



PHOTOS: ARSHADUL HOQUE ROCKY

22nd DIFF wraps up with cinematic splendour and global triumph

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TIASHA IDRAK

Celebrities, masterclasses, and premieres of Bangladeshi and international films marked the conclusion of the 22nd Dhaka International Film Festival (DIFF), organised by the Rainbow Film Society, which captivated the town's attention. The festivities commenced on January 20, with nearly every session making headlines in the media.

The events ranged from Sharmila Tagore's press conference to the highly anticipated premiere of Swastika Mukherjee's *Bijoyar Pore* and masterclasses by Iranian filmmaker Majid Majidi and Indian singer, actor and director Anjan Dutt.

Presided over by Shahrir Alam, chief patron of DIFF and state minister of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh, the festival concluded with a grand ceremony at the Bangladesh National Museum on Sunday.

As the chief guest of the event, Mohammed Ali Arafat, state minister for Information and Broadcasting, said, "International film festivals like this one will ensure the exchange of views amongst people across cultures, which, in effect, will make the society more optimistic. While it has an impact on our society, it also helps our local industry flourish."

"Moreover, the film festival also serves as a protest against bigotry, prejudice and harmful business practices. The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting is proud and honoured to be a part of this film festival."

Internationally renowned figures, including Iranian filmmaker Majid Majidi, Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism Secretary Mokammel

Hossain, Bangladesh National Museum Director General Md Kamruzzaman, DIFF Chairperson Kishwar Kamal, and Sharmila Tagore, graced the occasion as special guests.

Filmmaker Majid Majidi expressed immense delight at being part of the event. He emphasised that cinema serves as a powerful medium to narrate the stories of people and society, particularly those whose voices often remain unheard. Majidi expressed hope that in the future, Bangladeshi films will receive well deserved international recognition.

This year's festival featured 252 films from 74 countries, including Bangladesh, screened across various sections such as Asian Competition, Retrospective, Tribute, Bangladesh Panorama, Wide Angle, Cinema of the World, Children's Film, Spiritual Films, Short and Independent Film, and Women's Film.

"All these films are the best of the best, and windows are open one after another for those aspiring to climb the ladder of the wonderful world of celluloid. It is a great privilege on our part to have these films viewed and appreciated by some of the greatest icons and renowned personalities," said Kishwar Kamal, chairperson of the festival committee.

The closing event unveiled the winners in various categories, with the Best Director Award in the Asian Film Competition Section going to Jagath Manuvarna for *Rahas Kiyana Kandu (Whispering Mountains)*. Anjan Dutt received the Best Actor Award for his directorial film *Chalchitra Ekhon (Kaleidoscope Again)*, while the Best Actress Award went to Badema from China for *The Cord of Life*, directed by Qiao Sixue.

Other notable awards included Best Script Writer for *Dov (Fortune)*, directed by Muhiddin Muzaffar (Tajikistan), and Best Cinematography for *Mighty Afrin - In the Time of Floods*, directed by Angelos Rallis (Bangladesh, France, Greece). The Best Film award was given to *The Cord of Life*, and a Special Jury Mention went to *Baqt (Happiness)*, directed by Askar Uzabayev (Kazakhstan).

Afrin Khanom received a Special Jury Mention (Actress) for her role in *Mighty Afrin - In the Time of Floods*.

In the Women Filmmakers Section, *Pasang: In the Shadow of Everest*, directed by Nancy Svendsen (USA), won the Best Documentary Award, while the Best Feature Film Award went to *Ashghal-ha va Arousak-ha (Junks & Dolls)*,

directed by Manijeh Hekmat (Iran). Gyeongmu NOH won Best Director for the film *How to Get Your Man Pregnant* (South Korea), and a Special Mention went to *Mukti*, directed by Chaitali Somadder (Bangladesh).

In the Bangladesh Panorama section, *Sabitri (A Burning Soul)*, directed by Pantho Prosad, received the FIPRESCI Award for Best Full-Length Feature Film. In the Talent Section, *Laila*, directed by Baishaki Somadder, won the FIPRESCI Award for Best Short Film, with *Inafi (The Scarf)*, directed by Shuvashis Sinha, as the 1st Runner-up and *Antohin Pathe (Endless Way)*, directed by Ziaul Hoque Raju, as the 2nd Runner-up.

The Spiritual Film Section awarded *Tuda 1 Obratno (There and Back)*, directed by Oleg Asadulin (Russia), as the Best Feature Film, and *Kunanfinda: The Land of Death*, directed by Hansel Leyva Fanego (Cuba), as the Best Documentary. A Special Mention went to *Surot (Reflection of Life)*, directed by Golam Rabbani (Bangladesh). The Audience Award went to *Mujib: Ekti Jatir Rupokar (Mujib: The Making of a Nation)*, directed by Shyam Benegal (Bangladesh, India), and a Special Audience Award was given to *Bijoyar Pore (Autumn Flies)*, directed by Abhijit SriDas (India).

