

'No filmmaker should have to go through what I did'

Farooki on Shonibar Bikel's censor board clearance

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Amidst the excitement for the trailer for Hansal Mehta's *Faraaz*, a film based on Bangladesh's tragic Holey Artisan attack in 2016, a sour aftertaste was felt by many. Hidden behind the frankly stellar cinematography and characterization of the Indian film was a glaring question – is it appropriate for our neighbouring country to make a film, with however 'noble' intentions, about one of the darkest days of our history?

The sentiment was echoed by many, including the family of the victims – Ruba Ahmed, mother of victim Abinta Kabir, in a press conference questioned, "who exactly gave Hansal Mehta the right to make a film on this attack? Imagine having to relive the death of your daughter on the big screen, just because a director wanted to capitalise on a national tragedy."

She, however, did not have much to comment about Bangladeshi filmmaker Mostofa Sarwar Farooki's *Saturday Afternoon*, noting that it was completely up to Bangladesh's censor board. The reason, partially at least, was the fact that Farooki did not use the names or likenesses of any real victims of the attack in his 83-minute one-shot endeavour.

After waiting for four long years, *Saturday Afternoon* received clearance from Bangladesh Film Censor Board, that too on a Saturday afternoon, yesterday.

The film got the clearance from the appeal

committee led by actresses Suborna Mustafa and Sucharita, former Additional Secretary Nurul Karim, journalist and censor board member Shyamal Dutta.

"I feel relieved now," the director told The Daily Star. The film was submitted to the censor board on January 9, 2019. "It felt like I was stuck on that date of the calendar for the last four years, until today."

After reviewing the film, the board members initially had expressed their impressions as mostly positive to several media outlets at that time. Mushfiqur Rahman Gulzar was one of the jury members to have appreciated 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.

Then, tragedy struck. 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. "For a filmmaker, it was extremely painful," he shared, "There was no clear communication at that time, however, I want to forget everything and keep moving ahead."

"We are now waiting for the official letter, and as soon as we complete the formalities, I will request them to complete the procedures as soon as possible, so that we can release it either on January 27 or February 3."

"I am grateful to my colleagues of Film Alliance of Bangladesh (FAB), to my audience and people from all walks of life who have stood with me," shared the director. "I hope that no filmmaker has to go through what I have, ever again".



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

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Bangladesh

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foxing out three scalps to make things interesting.

Bangladesh appeared to have attuned themselves to the wicket at Willowmoore Park in Benoni in the previous games but on Saturday, the new wicket tested Disha Biswas's troops.

In form batters – Afia Prottasha, Dilara Akter, and Sumaiya Akter – scored 21, 17, and 24, respectively, with strike rates below 100 and Shorna Akter could not replicate her big hits from the first three games. Shorna scored 20 runs off 18 balls before departing to off spinner Reyneke, who managed to break the spine of Bangladesh's batting by sending back three of the aforementioned four Tigresses.

Chasing a low total, South Africa didn't have the best of the starts as they lost opener Elandri Rensburg to a run out before Rabeya castled Simone Louren inside the Powerplay.

The South African camp got the jitters when Rabeya sent back Reyneke and Miane Smit in the eighth over to have the hosts reeling at 33 for four.

But a 70-run stand between Lansman and Meso ensured South Africa's victory.

India blocks BBC

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veterans yesterday slammed the BBC documentary as a "motivated charge sheet against our leader, a fellow Indian and a patriot" and a reflection of its "dyed-in-the-wool negativity and unrelenting prejudice".

They said "it is the archetype of past British imperialism in India setting itself up as both judge and jury to resurrect Hindu-Muslim tensions that were overwhelmingly the creation of the British Raj policy of divide and rule."

Momen defends

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The minister said Tauhidul was withdrawn and suspended after an allegation was made against him. But after a number of investigations, the allegations against Tauhidul were proved to be false. Later, he was promoted to ambassador.

Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen said Austria has been informed about the results of the investigations. However, the Austrian government still decided not to accept Tauhidul.

