



PHOTOS: COURTESY

# OSCAR NOMINEE NAZRIN CHOUDHURY is proud of her Bangladeshi roots



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RAKSHANDA RAHMAN MISHA

*The 96th Academy Awards have recently announced this year's nominees for the Best Live Action Short Film. The entire crew of 'Red, White and Blue' waited in anticipation to hear their film's name. When it finally happened, Nazrin Choudhury, the film's director, was overwhelmed with emotion. She, along with her daughters, burst into tears. She thanked everyone who supported her, and the very next day Bangladeshi newspapers prominently featured headlines about Nazrin Choudhury, the Bangladeshi-origin British-American screenwriter, who secured her first Oscar nomination with her directorial debut film.*

Although she was born and raised in London, the curious old me wanted to know whether she felt a strong connection with her Bangladeshi

roots and what made her choose *Red, White and Blue* as her maiden venture. I searched her up on social media and decided to converse with the talented director who exclusively gave us an up-close and personal view of her dreams and aspirations.

“I am so thrilled that we told a story that we care about so passionately and believe in. I have an intersection of identities that encompasses my Bangladeshi, British, and American heritage. Bangladesh holds a special place in my heart because it's where my parents were born. I spent a significant amount of time in Bangladesh while growing up, even though I was born and brought up in London. I speak the language fluently and I still have many relatives there. Even amidst the joyful shock and tears that came when I learned the news, I knew the Bangladeshi people would be so proud and overjoyed on my behalf. So, when I received an outpouring of congratulations almost immediately, it truly filled my heart with joy to know that this achievement felt like their achievement,” said the director.

Nazrin Choudhury's short film chronicles the life of Rachel (Brittany Snow), a single parent confronting the challenges of living paycheck to paycheck while dealing with childcare issues. When an unexpected pregnancy jeopardises her already precarious position, Rachel is compelled to hit

the road with her young daughter, embarking on both a literal and metaphorical journey.

“I penned the film's story in the immediate aftermath of the Supreme Court overturning the landmark decision in the Roe v Wade case, which had protected our reproductive rights in America for almost 50 years. My daughters, Iman and Alyssa, were the first to hear the story and read the script. It's an important issue that affects all of us, but it will affect them for a much longer period. I felt I owed it to them to use the power of storytelling to examine the repercussions for them and so many Americans who are being denied their bodily autonomy through a very characterful and humane story,” said the screenwriter.

“There are countless memorable moments about the film that I will always cherish. However, most importantly, the cast and crew became a family. I like to think the Bangladeshi spirit of warmth and hospitality that is in our DNA is what I brought to the set that helped foster some of these special bonds that continue to this day.”

Nazrin takes pride in her upbringing within an immigrant family abroad.



“When I was five years old, we relocated to Bangladesh for a year, and I even attended school there before returning to the UK. However, I continued to make frequent visits to Bangladesh during the summer holidays. I maintain a strong connection to my Bengali culture, even as I am shaped by my experiences in the UK and the US. This has resulted in a melting pot of cultures, which extends to my daughters.”

Nazrin pursued Biomedical

Science at King's College London, graduating with a BSc (Hon's) with the intention of becoming a doctor. However, she ultimately chose to embark on a different path and became a writer.

“I was on track to study medicine as my ultimate career goal, but I always knew deep down that I wanted to be an artiste. Interestingly, my Bengali name is *Shilpy* and my relatives back home refer to me by this name, which means 'artiste'. I started out as an actress but soon transitioned into writing after winning an award for my first screenplay. It opened the door for me to work on several UK shows before moving to the US to work in films and TV shows in Hollywood.”

As the world eagerly anticipates the unfolding of the 96th Academy Awards, the entire nation of Bangladesh will unite to extend their heartfelt wishes to our own Nazrin Choudhury, hoping she will clinch the Oscar for her film on March 10.

“I believe my most enchanting Hollywood moment is just on the horizon, following our Oscar nomination. Please keep your fingers crossed for us and I hope everyone in Bangladesh will be watching,” concluded the ecstatic Nazrin.

## COUNTRYWIDE

### Hemayet shines in Bombay chili farming

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

An educated youth from Kalapara upazila sets the example by becoming a successful entrepreneur through chili and vegetable farming.

Gazi Hemayet Uddin, 30, a resident of Pakhimara village close to the Bay of Bengal, about 60 kilometres far from the district town, completed his post-graduation from Patuakhali Government College last year.

After completing his study Hemayet took the decision not to try for a job. Instead, he involved himself in agriculture sector and started vegetable farming on a limited scale.

Last year, he cultivated Bombay chili on only 35 decimals of land and earned about Tk 3 lakh from selling his produces throughout the year.

Moreover, alongside cultivating Bombay chili, he also different varieties of seasonal vegetables and earned at least Tk 10 lakh in the last one year.

During a recent visit Hemayet's chili field this correspondent saw the young entrepreneur covered the entire field with polythene so that chili plants does not get damaged due to heavy rain or excessive heat.

Hemayet, who was busy tending to his chili plants, said he grows different seasonal vegetables like coriander,

spinach, radish, cabbage, cauliflower, sweet potato and watermelon.

“I manage to earn around Tk 10 lakh by selling the vegetables I produce round the year, which is no less than the salary of a private job,” Hemayet said, adding that he has been cultivating Bombay chili for the last two years.

Meanwhile, seeing his success, a number of farmers of the locality are now cultivating Bombay chili alongside other crops.

