

NAYEEM on a hunt for perfection



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

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SHARMIN JOYA

ASP Mahid faces a great challenge in his career, as multiple murders leave the country in terror. A missing case leads him towards one of his biggest missions ever.

The intriguing storyline of the Hoichoi web series “Mission HuntDown” will unfold many mysteries on June 28.

FS Nayeem, fresh off a career rejuvenation through OTT, shares his expectation about this project with The Daily Star.

It is being said that the audience will find a “new Nayeem” in this project. Why?

People’s expectations have skyrocketed after watching the trailer, as they have never seen me in a true action flick before. In my long career, I have always been concerned about being overused or misused. I have never appeared in repetitive roles on-screen. Ashfaque in *Karagar* had one kind of persona, while Mahboob in Chorki’s *Overtrump* was completely different, and this is going to be another 180 degrees, and I am sure the audience will get it, once they watch the show.

How did you prepare for the role?

ASP Mahid is literally Sunny Sanwar himself. It is extremely difficult to portray a living person, that too when he is the director.

Also, there were benefits of watching him closely and taking tips about action scenes from him, as it would be more real.

I tried to observe Sunny bhai very closely to understand his personality, and how he sees the world. Luckily, he was satisfied with my work.

Give us some insight about ASP Mahid. Mahid’s motto is to free his country from terrorists. Through his journey, he has to pay a lot. Moreover, you will see the human inside a cop, and not just the police who runs everywhere holding a gun!

He is a family person; he loves his colleagues and his country. To be honest, we need at least one Mahid in each sector in our country.

This is where Mahid is different and I have given my best efforts to bring him on the screen.

How do you do your homework to become a character?

I always try to act in a lean way. When I take up any project, my entire time is spent on it. I spend a lot of time with the crew, even before we start shootings or rehearsals. This is just to get the vibe of the story and especially the director’s vision.

Nayeem, in real life, is a very positive personality. What is the secret behind this?

Since childhood, I had faced a lot of comparisons, and encountered many competitions. Since my grandfather was a language activist, a politician and my father was a freedom fighter—being compared to such great personalities was challenging for me. Since I have dedicated my life to acting, I have never tried to become a conventional actor, but create my personality in a way that leaves a mark in one’s heart. I believe a positive smile can bring a remarkable change.

Bubly, Nirab starrer ‘Casino’ receives censor clearance



Excitement is brewing as the Shobnom Bubly and Nirab starrer, *Casino*, directed by Saikat Nasir, obtained an uncensored certificate from the Bangladesh Film Censor Board, on Sunday.

Director Saikat Nasir expressed his gratitude, stating, “I submitted the film to the Censor Board a few days ago, and on Sunday they passed it without any issues. I hope to receive the certificate today. Some members of the board called me over the phone to share the good news and express their appreciation for the film.”

Casino revolves around the operations targeting illegal casinos and money laundering in Bangladesh in 2019. So far, 16 theatres, including Cineplex and Blockbuster, have been finalised for the film’s release, with the possibility of more being added to the list.



‘The Kerala Story’ struggles to find OTT deal

Sudipto Sen’s directorial venture, *The Kerala Story*, has emerged as one of the biggest hits of 2023. However, the film has faced its fair share of controversy and bans due to its sensitive portrayal of religious conversions, ISIS, and love jihad. Initially banned in West Bengal and rejected by many theatres in Tamil Nadu, the film’s makers are now grappling with finding a suitable OTT platform to showcase their film.

Since its release on May 5, *The Kerala Story* has ignited discussions and polarised opinions with its exploration of religious conversions and ISIS involvement. Despite its success at the box office, the film’s producers have been unable to secure a favourable offer from any major OTT platform.

NEWS

High prices keep buyers away

FROM PAGE 12

“I came to Gabtoli cattle market with four big bulls on Thursday, the prices of which are between Tk 9 lakh and Tk 11 lakh each, but I have not received a single offer from a single customer in the last four days, which is very frustrating,” said Zoyan Abedin, proprietor of Tanha Dairy Farm in Chaudhagram, Cumilla.

“People are blaming traders for the high prices, but we had to buy bulls from the local markets about a week ago spending 20 to 30 percent more for each bull than last year,” said Md Tejj Ali, a trader from Meherpur, who arrived at the Kamalapur cattle market with 16 bulls.

Eight of his bulls were raised at his farm, which cost him a lot of money.

