

Kaalpurush

A murder-mystery where time is the protagonist

From the first second, 'Kaalpurush' exudes a thriller vibe, masterfully blending sound and music. The sound of the ticking clock is used effectively to build tension. The sound of rowing on the lake, the sound of breathing, along with the bold dialogue delivery create a crisp soundscape, though occasional echoes are missing.

SAEED KHAN SHAGOR

As the murder investigation unfolds, the narrative delves into the life of an unfit police officer grappling with marital issues, religious beliefs, and doubts, while also exploring the dynamics within a police station.

Gradually, the story evolves into a tale of time travel, uncovering the motives behind the murder and the identity of the killer. With seven episodes, each running for 24-25 minutes, the series not only navigates the events surrounding the murder but also delves into the philosophies of its characters and their societal roles, making for an engaging and thought-provoking storyline.

From the outset, the ticking of a clock sets the tone, adding tension and excitement to the series. Each twist in the narrative, accompanied by the ticking clock, contributes significantly to the build-up of suspense. With time travel at its core, time itself emerges as the protagonist of the series. Even the episode titles play with the concept of time, maintaining a thrilling atmosphere that resonates with the genre.

Salzar adeptly plunges into the narrative from the very first scene, though some extended subplots occasionally dilute the main



PHOTOS: COURTESY OF CHORKI

storyline, leading to a less-than-clear conclusion. The transition from murder mystery to science fiction involving time travel lacks smoothness, leaving certain ambiguities unresolved. The director fails to clearly define the boundaries of time travel, leaving viewers puzzled about what can and cannot be altered through it.

Despite these shortcomings, *Kaalpurush* boasts strong performances and an engaging script. F S Nayeem's portrayal of S I Miraz is particularly noteworthy, with his immersive performance drawing viewers into the character's journey. Chanchal Chowdhury brings a fresh dimension to his role as Shehzad Chowdhury, showcasing a different side of his acting prowess. Imtiaz Barshon's portrayal of SI Jahangir adds further depth to the series, injecting energy into the narrative with his commanding presence.

Tanzika Amin's depiction of Nova shines as a highlight, offering a nuanced portrayal of a woman navigating the complexities of faith and personal struggles.

Jayanta Chattopadhyay's character in the series lacks development. Despite her brief screen time, Priyontee Urbee impresses as Faria. Casting director Tania Rahman deserves an honourable mention for her excellent choices.



As police officer Jahangir drives home, clutching a small glass bottle, his recent completion of a murder mystery assignment brings him no sense of triumph. Unbeknownst to S I Miraz, he is caught in a time loop, unsure of its destination. Shehzad, with his enigmatic persona, sets the stage, leading the audience seamlessly from a Bangladeshi web series' murder mystery to the realm of science fiction. Produced by Film Syndicate, 'Kaalpurush' is the brainchild of writer and director Salzar Rahman. His debut web series revolves around a murder one December night at Dhanmondi Lake, focusing on unravelling the mystery of Faria's death.

From the first second, *Kaalpurush* exudes a thriller vibe, masterfully blending sound and music. The sound of the ticking clock is used effectively to build tension. The sound of rowing on the lake, the sound of breathing, along with the bold dialogue delivery create a crisp soundscape, though occasional echoes are missing. The ambience of Dhanmondi Lake could have been enhanced, and Miraz's press conference should have been noisier.

Despite these minor issues, the sound design by Adeep Singh Manki is commendable.

Although *Kaalpurush* is a murder mystery, it avoids harsh music, instead maintaining a consistent rhythm throughout. The balance between music and dialogue volume enhances the series' appeal. Elita Karim's *Mahakal*, Arnob's *Bebak Bebagi*, and The Watson Brothers' *Amar Notun Ami* perfectly complement the series' moments.

Technically, the production stands as the pinnacle of Bangladeshi web series to date. Barkat Hossain Palash's photographic direction gives the series a voice of its own, with the camera engaging in a dialogue through pan shots and handheld scenes. Palash's commendable sense of framing is evident in the close shots; every element coalesces into a visually captivating presentation.

The interrogation scenes, with parallel cuts of three different individuals, are masterfully edited. The frames captured around Dhanmondi Lake and its surroundings are visually stunning, though some typographical errors and missing spaces after commas in the subtitles are noticeable.

Kaalpurush also experiments with lighting and colour, with notable success. The lighting at Dhanmondi Lake effectively conveys the chill of a winter night. Inside the police station, the dark and gritty tones enhance the frames, while the lighting in Miraz and Nova's home complements the wall colours. The settings in Shehzad's room and laboratory are equally noteworthy.

Art Director Shihab Nur Un Nabi and colourist Saleh Sobhan Auneem should be appreciated for their outstanding work.

However, it is refreshing that the narrative does not repeatedly place the investigation officer at the murder spot, unlike usual murder mysteries. This unique approach makes *Kaalpurush* more viewer-oriented. The series avoids unwarranted jump cuts between scenes, maintaining continuity throughout.