Dhaka will have own

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The Indo-Pacific region is home to more than 50 percent of the world's population and produces about 60 percent of global GDP, making it the global focus, said Shahriar, adding that healthy competition can usher in healthier growth.

However, an unstable Myanmar, Rohingya crisis, illegal fishing, drug smuggling, human trafficking are some of the major threats the region faces.

Burma's [Myanmar] military is going to be a major security challenge and the country's instability also affects Bangladesh, US embassy political section chief Arturo Hines said.

He said the US Indo-Pacific strategy highlights resilience, security, prosperity, democracy. And, Bangladesh is already advancing those principles by peacefully setting maritime demarcation, becoming a leader in health and climate change

initiatives.

Bangladesh Enterprise Institute Distinguished Fellow Farooq Sobhan suggested that Bangladesh gives a hard look before joining the IPEF. Bangladesh can opt to become an observer first as Canada is, he said.

Noting US Senate passing Burma Act late last year, he said the Burma Act contains provisions for substantial humanitarian aid, support for the democracy movement. "We should take advantage of the act for a sustainable solution to the Rohingya crisis."

Foreign ministry's Maritime Affairs Unit Secretary Rear Admiral (retd) Khurshed Alam, Brig Gen (retd) M Sakhawat Hussain, UN Resident Coordinator in Bangladesh Gwyn Lewis, Australian High Commissioner Jeremy Bruer, EU Ambassador Charles Whiteley, Japanese Ambassador Iwama Kiminori also spoke at the event moderated by BCIPA Executive Director Prof Shahab Enam Khan.

Ex-GCC mayor Jahangir

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after the AL didn't nominate them.

The decision to withdraw the expulsion orders for those who formally apologised to the party was made at a meeting of the AL National Committee on December 17 last year.

A source close to Jahangir said the former mayor received a letter regarding the withdrawal of his expulsion yesterday.

The letter, signed by AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader on January 1, also mentions that any further violation of the organisation's rules will be deemed unforgivable.

"It is to let you know that you were expelled from the organisation for your involvement in activities against the interest, ideal, discipline as well as the constitution and declaration of the Bangladesh Awami League."

Quader said since Jahangir apologised and promised not to get involved in such activities, he has been pardoned.

The ruling party expelled Jahangir at a meeting of its Central Working Committee on November 19, 2021 at the Gono Bhaban.

After the video of Jahangir making the comments about Bangabandhu and the Liberation War went viral, the AL asked him to explain.

In his reply, Jahangir had claimed the video was doctored.

A week after he was expelled, the Local Government Division on November 25, 2021, temporarily suspended Jahangir from his mayoral post amid allegations of graft, abuse of power, and violation of rules.

The Anti-Corruption Commission is investigating complaints of irregularities involving Tk 7,800 crore against Jahangir.

In January last year, Gazipur City Corporation wrote a letter to the senior secretary of the Local Government Division mentioning his involvement in embezzlement of Tk 2.6 crore.

Police have no clue

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various progressive and social welfare works and had no dispute with anyone.

Patgram police said an investigation has been launched.

Project to save the Karnaphuli

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The project, to be implemented by the BWDB, was scheduled to begin in July last year and be completed by June 2025 with full government funding, according to the DPP.

After primary approval, the proposal was forwarded to the planning wing of the ministry by its DPP board, said Tayan Kumar, adding that that was where the project ground to a halt.

He, however, said, "We spoke to AKM Enamul Haque Shamim, deputy minister of the water resources ministry, when he recently visited the port city. He promised a quick approval of the project."

According to the proposal, a 7.4km-long sustainable dam will be built, while 2.4km-long dams will be built on both banks of the river. In addition to those, dams will be built to guard the banks of five branch canals of the river.

The board's data showed that due to rapid erosion, 150 small industrial structures, 45 roads, 20 bridge-

culverts, 3,750 homes, 140 km of electric lines, five markets, 12 different public and private educational and religious institutions, six different public and private buildings, and 2,500 hectares of agricultural land are at risk.