“Some customers told us that their salaries did not increase and that’s why they are not offering higher prices this

year than last year. If we do not sell our bulls without making any profit, it would be a big blow to us,” he said.

Kabirul Sheikh, a trader from Kustia, brought 11 bulls to the Dholaikhal cattle market on Friday. He said he sold two of them without profit. “I still have nine more and will try to make a profit from their sale, but there is still a risk if I do not get the desired customers in the last few days,” he added.

Meanwhile, sales at cattle markets in Pabna and Moulvibazar were also slow yesterday.

Cattle prices are high in those two districts as well despite a sufficient supply.

On June 14, Fisheries and Livestock Minister SM Rezaul Karim stated that the number of sacrificial animals this year is around 1.25 crore, which is 4.1 lakh more than last year.

4 out of 5 factories yet to pay workers

FROM PAGE 1

of Bangladesh Textile Mills Association (BTMA).

The rest of the export-oriented factories that are yet to clear half month’s salaries are in Export Processing Zones and the jute mills.

Talking to The Daily Star, BGMEA President Faruque Hassan said, “Most of the factories have already paid Eid bonuses and it is expected that they will also complete the payment of the 15 days’ salary of June by tomorrow [Tuesday].”

The BGMEA has been monitoring the payment schedule, Hassan also said.

Earlier, the government asked the factory owners to pay half month’s salary of June and bonus to workers before Eid.

I have no problem

FROM PAGE 12

cycle of inflation. The government should take steps to overcome this.

“There are syndicates. There is no doubt about it. These syndicates are powerful. But are they stronger than the government? ... If there is a syndicate within the government, it must be identified.”

He said, “He [Munshi] is a successful businessman. I believe that if he is given the freedom to act, he can definitely control it.”

Another JP MP Rowshan Ara Mannan said, “The Ministry of Commerce is not monitoring the market properly... Why can’t he control the market?”

Pir Fazlur Rahman, a JP lawmaker, said the state minister for industries said people cry when they go to the market and the only reason for their tears is the syndicate.

“People understand this. The Russia-Ukraine war alone should not be blamed for the rise in commodity prices. The syndicate has looted thousands of crores of taka from the egg market. Eggs don’t come from Ukraine.”

He said the commerce minister blames some traders for taking advantage. “He [Munshi] himself is a businessman. He knows which businesspeople are doing it. So, are these businesspeople close to him? Is this why he can’t catch them?”

He demanded that the commerce minister says in public why he is not able to catch them.

Munshi in his response said, “We are discussing the syndicate. It is correct that large companies are doing lots of businesses together. We need to think ... We can put them behind bars and we can fine them. That might be possible. But it will be difficult for us to bear the sudden crisis caused by it. That’s why we try to remain within the rules and [tackle the situation] through discussions,” he said.

He said, “One thing that comes up time and again is that I am a businessman and the businesspeople take advantage of me. But I have been in politics for 56 years and I have been in business for 40 to 42 years.

“Someone here asked me to resign. I will tell the prime minister that if he [Mokabbir] takes the responsibility, she can relieve me of my duties ... I have no problem.”

Petition filed with SC

FROM PAGE 12

Jamaat leaders including its Ameer Dr Shafiqur Rahman for holding public meetings as a political party despite its appeal has been awaiting the apex court disposal.

They also filed the contempt of court petition against three government high officials for allowing Jamaat to hold the programmes in Dhaka.

The other four Jamaat leaders are its Secretary General Dr Golam Parowar, Central Nayab-e-Ameer Dr Abdullah Mohammad Taher, Metropolitan South Jamaat-E-Islami Ameer Nurul Islam Bulbul and Nayeb-E-Ameer Ameer, Dhaka,

Advocate Helal Uddin.

Home Ministry’s Senior Secretary (department of public safety) Md Mostafizur Rahman; Inspector General of Bangladesh Police Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun, and Commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police Khandker Golam Faruq have also been made respondents in the contempt of court petition.

Chamber judge of the Appellate Division Justice Md Abu Zafar Siddique yesterday admitted the application and petition and sent those to its full bench for their hearing on July 31, petitioners’ lawyer Barrister Tanya Amir told The Daily Star.

Claims of sexual abuse

FROM PAGE 12

with 6,582 peacekeepers, including more than 400 women, deployed in nine peacekeeping missions in eight countries, according to data of the Armed Forces Division.

