

Channel i's 'iScreen' joins the OTT race

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ANTARA RAISA

Amidst the cacophony of traffic on Thursday night, the Sheraton Hotel in the capital's Banani area lit up with the presence of some of the top celebrities of our country, as Channel i launched their new OTT platform, iScreen. From glamorous dance performances to surprise content announcements, the star-studded gala evening was a successful treat to the eyes.

Celebrities like Afzal Hossain, Mamanur Rashid, Subarna Mostofa, Badrul Anam Soud, Runa Khan, Tanvin Sweety, Raihan Rafi, Syed Ahmed Shawki, Azmeri Haque Badhan, Nipun Akter, Apu Biswas, Mehazabien Chowdhury, Afran Nisho, Chanchal Chowdhury, Sariful Razz, Pori Moni, Shamol Mawla, FS Nayeem, and Nazifa Tushi were present at the event. Additionally, cricketer Shakib Al Hasan was also present in the festivities.



Guests at the launching ceremony.

PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSVED



The gala evening opened with an exciting performance and a short introductory video for iScreen. Then, the newly appointed Project Manager of the platform, popular actor Riaz Ahmed, greeted the audience with a big smile.

"It is a historic night for all of us because Channel i is stepping into the big world of OTT. I can't remember the last time I saw such top celebrities under one roof," said Riaz.

Following his short speech, Faridur Reza Sagar, the visionary of Impress Telefilm and Managing Director of Channel i said, "We have been getting responses from the audience since the in-house launching of the platform. Statistics for the last two months show that each visitor spent an average of 18 minutes on

our platform, which is a big thing for us."

"We started the journey with 3000 hours of content. Not only web series and films are available, but the audience can also watch live TV and sports from the platform. We are working on building the biggest online music archive too," he added.

Faridur Reza Sagar then announced the release of three hit films of last year, *Hawa, Damal* and *Beauty Circus*, on iScreen.

The gala evening was colored with a variety of performances. The stage was lit up by dance performances on the hit songs of these three films. At first, there was a dance performance on the song *Boye Jao Nokkhotro* from the film *Beauty Circus*. The performance mesmerized the audience with its brilliant choreography, which incorporated different moves of acrobatics and contemporary dance.

In between the performances, there were a few surprise announcements that revealed the upcoming contents of iScreen. Although the projects mostly feature popular actors Mehazabien Chowdhury and Afran Nisho, they still look quite promising.

A short teaser was shown at the event which revealed the first look of the thriller



web series, *A Clueless Murder* directed by Noyeem Imtiaz Neamul. The series will feature Afran Nisho and Sabil Nur in the lead roles. The series was based on a mysterious murder that happened a long time ago in a building.

Apart from this, Vickey Zahid is back again with another thriller project titled, *Ami Ki Tumi* featuring Mehazabien Chowdhury in the lead role.

Mayashalik famed director Shihab Shaheen announced his project, *Nil Joler Kabbo*, starring Afran Nisho and Mehazabien in vital roles.

Mehazabien Chowdhury is optimistic about the launch of a new OTT platform and said, "Through iScreen, there will be a new start in our industry. It just opened a new door for us to experiment with our roles. I hope they will tell those stories which were never told before."

"The audience has a thirst for good content. I hope iScreen will be able to quench this thirst," added another guest, Nusrat Imrose Tisha.

iScreen will offer three subscription plans for the audience. They include a one-month subscription for BDT 25, a six-month subscription for BDT 125, and a one-year subscription for BDT 225.

Taylor Swift drops four unreleased songs ahead of Eras Tour



On the eve of the opening night of her Eras Tour, Taylor Swift had announced that she would be releasing four unreleased songs.

Three of the tracks are part of Swift's major re-recording project, while one was a never-before-released track, composed during the "Lover" era, according to Variety.

The four songs that were released earlier yesterday, include: *Eyes Wide (Taylor's Version)*, *Safe & Sound (ft. Joy Williams and John Paul White)(Taylor's Version)*, *If This Was a Movie (Taylor's Version)*, and *All of the Girls You Loved Before*.

'Patalghar', 'Nakshi Kanthar Jamin' to compete in BIFF

Jaya Ahsan starrer *Nakshi Kanthar Jamin (A Tale of Two Sisters)* and Nusraat Faria starrer *Patalghar* is all set to compete in the 'Asian Competition' category at the prestigious Bengaluru International Film Festival (BIFF). The 14th edition of this festival is going to start on March 23.

Nakshi Kanthar Jamin (A Tale of Two Sisters) is based on the Bangladeshi Liberation War. Earlier, the film had been nominated for the competition category of the 19th Barcelona Human Rights Film Festival.

Furthermore, after receiving accolades for his debut directorial project *Komola Rocket*, Noor Imran Mithu's second venture *Patalghar*, had a world premiere in Goa last year. The film depicts the story of a mother daughter duo, played by Afzana Mimi and Nusraat Faria.



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owns two houses worth Tk 15 20 crore in Moulibazar town, two poultry farms and a fish farm on 20 acres of land, a brick kiln and several lorries. His children live abroad.

A lawyer wishing anonymity said there have been speculations that sometimes investigators give flawed charge sheets against criminals in exchange for bribe.

Asked about the discrepancies between what is mentioned in the charge sheet and the ex-DB official's claim, Sub-Inspector Shahim Ahmed of DB's Tejgaon zonal team and the IO of the case, suggested taking comments from Md Shafiqul Islam, additional deputy commissioner of Tejgaon division DB.

Contacted, Shafiqul said the IO prepared the charge sheet based on the information he gathered during investigation of the particular case.

