

'My debut Hindi film brings me happiness, gratitude'

JAYA AHSAN

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Jaya Ahsan is currently in India, shooting for her first Hindi film with Bollywood actor Pankaj Tripathi. The actress also celebrated the New Year with her mother there.

In a candid conversation with The Daily Star, she talked about the new year and recent ventures.

What is keeping you busy in India?

I have completed my part of the shooting for the film. As my mother was also here, I decided to spend some leisure time with her. I feel happy to have spent quality time with my mother here.

You celebrated the New Year in India. How was the experience?

I rarely go outside to celebrate the New Year, so I spent the evening at home. However, I have exchanged New Year's greetings with my loved ones through Facebook and phone calls. I love doing this instead of going out. However, I am quite often sad on New Year's Eve.

Why do you feel sad on this special occasion?

I am always in favour of celebrating good things. However, the blasting of ear-splitting music, combined with the blaring sound of fireworks frighten street animals like dogs and cats. Many birds also die due to this. My heart cries for them. They can't share their



pain with us, but we have to be more empathetic towards them.

Which food item attracts you the most in Kolkata?

Quite often, I find myself here for work purposes. So, there are a few food items that I really enjoy. I love Nolen Gur Rosogolla here, which is a winter delicacy in Kolkata. It is so soft and delicious that it can melt in your mouth.

Could you tell us about your feelings about working on your debut Hindi film?

Of course, there is a feeling of happiness. I am playing a wonderful character in this film and this fact fills me with joy. The director is also making the film with the utmost care and love. Overall, I am thoroughly enjoying the whole experience.

What other ventures do you have planned in Kolkata?

The year has just started. Right now, I want to focus on completing this film. Apart from this, I am also in talks for a few other projects. I will disclose the information once things are finalised. At the same time, some of my Tollywood films are also awaiting release. I am hoping that at least two or three of my films will be released this year.



Dipjol-Misha ready to play 'Kabadi'

Two popular 'villains', Dipjol and Misha Sawdagar, will be sharing the screen together with the web series *Kabadi* directed by Rubayet Mahamud. Recently, the trailer of the web series was unveiled by the makers, and it has created excitement among viewers.

"It's a Comedy thriller series, where four friends try to solve the mystery of video footage. They also try to find out the relationship between this mysterious video footage and 10 crore taka," said the director. "Dipjol and Misha Sawdagar are both just amazing," he added.

The series also casts Sayed Zaman Shawon, Tamim Mridha, Khairul Basar, Sadia Ayman and Kamrun Nahar Dana, and Morshed Mishu among others.

'Wednesday' renewed for season 2



It's time for more spookiness as *Nevermore* opens its door once again for the epic adventures of *Wednesday Addams*. After months of speculations, Netflix has finally confirmed the season 2 renewal of the goth mystery series.

The series follows the Addams family's 16-year-old sardonic and unyielding, goth daughter as she enrolls in a new boarding school called *Nevermore Academy*—where she finds herself surrounded by enigmatic spirits and supernatural beings.

The first season of the Jenna Ortega-starring Netflix series *Wednesday*, which debuted on November 23, has surpassed "Stranger Things" season four and "Squid Game" to rank as the third most watched series of all time.

NEWS

Empowerment of upazila parishad

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But these amendments did little to reduce the influence of administration officials in the local government.

On September 1 this year, the Local Government Division formed a nine-member upazila survey and settlement committee putting UNOs as its president and chairmen as advisers. The committee was formed to look after survey work [what survey].

It is not an isolated example where the local elected representatives are made to look inferior to the admin officials.

"We are never invited to the meetings of these committees," said Saiful Islam Khan Biru, a five-term Chairman of Monohardi Upazila in Narsingdi.

The UNOs do not even consult them about the government's development plan.

This lack of coordination affects the local communities who are deprived of various government services.

Citing an example, Saiful said he went to visit Monohardi Upazila Health Complex a few days back and found three to four doctors out of the seventeen appointed there.

"When I asked about the rest, they said some are in meetings in Dhaka or are at the DC office. Some are on leave," he said.

According to him, if upazila chairmen were empowered, the

doctors and other local government officials would be accountable to local elected representatives.

"You will find many chairmen who do not have proper education. Besides, there are many who become chairman without a vote and are famous for hooliganism," said an additional secretary, explaining why upazila chairmen are not empowered.

"A UNO is an educated and qualified person. How can you expect an educated person to work under them?" he said.

A corrupt chairman will either turn an officer corrupt or prevent them from doing their job properly.

"In many cases we find allocation was made for public roads but the chairman either pocketed the fund or built roads to serve their family interest," the official added.

Sources said officials of the 26th batch earlier opposed work as secretary under the zila parishad chairman.

"We also have to consider these things," he said.

The sub-committee of upazila parishad recommended making the decision considering all aspects and reality of the country.

Local government expert Dr Tofail Ahmed pointed out a multifaceted problem that impedes the strengthening of the upazila parishad.

Unions are under upazila, but upazila chairmen have little regards for union chairmen, municipality

mayors and other members. The same goes for the union parishad chairmen.

"Upazila chairmen are more concerned about their power and benefits rather than making the parishad administratively strong. Backed by the central government, UNOs, on the other hand, consider themselves bosses of the upazila," he said.

Organisational weakness coupled with power conflict and apathy of the government are major reasons for the weak local government system.

Underscoring the need for farsighted planning, he said, "Instead of separate acts, there should be a uniformed act for all local parishads, which will operate like a parliamentary system for effective governance," he added.

LGD Minister Tazul Islam admitted that there are some problems and that they are working to solve them.

