

## 'This award is special, it motivates us to do even better'

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Priyontee Urbee's standout performance in the episode *Kothay Palabe Bolo Rupban* from the anthology series *Ei Muhurte* has been widely praised by critics and audiences alike. The young talent, who has made a name for herself with roles in projects like *Apolap* and *Close-up Ei Somoyer Kache Ashar Golpo*, is now excited for the upcoming *Blender's Choice The Daily Star OTT Awards 2023*.

Urbee reflected on the challenges of working in the industry, emphasising the appreciation they receive as artists, from audiences and critics despite the constraints. "We work under so many restrictions, but when our efforts are recognised, it motivates us to do even



PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

better," she remarked. She believes the rise of OTT platforms has been a game changer, allowing actors to experiment with diverse roles in unique stories.

The actress also praised this OTT award, now in its third year, for recognising these contributions. "I appreciate this event and believe that the award show's success lies in its wide range of categories, something that distinguishes it from other award shows."

As she awaits the gala night, Urbee is looking forward to celebrating it with her friends and colleagues and honouring the artists whose hard work and dedication continue to shape the industry. For her, the recognition from the awards is both a blessing and an inspiration to push creative boundaries.



## NEWS

### Media commission shouldn't be a vehicle

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used them to harass and gag the media."

While the interim government should carry out reforms to protect and strengthen media freedom, Irene believes that in Bangladesh's current situation the media must also make some important changes.

"People don't trust the press," says Irene. "Most media outlets peddled the lies of the previous regime without hesitation. Their journalistic standards are very low. Disinformation and misinformation proliferate, and journalists don't do much fact-checking."

"Journalism serves a valuable function by informing the public, exposing wrongdoing and holding the powerful to account. But that kind of public service journalism requires journalists to abide by certain principles and professional standards, and above all, demonstrate an unequivocal commitment to truth."

"Responsible self-regulation by the media sector is missing in Bangladesh."

Asked about the interim government's proposal to set up a media commission, Irene says it is not yet clear what this commission will do. She cautions the government against using the commission to tighten state control over the media.

"Countries with high state regulation of the media—Iran or China for instance—have no media freedom nor public trust in information."

"In a democratic society, state

regulation of the media should be light so that diverse ideas, information and perspectives can flow freely from a wide range of sources. The media commission should not be a vehicle for censorship."

Irene believes that a media commission, composed of media representatives, legal experts and civil society, could play a useful role in establishing journalism standards and a code of ethics, ensuring compliance, encouraging skills and capacity development, and promoting good practices in the media sector. "To be credible and effective, such a commission must be independent and free from political influence," Irene adds.

The media commission could also receive, investigate and address complaints from the public about the media. "A national media ombudsman could be another option."

When asked to identify the main threats to media freedom, Irene highlights attacks on journalists with impunity, legal harassment, and opaque governance and ownership of media.

"Bloggers have been murdered in this country. The case of Sagar and Runi is unresolved. Local journalists were attacked in the past and some face attacks even now," she says, referring to the string of murders in 2016, the gruesome killing of a journalist couple in 2012 and recent attacks and threats against journalists.

She explains that the killing of one

journalist can silence many others. "There is a dangerous chilling effect, which makes it doubly important for the government to protect journalists and end impunity."

On legal harassment, Irene cites the use of the Digital Security Act and Cyber Security Act by the Hasina regime to bring the "online space under control". She also mentions that the offense of criminal libel was used by the previous regime to prosecute journalists and editors.

"There is no place for these oppressive laws in a democratic state, and the interim government should repeal them and dismiss the cases pending against journalists without delay," she says.

"There is considerable political influence over the media through ownership or financial incentives." Big business houses or powerful politicians own almost all media outlets in Bangladesh. The previous government also leveraged the state advertisement budget to reward or punish the press.

The government should introduce rules to ensure that media ownership is not concentrated in the hands of a few powerful people. It should encourage transparent, good governance of media outlets, so that editorial independence is not compromised, says Irene. "Such reforms will help create public trust."

"Public interest journalism is a public good, the government must protect it, together with freedom of expression."

### Ex-US envoy Haas

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Steven Kobos, president and CEO of Excelerate.

