

JANUARY BOX OFFICE

Four local films fail to attract audiences



PHOTOS: COLLECTED

The allure of movies hasn't waned even during the final phase of the OTT era. In fact, the audience's interest in the big screen seems to be growing steadily. A glance at neighboring India reveals a significant trend: where the box office used to earn Rs 100 crores, it's now reaching a thousand crores.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Dhaka's film industry is no exception to this trend. Last year, movies like *Priyotoma* and *Surongo* demonstrated how to dominate the box office. Especially *Priyotoma* surpassed the records of any previous movie at the box office. The producer estimates that the film earned more than Tk 40 crore.

According to data from the distributor association, over fifty movies were released on the big screen last year. Unfortunately, a majority of these films failed to generate sufficient returns on investment. However, many hope the movie business will experience a turnaround in the new year.

As January 2024 came to a close, it's worth noting that a total of four movies have been released on the big screen during these thirty-one days. Unfortunately, all the released movies have failed to attract an audience.

Cinema hall owners report that there were insufficient crowds in the theatres, even for the Mehdi Hasan directorial *Shesh Bazi* featuring Symon Sadik and Shirin Shila, Chayanika Chowdhury's *Kagojer Bou*, featuring Pori Moni and D A Tayeb, as well as the Musharraf Karim

starrer *Hubba*.

On January 26, Sukumar Chandra Dash's directorial *Rukhe Daraw* featuring Kayes Arju and Tanha also failed to attract audiences.

Not only in single-screen theatres, but the same situation also prevails in the country's cineplexes and multiplexes. As per reports by industry insiders, these movies failed commercially due to untimely storylines and weak production values, resulting in commercial disappointment.

Mesbah Uddin, senior media manager, and marketing officer of Star Cineplex expressed that in the first month of the new year, three films, namely *Shesh Bazi*, *Kagojer Bou*, and *Hubba*, failed to attract viewers. Among them, there was a level of optimism regarding *Hubba*, but the outcome turned out unexpectedly poor. He noted that the beginning of the year hasn't been pleasant, but since the year is just starting, they remain hopeful about the future. "It's possible that the film business will pick up again during Eid," he added.

In response to the question about why films haven't been performing without being 'Eid releases', Mesbah Uddin stated, "Audiences typically do

not frequent theatres outside of Eid." He emphasised that the two major festivals in the country are Eids, during which high-quality movies are released. Currently, most movies are being tailored for Eid releases. He suggested that if compelling movies were released outside of Eid, and if audiences could be drawn in through captivating marketing campaigns, then movies could potentially thrive without relying solely on Eid releases.

"Movies will always succeed if they are of high quality. Apart from Eid, audiences should be provided with compelling movies to draw them to the cinema halls. We are prepared, and the rest of the responsibility lies with the directors, producers, and artists to deliver outstanding content," he affirmed.

Modhumita Cinema Hall was closed this week due to the movies failing to attract audiences. Iftekhar Uddin Noushad, its leader, mentioned that no Bangladeshi movie released in January succeeded except for *Hubba*. He expressed disappointment over the cancellation of the Hindi film *Fighter*, which was expected to draw crowds. The decision to not screen *Fighter* during the language month was deemed a 'sensitive excuse.' Naushad also mentioned

attending a family function where he observed grand celebrations featuring Hindi songs.

Awlad Hossain Ujjal, the general secretary of the Bangladesh Film Exhibitors' Association, attributed the lack of success of four movies released in January to the 'winter' season. "An abrupt onset of harsh winter is affecting various regions of the country, discouraging people from going out. Additionally, feedback from those who watched the recently released movies suggests that the film quality might not be up to par. The association of hall owners is expressing concerns about the current state of the cinema business. They believe that despite any political instability improving, winter tends to bring its set of challenges. The hope is that upcoming movie releases will entice audiences."

Despite facing setbacks in January, three movies are anticipated for release in February. The film *Trap*, featuring Apu Biswas and Joy Chowdhury, is set to hit theatres, along with Jaya Ahsan's *Pejarar Subash* scheduled for release on February 9. Additionally, another Apu Biswas starrer film *Chaya Brikkho*, also featuring Nirab Hossain has been announced for release on February 16.

Nawshaba to direct another play featuring children with special needs



The beginning of Quazi Nawshaba Ahmed's acting journey might have begun on television, but the actress has consistently revisited her roots in theatre, by becoming a regular presence in renowned plays.

Under Nawshaba's founded theatre troupe, Together We Can established in 2018, they are preparing to present the fourth production named *Triveni* in March.

Triveni will feature children with special needs from Rangpur. Nawshaba conceived and will direct the play based on Ejaz Farha's script, with music composed by Abhishek Bhattacharya.

Ananta-Barsha to star in upcoming Masud Rana project

The enduring literary legacy of the late writer Qazi Anwar Hussain lives on through his immortal creation *Masud Rana*. An upcoming film titled *Cheetah* has thus been prepared based on the author's novel *Operation Cheetah*.