Besides, alongside Hemayet, his two educated brothers -- Mahfuz Gazi and Abdullah Gazi -- also became financially solvent by cultivating vegetables.

Farmer Zakir Hossain of the village said due to its aroma the Bombay chilli produce here has a great demand.

They sell each kilogramme of Bombay chili for Tk 250 to Tk 400, depending on its quality, he said.

Locals said earlier farmers used to cultivate only paddy once a year due to high salinity in the water of Pakhimara Canal, a tributary of the Andharmanik river.

In 2005, local farmers came together and constructed four separate temporary dams on Pakhimara Canal in order to preserve fresh water. Later, around 10,000 farmers of 15 villages under Nilganj union started to grow different varieties of vegetables there and have a great success.

### Woman, daughter gang-raped

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Md Rafiqul Islam, officer-in-charge of Char Jabbar Police Station, told The Daily Star that Munshi was arrested in this regard.

The incident occurred just hours after a Noakhali court sentenced 10 people to death, including local AL leader Ruhul Amin, and six others to life imprisonment for raping a woman in the same upazila on December 30, 2018.

Speaking to this newspaper yesterday, the victim said she had recently moved to Charkaji Mokhles village in Subarnachar with her husband and children from the neighbouring Hatia upazila.

“My husband works as a day-labourer and is often away from home in search of work. He returns every 3-4 days. Two days ago, he left home again and I

was alone with our three daughters.

“Around 2:00am, a man broke into our house and let two others in. They tied me and my daughters up and gagged us. While two men raped me, the other raped one of my daughters ... I recognised two of them [rapists].”

She added that before the rapists left, they took her gold ornaments and cash.

“After they left my home, leaving us still tied up, my children screamed for help. The neighbours heard them and came to rescue us.”

They also called 999 and informed police about the incident.

The woman then filed a case with Char Jabbar Police Station against two named and one unnamed persons.

OC Rafiqul said, “Noakhali Superintendent of Police Md Asaduzzaman visited the spot last morning upon receiving the news. Abul Khair Munshi was arrested during the visit and is currently under interrogation.”

He added that police were patrolling the area.

Noakhali SP Md Asaduzzaman said, “We have detained one individual for questioning.... We are investigating the matter with utmost priority.”

After the two victims were rescued, they were taken to Noakhali General Hospital. On-duty doctors conducted tests and transferred them to the hospital's gynaecology ward, where they are currently being treated, the OC said.

### Trump claim of immunity rejected

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the case, was forced to postpone it pending a ruling on the immunity issue, which she had rejected in December.

The three appellate court judges who heard Trump's appeal last month were also unconvinced by his arguments.

“For the purpose of this criminal case, former President Trump has become citizen Trump, with all of the defenses of any other criminal defendant,” they said in their unanimous ruling.

“But any executive immunity that may have protected him while he served as President no longer protects him against this prosecution.”

Special Counsel Jack Smith, who brought the election conspiracy case against Trump, the first

former president to face criminal indictment, had been trying to keep the March start date for the trial on track.

Lawyers for the former president have sought repeatedly to delay it until after the November presidential election, when Trump could potentially have all of the federal cases against him dropped if he wins the White House again.

“Pandora's Box” Trump also faces 2020 election interference charges in the state of Georgia, and has been indicted in Florida for taking large numbers of top secret documents with him on leaving the White House.

He was impeached twice by the Democratic-controlled House of Representatives while in

office, but acquitted both times by the Senate.

During arguments last month before the appeals court, Trump's attorney John Sauer argued that a president can only be prosecuted for actions taken while in the White House if first impeached and convicted by Congress.

“To authorize the prosecution of a president for his official acts would open a Pandora's Box from which this nation may never recover,” Sauer said.

The appeals court judges disagreed.

“Presidential immunity against federal indictment would mean that, as to the President, the Congress could not legislate, the Executive could not prosecute and the Judiciary could not review,” they wrote.

### Install air quality

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Following a writ petition filed by Bela, the HC on February 15, 2022 directed the officials to identify the sources of major air pollution and submit a report on the government's action plan to curb the health hazard and the implementation status.

The court also ordered a list of the activities responsible for air pollution.

It asked the authorities to prepare a time-bound mitigation plan for setting up air quality monitoring systems in appropriate places and introduce a system to save people from exposure to unhealthy air.

The HC also issued a rule asking the authorities to explain why their failure to mitigate air pollution and save public health should not be declared illegal and against the public interest.

They must also explain

### Houthis fire

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Islands flagged ships, respectively, as British and American.

British maritime security firm Ambrey said a Barbados-flagged, general cargo ship owned by a British company suffered damage from an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) while sailing south east through the Red Sea.

No injuries were reported. The ship performed evasive manoeuvres and continued

its journey, Ambrey said. The owner of the Morning Tide, British firm Furadino Shipping, told Reuters the ship was currently sailing without problems, but gave no further information.

The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) agency said just after midnight it had received a report of a projectile fired at the port side of a ship located 57 nautical miles west of Hodeidah and that a small craft was seen nearby.

### Ensure fair, transparent

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harassment” of Yunus. Led by Senator Dick Durbin, 12 US senators also called for halting all harassment.

Patel was also asked about the status of the 3C visa policy, announced in May last year for those who were

found to be undermining democracy in Bangladesh.

“My understanding is that these policies don't sunset just because the election is over, but I don't have any updates to offer. There is no change in policy,” he added.



Hemayet Uddin tends his chili plants at Pakhimara village in Patuakhali's Kalapara upazila.

PHOTO: STAR