In the Children's Film category, the Best Children Film Badal Rahman Award was given to *Pravas (Pravas the Tour)*, directed by Vipul Sharma (India).

The upcoming edition of the country's grandest film festival has been announced at the closing ceremony, scheduled to take place from January 11-19, 2025.

NEWS

Govt institution, not workers, sued us

FROM PAGE 1
A January 1 labour court verdict that Prof Yunus and the three others are guilty of labour law violations. The four accused were sentenced to six months in prison and fined Tk 30,000 each.

The bail will be in effect until an appeal they filed against the verdict yesterday is disposed of, said Abdullah-Al-Mamun, a lawyer for the accused.

The tribunal ordered the court concerned to submit the case dockets on March 3, the lawyer told The Daily Star.

The lawsuit against Prof Yunus and the others was filed by Labour Inspector (general) SM Arifuzzaman in 2021.

Yesterday afternoon, a reporter asked Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader for his take on Prof Yunus's comment that the government had sued him.

The minister replied that the workers had filed the case, not the government.

"He misappropriated poor people's money... The workers filed cases. The government had not filed a case against him," he told a press conference.

After the tribunal granted him bail, Prof Yunus said he dreamed of a world

with net zero carbon emissions, zero poverty, and zero unemployment. "Eliminating the concentration of wealth is another goal. The upper class currently controls most of the resources. The underprivileged are being deprived. The wealth flows in one direction: towards the rich. All institutions, laws, policies, and structures are designed for this. Our goal is to break this cycle..."

In response to a question, he said, "We are chasing a dream. We might have unintentionally offended someone by running after this dream."

At one point, he said, "I cannot tell why the case was filed."

As a journalist asked if the matter would upset him, Prof Yunus said, "Hopefully not. We have a schedule filled with work. Globally, there is a significant amount of support for our cause. Universities and young people come to us. There are currently 107 universities with Yunus Social Business Centres. Yunus Centres have been established in 37 countries."

"The Social Business Centre is being opened in Russia. Every nation has a university-based social business centre."

His lawyer Mamun said, "His [Yunus's] organisation is under the jurisdiction of the Directorate of

Factories. A government institution created this fictitious case at the orders of higher authorities. The matter has already been resolved, and the [prison] sentence is invalid."

Referring to his colleagues who were also accused of labour law violation, Prof Yunus said, "I am one of the four accused. No one is talking about the three other accused. One of them is Nurjahan Begum. She is right here."

Grameen Bank's journey started "holding her hands. She joined as a volunteer... But no one remembers it. She has to appear at the court today. It makes us sad."

"The last time, she brought her medication with her, thinking we might have to head to jail directly from the court. It is our misfortune that the woman, who gave her whole life for this, has to make preparations to go to jail."

"Shahjahan has been with me since the inception of Grameen Bank. He is another accused. He can't walk; can't move. He had to be brought up and down to and from the sixth floor. That is our punishment."

"Ashraf is the other one standing here. Ashraf had just graduated from Buet when we took him in... We needed an engineer."

Mercury falls to lowest

FROM PAGE 12
temperature was recorded at 26.3 degrees Celsius in Cox's Bazar's Teknaf and Chattogram's Sitakunda upazilas. Dhaka saw a minimum temperature of 12.7 degrees Celsius.

A mild to severe cold wave is sweeping Rangpur, Rajshahi, Dhaka, Khulna, and Barishal divisions and Cumilla, Sitakunda, and Moulvibazar districts, according to the BMD.

Temperatures between eight and 10 degrees Celsius are considered mild cold waves; six to eight degrees Celsius are moderate cold waves; and less than six degrees Celsius are severe cold waves.

Moderate to thick fog may occur at places over the river basins and light to moderate fog at places elsewhere across the country from midnight to morning.

BMD officials, however, said the temperature across the country is expected to start improving.

"At places, the temperature will start getting warmer from Sunday [yesterday] night and will continue to do so till February 3, after which the country will not likely see any more moderate or severe cold waves this season," said BMD Meteorologist Omar Faruq yesterday.

People living in the northern districts of Dinajpur and Thakurgaon continue to experience a cold spell that is significantly disrupting daily life.

Liakat Ali, a resident of the Rajbari area of Dinajpur town, said he had to drive his rickshaw van early in the morning, but the cold was so intense that his fingers went numb.

All educational institutions in the districts remained closed yesterday. The weather also affected flight operations at Saidpur Airport in Nilphamari.

Airport Manager Suplob Kumar Ghosh said the operation of flights suffered disruptions for an hour due to low visibility caused by dense fog. "Operations resumed after 1:00pm."

In Thakurgaon, low-income groups are suffering the worst, with limited income for the last week.

Rickshaw puller Rafiqul Islam said his daily income has been dropping for a week as people chose to stay indoors unless there was an emergency. "It's also very hard to pull a rickshaw in this bone-chilling cold."