Meanwhile, Ananta Jalil and Barsha have been tapped to co-star in the leading roles for this action thriller film produced by Jazz Multimedia.

On Wednesday evening, the movie was officially announced at Dhaka Club where it was also stressed that this project marks the first collaboration between Ananta Jalil, Barsha, and Jazz Multimedia.

Rajiv Kumar Biswas will be directing *Cheetah* as filming for this project is scheduled to commence in May.



COUNTRYWIDE

People suffer as awful roads lie unrepaired

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narsingdi

Thousands of people at different char villages under Narsingdi Sadar upazila have been suffering immensely as several dilapidated roads in those areas are lying without repair for years.

Locals said nearly one lakh residents living at several villages under Alokballi, Chardighaldi, Shreenagar and Karimpur unions have to face serious difficulties in reaching their destinations every day as most of the roads of those villages have remained in awfully dilapidated conditions for years.

As a result, many commuters often get injured while travelling through different damaged roads of those unions, which has now become a common scenario, they said.

Villagers said the Meghna river separated Chardighaldi union from the main land and located nearly eight kilometres from Narsingdi town.

Boat is the only mode of communication for several thousand residents of different villages under the union.

Meanwhile Alokballi union, which is about 10 kilometres from the district town, has eight villages, but apart from a three-kilometre-long paved road, stretching from Bakhornagar to Nekjanpur, there is no concrete road in the union.

While talking, Chardighaldi Union

Parishad (UP) Chairman Delwar Hossain Shahin said a concrete road was constructed to connect Chardighaldi with Jithrampur about a decade ago.

But due to lack of renovation work for long that too has turned awful for its users as it developed at least 27 cracks at different spots, he said.

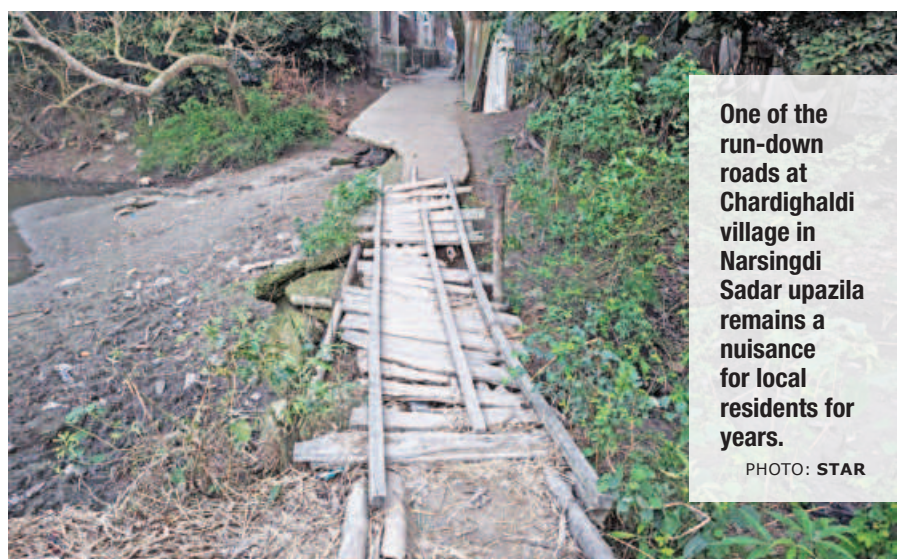
A team from the upazila engineers' office visited different villages under his union about a year ago and assured the local residents to repair the roads soon, but nothing has been done so far, he added.

Sayed Abdullah, a bank official at Chardighaldi village, said usually two auto-rickshaws cannot run side by side as numerous cracks have developed at many points of the eight-foot-wide road.

Moreover, as the entire area is separated by the Meghna, local farmers face serious difficulties in transporting their agricultural products to the nearby markets.

Alokballi UP Chairman Delwar Hossain Dipu said he has informed the authorities concerned to take immediate step to repair the roads, but necessary steps are yet to be taken in this regard.

Narsingdi Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) Executive Engineer Shah Alam Mia said they will start the repair work of the roads soon after getting fund allocation from the World Bank.



One of the run-down roads at Chardighaldi village in Narsingdi Sadar upazila remains a nuisance for local residents for years.
PHOTO: STAR

Go for digital publications to promote Bangla globally

FROM PAGE 12

The premier was speaking at a programme on the Bangla Academy premises marking the opening of the Amar Ekushey Boi Mela.

The Bangla Academy is organising the country's largest annual book fair on its premises and the adjoining Suhrawardy Udyan.

Talking about the publishers, Hasina said if they become digital publishers, their books can be reached to all people abroad. "People speaking other languages would be able to read the books."

She directed the Bangla

Academy to launch a web portal with the digital versions of its published books for online readers.

