

# There is a huge market for Bangla films, we need to utilise it: GOUTAM GHOSE



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

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PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

Bangla cinema is currently evolving, with constant experiments rejuvenating it, according to acclaimed filmmaker Goutam Ghose.

In an interview with The Daily Star during his recent visit to Dhaka, for the purpose of his documentary film made on the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Goutam discussed the golden era of Bangla films, their present and future, the difficulties Bangla film productions face, as well as his own vision.

The director, widely known for his films like *Padma Nadir Majhi*, *Antarjali Jatra*, *Moner Manush*, *Sankhachil*, *Ma Bhumi*, *Paar* and *Kaalbela*, stated that the international standard of Bangla films has declined.

“Experiments in Bangla cinema are commonplace— young directors in both Dhaka and Kolkata are trying to make new types of movies with new dimensions in form and content. However, it's not nearly as much as it used to be in the old days,” said the filmmaker.

Comparing Bangla movies to the cinemas of South India and Maharashtra, Goutam opined that the latter are performing better.

“Perception used to change with new technologies, and new perception is required for new technologies. I hope that a

transformation will occur in Bangla movies,” the director said, stressing the need for collective efforts by both West Bengal and Bangladesh for the betterment of Bangla cinema, and diversifying its market.

“We don't know proper marketing and how to conduct business,” Goutam remarked, citing this as the primary reason for Bangla films' underperformance.

“The number of Tamil-Telugu speakers is far fewer than the Bangla audience, but they invest Tk 100-200 crores in a movie, and easily get a return on their investment,” said the director, adding, “Tamil-Telugu speakers all over the world watch their movies in cinema halls. Their films are being released in halls across North America, Europe, Japan, Southeast Asia, etc.”

“Directors of Kerala are doing well,” he said, mentioning Payal Kapadia, who won the Grand Prix award at the prestigious Cannes Film Festival. “On the contrary, Bangalis across the globe don't watch Bangla movies; they watch pirated versions, or prefer television and OTT platforms”.

Regarding his upcoming projects, the acclaimed director said his first Indo-Italian cinema is ready for release. “It is a trilingual fiction film with English, Hindi and Italian narratives. I am also working on a joint venture between Bangladesh and India,” he said.

Speaking about his legendary film *Moner Manush*, Goutam explained, “I made the film because I felt the need to tell Lalon's story. In this intolerant society, someone like Lalon is very much needed.”

The director further revealed his plans to make a film about the partition history of India and Bangladesh. He believes that although the countries have been divided politically and geographically, there are several topics they can collaborate on.

“Due to a political crisis, India and Pakistan were divided. Was there any referendum in this regard? That political crisis led to suffering of countless people. Quaid-e-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah's two nation theory did not stand the test of time, and birth of Bangladesh has proved it,” he said.

The 74-year-old legend humbly described himself as a common person who has worked in the film industry for a long time. “Since I have taken a lot from society, I always feel a commitment towards it. Social contexts have repeatedly come up in my films, as have social and political aspects.”

Goutam concluded by saying he is not an ambitious person at all, and wants to erase three words from the dictionary—Star, VIP and celebrity. “I have an objection regarding these three words.”



## Tahsan-Mithila starrer 'Baaji' to premier this Eid

A recent post on Chorki's Facebook page has ignited widespread speculation, featuring an image of a cricketer in a yellow jersey, helmet, and holding a bat, with the intriguing caption, “Who is coming to Chorki?”

The OTT platform has confirmed that the upcoming series will feature singer-turned-actor Tahsan Khan in the lead role. While Tahsan has graced television screens numerous times, *Baaji* marks his OTT debut. Rafiath Rashid Mithila will be seen alongside Tahsan in this series.

Directed by Arifur Rahman, the story revolves around the impact of betting on cricket. In *Baaji*, Tahsan portrays the role of a cricketer, while Mithila portrays a journalist.

Chorki is expected to release the first seven episodes of the series during the upcoming Eid-ul-Azha.

## 'Padatik' wins big at New York Indian Film Festival

After screenings at the London Indian Film Festival and the International Film Festival of Kerala (IFFK), Srijit Mukherji's *Padatik* has now won the Best Screenplay Award at the 2024 New York Indian Film Festival (NYIFF).

Srijit posted the good news on social media, congratulating the team on this achievement. He also personally shared the news with Chanchal Chowdhury.

Chanchal Chowdhury told The Daily Star, “This is a big achievement for the film. We have worked really hard for this film, and when I heard the news, I was really happy.”



# NEWS

## Grameen Bank counsel sharpens barbs

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the Packages Corporation Limited owners, including Prof Yunus, of taking financial benefits from Grameen Bank.

