

# Bringing ‘Manush’ to Bangladesh was a challenge: SANJOY SOMADDER

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RAKSHANDA RAHMAN MISHA

Sanjoy Somadder's debut Indian film, *Manush*, premiered in Kolkata on November 24. Although there were plans to release the movie in Bangladesh on the same day, complications arose, leading to a temporary halt on the release. Originally slated for distribution in Bangladesh by Jazz Multimedia, the rights were eventually transferred to Anonno Mamun and his production company.

After overcoming hurdles, the film received its censor certificate on Wednesday, paving the way for its release in theatres across Bangladesh starting today.

How excited are you about the release of ‘Manush’ in Bangladesh?

I am overjoyed that Bangladeshi audiences will now be able to see my maiden Indian film in theatres. I'm excited for them to see the film and provide feedback, both good and constructive. While the film's delayed release is disappointing, we are happy in the fact that it is finally reaching audiences, believing that it's better late than never.



PHOTOS: COURTESY

The director and Jeet during the shooting of “Manush.”

Why did it take so long for the film to be released in Bangladesh?

These delays are mostly due to issues with the importing process and legal procedures. Anonno Mamun bhai has taken over the



responsibility that was previously given to Jazz Multimedia. According to Mamun bhai, the film will be released in around 50 theatres, including Star Cineplex and Blockbuster.

We could not arrange the special premiere today, as we only received the censor certificate on Wednesday. However, we are hopeful that we will be able to announce the premiere show for our fans shortly. While Jeet may be unable to attend the premiere in Bangladesh, Mim will promote the film at the event.

How was it directing Kolkata's superstar Jeet in your first Indian film?

Jeet is not only a superstar, but also a wonderful human being. He came out to me, a Bangladeshi director, and showed me a lot of love and support. Working with him was an incredible joy for me. My excitement was heightened when I saw Jeet lauding me as a fantastic director to the Indian media and expressing his respect for my work.

I never felt alone while embarking on my first project abroad with a whole new crew. The actors and crew were genuinely great, and

the memories made during that period will be treasured by me for the rest of my life.

Apart from directing an Indian film, you also cast Bidya Sinha Mim in a pivotal role. What made you cast her as a police officer?

Mim has risen to become one of the top actresses in Dhallywood. Mim came out as the right choice in our search for a mature actor capable of executing tough action sequences and genuinely embracing the character. Her dedication and passion for acting was visible in the movie.

What was the most challenging part of shooting for ‘Manush’?

The majority of the fight sequences were filmed during the night, as per the requirement of the screenplay. Over the course of 14 consecutive days, we faced the significant challenge of shooting exclusively at night. The demanding schedule left little time for rest, as we often had to travel in the early morning hours.

Despite the difficulties, it is extremely fulfilling to know that my Bangladeshi audience will soon be able to understand the passion and toil that went into making the film.



## Siam Ahmed is the villain in Vicky Zahed's new project



Siam Ahmed is shedding off his 'chocolate boy' image by taking on the role of an antagonist in Vicky Zahed's web-series *Lottery*. Recently, the actor has wrapped up filming for the series as well.

“Although we didn't work much; our equation remains great. I'm about to take on one of the darkest and most negative roles in my career. It's the first time I'll be portraying such a character, and I'm eager to see how the audience will respond to the project,” shared the actor.

The upcoming web-series starring Siam, Safa Kabir, Manoj Pramanik, and others, blends drama, suspense, and thriller elements.



## Aparna Sen, Anjan Dutt to team up for Parambrata's upcoming film

Eminent artistes Aparna Sen and Anjan Dutt are going to be featured in actor and director Parambrata Chattopadhyay's upcoming film, *Ei Raat Tomar Amar*.

The plot of the film will be centered around Hemanta Mukhopadhyay's famous song *Ei raat tomar amar*, which the legendary Bengali singer and composer sang for the 1959 film *Dweep Jwele Jai*.

Parambrata is set to star in the film, potentially playing the role of the singer alongside lead actors Anjan Dutt and Aparna Sen, as per various Indian media reports.

# NEWS

## Govt to set up expats' centres

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payment gateways in the areas populated by Bangladeshi expat workers.

