

I have fallen victim to film politics: SWAGATA

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With her magnetic presence in films and television, Zinat Sanu Swagata has carved a niche for herself, captivating audiences with her acting prowess, hosting charm, and melodic voice. Her recent silver screen project, *Deyaler Desh*, directed by Mishuk Moni, emerged as a standout amidst the flurry of releases this Eid-ul-Fitr. Despite the saturation, the film resonated deeply with viewers.

Apart from Swagata, the film also stars Sariful Razz and Shobnom Bubby in pivotal roles, amongst others. Swagata plays the character Kona. *Deyaler Desh* is essentially a love story - a wonderful film of great storytelling. The audience in this country loves stories, and that's what *Deyaler Desh* offers," said the actress.

Swagata recounts her attempts to watch the fruits of her labour firsthand upon its release. She watched the film twice on the big screen. However, she couldn't avail of any tickets on the first day of its release. Swagata says, "On the second day of Eid, 11 of us went together. We went to two halls but couldn't get any tickets. It was disappointing, but seeing the crowd felt rewarding at the same time. Then, on the third attempt, we got only three tickets. So, my mother, husband, and I watched the movie together."

"The overwhelming love *Deyaler Desh* has received really touched me," the actress expresses. Reflecting on the essence of the film, Swagata emphasises the importance of audience reception, noting, "The essence of a film lies in its audience. If they aren't receptive, what's the gain? I think *Deyaler Desh* did a pretty good job at engaging audiences."

Speaking about her experience of watching films during the Eid holidays, Swagata further shares, "I thought I would watch *Deyaler Desh* without drawing any public attention and return home. But that wasn't possible. After the show ended, the audience recognised me, interacted with me and praised my performance and the film. I have been over the moon seeing such feedback from the audience."

Deyaler Desh has been running in theatres for the past 13 days and has generated significant buzz amongst moviegoers. How did Swagata get involved with this film? In response to this question, Swagata reveals, "The director directly reached out to me. We

discussed the story and characters. He finalised my role after seeing my performance and expression."

While talking more about the director, the *Oshombhob* actress shares, "Mishuk Moni, the director, is only 27 years old. He has studied cinema and worked with a lot of passion for this film."

Swagata has been involved with the local film industry since her childhood, as a child artiste.

Over the years, she has been featured in many films and also shared the screen with the late veteran actor Manna. Last year, her film *Oshombhob*, directed by Aruna Biswas, was released. Before that, she appeared in *Laal Morogger Jhuti*. Speaking about acting on the big screen, Swagata says, "I want to act regularly in movies. I want to do it with dedication. However, the story and character must resonate with me."

However, amidst the accolades and acclaim, Swagata remains candid about the darker side of the industry. Admitting to being a victim of film politics, she confesses, "I have also fallen victim to it many times. But I chose to navigate the complexities with silence. I believe, if you know how to act, you will always be able to work. No one can take away someone's fortune."

Away from the spotlight, Swagata finds solace in her family, cherishing the love and support that fuels her journey. "We are doing very well, it's going great. We want to continue the journey together with everyone's love," concludes Swagata with a smile while talking about her married life.



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

Chanchal Chowdhury confirms involvement in 'Toofan'



As the anticipation surrounding the upcoming film *Toofan* continues to escalate, inclusion of prominent actor Chanchal Chowdhury in the film gets confirmed by the actor himself and the makers of the film.

Toofan marks the first collaboration between superstar Shakib Khan and filmmaker Raihan Rafi. Set for release during Eid-ul-Azha, the film also stars actresses Mimi Chakraborty and Masuma Rahman Nabila, alongside Khan.

Regarding his involvement in the film, Chanchal stated, "This character offers me a unique opportunity to explore a different genre. Collaborating with such significant entities in the film will undoubtedly be exciting."



Rezwana Choudhury Bannya receives Padma Shri award

Legendary Rabindra Sangeet exponent Rezwana Choudhury Bannya was awarded Padma Shri, India's fourth-highest civilian honour, by India's President Draupadi Murmu. The award ceremony occurred at Rashtrapati Bhavan in Delhi on April 22.

