

# ‘Harassment of artistes not acceptable’

TV, film shootings stopped amidst looming uncertainty

“A culture of fear looms over us,” said Ekushey Padak-winning actor Ramendu Majumdar. “Many have accused us of remaining silent during the student movement.”

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

The mass uprising in July and the subsequent ousting of the former ruling party have brought the entertainment industry to a standstill. Artistes, many of whom were accustomed to working 30 days a month, are now eagerly waiting to resume their industrious lives. Some argue that fear and the lack of a secure cultural environment are preventing them from returning to work.

“A culture of fear looms over us,” said Ekushey Padak-winning actor Ramendu Majumdar. “Many have accused us of remaining silent during the student movement. However, I can say that in numerous television interviews, I expressed solidarity with the students’ demands, urging the former government to heed them. Unfortunately, they did not listen to us.”

The veteran actor continued, “During the war in 1971, poet Shamsur Rahman retreated to his ancestral village, where he wrote *Shadhinota Tumi*, which I consider the finest poem on our independence. While many literary figures sought refuge in India, he remained in the country without blaming those who chose to leave. Now, however, there is a clear divide among artistes. The attitude of some is putting others at risk.”

Majumdar also noted that many cultural figures are facing harassment. “Cases are



PHOTOS: STAR



Aruna Biswas

being filed over incidents from a decade ago that have nothing to do with artistes. Media personalities are being extensively questioned when trying to travel abroad. Overall, a safe environment for filming has yet to be established.”

Another Ekushey Padak awardee, theatre personality Mamunur Rashid, believes that artistes should not be politicised. “Every time a new government comes to power, certain artistes are banned. Many face legal harassment and even exile. I hope the current government will alleviate this to some extent,” he said.

Tariq Anam Khan asserted that every artiste

has the right to support a political party, but with a caveat. “If a media personality wishes to enter politics, they should leave their ‘artiste’ identity behind,” said the National Award-winning actor. “Only a few artistes were fully affiliated with the ruling party, so why should all of us be blamed? Why should artistes feel endangered in a free country?”

Aruna Biswas told The Daily Star that she has also faced harassment recently. “I won’t deny that some artistes have become too entangled with the government over the past 15 years, tarnishing their image. However, what’s happening now is unacceptable. I was born into a renowned cultural family that firmly believes in the spirit of our independence and Liberation War—is that a crime now? Artistes are national treasures; they do not belong to any political party. I demand security for all artistes.”

Actors’ Equity President Ahsan Habib Nasim highlighted the growing tendency to blame other artistes in the industry for “keeping quiet” during the student movement. “What good will this finger-pointing do? Artistes are not criminals, and they should not be treated as such. Moreover, there have been cases against three actors, which we do not condone at all. Remember, thousands of people, including lighting technicians, makeup artistes, and crew members, depend on daily shootings for their livelihoods. To prevent further disruption, we must ensure a safe environment for cultural personalities to continue their work.”

## ‘Toofan’ to release on both Chorki and Hoichoi



The Shahid Khan starrer film *Toofan* made a strong impact in theatres during Eid-ul-Azha and received a huge response internationally, releasing in nearly 20 countries. After breaking records, the film is set to debut on OTT platforms soon.

Raihan Rafi’s film will finally be released on two OTT platforms simultaneously, as announced on his Facebook page by the director himself.

“The biggest sensation of the year #Toofan is gearing up for its grand OTT debut. Coming soon to both Chorki and Hoichoi for the very first time—stay tuned for the date announcement,” the director wrote.

An update on the release date is expected soon.

## AdFilm Association announces indefinite strike over industry issues



The Bangladesh Association of AdFilm and Content Producers (BAACP) has launched an indefinite strike, starting last Sunday, to address unresolved issues with advertising agencies and clients. Despite ongoing negotiations, key demands remain unmet, which BAACP outlined on social media.

