

# 'PRAAY TIN/CHAAR JON' Ordinary lives torn apart under oppression



PHOTOS: ARSHADUL HOQUE ROCKY

play with tickets priced at just Tk 10, or more if the audience wished to contribute. Originally written and published a few years ago amid the backdrop of enforced disappearances, the play was adapted to reflect the current realities of Bangladesh. "When this play was first written, I think we were censoring ourselves. Even I wasn't immune to self-censorship. I constantly asked myself if I could write exactly what I wanted, and the answer was no. Even now, I'm not sure if I can. This is an eternal struggle for writers because true freedom in a society or state still doesn't exist. But it's the writers who must fight to create such a society and remain unapologetic," Zahid Sohag said. "In my view, Bangladesh has become a place where you're either a killer or the killed. Our

Prochondo is a collective of young artistes, many of whom actively participated in the uprising that ousted the former prime minister Sheikh Hasina. Their personal experiences found expression in the play, including memorable dialogues from the uprising, such as "Hamak betak marlu kaan?" (Why did you kill my son?). When asked why they chose to form this collective, the performers of Prochondo explained that they wanted to create a platform open to anyone who wishes to join, especially those ready to question authority. "We are equals in this collective," said member Riasat Salekin. "I once chased the dream of changing the world with my art, but I soon realised there were forces preventing it. Over time, I became complacent, looking



## Mithun Chakraborty to be honoured with Dadasaheb Phalke Award

Actor-politician Mithun Chakraborty has been named as the recipient of the prestigious Dadasaheb Phalke Award, the highest Indian government honour, accorded for contributions in the field of cinema.

The news was announced yesterday by Indian Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on X (formerly Twitter). The award will be presented at the 70th National Film Awards ceremony on October 8.

The three-time National Award winner, who is one of the very few to have won the Best Actor award on debut, is a veteran of over 350 films in Hindi, Bengali, Bhojpuri, Odia, Telugu, and Tamil.

## Mahaan Fahim's journey with Aurthohin ends after 8 years

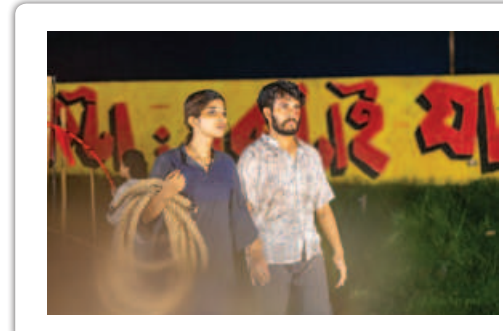
Guitarist Mahaan Fahim has officially ended his eight-year journey with the iconic band Aurthohin. In a heartfelt Facebook post on Sunday afternoon,



Mahaan revealed that he made the difficult decision to leave the band, following his doctor's advice due to ongoing health issues.

The musician shared, "Back in April, I suffered a slipped disc in my cervical spine, which caused severe pain in my left hand. My doctor has strictly advised me to rest and avoid playing guitar."

Despite leaving Aurthohin, Mahaan made it clear that he is not stepping away from music entirely. The artiste performed with Aurthohin for the final time at the *Legends of the Decade* concert last Saturday, alongside Vikings, Conclusion and Pakistani band Jal.



identity is being reshaped into this binary. On August 5, the nation was 'purified' through bloodshed. During the movement, we all dreamed of a free Bangladesh. But where is the country heading today? Can we speak freely? Can we question everything?" he asked.

Director Upol described the play as laden with "gunpowder in every line." "If we, the performers, first internalise each line, we can then transmit its fire to the audience—so that if injustice unfolds before us in the future, we will be ready to ignite," he said.

The play is dedicated to the martyrs of the July Uprising, the victims of enforced disappearances over the past 15-16 years during the former AL-led regime, and all those who have suffered injustice in the country.

away from the suffering, from people being murdered and raped in the hill tracts. But July changed that. July grabbed me by the neck and forced me to see."

"The artiste and the activist are not separate; Prochondo Collective was born from that realisation," Salekin continued, recounting his experience on August 5, when many members were in hiding. "That's when I asked myself, what now? Has anything really changed?" he said. Prochondo exists to keep questioning power, he added.

The play featured performances by Riasat Salekin, Fariha Jannat Mim, Jessica Jacinta Chiran, Farzin Fariha, Rabi Prarombho, Zordan Niloy, Swarup Ratan Lalan, Fahad Khan, and others.



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TIASHA IDRAK

A nameless mother frantically searches for her son, her voice hoarse from calling his name. Her boy, now stripped of his identity, lies among other anonymous sons—either in the morgue or discarded in a river. His name no longer matters; he has been reduced to just another number.