Draupadi Murmu's official Twitter acknowledged the awardees, highlighting Rezwana Choudhury Bannya's dedication to promoting Rabindra Sangeet in Bangladesh.

It also mentions her rendition of *Vaishnav Jan To* for Mahatma Gandhi's 150th birth anniversary. This year, the Government of India conferred the Padma Vibhushan upon five individuals for their outstanding contributions across diverse fields.

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Judiciary's freedom cut

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Referring to media reports, it said police and intelligence agencies continued to threaten, harass, and surveil human rights defenders, civil society leaders, and the family members of critics based outside the country.

"Journalists living abroad continued to report police and intelligence agencies harassed and intimidated their relatives in the country to silence criticism."

The report said minority groups continued to report land ownership disputes that disproportionately displaced members of indigenous communities and ethnic minorities, especially in areas near new roads or industrial development zones.

They also claimed local police, civil authorities, and political leaders were sometimes involved in evictions or shielded politically influential land grabbers from prosecution, it added.

According to the report, extrajudicial killings decreased from the previous year. Rights group Ain o Salish Kendra reported eight people died from January to September in alleged extrajudicial killings or while in custody.

However, according to another

domestic human rights organisation, there were 12 incidents of alleged extrajudicial killings between January and September.

The US State Department report further said significant human rights issues in Bangladesh included credible reports of arbitrary or unlawful killings, including extrajudicial killings; enforced disappearances; torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment by the government; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions.

Police policy required internal investigations of all significant uses of force by police, including actions that resulted in serious physical injury or death, usually by a professional standards unit, but the government neither released official statistics on total killings by security personnel nor took transparent measures to investigate cases, it added.

There were reports of disappearances by or on behalf of government authorities. Between January and September, a local human rights organisation reported 32 persons were victims of enforced disappearances, it said.

The report added there were serious restrictions on freedoms of expression

and media, including violence or threats of violence against journalists, unjustified arrests or prosecutions of journalists, censorship, and enforcement of or threat to enforce criminal libel laws to limit expression.

It also said there were serious restrictions on internet freedom; substantial interference with the freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association, including overly restrictive laws on the organisation, funding, or operation of nongovernmental and civil society organisations; restrictions on freedom of movement; and inability of citizens to change their government peacefully through free and fair elections.

"There were numerous reports of widespread impunity for human rights abuses. In most cases, the government did not take credible steps to identify and punish officials or security force members who may have committed human rights abuses."

At the briefing, Robert S Gilchrist, senior official in Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labour, said, "Washington will continue to express concerns on the fundamental human rights issues in Bangladesh and urge the government to uphold those."

EU votes today

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disposal of a product [...]" states the draft.

The draft law comes with penalties for violations, like fines worth 5 percent of the company's net turnover.

The draft law states that the manufacture and trade of textiles, clothing leather and related products (among others) are "high impact" sectors.

The European Union is one of the two largest export destinations for Bangladesh's ready-made garments, the other being the USA.

"It is essential to establish a European framework for a responsible and sustainable approach to global value chains, given the importance of companies as a pillar in the construction

of a sustainable society and economy," said the draft law.

A press release by the European Council on December 14, 2023, stated, "On civil liability, the agreement reinforces the access to justice of persons affected."

It goes on to say that trade unions, civil society organisations and persons affected by "adverse impacts" have a window of five years to make those claims.

"As a last resort, companies that identify adverse impacts on the environment or human rights by some of their business partners will have to end those business relationships when these impacts cannot be prevented or ended," said the statement.

The first due diligence law was passed

in France in 2017 and was nicknamed the "Rana Plaza law", read the Clean Clothes Campaign in their press release. This was followed by Germany in 2023.

The Clean Clothes Campaign said that to be compliant with this new law, brands must ensure that when workers in the supply chains are killed, the financial compensation is consistent with international standards.

In addition, it said that brands have to adjust their pricing policy to make sure that workers are paid living wages.

