whole scenario, stating that if there were any genuine issue – it would have been raised in the first screening. Why would a second screening be warranted then?

The film filed an appeal against the verdict



The crew of ‘Saturday Afternoon’ on the last day of shooting.

given by the censor board. The appeal was headed by Nasir Uddin Yusuf, Morshedul Islam and Abdul Gaffar, in support of Farooki. Since then, three years and seven months have passed, without any response from the authorities.

Despite not being granted a theatrical release in Bangladesh, the film went on to impress international critics, jury and audiences. It was reviewed by prestigious outlets like Hollywood Reporter and Variety. “Saturday Afternoon” won the Russian Film Critics Jury Prize and the Komersant Prize at Moscow International Film Festival in 2019. It also grabbed the NETPAC Award and High School Award at Vesoul International Film Festival of Asian Cinema in 2020.

Hollywood Reporter published – “Unfortunately, it has been banned in Bangladesh on the grounds it could ‘damage the country’s reputation’ and incite religious hatred. The only thing this Bangladesh-Germany co-prod could do to the country’s reputation is improve it, and its (the film’s) plea for religious tolerance is nothing short of touching.”

The film, a Bangladesh-Germany joint production, is produced by Jaaz Multimedia, Chabial and co-produced by Tandem Productions (Germany).

Besides “Saturday Afternoon”, filmmakers

Enamul Karim Nirjhor’s “Nomuna” and Nazrul Islam Khan’s “Rana Plaza” are also waiting for responses from the Film Censor Board of Bangladesh.



Married women can now participate in ‘Miss Universe’

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Competitions like “Miss Universe” attract young women to come and participate, to determine who is the most ‘beautiful’ young woman in the world. However, until now, the 70-year-long competition only allowed unmarried women to participate.

Now, a change has been made to the rules of the competition, which will allow married young women to also participate from now on. Starting from next year, married women will be able to participate in “Miss Universe”. At the same time, pregnant women and mothers will also be able to enter the competition.

Pori Moni and Razz blessed with a baby boy

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Celebrity couple Pori Moni and Sariful Razz have been blessed with a baby boy at Evercare hospital around 6:40 pm today.



Sariful Razz confirmed the news to The Daily Star. He also noted that both mother and child are healthy. The star also took to Facebook to let all of their fans know the good news.

“Alhamdulillah, Congratulations my dear wife Pori Moni. We have been blessed with a

baby boy,” read Razz’s post. Pori Moni and Razz announced their pregnancy on January 10. The couple declared that they secretly tied the knot on October 17, 2021.

NEWS

Parties sitting together

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ideologies. “This is the hallmark of democracy,” he said.

Haas said the fundamental way of improving people’s lives is to give them the opportunity to vote in a fair and transparent election. But from US experience, he knows that it is difficult to do so.

He said such an election requires involvement of the Election Commission, political parties, civil society and law enforcement agencies. If any one of them fails to fulfil its responsibilities, or if one intimidates another, fair elections become difficult to hold.

Speaking about the e-learning platform, Haas said it provides different courses of international standards on leadership, strengthening democracy, conflict resolution, and communications.

He said one of the modules targets women leaders, as they want women to be present in all tiers of leadership – local, national and even in the international level – to flourish democracy.

Hasan Mahmud said promotion of democracy is not the work of any single political party, but of all. In the last 50 years, democracy has been threatened whenever arms were used to control power.

He hoped the next election will be fair and transparent with the participation of all parties.

Amir Khasru said grooming and development of political parties is crucial for better politics.

It is not only those who have money, political family background or muscle power who should join politics; ordinary people need to be trained and be engaged in politics for proper public representation, he said.

Shamim Haider said all parties have to take responsibility for the current situation, a time when people are worried about the transparency and neutrality of elections.

Democracy International Chief of Party Dana Olds said the political parties having differences of opinion does not mean they are enemies of each other. “You can work together for common causes.”