As much as 90 percent of the remittance can be brought through legal channels if such smart centres are established, The Daily Star has learnt from people with knowledge of the matter.

Now, less than 50 percent of the remittance is sent to Bangladesh through legal channels, they added.

In the October 5 meeting, the government officials discussed various ways to send remittance directly to Bangladesh legally and they emphasised MFS among the channels.

One of the officials told the meeting that most of the expat workers work outside the major cities. The hundi traders visit the workers and buy dollars or currency of that country at a higher rate.

“The government wants the MFS to

fill up this gap and reach the workers at their workplaces in remittance-earning countries,” said an official present at the meeting.

Most of the funds are sent using international money exchange houses while a small portion is sent using branches of the government banks located abroad. An expat can send a maximum of Tk 3 lakh per month through MFS to Bangladesh.

Although there was a rise in the remittance inflow after the banks in October announced a separate cash incentive scheme for remitters, the government wants to make sure that 90 percent of the remittance is sent through legal channels.

At present, there are 22 Expatriates Digital Centres (EDC) in Saudi Arabia outside the Bangladesh embassy where mainly consular services are provided. The government wants to introduce MFS transaction services in the EDCs.

Like the EDCs, the government wants to establish smart expat centres in other remittance-earning countries.

The meeting also discussed the challenges as well.

One of the officials shared that setting up such centres may not help ensure that all remittance comes through the legal channels as the hundi traders pay more money against the dollar than the government's incentive.

Now, the remitters receive 2.5 percent from the government and 2.5 percent additional incentive from banks.

Mostofa Jamil Khan, director (welfare) of the foreign ministry, told the newspaper that apart from establishing the smart centres, the meeting also discussed increasing awareness so that the remitters send money through legal channels instead of hundi.

## Fakhrul's wife files writ for courts to hear his bail pleas

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the 10 cases six were lodged with Paltan Model Police Station and four with Ramna Police Station over violence on October 28.

On October 29, Fakhrul was arrested in connection with the case filed with Ramna Police Station over the attack on the chief justice's residence during a clash between police and BNP activists on October 28.

Meanwhile, another HC bench yesterday said the bail petition of Fakhrul in the case filed over vandalism of the chief justice's residence will be included in its cause list on Sunday.

The bench of Justice Md Salim and Justice Shahed Nuruddin said this after his lawyers led by Zainul Abedin appealed to the court for hearing the matter as an “urgent case”.

On December 7, the HC issued the rule asking the state to explain in seven days why Fakhrul should not be granted bail in the case.

The HC may hear the rule or may set a date for its hearing on Sunday, Md Badruddoza Badal, another lawyer for Fakhrul, told this newspaper.

June 2011.

No convicts were present at the courtroom yesterday.

Five prosecution witnesses gave statements before the court in the case.

The case documents said some pickets set a bus on fire in Shahjahanpur Railway Colony area on June 4, 2011, during a hartal.

Later, bus driver Monir Hossain filed a case with Motijheel Police Station.

Another Dhaka court sentenced 18 BNP Jamaat activists to different prison terms over political violence in Cantonment area on September 15, 2018.

## US worried

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campaign involving fake news, fake videos, using artificial intelligence tools against the US and Bangladesh opposition political parties in the context of the upcoming election.

Miller said, “It's part of a worrying trend around the globe of using AI to manipulate and influence democratic processes.”

Asked if he had any news on new US sanctions against Bangladesh before the January 7 polls, the State Department official said he did not have anything to announce.

“It is our longstanding practice not to preview sanctions actions before we take them.”

## Arsonists and saboteurs have no right

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“The ghosts of occupational Pakistani forces who were defeated in 1971 are now engaged in a conspiracy against the people of this country. They are killing people and are planning to kill more.”

“I am urging you all to resist them. If people come forward in places where fishplates [of rail track] are removed then these conspirators will not have the scope to run away,” Hasina said, referring to the recent incident in Gazipur.

She urged all to remain alert to prevent this kind of subversive activity.

“These people just know to destroy; they do not know to create or build. They can kill people but not provide peace and security to people's lives. All have to remain cautious around them,” she said.

Hasina, also the ruling Awami League chief, asked all to nab the perpetrators red-handed while they would go for any destructive activities and arson attacks.

