

Shakib Khan, Raihan Rafi conjure up a 'Toofan'

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

In a groundbreaking collaboration, three titans of the Bangla entertainment industry, SVF, Chorki and Alpha-i, are joining forces to produce *Toofan*, starring Dhallywood superstar Shakib Khan. Directed by Raihan Rafi, this colossal production marks the convergence of major film studios, renowned directorial talent, and the nation's popular actor.

The announcement of this cinematic extravaganza took place today during a press conference held at a five-star hotel in the capital. *Toofan* is poised to be a spectacle with all the elements of a blockbuster – a stellar cast, distinguished producers, a visionary director, and the widely recognised Shakib Khan in the lead role.

Raihan Rafi, who would be taking the director's chair for this latest production, expressed his enthusiasm for his role, stating, "I am very excited. Because Alpha, SVF, and Chorki – three big entities are coming together to produce two films simultaneously. This is my first film with Bangladesh's one and only superstar, Shakib Khan. When the three biggest production houses and the biggest superstar come together, there is a genuine hope for something significant with this film."

"We've just started the work. We seek everyone's prayers. However, I can confidently say that this film is going to be a milestone for Bengali cinema," the director added.

Shakib Khan, equally thrilled to be part of this ambitious venture, shared his thoughts on the collaboration, saying, "Our journey to the international film market has already begun, and this time the three giants of the film industry have collaborated to take it to another level."

He further said, "I believe that day is not



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED



too far when Bangali people sitting in the halls abroad will say that—yes, this is our cinema, and making a Tk 100 crore-budgeted Bangla film will not be a big deal for the producers as well."

Shahriar Shakil, managing director of Alpha-i Studios, emphasised the significance of this collaboration, stating, "It took us a lot of time to come to this phase.

Although there has been confusion amongst many that it is a co-production, I assure you that it will be a completely Bangladeshi production, which will be marketed and distributed worldwide."

SVF Director and Co-Founder Mahendra Soni sees this collaboration as the beginning of a new era in Bengali cinema. He stated, "We are at the beginning of a new chapter in Bengali

cinema as this collaboration is anticipated to redefine the scale of storytelling. This collaboration is ready to take Bengali cinema to unprecedented global heights. This will be a historic moment for all of us. Moreover, the major role that SVF will be playing here is SVF will be in charge to make it reach global audiences."

Redoan Rony, CEO of Chorki, added to the excitement, saying, "SVF, Chorki and Alpha-i have joined hands to captivate Bengali-speaking audiences and provide them with high-quality international content. During Covid-19, we were tense that cinema halls will not survive, as the number of audiences for OTT platforms had increased significantly. However, that notion had completely changed when we witnessed the audience's genuine interest in experiencing big screen entertainment. Moreover, the audience has a variety of choices and preferences, thus the audience for both media shall persist."

Hosted by Mousumi Mou, the press conference witnessed the presence of eminent author Anisul Hoque, representatives from Chorki and Alpha-i, along with journalists eager to witness the unveiling of this cinematic powerhouse.



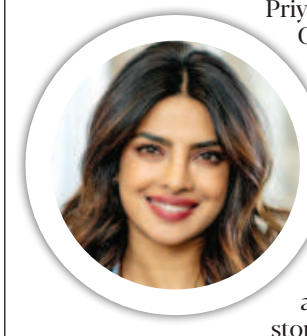
Prachyanat to conclude triumphant year with 'Koinna'

This has been a successful year for the pioneering theatre troupe Prachyanat, with houseful shows of more than 10 of its most popular shows, such as *Agunjatra*, *Achalayatan*, *Pulsiraat*, *Khawabnama*, *Circus Circus*, *Kinu Kahar er Thetar*, and *A Mother in Mannville*, amongst others.

Prachyanat is going to conclude a glorious year with one of their much acclaimed play *Koinna* at the Main Hall, National Theatre of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, on December 13 at 7 pm. *Koinna* is the 9th play produced by the group, written by Murad Khan and directed by Azad Abul Kalam, is based on a myth from Sylhet-Sunamganj haor areas in Bangladesh.

The play premiered on February 13, 2001, and has been mesmerising theatre audiences since then with its masterful storyline, mystic roots, and brilliant theatrics.

Priyanka Chopra calls for 'humanitarian ceasefire for children' in Gaza



Priyanka Chopra, who is the Goodwill Ambassador of Unicef, has time and again advocated for rights of children suffering in various countries.

Recently, the actress posted an Instagram story on Monday which called for a ceasefire in Palestine to stop the killing of innocent children.

The post highlighted the devastating impact of Israeli bombardment, with thousands of children and minors reported killed or missing under the rubble. The original post was shared by Unicef, the United Nations agency, dedicated to offering humanitarian and developmental assistance to children globally.