Latest draft too leaves

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physical boundaries of Bangladesh.

At the same time the government can direct the DG in charge of this law to take action “in the interest of sovereignty and the integrity of Bangladesh, the security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states or public order”.

The state minister himself, however, questioned the need for this provision – and reiterated that the draft is a work in progress, and has not been finalised yet.

Concerning storing data locally, Palak said, “We need to make sure that foreign organisations can’t take our data without our consent or cause problems for the state.”

The latest draft, however, included certain conditions under which citizens’ sensitive data can be transferred across borders – this includes international relations, international businesses and immigration.

This transfer has to be governed by the DG of the data protection agency.

The law will also empower citizens to take action against data controllers for violating their rights, states the draft.

According to it, citizens can file

complaints with the data protection agency, and violators will be fined up to Tk 3 lakh for domestic companies, and up to five percent of the annual turnover for foreign companies.

Furthermore, if the scale of a violation is seen to call for stricter penalties, a court will take over and can sentence violators to three years in jail and fine them up to Tk 10 lakh.

Tarique M Barkatullah, director of the National Data Centre, said, “The law is about protection of data, not its control.”

Mohammad Shahidul Haque, former secretary of the law ministry’s legislative and parliamentary affairs’ division and NM Zeaul Alam, senior secretary of ICT Division were present at the event.

Iran navy repels attack on ship

AFP, Tehran

An Iranian naval flotilla thwarted an overnight attack on an Iranian vessel in the Red Sea, a senior commander said yesterday.

2 Rohingya

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Hossain died. Taleb was moved to another hospital and he breathed his last there.

The two might have been murdered over previous enmity. Syed Hossain was shot in the neck, while Taleb was shot in the neck and chest, said the APBN officer.

Police were conducting raids to arrest the criminals, the officer added.

Contacted, Sheikh Mohammad Ali, officer-in-charge of Ukhiya Police Station, said the bodies were sent to Cox’s Bazar Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsies.

Former

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export-oriented industries over the years.

In the lawsuit filed late on Tuesday in the United States, the 13 former Brightway workers say they paid high recruitment fees to middlemen that resulted in debt bondage, worked long hours with few or no rest days, and had their passports taken by the company.

They are seeking damages from Kimberly-Clark, a US personal care company that owns the Kleenex brand, and Australian personal protective equipment supplier Ansell in the Federal District Court for the District of Columbia.

“These companies cannot deny that they had knowledge of forced labour at Brightway,” said Terrence Collingsworth, a lawyer from International Rights Advocates representing the workers.

Collingsworth said he had first proposed mediation with Kimberly-Clark and Ansell to obtain compensation for the workers, but both companies declined.

The United States banned Brightway products from entering the country in December 2021 over suspected forced labour practices, saying it had found 10 of 11 International Labour Organization indicators of forced labour.

Allegations of misconduct at Brightway had been public for at least a year before that.

In December 2020, Malaysian officials found Brightway workers living in shipping containers, and a minister likened the squalid conditions as “modern slavery” after a raid.

Developing countries

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“Whatever the situation [that] is going on worldwide, everybody will be thinking twice to agree to this project,” he said in the interview, referring to BRI. “Everybody is blaming China. China cannot disagree. It’s their responsibility.”

He said Sri Lanka’s crisis highlighted that China had not been rigorous enough in deciding which projects to support. It needs to “make a thorough study” before lending to a project, he added.

Over the weekend, China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi visited Bangladesh and met Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and other top officials.

In a statement, China called itself “Bangladesh’s most reliable long-term strategic partner” and said the pair agreed to strengthen “cooperation in infrastructure”.

Bangladesh last month became the latest country in Asia to approach the IMF for financing as surging commodity prices after Russian invasion of Ukraine weighed on its foreign reserves. The country, a participant in China’s BRI, owes about \$4 billion, or 6 percent of its total foreign debt, to Beijing, reported FT.