Salzar Rahman advances the story directly from previous episodes, although some fundamental flaws remain—for instance, if Shehzad needed hospitalisation due to severe beatings, how could he later leave so effortlessly with Miraz? The scene where Jahangir places a bet on the train's arrival for Tk 20 is redundant when the train's sound is already heard.

Despite these minor issues, this project remains a noteworthy web series. Comparing it to works like *Dark* or *1899*, *Kaalpurush* deserves recognition in the same genre. The director adeptly portrays the relevance of time and the events surrounding it. Although the series slightly loses its way of trying to depict both ontological and practical time travel, it stands as a unique addition to the Bangladeshi web-series landscape in all other aspects.



NEWS

High-risk pregnancies on the rise

FROM PAGE 12
expensive dietary requirements and medication, while having to monitor my baby's development through expensive scans every 15-20 days in the first two trimesters, and every week in the last."

She had to undergo numerous costly tests to assess her conditions, while having to be hospitalised a number of times due to low amniotic fluid, often rendering her unable to walk.

After the 9-month ordeal, Sabina had a baby girl but the challenges persisted as her infant was at risk of hypoglycemia due to high insulin levels.

According to data from 14 medical college hospitals, 38 percent of 1,24,557 obstetric patients in 2023 had high-risk pregnancies like Sabina's.

These hospitals performed deliveries on around 98,000 pregnant women. Of them, 531 died, even though

and even fatalities."

SHORTAGE OF SKILLED PROVIDERS
The rise in high-risk pregnancies adds strain to an already stretched healthcare system, exacerbating the shortage of specialists, especially in rural areas.

With around 3.6 million pregnancies every year, the doctor-patient ratio is currently one doctor for every 2,374 pregnant women, which is far from the ideal situation.

Asma Akter, an expecting mother with a high-risk pregnancy from Gazipur's Kapasia, has been experiencing placenta previa and enduring prolonged bleeding since the start of her third pregnancy.

After seeking help from multiple doctors in her locality, she was finally referred to DMCH.

"I was prescribed bed rest and necessary injections, but I have to travel 65km to visit my doctor."

Dr Raunak said, "Currently, only four medical colleges — RMCH, DMCH, Suhrawardy hospital, and Sir Salimullah hospital — offer foeto-maternal medicine positions to manage high-risk pregnancies, with postings in 10 more medical colleges underway.

"We're yet to develop proper sub-speciality positions in gynaecology and obstetrics, unlike other departments and developed countries where maternal and fetal medicine are already separate sub-specialities."

She said, "In rural areas, families often delay hospital visits until a crisis arises; sometimes, they only seek care after the first trimester when risks have already developed. Though four antenatal visits are recommended, the BSVS 2023 showed only 39 percent of pregnant women undergo four or more such visits.

"Teenage pregnancy, a significant contributing factor of high-risk pregnancy, remains common in rural areas. This is very risky because adolescent mothers' bodies are still developing, and their organs are not fully matured."

The BSVS-23 showed that at least 73

of every 1,000 delivering mothers were teenagers aged 15-19.

Prof Ferdousi Begum Flora, a renowned gynaecologist and former president of the Obstetrics and Gynecological Society of Bangladesh, highlighted issues with the deployment of doctors, noting a bias towards urban areas.

"Why would doctors want to work where there's inadequate space and facilities and no proper educational opportunities for their children? These are reasons they choose not to work in rural areas."

FINANCIAL TOLL
Experts said high-risk pregnancies are also economically taxing.

Specialised tests, frequent monitoring, medications, and potential hospitalisations can lead to excessive medical bills.

Sajida Islam Parul, facing a high-risk pregnancy due to diabetes, thyroid issues, and cystic fibroids, had to borrow over Tk 1.5 lakh from colleagues and relatives.

With monthly medicine costs exceeding Tk 20,000, along with over 150 expensive injections, a special diet, and anticipated Caesarean expenses, she struggled financially.

"I pleaded with the hospital authorities for discounts and even mortgaged my wedding gold ornament for Tk 25,000, which I haven't been able to redeem."

Saudia Afrin had to spend Tk 18 lakh for the preterm delivery of her baby, who required NICU care and other treatment in private facilities.

WAY FORWARD
Dr Raunak suggested implementing overseas training or local workshops for healthcare professionals to address high-risk pregnancies.

She also recommended introducing an app to identify high-risk pregnancies and track appointments, while establishing dedicated high-risk pregnancy units in every government hospital with adequate NICU facilities.

"Additionally, subsidising essential investigations and ultrasounds can also help reduce the financial burden."

She also suggested ensuring pregnancy counselling, conceiving at the right age and management of chronic health issues to prevent high-risk pregnancy.

Dr Ferdousi said government initiatives, including awareness campaigns by community health workers, enhanced access to prenatal care, subsidised services, required policy interventions, and proper research can help tackle the issue.

EC suspends polls

FROM PAGE 12
(Wednesday).

