

# MEHAZABIEN AT TIFF

## Making waves with 'Saba'

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Mehazabien Chowdhury is currently in Toronto for the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF), where her debut feature film, *Saba*, had its international premiere. In a conversation with The Daily Star, Mehazabien shared her excitement and experiences from the festival.

Directed by Maksud Hossain, *Saba* received an overwhelming response, with tickets selling out quickly. The actress described the audience's emotional reactions as surreal, saying, "I am amazed to receive such a response, and the emotional reactions from the audience were surreal to me."

Indian film critic Sucharita Tyagi showered high praise on the film, describing it as "a deeply moving Bangladeshi masterpiece that shines a glaring light on the irrevocably problematic nature of certain sections of society."



her pride, stating, "It's a great honour for the entire team to be in the People's Choice Award category. Our fingers are crossed as we await the announcement."

The actress experienced a star-struck moment when she met the renowned actress Naomi Watts. Overwhelmed with admiration, Mehazabien shared the unforgettable encounter on social media, posting a photo with the gorgeous star. She beautifully captioned it as her "ultimate fangirl moment with Naomi Watts at TIFF," perfectly capturing the thrill and wonder of standing beside a screen legend.

Meanwhile, Mehazabien's new web-film, *Forget Me Not*, was recently released on the OTT platform Chorki, where she plays the lead role of Aurthee. The film has garnered significant praise, with Mehazabien describing it as a love-centred story.

"At the end of the day, people want to watch light hearted content, especially during times of unrest," she explained. Known for her work in thrillers, Mehazabien found this project a refreshing change. "This was my first collaboration with Robiul Alam Robi, and I thoroughly enjoyed working on it."

In *Forget Me Not*, Mehazabien stars alongside Bijori Barkatullah, Yash Rohan, and Irfan Sajjad. Reflecting on her experience with Yash, she remarked, "Some people are born actors, and Yash is one of them. Although we haven't worked together on many projects, I got to work closely with him in this after *Sabrina*. It's an experience I'll always remember."

She also praised her on-screen rapport with Bijori Barkatullah and spoke fondly of reuniting with Irfan Sajjad, complimenting his portrayal in the film.

*Forget Me Not* was shot in November and spent considerable time in post-production. Mehazabien believes many will connect with its story, explaining, "The film shows how love is felt most when it's no longer there, giving the audience a lot to reflect on."

problematic nature of certain sections of society." With her words, she captures the film's haunting portrayal of societal flaws, lauding its emotional depth and raw power.

The festival's prestigious People's Choice Award, determined by audience votes, includes *Saba* among its 25 competing films. Mehazabien expressed



PHOTOS: COLLECTED

## Indian filmmaker sues Netflix for alleged plot theft in 'Squid Game'



In 2009, Soham Shah directed *Luck*, which underperformed at the box office. He has now sued Netflix, claiming they copied the plot for their hit series *Squid Game*.

A Netflix spokesperson told the media, "This claim is baseless. *Squid Game* was created and written by Hwang Dong Hyuk, and we plan to defend this case strongly."

Shah seeks compensation and a court order to halt Netflix's promotion, streaming, and merchandising of *Squid Game*, and prevent future copyright infringements.

## Reshuffled Artistes' Welfare Trust adds key figures



The interim government has restructured the 15 member trustee board of the Artistes' Welfare Trust to strengthen support for the creative community.

The new members, appointed by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, will serve a three-year term.

The new board will have the Cultural Affairs adviser as chairman, the ministry's secretary as vice-chairman, and the trust's managing director as member-secretary.

Kanak Chapa, Samina Luthfa, Ashfaque Nipun, and actress Quazi Nawshaba Ahmed—have been appointed to the 12 member board.

The board also includes leaders from Bangla Academy, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, and key government officials, alongside poet Nahid Hasan, writer Tuhin Wadud, and poets Imtiaz Mahmud and Syed Jamil.

# NEWS

## Constitution needs rewriting

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by the mass people because the autocrat was ousted by their participation in a student movement. I wouldn't call it a "revolution" because that requires a post-revolution government by the revolutionists, which did not happen. Again, I wouldn't call it a "second independence". The 1990's movement was also called a "second independence" then.

I want to place the Liberation War above everything.

TDS: What are your observations on the activities of the interim government in its first month in office?