The economic hit from the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the surge in global food and fuel prices amid the Ukraine war, has put many developing countries under strain and some are struggling to repay their foreign debt.

According to FT, Kamal said Bangladesh wanted a first instalment from the IMF of \$1.5 billion as part of a total package worth \$4.5 billion, which would include financing to help it fund climate change resilience projects and buttress its budget.

Dhaka moves

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of buying defence equipment was discussed at an inter-ministerial meeting at the foreign ministry.

The development comes ahead of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s visit to India on September 6-7.

In the last several years, top defence officials of Bangladesh and India made reciprocal visits and discussed various aspects of defence cooperation.

During a visit to Bangladesh in December last year, India’s then foreign secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla said Bangladesh would soon

Bangladesh is also seeking up to \$4 billion more in total from a range of other multilateral and bilateral lenders, including the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and Japan International Cooperation Agency, Kamal said. He added that he was optimistic the country would secure loans from them.

Sri Lanka, which defaulted on its sovereign debt in May, is in negotiations with the IMF for an emergency bailout. Pakistan, whose foreign reserves have fallen to enough for just a month and a half’s worth of imports, last month reached a preliminary deal with the fund to release \$1.3 billion as part of an existing \$7 billion assistance package, said the FT report.

Bangladesh has been hit hard by a rising energy import bill, with fuel shortages forcing daily, multi-hour power cuts. Its foreign reserves have also fallen to less than \$40 billion from more than \$45 billion a year ago.

However, analysts say the country’s strong export sector, notably its garment trade, has helped shield it from the recent global shocks and its reserves are still enough for about five months’ worth of imports, providing the country with some cushioning, the British newspaper mentioned. This meant that although “everybody is suffering [and] we’re also under pressure”, Bangladesh was not at risk of defaulting like Sri Lanka, Kamal said. “There is no way to even think of a situation like that.”

The government has responded to the economic downturn by cancelling a series of planned infrastructure upgrades, including investments in building a 5G network and upgrading highways.

import defence-related items from India under the \$500 million LOC provided by New Delhi.

At a press briefing in Dhaka on December 16, he said the defence issue was discussed during President Ram Nath Kovind’s talks with Bangladesh’s top leadership.

During Hasina’s visit to New Delhi in April 2017, India committed \$500 million LOC for Bangladesh’s defence. India provided the LOC in 2019.

On April 11 this year, Export Import Bank of India inked an agreement with Bangladesh’s AFD for making available the fund to the latter.

Mismanagement rampant

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attention of CAAB Chairman Air Vice Marshal M Mafidur Rahman, who chaired the event.

Citing an example of mishandling of luggage, the expatriate said he on July 8 found one of his three suitcases cut and many items from it missing.

Oliullah, an expatriate from Cumilla, complained that he did not find one of his suitcases at the Dhaka airport while returning home from South Africa on July 18.

Several other passengers who used the airport recently said it often takes them two to three hours to get their luggage after arrival.

Several journalists raised before the hearing the muck-talked-about recent incident of slapping of a passenger from Malaysia by a customs official while checking his luggage.

Md Russel and Md Anis alleged that they bought tickets from an agency of Salam Air from abroad to travel to Oman at 1:30pm yesterday.

But after reaching the Dhaka airport, they came to know that no flight of Salam Air was scheduled for departure at that time.

In most cases, the CAAB chairman asked the airport and airlines officials concerned to resolve the passengers’ problems instantly.

Talking about misconduct by officials and employees at the HSIA, the CAAB boss said they were preparing a code of conduct for all stakeholders at the airport.

“Every individual will have to follow this code of conduct if he/she wants to continue working at the airport,” he added.

Mafidur said they will also organise training for all airport officials and employees so that they behave well with all passengers.

Regarding mismanagement in handling of luggage, the CAAB chief said as per instructions from the Prime Ministers’ Office, they have formed a committee to look into the matter on a regular basis to improve the situation.

He apologised over the slapping of a passenger by a customs official.