The producers are demanding immediate payment of outstanding dues and have expressed frustration over inconsistent work orders which often result in production delays and last-minute rushes that place undue strain on resources.

The Advertising & Filmmakers Association (ADFA), the Bangladesh Alliance of Cinematographers (BAC), the Post Productions Association of Bangladesh (PAB), and the Art Directors & Costume Designers Association of Bangladesh have all united in solidarity with BAACP.

## NEWS

### Floods leave thousands homeless

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relative’s house. James Ali, also a resident of Mierpara area, said, “My vegetable garden, which was my sole income source, has been washed away. Now, how will my family survive?”

Around 8,786 houses have been damaged by the recent flood in the district, according to Moulvibazar District Relief and Rehabilitation Officer Mohammad Sadu Mia.

“We have already sent a letter to higher authorities concerned seeking allocation to rehabilitate the flood victims,” he said.

Cumilla has been similarly devastated by the floods.

“My house and all the furniture in it

have been washed away. But I don’t have the money to repair it,” said MA Azim, a resident of Mohismara village under Burichang upazila.

He said he and his family took shelter at one of their relatives.

Burichang Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Shahida Akter said around 40,000 houses in this upazila have been damaged.

Over seven lakh families are still marooned across the country, though flood situations are improving gradually, according to a government report yesterday.

Flooding has subsided entirely in several districts, including Chattogram, Feni, Khagrachari, Habiganj, Sylhet, Brahmanbaria, and Cox’s Bazar, said the report of the Ministry of Disaster

Management and Relief.

“Meanwhile, the flood situation has improved in Moulvibazar, and the situation is gradually improving in Cumilla, Noakhali, and Lakshmipur,” it said.

“Currently, 7,05,052 families are still marooned,” added the report.

At least 59 people died and over 53 lakh people in 11 districts were affected by the flood.

The Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre, in a bulletin yesterday, said the flood situation is likely to continue to improve across the country as most of the major rivers are in a falling trend.

[Our correspondents from Moulvibazar and Cumilla also contributed to the report.]

### Nafeez Sarafat manipulated stock market

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licence for RACE Management PCL in 2008. The asset management company had created quite a stir among the capital market stakeholders through various workshops at that time.

By 2013, RACE was managing 10 mutual funds.

Sarafat, who is the younger brother of sports commentator Chowdhury Jafarullah Sarafat, Shahid and Taher Imam invested the money from the fund and bought shares of the then Farmers Bank (now Padma Bank) and became directors of the bank’s board, according to the CID findings.

However, the mutual funds did not benefit from this investment in the bank.

“The combined size of the funds is about Tk 4,500 crore. The FDRs [fixed deposit receipts] are opened for a fixed period with the money of the fund, but

those were broken before their expiry in collusion with the bank officials,” according to the CID report.

As a result, investors in the fund are being deprived of profits worth taka crores.

Around Tk 650 to 700 crore of the fund was deposited in short-term deposit (STD) and special notice deposit (SND) accounts at only 3-4 percent interest.

And again, about 2-3 percent of the interest money was embezzled in collusion with bank officials, the report reads.

Although there are rules for distributing at least 75 percent of the profits received from the stock market to the investors, in most cases, RACE embezzled most of the funds by not following this rule.

Sarafat, also the chairman of the board of trustees of the Canadian

University of Bangladesh (CUB), extended the tenure of the mutual fund by 10 years in collusion with the Bangladesh Securities And Exchange Commission and Investment Corporation of Bangladesh without returning the entire money to the investors in the fund.

On December 2, 2018, RAJUK allotted a plot of 171.16 katha to CUB under the Purbachal New Town Project. The government suffered a loss of Tk 77 crore, said CID officials.

Besides owning the mutual funds, Sarafat is the chairman of Argus Credit Rating Services.

“We have already started collecting databases regarding the anomalies of Nafeez Sarafat and his family members and associates,” said Md Moniruzzaman, inspector of the CID’s financial crime unit.

