

# A FRENCHMAN in Chittagong

Meet the director of the first western feature film in Bangladesh

**“We were at once asked to stop shooting for a month or two. The principal French actor left us, after shooting for a few days. Hence, we had to change both the actor and the actress.”**

SHISHIR BHATTACHARJA

Léon Desclozeaux, born in 1951, is a Paris-based film director and producer, who has been active for nearly four decades. He had come to Bangladesh in the early nineties, as the producer of a documentary on the ‘Flood Action Plan’, conceived by the then-French Government.

In 1992, when Léon’s team revisited Bangladesh for a second documentary, he was inspired to capture the country on film. In the monsoon of 1998, Léon took a high-interest loan from a French bank, came to Dhaka with a big film crew, and started to shoot his film *Chittagong: The Last Stopover*. The film received recognition around the globe and claimed numerous prizes. Unfortunately, it was never released in Bangladesh.

During a recent visit to Bangladesh, Shishir Bhattacharja interviewed him on behalf of The Daily Star.

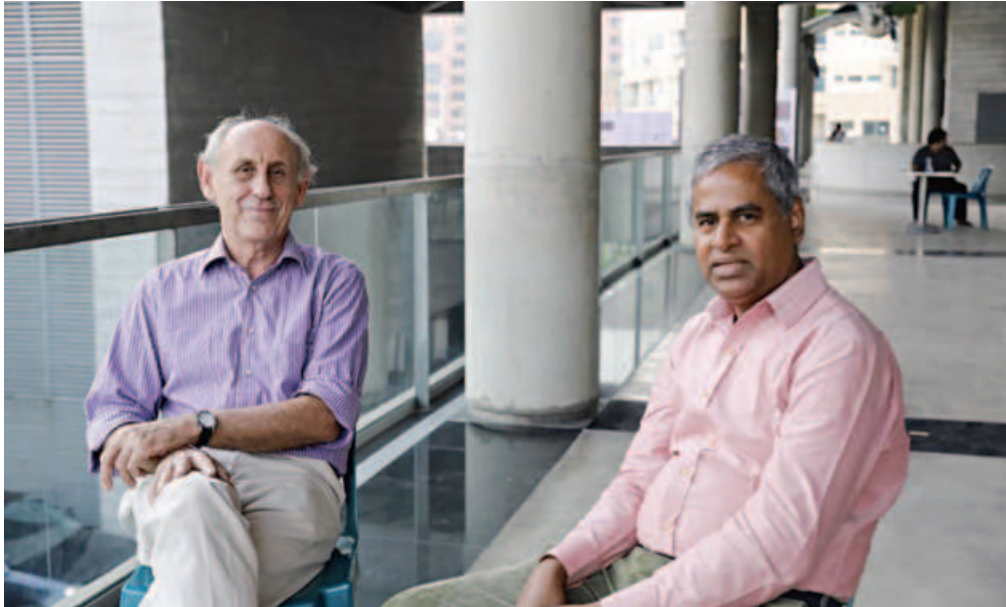


PHOTO: SABINA YASMIN

**You have been quite familiar with Bangladesh for over thirty years. What impression do you have about the country and its people?**

It’s a beautiful country with wonderful people. They know how to smile at you, and it is not a fake one. They have a lot of kindness in their hearts for others living around them.

**To date, you are the only producer-director from the west, who made a feature film in Bangladesh. What were the**

**reasons to have chosen Bangladesh as your location?**

This country has an extraordinary natural beauty, that remains unexplored to date. I saw this beauty when I had been producing documentaries here in the nineties. I thought I must keep a record of this beauty on celluloid and expose it to the outside world.

**Could you tell us more about your film, “Chittagong: The Last Stopover”?**

The film narrates the story of a ship captain, Paul, who brought his cargo vessel to the ship (graveyard) in Chattogram, to be broken into pieces. While traveling through Bangladesh by train and launch, he meets a village woman Alima and her son Moti. He accompanies them to their village and soon the conflict starts. Both Alima and the foreigner get banned by the village tribunal.

**Did the shooting go smoothly? Do you have any bad memories?**

Oh, a lot! The Bangladeshi actress acting as Alima got angry, because we were shooting

without make-up and with the normal people of the country, instead of professional actors. Out of a whim, she wrote a letter to the authorities, blaming us for secretly shooting an inappropriate film, out in the deep sea with our digital cameras.

We were at once asked to stop shooting for a month or two. The principal French actor left us, after shooting for a few days. Hence, we had to change both the actor and the actress.

Otherwise, the whole Bangladeshi team worked with zeal and we could finally finish our shooting successfully.

**Would you like to say anything to the new generation of cinematographers in Bangladesh?**

I am quite eager to see their work. Meanwhile, I will ask them to make films about their extraordinarily rich society and beautiful country, with authenticity and courage.