As per the EU parliament website, the law was first proposed in February, 2022, to institute an EU legal framework across global value chains.

The full draft law was approved last March.

Road blocked over death

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students sat for a meeting around 7:00pm yesterday and that the meeting decided to observe a day of mourning for the deceased today.

Asad said, "We have given a 72-hour deadline to the police and administration for arresting the bus driver and his helper. If they do not arrested them within the time, we will take to the streets again."

Meanwhile, representatives of the students, Cuat authorities, police, and administration and bus owner's association held a meeting at Chattogram Circuit House in the afternoon where students placed a

nine-point demand.

The demands include establishment of modern medical centre on the Cuat campus, and construction of a four-lane highway from Kaptai Rastar Matha in Chattogram to Kaptai.

The meeting decided to pay compensation to the deceased and injured students, said SM Shafiqullah, superintendent of Chattogram police, adding that the district administration would pay Tk 5 lakh to each of two deceased's families and Tk 3 lakh to the family of the injured student.

Besides, the bus owner's association would pay Tk 2 lakh to each of the

deceased's family and Tk 1 lakh to the family of injured student, he said.

Abul Bashar Mohammad Fakhruzzaman, deputy commissioner of Chattogram, said top officials assured him of starting the work on a four-lane road within a month.

A seven-member committee, led by additional district magistrate of Chattogram, has been formed to investigate the incident and it has been asked to submit the report within seven working days, said the SP.

Cuat VC Prof Rafiqul Alam said he would take steps so that the demands of the students are met.

Over a decade on, all 14 cases stuck

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statements of all 596 people. It would have been possible to interrogate a few key witnesses like the complainant and conclude the case."

On January 15 this year, the Supreme Court had ordered to have the trials of these two cases completed in six months. Four months on, the courts are still making sluggish progress, observed speakers.

The case filed by a deceased victim's wife demanded due compensation from the owners of one of the factories. It was, however, dismissed on October 25, 2018, as the complainant could no longer appear in court.

Speakers said a majority of the survivors are still unemployed because of their disabilities resulting from the collapse, forcing many to move back to their villages.

Bimal Samaddar, additional public prosecutor at Dhaka Judge Court, said, "Providing them [the survivors] with transportation costs to show up to court proves to be difficult for the state prosecutors and this is slowing down the progress of the cases."

Barrister Aneek R Haque pointed out that there are four writ petitions

pending with the High Court, and their hearings began only last year.

One of the writ petitions were filed by BLAST and Ain o Salish Kendra in 2013, demanding treatment and rehabilitation of those injured in the disaster. It also demanded that the accounts of Sohel Rana and the owners of the five garments factories be frozen by Bangladesh Bank.

Another writ was filed by Nagorik Udyog the same year, seeking compensation for the workers under the Disaster Management Act.

BLAST's speakers pointed out that the court had issued a rule demanding to know why it did not happen, but that the hearing is still ongoing.

Two more writ petitions, filed by one Kamal Hossain Mirazi on October 22, 2013 and lawyer Yunus Ali Akond are still being heard in court.

"We recommend that all legal cases pertaining to Rana Plaza be considered as sensitive cases so that they are sped up," said Khanam.

The speakers demanded that the government identify the root causes behind the long delays.

During the press brief, an injured

worker named Sheila showed her body brace to the attendants.

"I have to wear this brace all the time. My right hand is also in a brace. I am a widow and I have spent all of the meagre amount of money we got as compensation on my treatment. Now I have to beg to survive. People have even recommended that I do sex work."

Speakers pointed out that compensation should be provided as per section 121 of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention, which states that the amount of money to be compensated should be decided by calculating the money that could have been earned by the victim in the working years lost.

Shahriar Ronny, coordinator of a trust for Rana Plaza workers, said they only cover basic medical costs.

"We give them money for transport to healthcare centres, or hospital admission fees. Some diagnostic expenses at public hospitals are covered. However, many of the survivors need extremely specialised treatment."

The trust was set up in 2016 using money from the Rana Plaza Trust Fund by the ILO.