

# From Pabna to New York: SUCHITRA SEN to be immortalised with US festival

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ZARIN TASNIM

In a momentous occasion set to mark a significant milestone in the world of Bengali cinema, the inaugural Suchitra Sen International Bengali Film Festival is set to grace the bustling streets of New York City. With anticipation brewing and excitement mounting, Bengali cinema aficionados worldwide eagerly await the grand debut of this cinematic effort.

The brainchild of Suchitra Sen Memorial USA, this festival promises to be a celebration of Bengali cinema like never before, drawing talent, enthusiasts, and dignitaries from across the globe. From the heartlands of Bangladesh to the vibrant film industry hubs of India and the melting pot of cultures in the United States, the event aims to unite Bengali cinema lovers under one roof.

The journey to bring this vision to life has been nothing short of remarkable. Born and raised in the quaint town of Pabna, Bangladesh,

Suchitra Sen's legacy transcends borders, resonating deeply with Bengali communities worldwide. Her ancestral home, once forgotten, now stands as a testament to her enduring influence, thanks to the tireless efforts of cultural activists and the support of the government.

In the bustling metropolis of New York, where dreams are born and ambitions thrive, the spirit of Suchitra Sen finds a new home. Cultural workers, filmmakers, and enthusiasts alike have rallied behind the cause, breathing life into her legacy and ensuring that her contributions to Bengali cinema are celebrated on an international stage.

The inauguration press briefing for the festival took place yesterday at Press Club,



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

Dhaka with distinguished guests, including luminaries such as Dr Nuran Nabi - Ekushey Padak-winning writer, scientist, and freedom fighter, and Lutfun Nahar Lata - a prominent actress. Joining them are Nazrul Minto, Md Abdul Hamid, Swadhin Majumdar, Eli Borua, Pial Hossain, and Shormishtha Ghosh.

Additionally, special guests included respected parliament member and popular actor Ferdous Ahmed, renowned Indian and Bangladeshi actress Rituparna Sengupta, filmmaker Reshmi Mitra, and well-known Indian entertainment journalist Sharmila Maiti.

Rituparna Sengupta expressed her immense joy and pride to be in Bangladesh and to be a part of the festival. She added, "Today is a very special day for me to be here as we celebrated International Mother Language Day on Wednesday. To commemorate Bangla language and films of Bangla language we are arranging Suchitra Sen International Bengali Film Festival. Suchitra Sen is a dream to all of us, this institution and the festival are all because of her - for her contribution to make a place for Bengali Cinema in the global platform. I'd like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who worked towards the preservation of Suchitra Sen's memory and building the museum."

Central to the festival's success are its esteemed jury members, representing the best and brightest in Bengali cinema. Morshedul Islam, a revered Bangladeshi filmmaker was also present in the press briefing.

Bedabrata Pain, a trailblazing Indian filmmaker and former NASA scientist, and Mary Lee Grisanti, department head of School of Visual Arts New York, bring a wealth of experience and expertise to the table as jury members.

Set against the backdrop of the iconic Jamaica Performing Arts Center (JPAC), the festival promises two days of cinematic splendour, showcasing a curated selection of feature films, shorts, and documentaries. As the spotlight shines on the silver screen, filmmakers from Bangladesh, India, and beyond will vie for recognition and acclaim, with awards presented across various categories.

The festival will run for two days on April 20 and 21, from 11am to 11pm, showcasing selected feature, short, and documentary films.

The internationally recognised platform 'FilmFreeway' is being utilised for film submissions, with April 6 being the deadline - which coincides with Suchitra Sen's birthday.



## Joy Bangla Concert to be held outside Dhaka for the first time

The Joy Bangla Concert, traditionally held in Dhaka since 2015, will take place at the MA Aziz Stadium in the port city of Chattogram on March 7 this year. This marks the first time the concert will be held outside Dhaka.

This year's event will showcase top bands and artists, including Artcell, Nemesis, and Chirkutt.

Young Bangla, a subgroup of Centre for Research and Information (CRI), is collaborating with the Chattogram District Administration and the Chattogram Metropolitan Police to organise the concert, reads a press release.

As the preparations for the event are underway, Chattogram Deputy Commissioner Abul Bashir Mohammad Fakhruzzaman visited the venue on Tuesday to assess the overall situation and preparations.

## 'The Office' star Ewen MacIntosh passes away at 50



The comedy community is in mourning following the passing of Ewen MacIntosh, best known for his portrayal of the deadpan Keith in the hit series *The Office*.

Aged 50, the actor passed away after struggling with his health for the last two years, confirmed his management company, Just Right Management. MacIntosh rose to fame as Keith

Bishop in *The Office*, where he plays the role of an accountant at Wernham Hogg, who has a dull voice and a passion for DJing.

He delighted fans with his hilarious scenes, such as when he casually ate a scotch egg while giving awkward romantic advice to Tim, played by Martin Freeman.

# NEWS

## Turkish rights groups under 'increasing' pressure: report

AFP, Ankara

Turkey's government is putting independent groups under increasing restrictions, including smear tactics, administrative harassment and the threat of criminal prosecution, argued a report released yesterday.

Groups are being threatened with administrative inspections, tax fines and even a possible trial for closure, said Murat Ozecebi of the Association

of Civil Society Development Centre (STGM).

Rights groups were particularly targeted, often through smear campaigns launched by pro-government media organisations, he added.

Ozecebi was launching the report, published with the support of the European Union, at a news conference in Ankara.

The criminal proceedings were meant to intimidate the entire civil

society in Turkey, said Ozecebi, who contributed to the report.

