

'Oshomoy' is a timely reality check on our society



Urbee's life came crashing down when her name became involved in a crime racket. Her dreams of enjoying the luxuries of life eventually led her to serve time in jail. Her case created a big upheaval in society, as the police, media, and court put her life on a pedestal. Is she really preying on and blackmailing rich kids, or is she simply a victim of the so-called 'privileged' society that tries to fake their image to live a double-faced life?

RAKSHANDA RAHMAN MISHA

Oshomoy marks Kajal Arefin Ome's debut in the realm of web-films, adding a new dimension to his already impressive portfolio, which includes widely acclaimed content like *Bachelor Point* and *Hotel Relax*, earning him a substantial fan following. While the director is renowned for producing predominantly commercial content, **Oshomoy** serves as a testament to his ability to surpass the expectations of his critics.

A special premiere show took place on Tuesday at Star Cineplex's SKS Tower, where dedicated fans had the exclusive opportunity to watch the film alongside the cast. The question arises: What sets this multi-starrer web-film apart from Ome's previous works?

"In my mind, I harbour the aspiration to create content that not only entertains but also sheds light on the societal issues that require attention. I am genuinely pleased that I could capture the essence of contemporary times, as reflected in our trailer and poster. Notably, during our pre-booking phase, Bongo initiated digital pre-booking for *Pathaan* and *Jawan*. I'm proud to share that the pre-opening demand for *Oshomoy*

surpassed even these significant releases on the Bongo platform," stated Ome.

When asked which scene made the director emotional, he shared, "There was a poignant moment in the jail between Farin and Monira Akter Mithu. While capturing that scene, I could sense the genuine helplessness in both of their reactions, and tears welled up in my eyes," added Ome.

The heartwarming father-daughter chemistry portrayed by Tasnia Farina and Tariq Anam Khan is what truly sets this web-film apart. The sweet fights and the father's big dreams for his daughter, Urbee, were an essential part of the story. Tariq Anam Khan's remarkable performance was loved by audiences, with many expressing admiration for his stellar portrayal in the web-film.

"My character has big dreams for his children, particularly his daughter. He wanted his daughter to get a chance at a public university, but unfortunately, she doesn't secure a spot. Determined to fulfill her educational dreams, he sacrifices all his properties, initially earmarked for her wedding, to ensure her enrollment in a private university. He believes that she will eventually marry with her own earned money.



PHOTOS: COURTESY

Unfortunately, his dreams shatter when his daughter is implicated in a legal predicament, leading to personal humiliation from his boss. Although my role in that scene doesn't

involve many dialogues, I conveyed the essence of a shattered man through subtle body language," shared Tariq Anam Khan.

Farin, as Urbee, totally immersed herself in the character; her pathos of being wrongfully arrested and losing her loved ones proved that she is in for the long run.

The actress shared, "There's a particular scene in the web-film where I was entirely consumed by Urbee's emotions. She experiences the loss of a significant person in her life, and when she visits him, she simply breaks down in tears. **Oshomoy** transcends being a mere narrative about a middle-class woman; it is a poignant story about an individual being unjustly punished for something she didn't commit. The film highlights how, due to fate, individuals suffer irrespective of their social classes."

Runa Khan skillfully embodies the character of Emily Rahman, a resilient and assertive lawyer, in the film. Despite achieving professional success, Emily grapples with the absence of happiness in her personal life.

Reflecting on her role, Runa Khan shared, "Emily is a self-assured lawyer navigating a tumultuous marriage with a husband who projects a self-righteous image in public.

Despite facing considerable turbulence in her personal life, she exhibits unwavering confidence in fighting for her clients when she believes in their righteousness. It's Emily's confidence that attracted me to the character."

Shashwta Datta, establishing himself with diverse roles, has opted for a character that promises surprises for the audience.

Sharing insights into his role, Shashwta said, "My character's name is Shuvo, a spontaneous individual who relishes spending time with his close-knit circle, comprising Shimul bhai, Lamiya, Ishrat, and so on, Farin becomes an integral part of our group. Farin's character is that of a brilliant girl who develops feelings for me. Additionally, there's an action-packed scene between Polash bhai and me that I'm confident the audience will thoroughly enjoy."

While multi-starrer projects have been trending, it's truly rare to witness a director skillfully weaving together such intricately layered stories that unveil the true faces of corruption hidden in society. **Oshomoy** is now available for streaming on the Bongo app.