The two lawyers appeared before the media and made statements after Prof Yunus on Sunday commented that appearing in the iron cage in connection with a case is part of his cursed life.

Yesterday, Masud told reporters that when Prof Yunus was the managing director of Grameen Bank, he gave a loan to Packages Corporation Limited, owned by Prof Yunus and his family, and waived the interest of the loan in violation of the law.

He said Yunus Centre in an explanation presented “false information” about the establishment of Grameen Bank.

“A research project on microcredit was undertaken by Chattogram University under the leadership of Dr Muhammad Yunus in 1976 when he was a teacher at the economics department. The project was financed by the Chattogram University and it was participated by its students under the leadership of Dr Yunus.

“The agriculture ministry named the project as Grameen Bank Project and sent it to Bangladesh Bank. The government gave Tk 100 crore to the project for eliminating poverty in fiscal year 1978-1979. Dr Muhammad Yunus was appointed as a salaried project director. The project was turned into Grameen Bank in 1983 under the leadership of Prof Yunus,” Masud said.

Not a single word in the Grameen Bank's complaint submitted to the ACC is fabricated, he said, adding,

“If the allegations are false and if he is innocent, let him prove it in court.”

Prof Yunus's lawyer Abdullah-Al-Mamun denounced the accusations, saying a vested quarter is jealous of his client's global outreach and popularity.

Prof Yunus has made great sacrifices for Grameen Bank, he said.

Replying to Masud's accusation, he said the lawyer made the statement in such a manner as if Grameen Bank created Prof Yunus.

“It is as if the son was born before the father. The microcredit project created by Muhammad Yunus under the Grameen Bank Ordinance, 1983, was named as Grameen Bank Project. Prof Yunus applied to the government to turn the project into a complete bank. The government directed him to give all his properties and capital to Grameen Bank and accordingly he did everything under section 37(I) of the Grameen Bank,” he said.

At a press release earlier on May 30, Yunus Centre said the allegations that Prof Yunus and his family financially benefited from the loan given to Packages Corporation Limited is totally false.

The owners of Packages Corporation, including Prof Yunus and his family, offered to give the printing press for the use of Grameen Bank without any financial benefits, it said.

“The bilateral agreement signed between Grameen Bank and Packages Corporation makes it very clear that owners of Packages would not take any kind of financial benefits from Grameen Bank, such as, share of profit, rent on the land, building and machinery, any fee of any kind during the tenure of the management

contract with Grameen Bank,” said the press release.

It said the objective of Grameen Bank was to reduce the cost of printing materials of Grameen Bank, ensure quality printing and timely delivery of all printing materials. Owners just literally handed over the printing plant to Grameen Bank free of cost, it added.

“Packages Corporation received working capital loans from Grameen Bank through its donor-funded window called SVCF (Social Venture Capital Fund). This loan money cannot reach the owners of the Packages Corporation under the Agreement. And it did not.”

It said Grameen Bank's price fixing committee used to work strictly on pricing. The price fixed by the committee was always much lower than the market price.

The release further said the total loan received by Packages Corporation over a period of 25 years was less than Tk 10 crore. These are internal financial transactions within Grameen Bank network of projects and companies. Any loan given to Packages has no way to reach the owners as per the agreement.

“It will remain within the Grameen Bank system – between Grameen Bank and its project, or a social business company designated by Grameen Bank.”

Whatever arrangement Grameen Bank made with Packages Corporation, it was made by Grameen Bank authorities. In several board meetings of Grameen Bank, the issues related to the contract were discussed. The board enthusiastically cooperated in the implementation of the agreement, said the release.

## 642m voters cast ballots in election

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results from votes cast in Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs).

Postal votes, which are paper ballots, are mostly cast by troops serving outside their home constituencies or officials away from home on election duty.

This year, postal votes were also offered to voters over 85 years of age and people with disabilities to allow them to vote from home.

Kumar said the majority of postal

votes would be counted before the completion of EVM vote counting and the process could not be changed at this stage of the election.

The INDIA alliance also urged the EC to ensure the “safe movement” of voting machines and their verification before and after the counting process, which Kumar said had been accepted.

Opposition parties have in the past accused the commission of bias in favour of BJP on issues such

as violations during the campaign - charges the EC denies - but have not challenged the counting process or election outcomes.

Some opposition leaders and watchdogs have also claimed, without evidence, that EVMs can be manipulated. The EC has rejected those accusations and courts have endorsed EVMs.

Kumar said one key learning for future elections would be to hold polls at least a month earlier to avoid extreme heat.

## Proteas thump SL

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By contrast Sri Lanka's score was their lowest total in all T20 cricket.