"Organisations deemed to be critical of the government go through more scrutiny and this pushes many of them to self-censorship," he added.

Associations defending LGBTQ rights and gender equality were particularly targeted for "verbal and physical attacks and harassment through the media", the report noted.

## Five officials of Transcom held in three cases

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Head of Transformation Zaraif Ayaat Hossain.

PBI Inspector Alauddin is probing one of the cases. Last light, he said Kamrul was arrested in the case he was investigating. He said the arrestee would be produced before a court today.

He said the other four were arrested in the other two cases.

## European

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partnership," she mentioned.

"Within the framework of our long-term partnership with Bangladesh, the European Union will continue to work with Bangladesh to uphold and advance the shared priorities of democracy, human rights and the rule of law that underpin our relations," said the European Commission president, wishing PM Hasina every success.

## Take action against 3 doctors

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licences at the entrances.

"We have issued an order. Those who will not display their licence numbers and follow the DGHS order will face legal action," said Abu Hussain Md Moinul Ahsan, director (hospitals & clinics) of the DGHS.

The DGHS directed the private healthcare facilities to follow 10 instructions, including keeping a designated employee to preserve and provide all information of a healthcare organisation and putting his or her photo and phone number on display at a visible spot; not running hospitals and diagnostic centres without licences; preserving all professional certificates, updated registration of the BMDC and copies of appointment letters; having registered doctors during a surgery as assistants to surgeons; and maintaining operation theater etiquette.

Warning that strict actions would be taken against irregularities in the health sector, Health Minister

Samanta Lal Sen said private healthcare facilities would have to abide by the government rules to run operations, reports UNB.

"This is the reason -- we have been noticing that some unscrupulous people are doing business with the lives of the people by opening hospitals, clinics, diagnostic centres everywhere for business interests without caring the government rules," he said in a statement yesterday.

Samanta said there are 1,200 unregistered healthcare centres with no skilled physicians, nurses, and technicians, raising concerns over how those are running and availing patients.

He informed that they have already shut 1,000 unregistered healthcare centres in the country and efforts were underway to close the rest ones.

The minister added that strict actions, including cancellation of licence, will be taken if the instructions are ignored.

## Israel hits Gaza's Rafah

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city and three in the centre, reports Reuters.

To the north of Rafah, smoke rose in the sky above Khan Younis, the territory's principal battlefield since Israel launched an assault there last month.

Gaza authorities said at least 20 people were also killed by bombing of two houses in a central part of the Gaza Strip, the only other substantial area yet to be stormed by Israeli forces in their five-month assault.

Residents who have fled to Rafah from elsewhere say there is now

nowhere left to go. Meanwhile, an already meagre aid flow has almost completely dried up over the last two weeks, with the United Nations saying it is often no longer safe enough to transport it, forcing residents to the brink of famine.

The heads of the main UN relief agencies, including UNHCR, Unicef, WFP and the WHO, released a joint letter pleading for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire.

In one of the first indications of how Israel sees Gaza being run after the war, a senior Israeli official said Israel was looking for Palestinians with no links

to either Hamas or the rival Palestinian Authority (PA) based in the West Bank, to set up a civil administration in "humanitarian pockets" of Gaza.

Israel's Channel 12 television said the plan could be tested first in the Zeitoun neighbourhood of Gaza City. But it was dismissed by Palestinians, including both Hamas and the umbrella Palestinian Liberation Organisation of its main rivals, as an unworkable formula for Israeli occupation.

"We are confident this project is pointless and is a sign of confusion and it will never succeed," Abu Zuhri of Hamas told Reuters.

## Govt move fails to stop price hike

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largest kitchen markets in Dhaka, said although the media reported that the import of Ramadan products increased recently, the prices of these items at the wholesale level are still high.

"This means that some traders in the supply chain are hiking the prices to make profits. The government needs to look into this.

"We are selling products at high prices because we are purchasing these at high prices," he said.

Though the prices of winter vegetables drop every February, the situation was the opposite this year.

According to a report of the Department of Agricultural Marketing, the prices of 10 vegetables were higher on February 20 compared to the same day last year. The rise

ranges from 14.29 percent to 207.14 percent.

The price of green papaya went up by 55 percent, sweet pumpkin by 15 percent, tomato by 15 percent, cabbage by 20 percent, and hybrid cucumber by 62 percent over the last year.

The department made the report after compiling data from four kitchen markets - Karwan Bazar, Mohammadpur's Town Hall Bazar, Mirpur-I and New Market Banalata Bazar - in Dhaka.

Speaking at an event yesterday, State Minister for Commerce Ahsanul Islam Titu said the authorities concerned were working to fix the prices of imported goods at the consumer level.

"If anyone makes the market unstable by hoarding, action will be

taken against them," he said, adding that regulators need to increase their vigilance so that prices of products in the market are contained.

Badrunnesa Ahmed, research fellow at the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, at the same event said prices were rising due to poor market management and middlemen.

She also blamed high transportation costs, extortion on roads, and commissions from production centres to sales centres for the abnormal hike.

"The price hike of essentials has reduced the purchasing capacity of the fixed-and low-income groups, while it increased the cost of living. At the same time, the price hike forced a section of people to go below the poverty line."



Relatives and friends attend a funeral ceremony for Valentyna Leonicheva, 74, Lyudmyla Kravchenko, 46, Sergiy Kravchenko, 23, at the site of their home, destroyed by a Russian missile strike in Kramatorsk, Donetsk region, Ukraine yesterday.