**The interview was taken in French and translated into English by Shishir Bhattacharja.**



## ‘Myself Allen Swapan’ spinoff coming this Eid

The witty and funny Allen Swapan will be back with his smuggling business this upcoming Eid, as the new teaser revealed the release date of the spin-off series, *Myself Allen Swapan*, directed by Shihab Shaheen. The teaser was released on the official Facebook page of Choriki.

With Choriki’s original series, *Syndicate*, Nasir Uddin Khan carved a place in the hearts of the audience by overshadowing his co-stars. The spin-off series will be focused on the origin story of the character and how he became a kingpin in the money laundering business.

The series also stars Rafiath Rashid Mithila as the wife of Allen Swapan, Shimla, Sentu, and Sumon Anwar, among others.

## Harry Styles wins Artist of the Year at iHeartRadio Music Awards



Earlier yesterday, Harry Styles was crowned the ‘Artist of the Year’ at the iHeartRadio Music Awards 2023. This year, the awards ceremony took place at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles. While the former One Direction member was not present at the show, he did thank his fans via a video message for the honour.

Harry Styles was nominated in multiple awards this year, including ‘Artist of the Year’, ‘Song of the Year’, and ‘Best Music Video’ for *As It Was*, and Favorite Residency for *Love on Tour*. With a total of eight nominations, he was tied with Taylor Swift and Lizzo, as one of the most recognised artistes on the show.

# NEWS

## Bangladeshi

FROM PAGE 12

School, is from Ramroypur village under Parbatipur upazila of Dinajpur and lives in Rangpur with his parents.

The 17-year-old is physically challenged.

He became the best debater of the tournament out of 534 participants from different countries.

The US government organises parliamentary debates every year in two categories – British Parliamentary and Asian Parliamentary – to find future leaders.

Russia became the champion country in the competition followed by the Netherlands. The United States was the second runner-up.

According to the White House website, Holland Lop Michigan of the Russian Federation became the best speaker in the competition while Shah Muhammad Rakib Hasan of Bangladesh was the best debater.

Rakib was scheduled to be formally presented with the award at the White House South Court Auditorium on March 28 (Tuesday-US time). US President Joe Biden would be the chief guest and Jeff Giants the special guest at the ceremony.

Despite getting an invitation from the organisers, Rakib is missing the ceremony for various reasons, including not having a passport.

The website also wrote in a footnote that the last record belonged to Louie Anderson by winning 139 debates in a row. Rakib, winning 144 debates in a row, broke all the past records and got a place in the White House Record Book.

He so far has earned a huge reputation in domestic debating competitions.

## Adani buys

FROM PAGE 12

Rahav Behl promoted Quintillion Business Media runs the news platform Bloomberg Qunit, now called BQ Prime.

Adani group had set up AMG Media Networks Limited for its foray into businesses of “publishing, advertising, broadcasting, distribution of content over different types of media networks”.

In September 2021, the Adani group hired veteran journalist TV Sanjay Pugalía to lead its media company.

## DU beset with gang crimes

FROM PAGE 12

of accounting and information system department were suspended.

The decision came after Shahbagh police arrested Naimur and another student, Sakib Ferdous, on Sunday in a case over assaulting Zubair.

A member of “Proloy gang” said there is a Messenger group titled “Proloy”, and 30-35 members of the group are second year honours students.

He said Saad Ibrahim and Tabarak Mia are the leaders of the gang. They usually hang around the DU medical centre and they used to take drugs at Suhrawardy Udyan. Some of them were involved in mugging in the area.

“We opened the group when we were first year students. We used to live in ‘gono rooms’ in terrible conditions. That’s when we started going to the medical centre as it was quite common for us to fall sick. Then we realised the medical centre was more comfortable than the dorms,” he added.

### TWO GANG MEMBERS HELD

Fazle Nabil and Sadique Ahmad, both residents of Bijay Ekattor Hall and members of Nishachor, were arrested last month for robbing a truck driver

## RHD moves to get rid

FROM PAGE 12

The DPP, which will contain an estimation of the cost for the entire project, will be sent to the Planning Commission through the Road Transport and Highways Division for approval, he said.

The Jica is going to sign today a Tk 4,319 crore loan as the first tranche for the project, RHD source said.

Since widening the entire highway under a PPP-model will take longer, the government might go for the bypasses and flyover first with Jica finance for expeditious implementation, a RHD source said.

Since widening the entire highway will take longer, the government appears to be more focused on upgrading the highway with Jica finance “for expeditious implementation of the project, and the Road Transport and Highways Division already sent a proposal to the Economic Relations Division in this regard,” RHD sources said.

### TWO OTHER PROJECTS

As China abruptly stepped aside from its role as a financier of the Joydebpur-Ishwardi Double Line

on Buet campus.

The DU suspended them, but many of their fellow gang members have become cautious, said a student.

He said many Nishachor members ride bikes and deliberately hit cars. “Other gang members waiting around rush to the spot and start shouting about reckless driving. At one stage, they would realise money from the car occupants. If any car driver tried to protest, they would assault the driver,” he added.