During a recent visit to the area, this correspondent found that there was no permanent embankment, due to which the residents of numerous settlements near the river live in constant fear of erosion.

"The Karnaphuli had earlier devoured my house and crop lands. I had to rebuild my entire life. I demand that the [issue of] erosion be solved permanently," said Nur Uddin, a resident of Boalkhali.

Aliur Rahman, general secretary of Chattogram River and Canal Protection Movement, told The Daily Star that the socioeconomic situation in Boalkhali is not improving due to frequent river erosion.

"Many people have been uprooted and lost their homes. Meanwhile, children living near the riverbanks

are unable to attend school."

If long-lasting dams are not constructed to stop river erosion, it will worsen the situation and the people will suffer more, he added.

Speaking to The Daily Star, SM Rezaul Mustafa Kamal, additional secretary of the planning wing of the ministry, said that due to the government's cost containment policy, they cannot sanction projects unless there is a dire need.

However, he said the deputy minister has asked them to specifically look into this project, and so the DPP will be sent to the water commission soon.

According to a 2012 assessment by the Department of Environment, at least 35 of the 140 different species of the river are not found there anymore.

On the other hand, a list created by the Chattogram District Administration, in response to a 2010 High Court order, said the Karnaphuli has fallen victim to 2,112 grabbers along its 40km-long banks, from Kalurghat to Patenga.

Ijtema ends today

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Health camps were set up for the devotees to provide them with treatment like the previous years.

The metro rail service will run from 8:00am to 5:00pm today for smooth movement of the devotees.

The first phase of the three-day Bishwa Ijtema ended on January 15.

Tabligh Jamaat has been organising the congregation in Tongi since 1967. In 2011, it divided Ijtema into two phases to accommodate a large number of attendees.

Besides, as done during the first phase of Bishwa Ijtema, Gazipur Metropolitan Police (GMP) has issued some traffic directives to ease devotees commuting to and from the congregation ground.

Movements of vehicles from Tongi to Bhogra Bypass on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway, Kamarpara Road, Abdullapur to Bypole on Ashulia Road will remain suspended from 6:00am today till the end of Akheri Munajat, said GMP Commissioner Mollah Nazrul Islam.

The GMP commissioner requested commuters to use the bypass road to avoid traffic gridlock.

Boy rescued from container

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After hearing the incident, I went to Faruk's house. Faruk and his wife told me that the boy is their son Ratul," said Shahidullah.

When the news spread in the area, local journalists also went to Faruk's house for his interview.

"My son Ratul left home on a Friday afternoon around two months ago and never came back. We searched for him in our area and at some of our relatives' houses. But we could not find him," Faruk said during a television interview.

"At one stage, we gave up any hope of getting him back. All of a sudden, we came across photos of our son in the media," Faruk added.

His wife Rokeya Begum told reporters, "I want my son back. I request the authorities concerned to take necessary measures to bring back my son as early as possible."

Contacted, Monoharganj Police Station Officer-in-Charge Shaiful Alam said, "After hearing about the matter, I sent an officer to Faruk's house. Faruk and his wife are claiming that the boy is their son. We are looking into the claim."

On January 17, a boy was rescued from an empty container in Malaysia's Port Klang. A video clip of

it went viral on social media.

The Daily Star obtained several clips in which the boy called himself "Fahim" when Bangladeshi employees at the port asked him his name in Bangla.

Journo found dead

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Dhaka Metropolitan Police (Mirpur division).

The door was locked from the inside and police found all his belongings in a neat and tidy state, he said.

Zaman rented the flat, owned by one of his former colleagues at the newspaper, two years ago. He used to live alone.

Concerned over his well-being, his colleagues contacted the house owner as Zaman was absent from the office for the last seven days, the DC said.

The house owner then informed the police as Zaman did not respond.

Police officials suspected it was a case of natural death. The Criminal Investigation Department has collected evidence from the spot.

The body will be sent to Shaheed Shrawardhi Medical College for autopsy, Jasim said.

He also served The Daily Star as a sub-editor.