

I stepped out to witness the people's victory: MEHAZABIEN CHOWDHURY

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Mehazabien Chowdhury's debut film *Saba* is set to make a remarkable entry at the 45th edition of the Toronto International Film Festival, before its official release. The film has been selected for the prestigious Discovery programme, a significant recognition that highlights the anticipation surrounding the film and marks a major milestone in Mehazabien's career, as she steps into the world of cinema.

Expressing her heartfelt emotions, the actress shared, "I am absolutely thrilled and overjoyed by this news. It's a special moment for those living abroad, especially in Canada, and for everyone attending the festival—they'll have the chance to watch *Saba*, at its world premiere."

The *Punorjonmo* actress added, "It's truly a matter of pride for me because *Saba* is my first film. It has made a place along with a total of 25 movies from around the world which will be showcased at this festival. This is a significant achievement for me."

Speaking about the world premiere of a Bangladeshi film abroad, she remarked, "Very few films from our country have had the opportunity to reach international film festivals. Previously, *Rehana Maryam Noor* was praised on the global stage. Now, *Saba* will be part of that legacy, which is a significant accomplishment for Bangladeshi cinema and a proud moment in my career."

Even before the film's release, her long-time colleagues and directors in the industry are highly optimistic about it, and discussions have already sparked on social media. When asked about her satisfaction with the experience, she shared, "I'm absolutely content with my performance in the project. There's a unique emotion that comes with the first silver-screen project, and that feeling has stayed with me."

Mehazabien also noted, "*Saba* is not just my debut film, but the first film for director Maksud Hossain. I had hoped it would be released in Bangladesh first, so I could experience it in theatres with my family, friends, and loved

ones."

She believes that it is a great achievement for her that many renowned filmmakers from around the world will be watching the film at the Toronto International Film Festival.

When asked about how well *Saba* will resonate with Bangladeshi audiences, Mehazabien said, "The film's budget isn't extravagant, but my genuine aim was to be part of a compelling story, and I'm glad to say we've achieved that. I believe the story of *Saba* has the potential to connect with viewers from all walks of life. The entire team has done an excellent job, and I've given my best performance."

Meanwhile, from the very beginning of the recent anti-discrimination student movement, the former Lux Superstar has been actively supporting the students on social media.

"The country has gained a new form of independence. On the day of the students' and people's victory, I stepped out of my home to witness the joy and celebrations firsthand. The experience was amazing," said Mehazabien.

When asked about her vocal support for the students, despite some hesitating to speak out, she responded, "I believe that personal freedom is essential in all aspects. Ultimately, one must stand up against injustice. I protested in my own way and supported the students' movement."

Mehazabien also spoke about the language of protest for artists. She said, "The language of protest for artists should be artistic. Everyone should have the freedom to protest against injustice in their own way. It's important to allow individuals the freedom to make their own choices."

The 45th Toronto



International Film Festival is set to begin on September 5 and will run for ten days. The actress plans to attend the festival in full glory.

PHOTOS: COLLECTED

FAROOKI demands reform in censorship system

Mostofa Sarwar Farooki called for the dissolution of Bangladesh's film censorship laws, advocating for a rating system to replace outdated censorship policies. His film, *Saturday Afternoon*, remains censored for undisclosed reasons, prompting his demand for change. Farooki criticised the censorship board for silencing dissenting voices, particularly those challenging the ruling Awami League's historical narratives.

Farooki proposed safeguards to address concerns over historical misrepresentation while protecting creative freedom. He also criticised former state minister Mohammad Ali Arafat for tightening regulations on OTT platforms instead of reforming censorship laws.

The filmmaker called for the removal of outdated figures from the censorship board and grant committee, pushing for more progressive and sensible leadership in Bangladesh's film industry.



Warfaze celebrates 4 decades with concerts worldwide

Prominent rock-metal band Warfaze celebrates its 40th anniversary this year, marking their four glorious decades in the music industry. To commemorate, the band is planning a series of domestic and international concerts, beginning with a US tour in September.

A grand reunion with former and current members is also in the works, followed by an international concert series. Founding member Sheikh Monirul Alam Tipu expressed pride in the band's enduring journey, attributing their success to innovation and fan support.