With their thought-provoking and experimental production *Praay Tin/Chaar Jon*, Prochondo Collective offers a stark portrayal of the harsh realities faced by ordinary people under authoritarian regimes. The play examines how lives are lived and disrupted by the constant threat of extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detentions, state-enforced brutality, and the overall subjugation of the human spirit, which is surveilled and extinguished at will.

Written by Zahid Sohag and directed by Sarwar Jahan Upol, this absurdist play was performed in four shows last Friday and Saturday (September 27 and 28) at Mukto Moncho amphitheatre in Suhrawardy Udyan.

As twilight descended that day, an unusual gathering took place at Mukto Moncho—people from all walks of life came together: the young and old, theatre enthusiasts, passersby, street children, and tea vendors. For their debut production, Prochondo Collective staged the

# NEWS

## Three killed in oil tanker explosion at Ctg port

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Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) Secretary Md Omar Faruk said the crude oil was imported for Eastern Refinery Limited.

"Following the explosion, fireboats from the Bangladesh Navy, Chittagong Port Authority, and Coast Guard and several units from Fire Service and Civil Defence rushed to the spot and managed to bring the fire under control by 12:30pm."

"As a precautionary measure, all nearby ships were relocated to safe zones, and oil installations were instructed to remain on high alert."

BSC Managing Director Commodore Mahmudul Malek, at a press conference in the afternoon, said the deck cadet and the two staffers were carrying out routine maintenance at the ship's forecastle when crude oil was being unloaded.

"The maintenance did not include any fire-related work, which could have triggered the explosion."

Malek said an investigation into the incident would reveal the cause of the explosion and the extent of damage.

The ship was bought by the Bangladesh Shipping Corporation (BPC) also formed a seven-member probe committee led by Managing Director Sharif Hasnat of the Eastern Refinery Limited to investigate the explosion.

He went on to say that the explosion was not the result of a mechanical failure because it did not come from the engine or generator. Meanwhile, the BSC formed two probe bodies, one for investigating the incident and the other to properly compensate the victims' families.

The Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) also formed a seven-member probe committee led by Managing Director Sharif Hasnat of the Eastern Refinery Limited to investigate the explosion.

BPC Director Anupam Barua said the committee was directed to submit a report within a day.

## Tigers must channel Mominul's resolve

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millimetres a day before the fixture, and only half of it was left in the end. However, this was done with Bangladesh's pace trio from the Chennai Test in mind.

There was supposed to be help on the surface over the first two days, and picking three seamers attests to that, as sources knowledgeable about Ranji Trophy games informed. It was during the opening day that Mominul Haque shouldered the responsibility of keeping the innings together.

While the ball swung and seamed on that day and yesterday, with two days foiled by rain, Jasprit Bumrah and others bowled deliveries that tried to sneak in low. Mominul prevailed in both scenarios while keeping Ravichandran Ashwin at bay, who seems to have a knack for bowling unplayable deliveries often to left-handers.

Mominul's innings was about calculating the risk and reward of

high-percentage shots. Yesterday, he swept spinners for fun and pulled comfortably on a much flatter deck, even if the bounce was not always true. He did it with a smoothness and authority that was not seen from the other Bangladesh batters.

He held his end, cutting anything loose, driving Ravindra Jadeja for six nonchalantly over the umpire's head to reach the 90s, and then sweeping Ashwin square to bring up his 13th Test ton. He has now become just the second Bangladesh batter to score a ton in India, and the 13th was also his second Test ton away from home.

His last tour of India was a tough one. Not many have forgotten Bangladesh's struggles, especially in the pink-ball Test in Kolkata, where Mominul got out for ducks in each innings. To turn around fortunes, clarity of shot selection was needed; there were no two minds about it.

And when it came to leaving the deliveries, he was certain about what to leave, only once giving a real opportunity to Virat Kohli at first slip when on 95. The cover drive he played off Bumrah on day one was so good it would have been a crime not to go on and complete a big score.

As someone who has often struggled for consistency, he applied himself better than the rest of the Bangladesh batters.

It was difficult to score on day one, but after two days of rain, when the sun came out, the wicket became batting-friendly, and Mominul cashed in to accelerate, providing Bangladesh with something to fight for.

The sweeps, especially against Ashwin, showed that Mominul has found his groove. He has found answers in the varying conditions present in this Test, but if Bangladesh are to make it to safety, a classic knock like the one Mominul played will be needed.

## Mayer Daak leader

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sign another paper for formality and he did it.

During the raid, the army personnel confined her aged mother to a room. Children and their house help got frightened due to the raid.

Tulee added that the army members took away Saiful's mobile phone and returned it later.