### Secondary edn

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announcing that the students currently in the ninth grade will return to the previous curriculum of 2012 when they advance to the 10th grade in 2025. Textbooks of the 2012 curriculum were last used in the 2023 academic year.

These students will receive revised textbooks and follow a shortened syllabus to ensure they complete their studies within one academic year, after which they will sit for the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) or equivalent exams in 2026.

The notice, signed by Deputy Secretary Rohima Akhter, cited widespread feedback concerning the National Curriculum 2022 from educators, stakeholders, and researchers.

It said there are issues such as inadequate teacher preparation, unclear content, concerns over assessment methods, and significant institutional limitations. Therefore, the curriculum is not feasible for

implementation, the notice said.

In response to these challenges, the ministry has decided to keep the current textbooks for classes six to nine throughout 2024. New textbooks, revised and updated as far as possible, will be introduced in 2025.

Additionally, students of grades six to nine will be evaluated under a revised assessment method for the remainder of 2024 and during the annual exams.

Their six subject-based assessments, which could not be completed due to the mass uprising and closure, will not resume.

Instead, the 2024 annual exams will follow a revised assessment framework, which will be distributed among the schools soon, the notice said.

Students advancing to the ninth grade in 2025 will study under the revised 2012 curriculum, using stream-based and cluster-based formats. They will complete their syllabus in two academic years and participate in the

SSC or equivalent exams in 2027.

For the primary level, the ministry decided to revise and print fourth and fifth-grade textbooks, aligning them with earlier grades. Teaching methods and assessments will be updated, with a focus on exams, similar to the National Curriculum 2012.

The education ministry said that the revised curriculum would be finalised in 2025, incorporating input from educationists, curriculum experts, and other stakeholders. A fully updated curriculum will be implemented from 2026 onward.

The existing new curriculum, launched in 2023 in classes one, six, and seven, expanded to classes two, three, eight, and nine this year. Initially, it was planned to be introduced in all classes by next year. The curriculum brought major changes, including a revised assessment system and the elimination of stream-based education at the secondary level.

### Dhaka may review MoUs

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the ouster of the Awami League government.

On August 5, Hasina fled to India and has been there since then.

Asked about the projects, the foreign affairs adviser said it is normal that after any revolution, there is some level of chaos, and that’s what has happened in the country.

“There were problems with law and order and there is no question about it.

However, we have been able to bring it under control.

“As everything is getting normal, the Indian contractors will also feel that and resume work,” he said, adding, “The ongoing projects have to be completed.”

He said the government will seek extradition of Hasina from India if the legal procedures require it as there have been numerous cases filed against her, including those of killing people.

“If the court asks us to bring her

back, we will try to act accordingly ... it is up to India if it extradites her. They are supposed to do it, but there is a legal process. I don’t know how it can happen.”

The interim government has cancelled red passports of former ministers and lawmakers.

Asked about the status of Hasina in India, Touhid said he had no idea about it. “You rather ask the Indian authorities.”

### Liton, Miraz turn the tide on Day 3

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bundled out for their lowest ever total in Tests—43 against the West Indies.

Liton and Miraz first saved the side from that embarrassment and took the team to lunch on 75-6.

Post-lunch, Liton and Miraz, looking unperturbed by the Pakistan bowlers, gradually turned the tide as they avoided the follow-on, completed their

respective fifties and brought the deficit below 100.

When the stand ended with Miraz chopping the ball back to Shahzad, they had already made history by becoming the only pair to put up a stand worth 150 runs or more after the team lost six wickets below 50.

Liton batted for almost another 25 overs, completed his fourth Test ton and

ended Pakistan’s hopes of a sizable lead, before getting caught off Salman Agha, who dismissed Nahid Rana (0) two balls later to end Bangladesh’s innings.

The Tigers could bowl only 3.4 overs during which Hasan dismissed Abdullah Shahique (three) and night-watchman Khurram Shahzad (0), leaving the visitors happier of the two sides at the close of day’s play.