Speaking to The Daily Star, DU Vice Chancellor Prof Md Akhtaruzzaman said, “We have learnt about a gang from the media. We can’t tolerate any anti-discipline activities by students on campus.”

He said they earlier had taken actions against students who were involved in criminal activities and violated the rules of the university.

“We have formed an inquiry committee to investigate the ‘Proloy gang’ incident. We will take stern action if we find any student guilty of committing crimes.”

This newspaper could not reach Saad Ibrahim and Tabarak for comments as their phones were found switched off.

## Two ex-land

FROM PAGE 2

died during the trial.

The court cross examined seven prosecution witnesses before delivering its verdict.

According to the case statement, one Swarna Khan bought 3.5 decimals of land in the capital’s Dakshinkhan area in 1987.

In 2007, then settlement officer Ashraf, in collusion with another accused, ordered to record her property in the name of Nurunnabi Firoze.

Following the incident, Swarna challenged the record with the higher court and won the legal battle.

On September 8, 2011, the Anti-Corruption Commission filed a case against Ashraf and three others with Teigaon Police Station.

After an investigation, the ACC pressed charges against them on December 29, 2012.

## 13 Jamaat men held

FROM PAGE 12

day remand prayer.

In the remand prayer, the SI mentioned that they carried out the drive and arrested them from the office of Rahmatullah and Mansur and recovered eight crude bombs and some organisational leaflets and literature.

The SI also stated that they came to know that the arrestees stored the explosives there with a plan to carry out subversive activities to damage public properties and tarnish the image of the government.

Abdur Razzak, a lawyer of the accused, opposed the remand prayer, saying the arrestees neither stored the crude bombs nor were they planning any subversive activities there.

They were performing Isha and Tarabih prayer when police picked them up, he told the court.

On March 20, the Detective Branch of Dhaka Metropolitan Police arrested 54 leaders and activists of BNP’s Munshiganj unit from Banani Club and claimed that they were planning to hold anti-government activities.

However, BNP said the leaders and activists went there to attend a social programme followed by a dinner being invited by a leader who was supposed to leave the country to perform umrah in Saudi Arabia.

## It causes 20pc

FROM PAGE 2

already taken steps to improve air quality management, including the approval of the Air Pollution Control Rules. Along with strong national actions, transboundary solutions will be important to curb air pollution. Through analytical work and new investments, the World Bank is helping Bangladesh reduce air pollution,” said the official.

The report said that air pollution travels long distances, crossing national boundaries and gets trapped in large “airsheds” that are shaped by climatology and geography.

It identified six major airsheds in South Asia where spatial interdependence in air quality is high.

“Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Pakistan share a common airshed that spans the Indo Gangetic Plain. Particulate matter in each airshed comes from various sources and locations, for example, in many cities, such as Dhaka, Kathmandu, and Colombo, only one-third of the air pollution originates within the city.”

## 2-7 years in jail

FROM PAGE 1

According to the draft law, an electoral candidate has to clear all utility bills at least a day before the submission of nomination papers. Otherwise, the candidature would be cancelled, he said.

A candidate will have to attach a TIN certificate and receipts of tax payment to the nomination paper as well, said the secretary.

As per the existing law, a person shall be disqualified for election if he fails to pay telephone, gas, electricity, water or any other bill of any service providing organisation of the government seven days before the day of submission of nomination papers.

Yesterday, the cabinet in principle also approved the draft of the Land Development Tax Act-2023 with a provision to collect land development tax through electronic system in every fiscal year instead of Bangla calendar year.

Recognising the transboundary nature of air pollution, South Asian nations Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan joined together to draw up the Kathmandu Roadmap for improving air quality in the Indo-Gangetic Plain and Himalayan Foothills.

“Air pollution is not limited to a city, state, or national boundaries – it is transboundary in nature,” said Cecile Fruman, World Bank director for regional integration for South Asia.

“South Asian Countries in the same airshed – common geographical areas that share the same air quality – can reduce the alarming level of air pollution only if they take a coordinated approach. By working together countries can get results better, faster and cheaper,” Fruman added.

The most cost-effective scenario, which calls for full coordination between airsheds, would cut the average exposure of PM2.5 in South Asia to 30 µg/m³ at a cost of \$278 million per µg/m3 of reduced exposure, and save more than 750,000 lives annually.

“All land development taxes will have to be paid online,” Mahmudul said, adding that the owners of less than 25 bighas (8.25 acres) won’t require to pay tax.

He said the union land assistant officer (tahsildar) will prepare a list mentioning the specific amounts of tax for every landowner, and send the list to the assistant commissioner (land) to display it at the latter’s office. If anyone is aggrieved with the tax amount, the person will be able to lodge an objection with the AC (land) and also the district collector. The district collector will dispose of the objection within 15 days.

The cabinet approved the president’s draft speech to be delivered in the coming special session of the 11th parliament.

The Jatiya Sangsad will go into a special session on April 6 to mark the 50th anniversary of parliament.