Meanwhile, Warfaze is set to release a remake album featuring iconic tracks like *Poth Chola 2*, with three of its singles—*Hariye Tomake, Alo*, and *Onkho Jibon*—already receiving positive feedback.

NEWS

Hasina faces another ICT case

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Among the others are former foreign minister Hasan Mahmud, former minister Jahangir Kabir Nanak, former state minister for ICT Zunaid Ahmed Palak, former state minister for information Mohammad Ali Arafat, former state minister Kamal Ahmed Majumder, former IGP Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun, and former RAB director general Md Shafiqur Rahman.

According to the complaint, Alvi died after being shot by police at the behest of the accused. It mentioned the entire country of Bangladesh as the location of the incident. It also said that the incident took place between July 15 and August 5, the day Hasina was ousted.

5 MORE MURDER CASES
Hasina has been accused in five more murder cases over killings in different parts of Bangladesh during the student-led movement that led to her ouster and escape.

With these, she is now facing 21 cases, including 18 on murder charges, two over alleged crimes against humanity and genocide, and one on allegation of abduction.

Several members of her cabinet, ex-Awami League lawmakers, leaders and activists of the party, and police officers are Hasina's co-accused in these cases.

One of the three latest cases in Dhaka was filed by Afsana Akhter Islam over the killing of her husband Jubo Dal leader Abdullah Kabir Khan, 50, at Mirpur-10 on August 4. Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Mehedi Hasan ordered Mirpur police to register the complaint as a first information report (FIR).

Among the 66 other accused are

AL General Secretary Quader, ex-home minister Asaduzzaman, former Mirpur MPs Majumder and Mainul Hossain Khan Nikhil, ex-IGP Mamun, ex-DMP chief Habibur Rahman, former chief of DMP's DB Harunor Rashid, and former DMP joint commissioner Biplob Kumar Sarkar.

In another case, Hasina is among 148 accused of killing protester Liton Hasan Lulu in Mirpur-10 on August 4. The others include Quader, Asaduzzaman, Kamal Majumder, Nikhil and the top police officers names in the previous case. Lulu's brother Md Milon Hasan filed a complaint with a magistrate's court that ordered police to register it as an FIR.

In the other case in the capital, Hasina and 12 others were sued over the death of carpenter Tarique Hossain, 18, who passed away on August 9 after being shot in front of Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station on August 5.

A Dhaka metropolitan magistrate ordered the Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) to submit an investigation report by September 30 in the case filed by Tarique's mother Fidusi Khatun.

Along with Quader, Asaduzzaman, Majumder, Nikhil, Mamun, Harun, Habibur and Biplob, former law minister Anisul was named in the case.

In Chattogram, Hasina, Quader and 106 other people were sued in a case over the killing of college student Wasim Akram in a clash between Chhatra League and protesters in the Muradpur area on July 16—one of the first killings that turned the quota reform movement into a mass uprising. Wasim's mother

Jyotsna lodged the case last night at Panchlaish Police Station.

Wasim, a third-year social science student at Chattogram College, was involved with Chhatra Dal, the BNP's student wing, according to police and his family members.

The other accused include Chattogram-based former ministers Mohibul Hassan Chowdhury Nowfel, Hasan Mahmud, former Chattogram City Corporation (CCC) mayor Rezaul Karim, city unit AL's General Secretary AJM Nasir Uddin, former Chattogram-10 MP Mohiuddin Bachchu, and 12 AL-backed CCC ward councillors. Some 100 to 150 unnamed people were also accused in the case.

In Narayanganj, the case was filed against Hasina, Quader, Asaduzzaman, former MP Shamim Osman and 58 others on Sunday. Shamim Osman's son Intinan Osman Ayon, nephew Azmery Osman and many of his followers were also accused in the case. Plaintiff Shahnaz is the widow of victim Md Milon, a fish trader.

On July 21, law enforcers and Awami League men clashed with the protesters between Signboard and Shimrail on the Dhaka-Chattogram Highway. Milon, who lived with his family in the Mizmizi Purbapara area in Siddhirganj, was shot in the chest while returning home from a fish warehouse on that day.