NEWS

UN mission in Mali officially ends after 10yrs

AFP, Bamako

The UN mission in Mali officially ended a 10-year deployment in the country yesterday, its spokesperson said, in a pullout ordered by Mali's military leaders.

The mission, known as MINUSMA, lowered the United Nations flag on its headquarters in the capital Bamako, its spokesperson Fatoumata Kaba told AFP.

The symbolic ceremony marks the official end of the mission, she said, even though some of the elements of it are still there.

"A liquidation phase" will take place after January 1, involving activities such as handing over remaining equipment to the authorities.

Mali's ruling junta, which seized power in 2020, in June demanded the departure of the mission, deployed since 2013, despite being in the grip of jihadism and raging crises.

Hunger causing

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general of UNRWA, the UN body responsible for the welfare of Palestinian refugees, said the Gazans driven from their homes were being pushed closer and closer to the border.

"The developments we are witnessing point to attempts to move Palestinians into Egypt," Lazzarini wrote in the Los Angeles Times.

The Gaza health ministry said 32 Palestinians had been killed in Khan Younis in 24 hours and 15 others were wounded. The armed wing of Hamas said it had hit two Israeli tanks with rockets and fired mortar bombs at Israeli forces.

In central Gaza, where Israel advised people to move towards "known shelters in the Deir al-Balah area" health officials said the Shuhada Al-Aqsa hospital had received 40 dead overnight.

The 193-member United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) is likely to vote today on a draft resolution demanding a ceasefire, diplomats said.

On Friday, the United States vetoed a UN Security Council proposal demanding an immediate ceasefire for humanitarian reasons.

Bangladesh needs urgent climate funds

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0.47 percent of global emissions, ranks as the seventh most vulnerable nation to climate change. The country has endured the consequences of rising emissions for decades, as evidenced by soaring temperatures above 40 degrees, severe heatwaves, power outages, school closures, and devastating floods that claimed 55 lives and displaced thousands in August alone, according to the PM.

The nation has proactively invested in adapting to climate change while pursuing economic growth. The Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan outlines a transformative strategy towards climate resilience, including increasing renewable energy capacity to 30 percent by 2030, fostering sustainable agriculture, and modernising energy grids, she writes.

Bangladesh's efforts extend to constructing flood defences, sea walls, mangrove forests, and implementing satellite weather tracking systems. These initiatives are integral to the country's national adaptation plan and are essential for survival.

However, adaptation extends beyond environmental measures to encompass growth in interconnected economies and sectors, requiring significant investment. This includes making solar technology more

affordable, revising taxes on inverters, and attracting international investment.

Despite leaders at COP28 pledging \$169 million to the Adaptation Fund, this falls short of the \$300 million annual target. The premier called for wealthier nations to fulfil their responsibilities.

With limited time remaining at COP28, she urged the largest carbon-emitting nations to submit ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and developed countries to meet the \$100 billion per year financing goal, with post-2025 climate finance targets set higher.

Climate finance, according to Hasina, must meet three criteria: sufficiency, regularity, and accessibility, considering the challenging years ahead for countries like Bangladesh. She appealed to international partners for deep reflection on common goals, decisive action, and acknowledgement of the costs of further delays. While applauding ongoing efforts, she also urged solidarity in line with the latest science.

As climate challenges intensify, the prime minister stressed the importance of confronting and addressing them collectively and decisively.

Mercury likely to dip

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temperatures yesterday. When the gap between the temperatures remains below 10 degrees Celsius, the feelings of cold increase," he said.

Mallik said if the gap reduces further, people will feel cold more in Dhaka though Dhaka will not experience any cold wave during this time, he said.

Yesterday's lowest temperature was recorded at 11.4 degrees Celsius at Badalgachi in Naogaon.

Daily activities of people in some upazilas of Kurigram and Lalmonirhat have been severely affected by the cold weather and dense fog.

The sun has not been seen in those areas since Sunday, said locals.

Poor people in char areas of the Brahmaputra, Dudhkumar, Gangadhar, Teesta, and Dharla rivers have been worst hit by cold weather.

"Although we are putting on a brave face and have started working on crop fields, we could not work for long because of the cold," said Nabir Hossain, 65, a farmer of Char Sonaikazi area of the Dharla river basin in Kurigram's Phulbari.

Abdul Hai Sarkar, Kurigram district relief and rehabilitation officer, said blankets would be distributed through upazila administrations and union parishes.

JP unrelenting

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But the AL leaders did not say anything about the JP demand for taking steps to have the "AL independents" withdrawn.

They said if the independents are forced to withdraw their nominations, then it would be criticised at home and abroad as the election would be considered as "compromising election."

They also argued that AL independents are necessary to ensure presence of more voters in the election, the co-chairman added.

Apart from that, if the independents withdraw, the election will lose its festive mood. Voter turnout may also decline.