NEWS

'Tired of playing hide and seek with myself' Sinohydro admits misuse of duty-free benefits

FROM PAGE 12
though he admits he did not grow up as part of the Hijra community.

Growing up in poverty as the son of a trucker in Jashore, Oalid's gender identity had been kept a secret. His family went to great lengths to protect him from the bullying that would inevitably follow if people found out.

"I grew up in a small house with lots of siblings. My mother would always tell me I was smart and 'different' and explained that others wouldn't accept this difference and so I shouldn't get out of the house much. My brothers would teach me the body language of a man. I used to like putting henna on my hands and they told me not to. Though my family was extremely poor, they made sure to send me to the best school in the area.

"They took various measure to ensure I could avoid unnecessary interactions with people. When I did go out, people on the streets would taunt me, call me 'half ladies', throw things at me or snatch away my possessions."

In the limited confines of his home, however, Oalid's world grew. Inspired by his mother, he learned to sing, draw, and write.

He would win dancing, singing, poetry recitation, and drawing competitions in district and division levels. However, his family felt unsafe sending him to the national stage, not knowing what sort of people he would be exposed to.

Oalid's merit would further broaden his world soon, as brilliant results in SSC and HSC exams were followed by enrollment into the pharmacy department of Jahangirnagar University. Initially in JU, Oalid faced all manner

of bullying. Yet, like he said a few times throughout the interview, "there are good and bad people everywhere". He met his good people on the JU campus.

Many of Oalid's friends, roommates, seniors and juniors in JU knew his third gender identity and their love for him meant they easily accepted this important detail.

"My mother would always tell me I was smart and 'different' and explained that others wouldn't accept this difference and so I shouldn't get out of the house much."

Oalid Islam

"Those close to me would tell me, 'To a child, it doesn't matter if its mother has all the problems in the world, the child still loves the mother. It doesn't matter who you are, Oalid, we will always love you', he said.

His successes in life were celebrated by his loved ones, but also rubbed others the wrong way.

He remembers the story of a particular neighbour who tried hard to become an obstacle after his success in the 35th BCS exam.

"For police verification, a teacher in my area was approached, who told the police that as patriots, they should not allow a Hijra to become a diplomat. He said,

"The son of a truck driver could only sell the country down the river, so the police should write a negative report. Today, I am grateful to that police officer for not listening to that man."

Oalid's personal life too has faced dramatic upheaval because of his gender identity.

He spoke about an eight-year long relationship and how the two families had agreed to their marriage with the condition of his sex reassignment surgery. However, after the surgery faced complications and Oalid's subsequent diagnosis of colon cancer, his fiancé back out from the marriage.

The trials of Oalid Islam may have broken many, but for 34 years, he has endured it with utmost courage.

That begs the question, why did he decide to speak out now?

In the Facebook post where Oalid revealed his gender identity for the first time, he said, "I am Bangladesh's first cadre officer of the third gender, and the world's first third gender diplomat. I am tired of playing hide and seek with myself."

In his conversation with The Daily Star, he added, "I am not looking for sympathy. I only wanted to reveal my identity. An identity crisis is one of the worst things that can happen to someone."

Speaking to Oalid, one gets the sense that this is a person whose life experiences have made him fully aware of his own humanity, despite people's stares and sneers.

In his post, he said as much: "Every third gender person is a human. You are the ones who behave with them like dogs. We have our own personalities. You are the ones who see us as devoid of personalities."

Metro to run till 8:30pm

FROM PAGE 12
Dhaka Mass Transit Company Limited (DMTCL), told reporters about the extended service hours at a press conference in the capital yesterday afternoon.

The 13-hour schedule is split into four segments.

Trains will run every 10 minutes from 7:10am to 11:30am (peak hours); every 12 minutes from 11:31am to 4:00pm (off-peak hours); and again every 10 minutes from 4:01pm to 8:00pm (peak hours), said a DMTCL press release.

Only MRT Pass and Rapid Pass holders can take the two trains that leave Uttara North Station at 7:10am and 7:20am.

Similarly, they can take the four metro trains that will leave Motijheel Station between 8:00pm and 8:40pm.

Passengers with Single Journey Tickets, purchased before 7:45pm on the

day of the commute, can also take the four trains after 8:00pm.

Ticket sales at all metro stations will close at 7:45pm.

The last train leaving Motijheel at 8:40pm will return to Uttara North Station, like all the other trains before it.

MRT Passes can be purchased and topped up from 7:15am to 7:45pm at all stations.