"Peter understands the intersection of geopolitics and markets, and I am confident that his leadership and experience will strengthen our global team and help us deliver energy security for our customers around the world," he said. The press release incorporated a

comment of Haas, where he said, "I am excited to join Excelerate Energy in its mission to deliver innovative LNG solutions that drive economic growth and improve lives around the world."

Currently, two floating storage and regasification units are processing LNG imported by Bangladesh. The one owned by Excelerate supplies around 600 million cubic feet of gas per day.

### Remittance

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Remittance inflow slumped in July as expatriates were unable to send funds in the middle of the month as the government imposed an internet blackout to quell protests centring on demands for quota reform in government jobs.

As of September, gross foreign exchange reserves stood at \$19.56 billion, enough to foot a little more than three months of imports.

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### Shakib's home sign-off in doubt

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During the presentation ceremony, Virat Kohli caught up with him, and the smiles came out. Kohli put an arm around him as the two shared light moments in what could be Shakib's last away series in Test cricket. The Indian superstar gifted him his trademark bat, while Rishabh Pant too had one lined up for Bangladesh's greatest-ever player. The pleasantries suggested Kohli had something of a send-off for Shakib in mind.

The contingent of Bangladesh media currently in Kanpur also had a little memorabilia to pass on to Shakib. A roll of flowers along with the memorabilia was handed to him, although the 37-year-old made no comments regarding any news or developments.

### Yunus, Modi may meet

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on security by the foreigners."

Asked if Dhaka raised the issue of 1971 and formal apology during the meeting between Prof Yunus and Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Touhid said it was not.

"We have not given any hint to Pakistan that we will advance our relations ignoring the events of 1971. While we want good relations, it does not mean that we will ignore 1971."

The adviser said he personally thinks that normalising relations with Pakistan would be easier if Pakistan could show courage and sincerely apologise for the events in 1971.

### Polls tribunal declares

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days later he was shown zero vote in 28 polling centres which was "unbelievable and unimaginable".

The tribunal's judge Mohammad Khairul Amin, also the joint district and sessions judge in Chattogram, delivered the verdict around 12:00pm yesterday.

It is the first time in the country's history that the court cancelled the declaration of an elected candidate for breaching the election rules and

He was all set to leave for the USA, taking yesterday's 8 pm flight.

During a bombshell press conference on the eve of the Kanpur Test, Shakib stated that he needed a safe exit from the country after the Test series against South Africa to conclude his Test career on home soil. He faces a murder case and a fine for stock manipulation, which are currently hanging over his head. Additionally, the all-rounder has not returned to the country since the fall of the Awami League government, of which he was an MP.

While there are still doubts about Shakib's return, those close to the development feel that if the cases hanging over him are revoked, he will play the series. "If he is found not to be involved in the cases where he was

named, he is likely to play. We feel he will come," a source close to the development said.

Head coach Chandika Hathurusingha is possibly already incorporating the veteran into plans for the next series. When asked at the press conference after the game whether the southpaw would play against South Africa, he suggested that he has not heard otherwise.

"I haven't heard anything to say that this is the last time Shakib is playing. As far as I know, he is playing the South Africa series," Hathurusingha said.

All speculations aside, much depends on the politics at play following the fall of a government, and Shakib would have to wait and see regarding assurances of a safe exit.

that no dictator can come to power again in Bangladesh.

"Once this is done [reforms], we will hold the polls ... If we say it will take three months or three years, it does not make any sense."

Touhid said he also met the Bangladesh community professionals and businesspersons in New York, who also suggested not hurrying for the elections but doing necessary reforms first.

"We don't want the young to take to the streets again and be hit by bullets. We said we will do it [reforms] as soon as possible. We don't have any political ambition."

Rules 2016, and the City Corporation Election (Electronic Voting Machine) Rules 2019, in declaring Rezaul Karim Chowdhury as the elected candidate (in CCC election)."

"They destroyed the electoral system through fraudulence and unlawfully declared Rezaul Karim Chowdhury elected as per the gazette published on January 31, 2021, which is illegal, invalid, and baseless," the court added.

laws, the lawyer claimed.

The court in its full verdict said, "Based on the evidence, the then Regional Election Officer, the Secretary of the Election Commission, the Chief Election Commissioner, along with the election agents of the defendants and the concerned individuals, have grossly violated the Local Government (City Corporation) Election Rules 2010, the City Corporation (Election Conduct)