Lacroix said they encourage member states to renew their commitment to the uniform gender parity targets.

He said the nature of conflict and the geopolitical context have evolved to such a state that peace operations are confronted with far more complex political and operational environment today. The tactics and weapons utilised by conflict parties require UN peace operations to have far more specialised capabilities.

“But capabilities go beyond the equipment we have. The mindset and composition of our workforce must also be strengthened to meet the new challenges we face. And this includes ensuring we deploy a diverse and gender-balanced workforce that reflects the diversity of the communities we serve,” the UN official said.

The principal staff officer of the Armed Forces Division, Lt Gen Waker-Uz-Zaman, said the women troops in Bangladesh are being trained in a way so that they can reach the leadership level.

He said there are rare occurrences of sexual violence in Bangladesh military, and prompt actions are taken if any such incident happens. Waker-Uz-Zaman said the

ministerial meeting in Ghana should discuss ways of addressing security threats against the UN peacekeepers.

Muhammad A Muhith, Bangladesh’s permanent representative to the UN in New York, said accountability should be ensured for crimes committed against peacekeepers.

UN Under-Secretary-General for Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance Catherine Pollard, Bangladesh Police Additional Inspector General Kamrul Ahsan, Global Affairs Canada’s Director General of the Peace and Stabilisation Operations Ulric Shannon and Uruguay foreign ministry Director General for Political Affairs Luis Bermudez also spoke at the event.

Lacroix is scheduled to leave Dhaka today after wrapping up his three-day visit to Bangladesh.

Huge crowds swarm

FROM PAGE 12

Shortly after midday, pilgrims packed most of the tents, which contain two to three beds and are fitted with water and food.

Many were overcome by the experience as they fulfil a lifelong dream at the sites where Islam began.

Saudi officials say this year’s hajj – one of the five pillars of Islam – could be the biggest in history. After 2.5 million attended in 2019, numbers were capped in 2020, 2021 and 2022 because of the Covid pandemic.

Rejoinder, our reply

FROM PAGE 1

Procurement Technical Unit, additional secretary of the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism (MoCAT), and a board member of Biman’s board were present. A litigator vetted the deal, said the rejoinder.

Biman discounted CAG’s allegation that having less than three bidders is a violation, saying that exceptions are allowed under the public procurement rules.

Biman also said that no information was kept hidden during the bidding process, and that since Biman’s board was involved in the whole process and there is no scope for duping the board.

It said that paying passenger service system (PSS) providers per passenger is internationally practiced and it is normal for those costs to inflate when passenger numbers go up. The bidders acquired the forecasted passenger numbers from Biman before making their financial offer, so there is no scope for the bidder to gain any extra payments.

Biman said that the GDS bid was judged separately by a team comprising of members from the ICT ministry and Buet, led by a joint secretary of MoCAT, and there is no chance of the bidder hiding

information.

It also mentioned that any fees paid to Sabre following their cutover date is what is owed to them.

Our Reply

The Daily Star has in hand all documents relevant in the process and verified the CAG’s report findings with the primary documents including the financial offer and the financial evaluation report submitted to the board.

This newspaper only reproduced the statistics from the CAG report that we independently verified from the primary documents, and the comparison shows that information was hidden in the financial evaluation report, or included in the contract without being presented in the financial evaluation report.

While fees following the cutover date is a normal phenomenon, The Daily Star’s report mentions delay penalties which come up to the exorbitant amount of \$40,000 for five days, without deciding who was at fault.

The Daily Star thanks Biman for listing in detail the senior officials present during the bid selections and maintains that the seniority of an official does not assure that oversights will not happen, as

documented by the CAG report.

While it is true that the PPR allows for three bidders under special circumstances, it sets very specific clauses including requiring the committee to reexamine and justify whether it is absolutely necessary to go ahead with the bid.

The Daily Star is in possession of the meeting minutes of the meetings held by the different committees pertaining to this matter and did not observe a reexamination being documented – if Biman furnishes this paper with documents proving so, we commit to standing corrected.

While it is heartening to know that Biman had provided the forecasted number of passengers to the bidder – as is obvious from bidder’s financial offer – it is also noticeable from the CAG’s calculation that the total price stated by Sabre only consists of a percentage of the forecasted.

We welcome Biman’s decision to form a committee to respond to the audit and hope that Biman shares the report with this paper too.

Since The Daily Star has reviewed the original documents used by the CAG for its audit observations, we stand by our report.