Alongside the printed books, it is essential to make audio version of books available in the libraries, the PM added.

Thanking the Bangla Academy for its contribution to translation literature, Hasina said once many people demanded foreign literature not be translated.

"But I favour translation. How can we know other nations, countries and cultures if literature of other languages is not

translated?"

The more Bangla literature will be translated into other languages, the more speakers of different languages will get the scope to read Bangla literature, Hasina added.

"If we can translate our books into other languages, we will be able to advance our mother language Bangla, literature, and culture throughout the world even faster. So, we need to make it happen," she said.

Referring to her government's Vision 2041, the premier said Bangladesh would be a

smart country in future by making its population, government, economy and society smart.

"If we want to build a smart society, we will have to enrich everything like language, literature and culture," she said.

Noting that book fairs are now held in districts, the PM said the government would organise book fairs in upazilas in phases.

Mentioning that Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman delivered his speech in Bangla at the United Nations General Assembly in 1974, Hasina said Bangabandhu

had taken Bangla to the international stage.

At the function, the PM unveiled covers of two books titled "Collected Works of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman: Volume-2" and "Praner Melay" (written by Sheikh Hasina), published by Bangla Academy.

She also distributed the Bangla Academy Sahitya Puroshkar-2023 among the 16 recipients under 11 categories. Each awardee received a cheque for award money, a crest, and a certificate.

Later, the PM visited some stalls at the book fair.

India regrets death of BGB soldier

FROM PAGE 12

Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud will be visiting India on February 7-9 for a bilateral meeting with his Indian counterpart S Jaishankar, his first since taking charge on January 11, Sabrin said.

Issues of mutual interests including trade, connectivity and energy cooperation, and people-to-people contacts, regional cooperation and connection will be

discussed between the two sides to further strengthen Bangladesh-India relations.

"We are also expecting discussion on the Teesta water-sharing agreement," she said.

The issue of the Chinese project in the Teesta may come up if the Indian side wants to talk about it. However, the agenda of the bilateral meeting is yet to be finalised, she added.

Asked about Bangladesh's

communication with Myanmar, which is witnessing an escalation of fighting, especially in Rakhine State, she said the ongoing conflicts in Rakhine are Myanmar's internal issue.

However, Bangladesh is keeping close watch so that no Bangladeshi citizen is affected by the Myanmar conflicts and that there is no fresh influx of Myanmar citizens into Bangladesh.

"Our diplomatic

missions in Naypyidaw and Sittwe are also keeping in contact with the Myanmar government. Besides, the concerned ministries are also maintaining communication with the Myanmar embassy in Dhaka. Our BGB is also maintaining contact with the Myanmar border force," she said.

Meanwhile, Mahmud on Wednesday travelled to Brussels to attend the 3rd EU Indo-Pacific Ministerial

Forum scheduled for February 1-4.

The foreign minister will also meet the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, EU Commissioner for Crisis Management, Luxembourg Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, and the foreign ministers of Belgium, Austria, Lithuania, Czech Republic, Hungary, Netherlands, Portugal, Vietnam and Sweden.

ACC presses charges against Yunus, 13 others

FROM PAGE 12

Meanwhile, Law Minister Anisul Huq yesterday said that lies were being spread abroad about the labour law violations case filed against Yunus.

"A propaganda is going on in this regard too," he said during a press conference held at the Secretariat to counter the "conspiracy that is being hatched against the state".

The government cannot remain silent when attempts are made to defame the country's dignity, he said.

"There is a law in the country - we will run the country according to that law. Despite irrefutable evidence, it is being spread abroad that the allegations against him [Yunus] are false, and it is being said it was done for harassment. These allegations are not true."

Propaganda is being spread centring a case to undermine the country's court, judiciary and continuity of dignity, democracy and justice in

Bangladesh, he said.

"We will tell the truth through the media. We don't follow anyone's directions."

Huq maintained that the government is "not doing anything to harass Yunus".

The government is not harassing him by filing any false case. The case against him was filed by the workers, after which the department responsible for protecting workers' rights prosecuted him, he said. The executive, legislature

and judiciary belong to all the people of Bangladesh.

"No one is above the law. If anyone commits a crime, they will have to face justice through the law," Huq added.

On January 1, the Labour Court-3 of Dhaka sentenced Yunus and three others to six months in jail and fined them Tk 30,000 each for violating labour laws.

On September 9, 2021, Labour Inspector (General) SM Arifuzzaman filed the case against them.

US sanctions

FROM PAGE 12
West Bank.

"These actions pose a grave threat to peace, security, stability in the West Bank, Israel and the Middle East region, and they also obstruct the realization of ultimately an independent Palestinian state existing side by side with the state of Israel," one of the senior officials said.

Biden has raised the issue directly with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the official said, as Biden seeks a path to a two-state solution for Israel and the Palestinians once the Gaza conflict ends.