Two journalists were also accused in the case over Milon's killing. They are Billal Hossain Robin, staff reporter of The Daily Manabzamin and correspondent of NTV, and Forhad Hossain, Siddhirganj Thana correspondent of The Daily Bhorer Kagoj.

Khaleda's bank accounts unfrozen

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formed during the then Army-backed caretaker government, said a senior official of the NBR.

Khaleda's accounts had been blocked since then although the BNP on several occasions demanded unfreeze.

The latest move by the NBR comes

after a mass uprising toppled the government of Sheikh Hasina, a long-time rival of Khaleda, on August 5, ending the 15-year Awami League rule.

The NBR said they received an application from Khaleda's lawyer on Sunday seeking unfreezing of the

bank accounts.

"As there are no tax-related issues pending investigation relating to Khaleda Zia, we have advised banks to unfreeze all her accounts. We have asked them to take immediate action and provide a compliance report," the official said.

Internet blackout had no legal basis

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"The question is whose opinion would constitute the opinion of the government? Can the telecom minister form the opinion of the government? Generally speaking, the government means the cabinet," said an eminent telecom lawyer who asked not to be named.

Most importantly, since there is a positive requirement of "opinion", the exercise of power under this section must be preceded by a written record of forming the opinion. "Such opinions must also be objective," he said.

No administrative approval of the posts and telecommunication ministry was taken while issuing the directive to shut down the internet, according to a probe report of the ministry.

The government and its agents acquire their powers and authority from statute, and there is currently no statute in force that can be used to legitimise the unprecedented mobile

and internet blackout, said Fatema Anwar, a Supreme Court advocate.

"A fundamental principle is that one cannot rely on an extenuating circumstance that is self-induced to justify one's illegal action," she said, adding that the entire episode was "clearly and unequivocally escalated and exacerbated" by the last government.

State agencies who facilitated the said aggravation cannot now turn back and claim that they have a legal justification for a law-and-order situation that they created, Anwar said.

The widely referred provisions of the telecom act are inappropriate given the circumstances of those days.

"Interpreting statutes to justify their misconduct is legally fallacious. There was no war or warlike situation against Bangladesh. There was no external threat to our national security or sovereignty."

As for the internal law and

order situation, the government is entitled to preferential use of telecommunication apparatus, equipment and systems.

"I do not see how this provision can be interpreted to mean blocking the service altogether. Moreover, there was no state of emergency declared," Anwar added.

In its response, the BTRC also said: "It is to be noted here that the former state minister gave his own confessions regarding internet shutdown and took the responsibility on his own which has been widely published in various media platforms."

The total losses from the internet shutdowns amounted to Tk 100,000 crore, said Mohiuddin Ahmed, president of the Bangladesh Mobile Phone Consumer Association.

"This action violated human and economic rights and those responsible must be held accountable and face trial—it is a severe criminal offence," Ahmed added.

2 DU deans step down in face of protests

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Students said the three deans were asked to resign for supporting the Awami League government's mass killings during the July movement.

Around 11:30am, around 50 students gathered in front of the arts faculty building, demanding Prof Bachir's resignation, alleging that he was an aide of the ousted autocratic government and had previously issued show cause notices to students who attended a Quran recitation programme on campus during last Ramadan.

Around an hour later, Prof Abdul

Bachir wrote his resignation letter and signed it.

"I'm resigning from the post of dean of the arts faculty. Please take the necessary measures in this regard," reads the resignation letter addressed to the DU vice-chancellor.

At that time, the protesting students recited verses from the Quran and prayed for guidance for the dean in his office with his participation.

Meanwhile, Prof Nisar Hossain, fine arts faculty dean, in his resignation letter also addressed to the DU VC, wrote, "I've received

a letter with a four-point demand, including the resignation of the dean of the Faculty of Fine Arts for taking a stance in favour of mass killing and autocracy during the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement. There is currently no scope for me to verify how objective their allegations are and how logical the demand for resignation is, so I request that I be relieved of my duties as dean without regard to the allegations."

Contacted, DU Pro-VC Sitesh Chandra Bachar said the resignations will come into effect once the new VC is appointed.