AL leaders said they will discuss the seat-sharing issue with party President Sheikh Hasina and will inform the JP of the final decision.

A JP senior leader said the seat-sharing issue is likely to be settled today as AL and JP delegations are set to meet to finalise the matter.

JP insiders said the seat-sharing issue with AL is at the final stage as the ruling party assured that JP will be given a "respectable" number of seats.

During a meeting with the AL on December 6, JP demanded the AL withdraw 70 of its nominees.

The JP even hinted that it would quit the race if its "minimum" demand was not met.

The party has filed candidates in 287 constituencies.

EC plans to deploy armed forces

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agrees," Wakar said.

A total of 414 platoons of the army and 48 platoons of the navy were deployed under the 'aid to the civil power' for eight days from December 24, 2018, to January 1, 2019, during the last election as a striking force.

The polls took place on December 30.

During the 10th parliamentary election, the army was on the field as a striking force from December 26, 2013, to January 9, 2014—a total of 15 days.

The election took place on January 5, 2014.

Another 51 aspirants

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their candidacy back. In last two days EC held hearing of 193 appeals.

A total of 558 appeals were filed by aspirants. Hearings on the appeals will continue until December 15.

The 12th national polls will take place on January 7.

Among others, Awami League aspirant from Noakhali-3, Mamunur Rashid Kiron; independent candidate from Rajshahi-1, actor Sharmin Akter Nipa Mahia; Gonoforum aspirant from Sylhet-2, Mukabbir Khan; and Jatiya Party candidate from Chandpur-4, Sajjad Rashid; got back their candidacies, clearing the path for them to contest in the election.

BNP activists in prisons

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torture cell where political prisoners live in constant fear of death."

BNP LEADER DIES IN JAIL CUSTODY

A local BNP leader, who was in Rajshahi Central Jail in connection with a sabotage case, died at the Rajshahi Medical College Hospital yesterday morning.

Md Monirul Islam, 52, was a ward-level assistant publicity affairs secretary of Kakonhat Municipality BNP under Godagari upazila, said Golam Mostafa Mamun, a member of the district BNP convening committee.

"He [Monirul] fell to the ground unconscious while bathing this [yesterday] morning. He was declared dead after being taken to the hospital around 10:30am," Nijam Uddin, jailer of the Rajshahi Central Jail, told The Daily Star.

RMCH Director Brigadier General FM Shamim Ahmed said Monirul was brought dead to the hospital.

His body was handed over to his family in the afternoon after an autopsy, the jailer said.

Monirul landed in jail on November 7 after police arrested him in connection with a case filed under the Special Powers Act and Explosive Substances Act, he added.

Meanwhile, unidentified arsonists set fire to a Shilpa Bank staff bus parked on a road in Dhaka's Motijheel around 3:30pm yesterday.

Locals doused the blaze before two fire engines reached the scene, said police.

Another staff bus of Delta Life Insurance was by torched by arsonists in front of the Rajdhani Super Market

Meanwhile, the hearing for an appeal challenging the candidacy of an AL aspirant from Jashore-4, Enamul Haq Babul, will take place tomorrow, the EC sources mentioned.

After regaining his candidacy, Gonoforum candidate Mukabbir Khan from Sylhet-2, told The Daily Star that the government has promised a free, fair, and participatory election, and the Election Commission has said it would also make all the necessary arrangements in this regard.

"However, there is some concern over the electoral environment...if we see the breaking of the promises that were made, we will appear before the people," he said.

in the city's Tikatuli around 10:00pm.

On information, two fire engines rushed to the scene and doused the blaze, said fire service sources.

A bus of Midline Paribahan was set alight by arsonists in the city's Mohammadpur around 8:30pm. Firefighters of two fire engines rushed to the scene but found the fire already put out by locals, said the sources.

Two suspects were detained near the scene, said HM Azimul Haque, deputy commissioner of (Tejgaon division) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

Police claimed that the detainees were activists of Jubo Dal, the youth wing of the BNP.

In Ashulia of Savar, a Dhaka-bound bus of Itihas Paribahan was set alight by arsonists on Nabinagar-Chandra highway in the evening.

Arsonists travelling in guise of passengers set the bus on fire when it reached Kabirpur, said Shahadat Hossain, officer-in-charge of Nawjor Highway Police Station.

On information, two fire engines rushed to the scene and doused the blaze.

Rizvi in the briefing yesterday said law enforcers arrested at least 20,895 BNP leaders and activists in 592 cases filed across the country from October 28 till yesterday afternoon.

The BNP also claimed that 110 party leaders and activists were detained and five cases were filed against 436 named and many unidentified party activists in 24 hours preceding yesterday evening.

Our Rajshahi staff correspondent and Savar correspondent also contributed to this report.