At one stage, they took Saiful, who looks after the family properties, to the Sher-e-Bangla Nagar army camp. Around 5:00pm, the army personnel dropped Saiful in front of their house, Tulee added.

Tulee said hearing the incident, she contacted senior officers of DGFI (Directorate General of Forces Intelligence) and army who assured her of investigating the matter.

Talking to reporters at her home, she demanded those involved in the incident be held accountable.

Tulee is the sister of BNP leader Sajedul Islam Sumon, a victim of enforced disappearance in 2013.

She suspects that a section of

officers loyal to the Awami League, who were responsible for his brother's enforced disappearance, were behind the raid.

"We are an enforced disappearance victim's family and organising many Mayer Daak programmes in our home. If our home is raided on false information, family of other enforced disappearance victims will be frightened."

Following the incident, Nahid Islam, adviser to the posts, telecommunications, and information technology ministry, and many family members of enforced disappearance victims visited the house.

Lt Col Sami Ud Dowla Chowdhury, ISPR director, told The Daily Star that the raid was conducted based on complaint against Saiful, who happened to be the brother of Tulee. There is no connection between the raid and Mayer Daak, he said.

Issuing a press release last night, ISPR said Saiful was taken to a nearby army camp from

## 7-hour sit-in withdrawn

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front of the chief adviser's residence in the capital.

The public administration ministry issued a notification in this regard and asked the committee to submit its report within seven days.

The committee is chaired by former caretaker government adviser Abdul Mueyed Chowdhury, with Mokhlesur Rahman, senior secretary of the public administration ministry, as the member secretary.

Around 11:00am, several hundred job seekers had gathered at Shahbagh to press for the age-limit extension. They then marched towards the chief adviser's residence, where police had set up barricades to bar them from moving forward. The protesters, however, broke through the barricades and continued chanting slogans.

Around 1:15pm, a scuffle broke out between the demonstrators and law enforcers, after which police fired tear gas shells and stun grenades to disperse the crowd.

Speaking to journalists, Ruman Kabir, one of the coordinators of 35 Prottashi Somonoy Parishad, said, "We condemn the police attack and question why tear gas was fired on a peaceful protest. We have no other option now but to seek a meeting with the chief adviser to present our demands."

Muzammel Miazee, another protester, explained the demand for extension. "Currently, the age limit for applying for civil service jobs is 30. We're demanding it be increased to 35. We've been asking for this for 14 years but there has been no response from the government."

Another protester said, "If the chief adviser can serve the state at the age of 70 [his actual age is 84], why can't we access government jobs after the age of 30?"

Tahsin Mahmud, a student of Chittagong University, said, "Our demand is logical, and the government should address it immediately. We're suffering from unemployment."

The age limit is 32 for only the children and grandchildren of freedom fighters.

Protesters had blocked the Shahbagh intersection a few days ago with the same demand.

Additionally, Bangladesh Administrative Service Association, an organisation of administration cadre officials, also demanded that the maximum age limit be raised to 35 and the retirement age to 65.

It is to be noted that the Dhaka Metropolitan Police on August 25 issued a notice banning any rallies, meetings or demonstration in front of the Secretariat and government residence of the chief adviser until further notice.

## At least 4,634 bullets fired

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A total of 2,733 teargas shells and 984 sound grenades were fired at the protesters.

Even when using "less lethal" weapons, the law enforcement agencies used deadly lead cartridges that resulted in several deaths, and numerous cases of blindness. As many as 12,340 rounds of lead cartridges were shot in comparison to 8,994 rounds of rubber bullets.

Seventeen-year-old Farhan Faiyaz was shot dead on July 18 with such a "less lethal" weapon, according to hospital documents.

At least 717 people were killed nationwide during the protests, according to a draft list of the health ministry. However, the number is still increasing as many deaths were previously unreported.

The first information reports (FIRs) of the 100 cases were recorded at Shahbagh, Mohammadpur, Adabor,

Rampura, Dhanmondi, New Market, Mirpur, Jatrabari, Uttara East, Uttara West and Turag police stations in Dhaka and Panchlaish, Khulshi, Bakalia, Chandgaon, Kotwali, Pahartali, Halishahar and Double Mooring police stations in Chattogram.

"The blatant violation of limits in the name of exercising 'right to self defence' by the law enforcement forces is clearly against the spirit and fundamental rights guaranteed by the constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh," said the report.

"We focused solely on 100 cases filed with 22 police stations, which represents only a small portion of the violence perpetrated during the protests. A comprehensive assessment of the true extent of violence is necessary. If we analyse all the cases filed by the police nationwide and compile the information, we will get a full picture," said lawyer Zahed Iqbal.