

OTT platforms reel from daily losses

The uncertainty of the continuation of internet services meant heavy losses for these organisations each day, amounting to crores in certain cases.

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REDOAN RONY
Chief Executive Officer, Chorki



SHARMIN JOYA

Over the Top (OTT) platforms are one of the major digital mediums of entertainment. The country has been suffering from a complete internet outage, resulting in huge financial losses for industry leaders.

The Daily Star caught up with the leaders of four major streaming platforms of the country.

Redoan Rony, Chief Executive Officer, Chorki, said, “We were at the promotional stage of our upcoming project from *Ministry of Love*, titled, *36-24-34*. It was supposed to release on Thursday. If we calculate the financial loss, it will approximately be around Tk 5 to 7 crores, and it is not possible to recoup,” shared Redoan Rony.

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MUSHFIQUR RAHMAN
Chief Content Officer, Bongo



shared that within these few days, there had been no new subscriptions. “We are completely a subscription-based platform; thus, it is obvious that without this revenue, we are suffering profusely.” Sakib shared that a Tk 15-20 lakh loss has been incurred. “We were also at the dubbing stage of our upcoming content *Rongila Kitab* featuring Pori Moni, and the dubbing was supposed to end on July 19. However, we couldn’t complete it. This will affect the post production and release date as well.”

He also added that the pre-production of Ashfaque Nipun’s *Jimmi* featuring Jaya Ahsan is complete, and they were ready to move to the shooting floor from August 10, however, the situation will also hamper the shooting.

Mushfiqur Rahman, Chief Content Officer, Bongo, stated that Bongo is only one of their multiple online platforms. “From Bongo alone, we are facing a loss of approximately Tk 10-15

lakh every day, if we add the other services, it will be around Tk 30 lakh,” shared Mushfiqur. “During COVID lockdown, OTT platforms became popular and during that crisis, we received a lot of subscribers, but didn’t have enough content -- but now, the scenario is completely different. This situation has made us realise that we are solely dependent on the internet, and now we are helpless.”

Hoping for the quick recovery of the country’s current situation, Head of Content, Binge, Umme Khairun Islam Swizee shared that during this time they have an opportunity cost of 10,000 subscribers. One of their projects, Vicky Zahed’s *Ekti Kholo Janala*, was supposed to release on July 18. “We have to re-promote this content, and fix another release date. It is obvious that in this critical situation, people will not remember this content.” She also informed that the promotions for *Maya* directed by Raihan Rafi and another series by Anjan Dutta have been stopped.



Looking forward to peaceful times:

Fazlur Rahman Babu

Amid the ongoing nationwide curfew and suspension of internet services, people are left suffering with no means of entertainment. The Daily Star spoke with veteran actor Fazlur Rahman Babu to inquire about his concerns and activities during this crisis.

The artiste said, “I usually don’t get to spend as much time at home. Although I have been spending this abundant time, it’s making me feel anxious.”

In hopes to see our collective better days, he said, “I am optimistic that good days are bound to return to all of us. I hope for better days to arrive peacefully.”

However, he admitted, “I may be getting to spend time with my wife and our two children, yet we are constantly feeling apprehensive. During one recent instance, my blood pressure shot up.”

“In terms of how I am currently occupying my free time-- I’ve been reading a lot, both fiction and nonfiction, while also watching TV pretty often,” he concluded.



Rahat Fateh Ali concert in Dhaka uncertain

Pakistani musician Rahat Fateh Ali Khan was scheduled to perform in Dhaka on July 20. However, due to the ongoing political unrest and nationwide curfew, the concert has been postponed to November.

Organised by Asiatic Limited and sponsored by Buy Here Now (BHN), the show was supposed to take place at the United Convention Centre.

Rahat Fateh Ali announced the concert on his official Facebook page on July 11. Priced at Tk 10,000 each, the tickets for the show were already sold out.

However, Hasib-Ul-Islam from Asiatic informed The Daily Star that the exact date for the concert would be announced as soon as the internet services are resumed in the country.