Ali Riaz: This government is facing huge challenges that were not seen before as people have put their trust in the interim administration formed under special circumstances. We cannot say that they are flawless. There are some criticisms. Overall, I can say that they are moving forward despite various obstacles. They aren't stuck or moving backwards. But I'd be happier if their activities were more dynamic.

The police and the administration collapsed and they could not be reformed yet. I can see that some quarters are trying to destabilise the country. There are attempts to instigate and create pressure from within and outside the country.

Overall, it wouldn't be right to assess them so hastily. We shall continue to talk, keep pressure and express our expectations.

TDS: Is it possible for the advisers, who have no experience in politics, to create a healthy political environment?

Ali Riaz: One of the main responsibilities of the hastily formed government is to create a new political arrangement that'll prevent the re-establishment of an autocratic rule in the future. Structural reforms and a political roadmap are needed for this. The government needs to specify its goal about politics and the way to achieve it, which is possible through discussions with the political parties, civil society and the student leaders. We're waiting for that. The government has formed several commissions for reforms, which is a positive move.

TDS: You've spoken about rewriting the constitution. Why? And

how the interim government can do it?

Ali Riaz: One-third of the existing constitution has been declared unamendable. But it allows one to become incredibly powerful and it has some paths for creating autocracy. Rewriting the constitution is necessary to block these paths.

The July uprising has created such hopes and aspirations among the people that cannot be achieved by just amending the constitution. Besides, it is also necessary to ensure human rights, freedom of expression and accountability, and to make the state obliged to ensure these.

Rewriting the constitution is not solely the government's responsibility. Citizens and political parties should also be involved. I have suggested three possible ways.

The first is to form a constituent assembly, which can be done through election. The assembly and the interim government can work together to draft a constitution and hold a referendum on it.

Secondly, the interim government can draft a constitution and go for a referendum after taking expert opinions. The third option is to form a constitutional convention in consultation with all the political parties, and the draft constitution will be developed for referendum.

I am suggesting a referendum for all three options because people's opinions must be taken into consideration.

There might be other options, but at first, we need to decide whether we want to rewrite the constitution or just to amend it like we did in the past.

TDS: How can we stop the old practice of arresting and filing cases indiscriminately and taking people in remand arbitrarily?

Ali Riaz: Cases are being filed indiscriminately because of people's pent up anger, which must be kept in mind. But I fear the cases will lose merit if they are being filed in such a manner. The government can form a separate cell to review each complaint. Based on the review, well-founded cases can be filed by the authorities.

Proper emphasis should be given on the killings during the 36-day movement in July and August. Sheikh Hasina, Obaidul Quader,

the former home minister, and the former law minister must be held responsible because they gave orders to carry out such a massacre. They must be tried for committing crimes against humanity. Those who executed the orders should be tried based on the severity of the offences they committed. To ensure justice, all the perpetrators must be put on trial.

TDS: There are noticeable tensions in India-Bangladesh relationship. What are your thoughts?

Ali Riaz: Bilateral relationships must be based on equity and fairness, which was not the case for India-Bangladesh ties. India has done everything to keep an autocratic government in power here. Now, the people of Bangladesh have ousted that regime with the hope of restoring democracy. But, the Indian government is not willing to accept this reality.

The interim government has positive gestures towards the Indian government, but India's response is negative. India, not Bangladesh, is creating these tensions. So, India must resolve this. I hope, this relationship will be established on equity and fairness in future.

TDS: It is said that Bangladesh is entering the US's circle after the fall of Hasina. How correct is this?

Ali Riaz: Can the people who are making such statements give any specific evidence or sign to back their claims? Is there any change in US-Bangladesh relationship after August 5? I don't think so. Claiming Bangladesh is entering the US-led camp means spreading misinformation. Sticking to any bloc is like an attack on the country's sovereignty. The relationship with countries should be based on equity and fairness, whether with India, China, the US, Japan, Germany or others. National interests with sovereignty at the core should be the guiding factor in these relationships.

Dhaka should communicate with Washington, Tokyo, Brussels, New Delhi directly, which is a natural thing for any sovereign nation. There was an idea that the US sees Bangladesh from India's standpoint. Will Washington change its policy to communicate with Dhaka directly bypassing New Delhi? Such signs aren't noticeable yet.