He suggested that both UNOs and local government representatives refrain from a bossy mentality. "When two people work together, some issues may arise. Both parties need to demonstrate tolerance and solve problems amicably," he said.

When his attention was drawn about the act which gives executive authority to chairmen instead of UNOs, he said, "Forceful enforcement of the Act may not bring fruitful results. It may create an adverse impact."

McCarthy secured the gavel only after agreeing to a demand by hardliners that any lawmaker be able to call for his removal at any time. That will sharply cut the power he will hold when trying to pass legislation on critical issues including funding the government, addressing the nation's looming debt ceiling and other crises that may arise.

Republicans' weaker-than-expected performance in November's midterm elections left them with a narrow 222-212 majority, which has given outsized power to the right-wing hardliners who have opposed McCarthy's leadership.

Those concessions, including sharp spending cuts and other curbs on McCarthy's leadership,

could point to further turbulence in the months ahead, especially when Congress will need to sign off on a further increase of the United States' \$31.4 trillion borrowing authority.

Over the past decade, Republicans have repeatedly shut down much of the government and pushed the world's largest borrower to the brink of default in efforts to extract steep spending cuts, usually without success.

Several of the hardliners have questioned McCarthy's willingness to engage in such brinksmanship when negotiating with President Joe Biden, whose Democrats control the Senate. They have raged in the past when Senate Republicans led by Mitch McConnell agreed to compromise deals.

Case finally filed

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Asked about the delay in filing the case, Rengweng Mro told The Daily Star that they were afraid of filing the case as they are under the surveillance of rubber company staffers.

"We filed complaints for such incidents earlier but got no outcome. Also, we could not go to local bazar to purchase daily commodities after filing the complaints. In addition, our people got beaten up by the company staffers," he added.

The victims alleged that the attack on January 2 was carried out by people of a rubber plantation to drive them away from the area, but the plantation company denied it and said that the indigenous people were building houses on company land.

The attackers also looted mobile phones, household utensils, poultries, cattle, and clothes of the villagers.

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The platform used the method followed by International Road Assessment Programme (iRAP).

Mahbub said they could not assess the losses of property caused by road crashes as they did not get any information in this regard. But the actual losses would be three to four times higher than the media reported.

"Considering all these facts, the economic losses incurred last year may be more than 1.5 percent of the GDP," he said.

He said 6,276 people between 18 and 65, the productive segment of the population, were killed in road crashes last year. This was 81.36 percent of the victims who died.

BIKES THE MAIN CAUSE

Mahbub said the numbers of road crashes and deaths involving other vehicles remained almost unchanged in the last three years. Actually, the gradual rise in road crashes and deaths involving bikes is the main reason for the increase in the total number of road crashes and deaths, he added.

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Road accidents eat up

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road safety although a stringent road transport act was enacted in the wake of a massive students' movement in 2018 for safe roads.

The Road Safety Foundation said 7,713 people were killed and 12,615 injured in 6,829 road crashes last year.

Last year's figures were the highest since 2019, it added. The number of road crashes and deaths in 2021 were 6,284 and 5,371.

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road accidents last year. Of the dead, 76.41 percent were between 14 and 45 years old.

Head-on collisions between bikes and other vehicles caused 21.26 percent accidents while 32.22 percent accidents occurred after bikes fell into ditches as their drivers lost control and 44.87 percent accidents happened after other vehicles ran over bikes and 1.65 percent accidents occurred for other reasons.

Bike riders were solely responsible for 38.31 percent of the accidents, Mahbub said, adding that a large portion of bikers were youths who either don't know traffic rules or ignore them.

He said 1,627 pedestrians were killed last year. Of them, 479 were pedestrians aged between three and 11. They were killed on their way to and from school, playgrounds or while crossing roads near their homes, he added.

ACCIDENTS DOUBLED IN CAPITAL

At least 246 people were killed in 259 road crashes in the capital last year, which was 79.56 percent higher than that of 2021, the foundation said.

Of the victims, 60.53 percent were pedestrians.

In the absence of bypass, heavy vehicles ply streets of the capital after 10:00pm, resulting in high causalities at night (34.13 percent) and early morning (21.62 percent).

Lack of roads, operation of motorised and non-motorised vehicles simultaneously, occupation of footpaths by hawkers, and lack of awareness among road users were the main reasons behind the accidents.

Saidur Rahman, executive director, and Shahjahan Siddique, vice chairman, of the foundation also spoke at the programme.

Cases against them

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Tarique was filed at that time.

"Although Zubaida Rahman is not involved with politics, a case was filed against her only because she is a member of the Zia family."

The BNP leader said the court verdict was given at a time when a mass movement, under Tarique's leadership, was going on against the government.

Mosharraf also said the Anti-Corruption Commission is oblivious to the massive corruption taking

place in the country.

He said the ACC does not take any step against the ruling party members, who are behind the corruption. "The Anti-Corruption Commission has become a weapon for the government to divert people's attention from the mass movement."

He also termed the cases filed against Tarique and Zubaida false and fabricated and urged the government to give up the path of vengeance and return to the path of proper politics.

McCarthy finally elected Speaker

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McCarthy was elected with the votes of fewer than half the House members only because six in his own party withheld their votes - not backing McCarthy as leader, but also not voting for another contender.

As he took the gavel for the first time, McCarthy represented the end of President Joe Biden's Democrats' hold on both chambers of Congress.

"Our system is built on checks and balances. It's time for us to be a check and provide some balance to the president's policies," McCarthy said in his inaugural speech, which laid out a wide range of priorities from cutting spending to immigration, to fighting culture war battles.

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