In a press briefing in the afternoon, EC Secretary Jahangir Alam said that the commission decided to suspend polls as heavy downpours during Cyclone Remal inundated many places and left many electoral areas without electricity.

Moreover, road communication with many places has been disrupted due to the cyclone, he added.

The 19 upazilas where voting has been postponed are Sarankhola, Morrelganj, and Mongla of Bagerhat;

Koyra, Paikgachha, and Dumuria of Khulna; Gournadi and Agailghara of Barisal; Sadar, Mirzaganj, and Dumki of Patuakhali; Mathbaria of Pirojpur; Lalmohan and Tazumuddin of Bhola; Rajapur and Kathalia of Jhalakathi; Bamna and Patharghata of Barguna, and Baghaichhari of Rangamati.

NIXON SERVED SHOW CAUSE NOTICE

Meanwhile, the Election Commission issued a show cause notice to Faridpur 4 independent lawmaker Mujibur Rahman Chowdhury, also known as Nixon Chowdhury, after a candidate in

the Bhangra upazila election accused Nixon of violating the electoral code of conduct.

Returning Officer Ziaul Haq Khan sent the letter yesterday and asked Nixon to explain his position by today.

The EC also asked the inspector general of police to take necessary steps to remove the officers in charge of Debidwar Police Station in Cumilla, Faridganj Police Station in Chandpur, Anwara and Chandnaish police stations in Chattogram, and Dumki Police Station in Patuakhali.

It's not yet criminalised, thus govt denies

FROM PAGE 12
This has become a systematic pattern in the country to silence the political opposition and dissidents," it said.

The statement was issued by Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances, Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development, International Coalition against Enforced Disappearances, International Federation for Human Rights, Maayer Daak and Odkhikar.

"We also express serious concerns regarding the plight of the victims, the impunity of security forces, and the lack of due process and judicial safeguards for victims and their families.

"The persistent denial of the government that enforced disappearances occur and its refusal to

determine the fate and whereabouts of the disappeared persons clearly indicate the government's unwillingness to address this serious violation of human rights," the statement said.

Bangladesh has not ratified the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the country's laws have not defined or criminalised enforced disappearance, it said, adding that because of this legal loophole, the government continues to deny the occurrence of such crimes.

"The resurfaced victims of enforced disappearance and their family members do not speak about their experience, out of fear of reprisals," the statement further said.

Victim families have also been subjected to surveillance, intimidation, harassment and threats by members of law enforcement and intelligence agencies, the rights bodies alleged.

"None of the writ petitions filed under Habeas Corpus in the High Court Division of the Supreme Court have progressed far beyond the filing.

"The continuous lack of response from the government of Bangladesh to the repeated calls for investigations, made by the families of the disappeared and civil society organisations, has made seeking justice even more difficult," they said.

The platform demanded a national legislation and criminalising enforced disappearances.

DB recreates crime scene

FROM PAGE 12
investigators. He is now on eight day remand in DB custody.

Speaking to The Daily Star, DB chief Harun yesterday said the killers cheered after murdering Azim.

"We are comparing the information that we have gleaned from the arrested suspects in Bangladesh with that of Jihad. Most of the information compared so far has been found to be true," he added.

Azim went to Kolkata on May 12 and stayed at his friend Gopal Biswas's house for a night. He went out the following day saying that he would visit a doctor. Gopal later received texts from Azim's mobile phone saying that he was going to Delhi and that he did not need to call him.

On May 22, India and Bangladesh police confirmed that the lawmaker was murdered.

FARMHOUSE IN JHENAIDAH
Aktaruzzaman, the alleged

mastermind, sold off his cattle, goats, and ducks, from his farm in Jhenaidah over the last one and a half months, said locals.

Most of the cattle were sold before Aktaruzzaman left for Kolkata on April 30. After the murder, he asked the farm manager to sell all goats and send him the money, locals told The Daily Star.

Aktaruzzaman, locally known as Shaheen, probably feared that his properties might be looted if the murder came to light, locals speculated.

He has a farmhouse at Elangi Bazar, around 5km away from Kotchandpur town, according to Shahiduzzaman, chairman of Kotchandpur Municipality and also the elder brother of Aktaruzzaman.

Asked about his brother selling off his livestock, he said, "There were some bulls, goats, and ducks there, but the farm was never running commercially."

[Our correspondent in New Delhi contributed to this report.]

Rohingyas in the crosshairs

FROM PAGE 12
"We see clear and present risks of a serious expansion of violence as the battle for neighbouring Maungdaw town has begun - where the military maintains outposts and where a large Rohingya community lives," a spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said.

The Rohingyas have faced decades of persecution and, after a 2017 crackdown by the military, nearly one million fled to Bangladesh, where many now live in crowded refugee camps.

Mohammed Taher, a Rohingya refugee in Bangladesh, said he had recently spoken to a friend in Maungdaw, who described the community living in fear.

Recent fighting has forced some 45,000 Rohingyas to flee to an area along the Naf river on the border, according to a UN estimate.