Meanwhile, farmers fear losses of winter crops, including potatoes and other vegetables, from various diseases.

Sirajul Islam, deputy director of the Department of Agriculture Extension, said, "The situation is not alarming, but the growers are advised to take measures to save their crops from fungal infections."

Bangladeshi

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Mekhliganj police, with the help of BSF, recovered the body and took it to the police station following the incident.

Tuklu was involved in the smuggling of Indian goods, said Nayek Subedar Golam Mustafa.

The BGB official said a letter has been sent to the BSF protesting the incident and also asking to return the body immediately through a flag meeting.

The body was not returned until filing the report last evening around 7:00pm.

Form body

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general of the Department of Agricultural Marketing; and the chairman of the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh have been made respondents to this effect.

The HC bench of Justice Mustafa Zaman Islam and Justice Md Atabullah issued the order and rule following a writ petition filed by Supreme Court lawyer Manoj Kumar Bhowmik seeking necessary directives to this effect.

Deputy Attorney General Tushar Kanti Roy represented the state during the hearing of the petition.

Un-pause funding

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Footage showed about 30 bodies were piled up in Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis as families continue to bury their children in a mass grave inside the courtyard, reports Al Jazeera online.

Palestinians are fleeing further south from Khan Yunis towards Rafah, close to the Egyptian border, where the United Nations says most of Gaza's estimated 1.7 million displaced people have gathered.

PM calls

FROM PAGE 1
parliamentary delegation led by Vice Chair of All-Party Parliamentary Group on Bangladesh and Chair of APPG on Indo-British, Virendra Sharma, MP, paid a courtesy call on her at the Gono Bhaban.

PM's Speechwriter M Nazrul Islam briefed journalists after the meeting.

This is the first parliamentary visit from the UK since the national election was held in Bangladesh on January 7.

During the meeting, Hasina said they gave shelter to Rohingya after their mass exodus in face of inhuman torture in 2017.

Myanmar has agreed to take back its nationals, but has yet to take any measure to this end despite the fact that six years have already passed, she said.

Mentioning that the global monetary assistance has decreased since the Covid-19 pandemic and Russia-Ukraine war, she said, "So, Rohingyas are now becoming a huge burden for a small country like Bangladesh."

The five-member parliamentary delegation includes Paul Scully, MP, former Conservative minister for tech and digital economy; Neil Coyle, MP, member of UK House of Commons Select Committee on Foreign Affairs; Andrew Western, MP, opposition whip at the House of Commons; and Dominic Moffitt, senior parliamentary assistant at the House of Commons.

China invites

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free, fair, and festive national elections. "China reiterated its position to further strengthen the bilateral relations during the tenure of the new government in Bangladesh," the foreign ministry said in a statement.

Hasan Mahmud thanked China for helping with the process to repatriate the Rohingyas.

Ambassador Wen reiterated China's stance that repatriation is the only means to have a sustainable solution to the crisis and China is working with all the stakeholder to that end.

Responding to a question on the Teesta project, he said China is committed to help Bangladesh in this regard but it requires proposal from the Bangladesh side first.

Jatiyo Party: where drama never stops

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She also alleged that many JP candidates quit the race as the two did not look after them.

The party leaders and activists have the right to protest against the leadership for the election failure. Atmosphere in the party has been damaged as GM Quader and Chunnun did not discuss or console the party activists after the polls disaster, rather expelled many activists, Raushan said.

To resolve the ongoing crisis in JP, Raushan said she removed the duo from their posts and took charge of the party chairman on request of the party leaders and activists.

She also made her Spokesperson Kazi Mamunur Rashid the new JP secretary general until a JP council is held.

Raushan added that those relived from the party or kept outside the

organisation would be reinstated.

Around an hour after her announcement, Chunnun said they are least bothered about the "baseless move" by Raushan, claiming that she has no jurisdiction to make such decisions.

"As per our party's charter, she has no power to become JP chairman or dismiss anyone from any post," he said at an emergency press conference in the JP chairman's Banani office.

Chunnun also mentioned that Raushan had announced the expulsion of GM Quader thrice and later backtracked.

"Her post is ornamental and as such she is no one in the party. Therefore, she has no such power in the party constitution."

The JP competed in 265 seats in the recently held polls. After a deal with the ruling party, the AL agreed

to withdraw its candidates from 26 constituencies. But the JP could manage to win only 11 seats, making the worst result of the party since 1991.

Around 90 percent JP nominees, including several heavyweight ones, lost their security deposits.

Raushan and her son did not run "due to a conflict with GM Quader over party nominations".

Around 668 JP leaders of Dhaka (city) north unit resigned from the party on January 25, saying they have no confidence in GM Quader and Chunnun.

On January 14, JP grassroots leaders at a programme in the capital held GM Quader and Chunnun responsible for the party's election disaster.

They alleged that the duo got money for taking part in the polls, but did not spend any for party candidates' campaigns.