Currently, the construction of the Kamalapur part of the metro rail is in progress and is scheduled for inauguration by the end of the year.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the Agargaon-Motijheel section on November 4 last year, making the entire route from Uttara North to Motijheel operational. In December 2022, she inaugurated the Uttara-Agargaon section of the country's first metro rail.

Residents flee as Israel pounds Khan Younis

FROM PAGE 12

the enclave, have already ceased functioning altogether, and the rest are only partly functional. Losing Nasser would sharply curtail the limited trauma care still available for Gaza's 2.3 million residents.

An Israeli official, speaking on condition of anonymity, told Reuters that, while Israel had already shifted to smaller scale operations in Gaza's north, the fierce battle for Khan Younis was likely to rage on for up to two months.

Fears are mounting the Israel's offensive in Gaza will trigger an all-out war across the Middle East, with growing violence involving Iran-aligned groups.

FROM PAGE 12

stern action against the responsible persons," said the letter signed by Wang Shouxing, the acting project manager.

Sinohydro failed to ship out the goods as the persons who were responsible for customs clearance had gone back to China.

The person in charge of the customs clearance process did not hand over all information and documents to the project office. As a result, the company could not renew the validity of import permission issued by the commerce

EU eager to scale up partnership with Dhaka

FROM PAGE 12

initiative, will be further enhanced in the days to come, said Md Noorelaha Mina, PM's deputy press secretary, quoting Whiteley after the meeting.

To this end, the EU already gave Bangladesh 407 million euros during the Global Gateway Forum in Brussels in October last year.

The EU envoy promised to continue the benefits given to Bangladesh under Everything but Arms scheme and also

pledged to give Bangladesh the GSP plus facilities upon graduation from the least-developed country bracket, according to Mina.

The EU ambassador also highly praised the initiatives taken by the Hasina-led government for people with disabilities and the marginalised ones.

The premier has expressed her satisfaction with the existing relations between her country and the EU over

ministry and the National Board of Revenue's orders for a long time.

"Further our headquarter in China warned the local office in Bangladesh to be more careful in future so that such mistakes never happen in future," the letter added.

Sinohydro responded after receiving eight show-cause notices from customs, Mohammad Fyzur Rahman, commissioner of Chattogram Customs House, told The Daily Star.

"A claim will be issued against the company any time now as they have admitted that they will not re-export,"

he added.

On 30 December, The Daily Star ran a report that said Sinohydro imported equipment, vehicles and accessories worth about Tk 1,145 crore over nine years using the duty-waiver facility.

The facility restricts the sale or handover of the goods to anyone in Bangladesh without the NBR's permission. However, the company had sold many of the goods and was in the process of selling others.

Sinohydro did not respond to The Daily Star's request for comment on the issue.

Tension rises as Pak

FROM PAGE 1

home. "The sole objective of today's act was in pursuit of Pakistan's own security and national interest, which is paramount and cannot be compromised," the ministry added.

A senior Pakistani security official told Reuters the military was on "extremely" high alert and would meet any "misadventure" from the Iranian side forcefully.

Tehran strongly condemned the strikes, saying civilians were killed, and summoned Pakistan's charge d'affaires, its most senior diplomat in Iran, to explain.

The strikes took place at around 4:30 am, with three drones destroying four houses in a village near the city of Saravan, IRNA said, citing Alireza Marhamati, deputy governor of the province.

All those killed were Pakistanis and investigations were ongoing to determine why they were in the Iranian village, Marhamati said.

In Islamabad, a foreign ministry spokesperson said Pakistan's caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-haq Kakar would cut short a visit to the World Economic Forum in Davos and return

between Pakistan and Iran, both close economic partners of Beijing.

India also released statements saying the tit-for-tat strikes as "a matter between Iran and Pakistan". The Indian foreign ministry, however, said it "understands actions countries take in self defence".

The US State Department criticised Iran for violating the sovereign borders of three nations in 48 hours. However, it didn't release any statement after the Pakistani strikes.

Russia yesterday urged Islamabad and Tehran to de-escalate tensions "through political and diplomatic means".

Pakistan's comments after its retaliatory strikes signal a desire to keep the row contained, but analysts warned it could get out of hand.

"Iran's motivation for attacking Pakistan remains opaque but in light of broader Iranian behaviour in the region it can escalate," Asfandyr Mir, a senior expert on South Asia security at the US Institute of Peace, told Reuters.

"What will cause anxiety in Tehran is that Pakistan has crossed a line by hitting inside Iranian territory, a threshold that even the US and Israel have been careful to not breach."

China yesterday offered to mediate