The organisers have also decided to offer a refund option for the sold tickets since the show has been postponed. The refund option would be available on their website following the announcement of the latest concert date.



‘Kalki’ sequel on the horizon

Nag Ashwin’s directorial film *Kalki 2898 AD*, featuring Prabhas, Deepika Padukone, and Amitabh Bachchan, is reported to see sequels and spin-offs after setting record of Rs 1000 crore in global box office as the first Indian cinema of the year.

However, the release dates for the upcoming productions have not been confirmed yet.

Produced under the banner of Vyjayanthi Movies, the sci-fi film has marked earning of Rs 600 crore in Indian box office. It amassed Rs 95 crore on the opening day, of which Rs 64.5 crore was collected from the Telugu version of the film.

The film also stars Kamal Haasan and Disha Patani, among others. Making history, *Kalki 2898 AD* became the first Indian film to have its first glimpse revealed at the prestigious San Diego Comic-Con.

INFLUENCERS LEFT without influence during internet outage

If your livelihood was based on the internet, specifically social media, what would you do if there was an outage that lasted almost a week? We caught up to some popular Bangladeshi influencers to see what they were up to during these unstable times.

RAKSHANDA RAHMAN MISHA

RAKIN ABSAR

Before the complete shutdown took place, we had only one concern -- and that was the students’ safety. We, the influencers community, tried our best to get the immediate help necessary for the students as much as we could.

Just hours before the shutdown, students had a hard time breathing due to exposure to tear shells and other harmful substances, many of the students were massively injured and they were asking for oxygen cylinders on social media. We were trying our best to arrange oxygen cylinders at that time when the situation escalated, and the internet was cut off abruptly. I really don’t know what happened to those students, and whether they received the oxygen cylinders or not.

Apart from that, personally speaking, our business is also completely shut down due to the disruption of the internet.

My first priority after getting back the internet would be to look after the people who need my help. I would want to know about their whereabouts. I really hope they are fine.

KAARINA KAISER

When the internet went off, I was really confused as to what was happening around. Earlier, we were getting updates via internet, and then things escalated towards disaster. I started calling my friends to see if they were okay.

I feel like this is the longest internet blackout in our country. I thought it would come back the next day, but it is heading towards a week now. Since we don’t use cable television in my house anymore, we were completely in the dark and reliant on phone calls.

The first thing that I would do



when the internet comes would be to pay my condolences to the bereaved families that have lost their bright stars. I would also like to congratulate the students for their victorious move on getting the government to approve their rightful demands. This verdict shows that our country is progressing towards the right direction.

For content creators like us, when we are active on the internet, we get an email that we have received the monetisation money from YouTube advertisements. Now that the internet is off, we won’t get that, and YouTube will not give us ad money since no one in the country is able to watch our content. Apart from that, we

are also not earning any money from selling our merchandise in Rokomari, Daraz and Facebook.

After the internet comes back, I would immediately check on students who were injured during the protest.

DANA BHAI

I am a student of BRAC University and during the protest on Thursday (July 18), I witnessed numerous batchmates getting injured during the quota reform protest. I could not check up on them after the internet outage. We are so dependent on internet, that we couldn’t transfer money or recharge our mobile phones.

As content creators, we are supposed to share content every week, and I used to upload my content through stories. Due to the outage, I feel entirely detached from the world, and completely helpless. After the internet comes back, my biggest priority would be to reach out to people involved

with the movement and get update about the current scenario.

PARI RUKH AL MARTIN

From the start, I had been sharing emergency helplines and numbers to help the students who were injured during the protest. I was going insane seeing all the violent videos and then, the internet went off. I faced a massive reality check, where I realised I couldn’t pay my bills and renew my prepaid gas system. As the curfew started, I couldn’t go outside, or even order food from restaurants. I had to buy an electric stove to cook food for my family. I was also supposed to upload a video on Saturday for my client, which I couldn’t.

The government could have declared the shutdown at least half an hour earlier, so that people could pay their necessary bills, so that they didn’t have to face the challenges that they are facing right now.