



Subrina Irine



Sallha Khanam Nadia



Edila Farid Turin



Somnur Monir Konal

WOMEN'S DAY SPECIAL

# Sanitation and showbiz

## Are sets accommodating enough for women?

**In the flashy world of showbusiness, where lights shine bright and cameras document every instance, there lies a less visible truth: The hygiene and restroom dilemmas experienced, especially by the women working in the industry while in their workplace – film and television sets.**

SHARMIN JOYA

Most of the time, a lack of restrooms in various shooting locations hamper women way more than it does men, who commonly fall victim to urinary tract infection (UTI).

Actress Sallha Khanam Nadia, like others, is a victim of this common disease. Interestingly she has already worked on a movie based on this issue in Kolkata, which raises awareness of maintaining hygiene in public toilets. The yet-to-be-released film is titled *Sunetra Sundaram*.

In this regard, she shares, "UTI is very common amongst women these days because of the failure to maintain proper hygiene, if there is a washroom at all. Holding urine is mandatory most of the times for us, and it shouldn't be."

Nadia adds that during a shoot in Kuakata, similar issues caused her to fall ill. "This shoot was scheduled for seven months. During that period, each day, I had to wait to use the restroom till the shoot was finished and we returned to the hotel. Also, I used to drink less water to avoid holding urine for a long time."

She further asserts that during the second lot of the shoot, she told the production team that she would not sacrifice her health anymore. "It took me a long time to recover, thereby I was adamant this time, and told them that even if I had to walk five kilometers and go to the washroom, they would have to manage that." In the end, she had to do exactly that.

Nadia suggests that if production companies take this humane initiative of making portable toilets, then it would be a great relief for female artistes.

Filmmaker Chayanika Chowdhury shares that she tries her best to select shooting locations where hygienic restrooms can be found nearby. "Being a woman myself, I can relate to such problems and I ensure proper sanitation while I am in the director's chair. One should not take health risks by using an unhygienic washroom or refrain themselves from easing their bladder, this could be deadly! On another note, during outdoor shoots, going to the washroom that is far away hampers with the shoot," she asserts, adding that it becomes way more difficult for a woman when she is going through menstruation.

She is proud of how her son, Anonno Proteck



Chayanika Chowdhury

Chowdhury, took the initiative to set up a portable toilet near the shooting set in Manikganj during the filming of *Jole Tara*, directed by her husband, Arun Chowdhury. "It is the director who is accountable for looking after this matter, although most of us neglect this, but this is a basic need for any artiste beyond gender."

To raise concern regarding the availability of toilets, actress Mehazabien Chowdhury wrote the script for the fiction *Alo*, in which she portrays the role of a traffic police who faces such challenges every day. "I have the horrible experience of not being able to use the washroom for 18 hours, because of the hygiene and environment," she shares, adding, "It is very sad that even in 2024, we still lack such facilities for our basic needs."

Mehazabien highlights the concern of gender discrimination as well. "Majority of the crew in a



Mehazabien Chowdhury

production team, including the director, are mostly males, and such issues are something they are least bothered about," she says, insisting that the difficulty for women multiplies when they are going through their periods.

She further notes, "See it won't take too much of a budget to make a portable toilet, and hiring a person to maintain it. In fact, I believe that the artistes would willingly contribute to it. All we require is intention, and this step has been taken by the production houses."

Singer Somnur Monir Konal travels frequently outside Dhaka for concerts. "I can demand such facilities, since I have been working in the industry for quite a long time now. However, most emerging artistes cannot even raise the issue, sadly." She also adds that on the road usually there are gas stations, however, those washrooms are not at all hygienic or usable for any woman, since they are more prone to catch infections,

especially while using unhygienic toilets.

Subrina Irine, an established ad filmmaker shared, "Mainly, most people don't know how to use a toilet by maintaining the cleanliness, before and after using it. As for outdoor shoots, we know that our country is still not shooting-friendly, so when we go somewhere, we try to manage nearby houses, and men usually go to the nearby mosques. It gets very difficult for the female crew members to manage during that time. Usually, we carry sanitising sprays, toilet papers and other necessary things with us."

Edila Farid Turin, a costume designer by profession, says that outdoor shoots are like a nightmare. "Production houses are least concerned regarding this matter," she asserts, "Since it is a male-dominated industry, most of them are not even aware of what health problems it can bring to a female member working in the team, for not being able to use the washroom properly."

She also stresses that the production houses facilitated by female producers or directors are more concerned about proper sanitation. "During outdoor shoots, even if we have to manage a place by paying money or requesting the locals, we who have to do it by ourselves, no one from the production house does that. Unless there is any big star involved in the project, they are not even bothered about the cleanliness and this is extremely annoying while working."

Turin further states that as they work in a male-dominated industry, if the female artistes start raising questions about washrooms and hygiene, they will be outcasted and might not get calls for work, since they are fewer in numbers.

From inadequate facilities to demanding schedules, the unnoticed struggles of these artistes underscore the urgent call for improvements within the entertainment sector. Who is responsible for this? Shouldn't the related associations in charge of ensuring artistes' rights take steps to bring a change? Shouldn't the government intervene to ensure such a sensitive and essential factor, to ensure basic hygiene and avoid deadly infections that make many women suffer, not only in showbiz but in every sector?

PHOTOS: STAR AND COLLECTED

## PUJA CHERY starrer 'Lipstick' joins Eid release queue

A scarcity of Bangla films in theaters for nearly three months since the new year has left the industry in a dry spell. The delay is linked to the National Parliamentary Elections 2024 and the rise of Bollywood films in Bangladesh. Producers are strategically holding off, aiming for a lucrative window, particularly targeting the upcoming Eid-ul-Fitr for optimal profit.

Now, actress Puja Chery starrer film, *Lipstick* has joined the queue of new movies awaiting release during Eid, confirmed the film's director, Kamruzzaman Noman.

Puja Chery stated, "Eid has always been auspicious for me in aiming to release a film during the holiday."

After a long break, producers are set to release a lineup of films, including *Rajkumar*, *Kajol Rekha*, *Omor*, *Deyaler Desh*, *Jinn 2* and more, all scheduled for simultaneous release during the nationwide Eid holidays.



## Nepal Int'l Film Festival 2024 to screen 3 Bangladeshi films

The seventh edition of the Nepal International Film Festival is all set to commence on March 14 and run until March 19. This time, the festival organisers unveiled the official lineup – featuring 88 films from various countries across six categories. In

comparison, the previous event saw the participation of 95 films from 35 countries.

This year, three Bangladeshi films namely, *A Letter of Postmaster* directed by Supin Barman, *Joy Bangla* by Shaila Rahman Tithi, and

*Everything is Nothing* by Arafat Mohsin, will be featured in the Shorts International category.

The organisers additionally announced that Renowned Chinese filmmaker Xie Fei has been appointed as the head of the jury for this festival.

## 'Hollywood is harsh on women': Léa Seydoux

Actress Léa Seydoux who stars in the ongoing film *Dune: Part Two*, recently revealed her perspective which illuminates ongoing discussions about gender equality and representation in Hollywood.

"In America, I find the industry harsh on women. Aging is tough for women; I don't want to fear losing my contract or desirability. It's economic there, and when money dictates, freedom is lost. I'm uncomfortable with the need to conform to certain standards. Being a woman on screen is easier in Europe," Seydoux remarked.

She added that "it's tough for someone who's not totally American to lead a Hollywood film" and she "takes what I get" in terms of roles in major studio tentpoles.