## Hasina sued over threats to Yunus, Khaleda

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Khaleda Zia should be thrown off the Padma Bridge and that Dr Yunus, who allegedly tried to stop funding for the bridge, should be given dunked in the Padma River.

The case statement further claimed that through the comments, Sheikh Hasina had expressed her secret desire to kill Khaleda and

Yunus and defamed them.

It also said by publicly threatening them, Hasina incited workers of Awami League and its affiliated organisations to carry out these acts.

Taking the case into cognisance, the court directed the Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) to conduct an inquiry and submit its findings

within 30 days.

Speaking to The Daily Star, the plaintiff's lawyer, Adv Rezaul Islam, said, "The case was filed against Sheikh Hasina as the sole accused, as she had issued death threats against BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia and Nobel Laureate Prof Dr Muhammad Yunus."

## HSC results may be based on JSC, SSC

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been evaluated. For the cancelled exams, the results will be calculated based on the scores from the JSC and SSC or equivalent exams.

"For instance, if a student scored 80 in a particular subject in both JSC and SSC, they would receive 60 marks from SSC and 20 from JSC, resulting in a total score of 80 for that subject in HSC," the official explained.

Another official said that they are

also considering another approach — calculating the results of the cancelled exams solely from SSC and equivalent exam scores. "The process is not yet final. The ministry will decide whichever method proves to be most beneficial for the students," the official added.

This year's HSC exams began on June 30 and continued until deadly violence during the quota reform movement broke out on July 16.

The remaining exams were

postponed and after the fall of the Sheikh Hasina administration, the interim government set September 11 for the resumption of the tests.

In the face of protests by a section of the HSC candidates, the government cancelled the remaining exams on August 20.

Over 14 lakh students registered for this year's HSC examinations under nine general education boards, the technical education board, and the madrasa board.

## Maintain peace, order

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These shrines, as the gravesite of saints, have a long tradition of being visited with devotion and respect by their followers.

The district commissioners have been requested to take necessary steps to ensure peace and order at the shrines and to maintain normal movement for devotees, it added.

Additionally, if there is any risk of an attack on a shrine in any district, they

have been instructed to take immediate action and inform the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

Earlier, the interim government strongly condemned the attacks on religious and cultural sites, as well as Sufi shrines.

The government stated that law enforcement agencies have been instructed to take adequate measures to protect these religious places and cultural establishments.

## Relentless rain floods

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from many enclosures were washed away.

"Water entered my house on Saturday night. We were compelled to move our furniture and cooking stoves elsewhere. So, we could not cook food today [Sunday]. Now, we are preparing to take shelter at a relative's house," Sagarika Sarker, of Mitha Pukurpar area of Cox's Bazar town, said yesterday. In Jashore, vegetables and crops on around 140 hectares have been submerged, said officials of Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE).

"If such waterlogging continues in next two days, all the vegetables and kumar will be damaged," said Sushant Kumar Taraldar, deputy director of DAE in Jashore.

"I planted early winter vegetables on around three bighas. My vegetables have been under water for the last two days. I will have to incur huge losses, if my vegetables are damaged," said Abdur Rahim, a farmer of Hamidpur area in Jashore Sadar upazila.

In Pirojpur and Barguna, around 2.5 lakh people are without electricity since Saturday afternoon.

Power supply, which was suspended due to the rough weather, will be restored after the weather improves, said Amit Das, assistant general manager of Pirojpur Palli Bidyut Samity.

Besides, different roads in Pirojpur have been damaged.

[Our correspondents from respective districts contributed to this report.]

## Five killed

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Deopara area.

Four passengers of the autorickshaw died on the spot. The injured child and autorickshaw driver were rescued and sent to Kaliganj Upazila Health Complex, where the five-year-old Aman Ullah was declared dead.

Confirming the matter to The Daily Star yesterday, Kaliganj Police Station Sub-Inspector Majed Mia said the lorry fled immediately after the collision.

Mostafizur Rahman of Kaliganj Fire Service and Civil Defence said that four bodies, including a woman, were recovered from the spot, and a child was declared dead after he was rushed to a local hospital by locals.

Later, the victims' bodies were handed over to their family members without autopsies upon their request, said a duty officer at Kaliganj Police Station.