Kagiso Rabada (2-21) and left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj, who took two wickets in two balls on his way to 2-22, also struck after Sri Lanka captain Wanindu Hasaranga won the toss.

Opener Kusal Mendis (19) and veteran all-rounder Angelo Mathews (16) were the only batsmen to pass 15.

Sri Lanka were bowled out with five balls to spare when last man Nuwan Thushara was run out for one of four ducks in the innings.

Fast bowler Ottneil Baartman, making his World Cup debut, started the collapse when, with his first ball, he had Pathum Nissanka caught in the deep before Nortje dismissed Kamindu Mendis in similar fashion.

Maharaj then struck twice in the ninth over as both Hasaranga, stumped by Quinton de Kock and Sadeera Samarawickrama, clean bowled by a quicker delivery, fell for nought to leave Sri Lanka 32-4 before Charith Asalanka survived the hat-trick ball.

Nortje, in the first match at a Long Island ground built specially for this tournament, returned to dismiss Mathews in his last over.

## Drug dealer shot dead

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Burmese cigarettes and 20,000 yaba pills were recovered from the spot.

During the reported shootout, Nezam was killed. Later, he was taken to his house in Khurushkul.

Informed, Sadar police recovered his body and sent it to Cox's Bazar General Hospital for autopsy.

According to the victim's father, Bashir Uddin, Nezam said he went to Maricha for three days to visit a friend.

Later, he found out that his son was shot dead.

Locals said Nezam was involved in cattle smuggling and yaba trading in the area.

Despite repeated attempts, Lt Col Shahol Ahmed Nobel, commanding officer (CO) of BGB-II, could not be reached over the phone for comments.

## Benazir's abuse of power

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communities, the statement read.

To do this, Benazir used members of his own organisation and other government organisations.

Terming such abuse of power by the top-ranking officer of a law enforcement agency outrageous, TIB Executive Director Iftikharuzzaman said, “Under such circumstances, there is no alternative to ensuring exemplary punishment of the accused and his aides, and fair compensation of those who were forced to sell their land.”

Citing media reports, he said Benazir, who is under investigation in connection with corruption, fled the country after withdrawing a large amount of money from banks.

Iftikharuzzaman said such a controversial person leaving the country with his family without anyone noticing raises suspicion that there might be people colluding with him and the graft investigation is just an eyewash.

He said, “It is evident that a section in power protected him before and is doing so now. Bring the former police chief to book will not be enough, his aides will also have to face the music.”

He mentioned that Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader, also road transport and bridges

minister, said the government has the information of those involved in corruption.

Then how a high-ranking police official could indulge in such corruption, Iftikharuzzaman added.

Releasing the names of the corrupt and ensuring accountability is imperative to demonstrate the government's commitment to zero tolerance against graft. Otherwise, the public perception of such commitments to be farcical will become true, the TIB executive director added.

## PM likely to visit

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G-20 Leaders Summit in September last year.

Additionally, Hasina's visit to China in July was underscored during a meeting with Chinese Ambassador Yao Wen.

Ambassador Yao emphasised the significance of the visit in promoting trade, investment, and cultural exchange, aligning with Bangladesh's aspirations for “Vision 2041” and the realisation of a “Smart Bangladesh.”

“It will be a game-changer. It will open a new chapter,” Yao Wen told reporters responding to a question at a seminar on Sunday night.

## Anti-Ershad movement

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where doctors declared him dead,” said Gazi Mozammel.

Ahamed has left behind his wife, two sons, and a host of well-wishers to mourn his death. His wife is serving as the general manager of Biman Bangladesh Airlines, and his sons are currently studying abroad.

AL President and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, in a statement, expressed deep shock at his death and prayed for the salvation of the departed soul. She also conveyed sympathy to the bereaved family members.

Ahamed's body will be taken to the Central Shaheed Minar tomorrow around 11:00am so that people can pay their last respects. Later, his namaz-e-janaza will be held on the premises of Dhaka University's central mosque.

Ahamed was born in 1961 in Makhna village of Netrakona's

Madan upazila.

He studied law at Dhaka University. Ahamed was the joint general secretary of JSD (Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal) Chhatra League central committee during the anti-autocracy movement. At that time, he was instrumental in the major decisions made by Chhatra Sangram Parishad and Sarbadaliya Chhatra Oikya.

In 1992, Ahamed joined AL and served as an assistant secretary to the party's central sub-committee.

He was nominated by the Awami League for the Netrakona-4 seat in the 2007 general election that got cancelled. Ahamed later aspired for the party's nomination in the last four national elections but was unsuccessful each time. In the 12 parliamentary elections held in January 2024, he wanted to contest as an independent candidate, but his nomination was scrapped.