He then started controlling the racket from behind the scenes and received the maximum share from the sale of the stolen goods.

"Shahid has been orchestrating the RMG thefts for over two decades

and now commands a racket of 40-50 members," Khandaker Al Moin, Rab's legal and media wing director, told a press briefing on February 4.

Police and Rab officials said there are 10-12 such gangs that have been involved in stealing 30-40 percent of the products from almost all cartons of readymade garments, mainly from major consignments, being carried to Chattogram port for shipment.

As the cases are filed on charges of "regular theft", which is a bailable offence with a maximum punishment of only three years in jail, the criminals seek bail easily, legal experts said.

The law enforcement officials said almost all of the gang leaders and members were arrested several times earlier, but they secured bail within some days of their arrest and then got back to the crime, putting garments exporters at the risk of losing their reputation along with foreign buyers.

The report added, "The police have also cracked down on protests and there have been allegations of

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harassment, threats and attacks on human rights defenders, journalists and the political opposition," it said.

"The draconian Digital Security Act continued to be used to target journalists and critics," it added, pointing that journalist Rozina Islam is still facing charges under the Official Secrets Act for exposing corruption.

"In 2022, the Bangladeshi authorities coerced and intimidated families of victims of enforced disappearances to silence them and targeted families of journalists and activists in exile. They also vilified leading human rights group Odhikar and arbitrarily revoked its registration."

The report added, "The police have also cracked down on protests and there have been allegations of

torture, ill-treatment and enforced disappearances committed by the security forces, including the Rapid Action Battalion, an elite anti-terrorism unit."

There has also been a sustained attack on the opposition in the lead-up to the 2024 elections, said Civicus.

The rights body recommended that the government stop using excessive force against peaceful protesters, stop preempting and preventing protests and allow the freedom of peaceful assembly.

They also urged that the government "repeal any legislation that criminalises expressions based on vague concepts such as 'fake news' or disinformation, as such laws are not compatible with the requirements of legality and proportionality".

One killed, nine hurt

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The building collapsed easily as it was old, said Fakhruddin.

The ground floor of the building was used to store paper rolls and other goods. Labourers used to live on the first floor.

Ilias Dewan, former president of Narayanganj District Atta- Flour Mill

Owners' Association, is the owner of the building, said Abdul Kadir, president of Nitaiganj Retail and Wholesale Multipurpose Cooperative Society.

This century old building was included on a list of dilapidated buildings prepared the authorities.

Ilias could not be reached despite repeated attempts.

It's hard to find

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Eminent jurist Dr Kamal Hossain said whenever the country faced a crisis, Zafrullah rushed there, took risks and tried to overcome the challenge along with the people.

AK Azad, president of Newspaper Owners' Association of Bangladesh and managing director of Times Media Limited, praised Zafrullah's contribution to the country's progress.

Hossain Zillur Rahman, executive chairman of Power and Participation Research Centre, said Zafrullah wanted to build a just society, and reflection of his dream can be found in his work.

Tapan Chowdhury, managing director of Square Pharmaceuticals, said the people of Bangladesh will benefit from his works for years to come.

In his speech, Zafrullah said he wanted to be a banker when he was young, but his mother inspired him to be a doctor. "Now I can say my mother showed me the right way."

He then said ensuring the

people's right to vote is imperative. The political parties should hold dialogues, and such events can take place publicly.

He also said the ruling party leaders must change their stance of criticising Nobel Laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus. It is also unjust that BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia has not been granted bail.

Samakal Editor Mozammel Hossain said Zafrullah not only played a role in defining what should be a people-oriented healthcare system but also demonstrated it by creating instances.

Economists Debapriya Bhattacharya, Prof Mustafizur Rahman, Binayak Sen, local government and election expert Badruddin Majumdar, eminent jurist Shahidul Malik, Chief Executive Officer of Channel 24 Tarun Chakrabarty, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's personal physician Prof ABM Abdullah, and politicians Kader Siddique and ASM Abdur Rob were among the speakers at the event.

Contest nat'l polls

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pace again.

Meanwhile, the Dhaka city (north) unit AL organised another discussion in the capital's Bhashantek area, while the Jibon League organised another such programme at the Uttara Friends Club ground.

Speaking at the AL's discussion, AL Presidium Member and former minister Matia Chowdhury said, "The main strength of the Awami League is in its activists. The leaders may compromise, but the activists remain constant when it comes to the question of the party and Sheikh Hasina."

She urged the party men to remain united ahead of the next national election.

Meanwhile, SM Mannan Kochi, general secretary of Dhaka (North) unit AL, said, "Stay alert and united to get the Awami League elected in the next parliamentary polls. If the BNP tries to murder people in the name of its movement, we will resist them."

Pak court drops

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lawyers said.

The case has been brought by the Election Commission of Pakistan which has accused Khan of not declaring gifts received during his time as premier, or the profit made from selling them.

Pakistan's courts are often used to tie up lawmakers in lengthy proceedings that rights monitors criticise for stifling political opposition.

Khan claims authorities want to throw him in jail so he is unable to campaign for upcoming elections.

Some 4,000 security officials including elite police commandos, anti-terrorism squads and paramilitary rangers have been deployed around Islamabad with hospitals put on high alert.

Police meanwhile raided his house in a plush Lahore neighbourhood after blocking nearby roads and suspending mobile services in the area.

As the political drama unfolds, Pakistan is in the grip of a stark economic downturn, risking default if help cannot be secured from the International Monetary Fund.

The security situation is also deteriorating with a spate of deadly attacks on police, linked to the Pakistan Taliban.

Last year Khan was shot in the leg during a political rally, an assassination bid he blamed on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.