“Steps have to be taken against them,” she said.

Regarding the demand of the BNP to restore democracy in the country, she said people who are engaging in destructive activities have no right to

preach values.

“How could they talk about democracy? Killers cannot give democracy; the people of the country have to understand that,” she said.

The prime minister said that the blood of martyrs did not go in vain, as today's Bangladesh is a changed Bangladesh.

“Today we got recognition as a developing country. Bangladesh will move forward as a developing country. The dream of the Father of the Nation to build a hunger and poverty-free Bangladesh is being fulfilled,” she said.

She mentioned that Bangladesh is now a truly independent country.

## 5 crisis-hit Islamic banks

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conduct any interbank transactions, according to bank MDs, who spoke with The Daily Star on the condition of anonymity to explain the significance of the letter.

Syed Habib Hasnat, the MD of Global Islami Bank, acknowledged the receipt of the letter.

The current account of Global Islami Bank – whose vice-chairperson Maimuna Khanam is the daughter of Mohammad Saiful Alam, chairman of S Alam Group – maintained with the central bank is in the surplus, according to Hasnat.

“Now that there is a crisis in the overall banking sector, we are also in crisis,” Hasnat said, adding that the bank purchased bonds to meet the deficit.

Despite repeated attempts over

the phone, The Daily Star could not reach Mohammed Monirul Moulana, managing director of Islami Bank, whose chairman Ahsanul Alam is the elder son of the S Alam Group chairman.

The correspondent yesterday paid a visit to the head office of Islami Bank and Moulana walked out of the room right away.

Zafar Alam, the MD of Social Islami Bank, did not respond to the correspondent's request for comment yesterday. However, on December 4 he told The Daily Star that the bank's liquidity situation is improving gradually.

“We did not need the central bank liquidity support in the last one week,” he had said.

The Daily Star could not reach ABM Mokammel Hoque Chowdhury, the

MD of Union Bank, and Syed Waseque Md Ali, the MD of First Security Islami Bank.

The S Alam Group chairman Alam is the chairman of First Security Islami Bank, while his wife Farzana Parveen is a director along with three other relatives.

Alam's son-in-law Belal Ahmed is the chairman of Social Islami Bank, while his sister Jebunnesa Akbar and nephews Arshadul Alam and Mahmudul Alam sit on the board.

The board of Union Bank consists of Alam's brothers Osman Goni and Md. Rashedul Alam along with other family members.

The S Alam Group directors Shahidul Alam, Shahana Ferdous and Farzana Begum sit on the board of Global Islami Bank along with five other relatives.

## AI disinformation spreading

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But the examples from Bangladesh show not only how these AI tools can be exploited in elections but also the difficulty in controlling their use in smaller markets that risk being overlooked by American tech companies.

According to the report, the AI disinformation campaign in Bangladesh is “still at an experimentation level” – with most created using conventional photo or video editing platforms – it showed how it could take off considering the mass accessibility of AI technologies and tools.

In one video posted on X in September by BD Politico, an online news outlet, a news anchor for “World News” presented a studio segment –

interspersed with images of rioting – in which he accused US diplomats of interfering in Bangladeshi elections and blamed them for political violence.

The video was made using HeyGen, a Los Angeles-based AI video generator that allows customers to create clips fronted by AI avatars for as little as \$24 a month.

AKM Wahiduzzaman, a BNP official, said that his party asked Meta to remove such content, but “most of the time they don't bother to reply”. Meta removed the video after being contacted by the Financial Times for comment.

Experts in Bangladesh said the problem is exacerbated by the lack of regulation or its selective enforcement by authorities.

Sabhanaz Rashid Diya, a Tech Global Institute founder and former Meta executive, said a greater threat than the AI-generated content itself was the prospect that politicians and others could use the mere possibility of deepfakes to navigate uncomfortable information.

In neighbouring India, for example, a politician responded to a leaked audio in which he allegedly discussed corruption in his party by alleging that it was fake – a claim subsequently dismissed by fact-checkers.

“It's easy for a politician to say, ‘This is deepfake’, or ‘This is AI-generated’, and sow a sense of confusion,” Diya said, adding that it would be a challenge for the governments, especially in the global south.