

# ‘ADHUNIK BANGLA HOTEL’ Where culinary obsession meets chilling horror



PHOTOS: COURTESY

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After *Pett Kata Shaw*, this was one of the web-series I was really looking forward to, especially because Mosharraf Karim plays not just one but three different characters. Although it's an anthology series, there are no interconnected episodes. The series, *Adhunik Bangla Hotel*, boasts a group of talented actors whose powerful performances elevate the narrative, even as the story is full of imperfections.

At the heart of the series is an intriguing

obsession with local foods, reflected in the carefully chosen episode titles. Each episode was released on Thursdays, starting with the first episode at midnight on Halloween and the last on November 14. The episodes come with unique names such as *Boal Macher Jhol* (Boal fish curry), *Khashir Paya* (goat trotters), and *Hasher Salun* (duck curry).

What truly stands out in the series is its stunning cinematography. The serene landscapes of rural life, framed by vivid skies and lush green sycamore trees, create a visual feast that captivates from the very beginning. The first episode, rather than shocking the audience, evokes a sense of tranquility and calm. Nature plays a central role, with elements like drifting white clouds, a gloomy moon, and sudden bursts of thunder becoming symbolic voices for the unspoken tragedies awaiting the characters.

Despite this being his first foray into the anthology format, Mosharraf Karim, being the fine actor that he is, blends seamlessly into his roles.

In the opening episode, a retired professor (Gazi Rakayet) visits an old student, Aziz (Mosharraf Karim), to hear ghost stories and enjoy *Boal macher jhol*. While fishing by the lake, Aziz recounts a tale of a village where the dead rise as soon as they're buried. The line between story and truth blurs as the mystery unfolds. Though the ending is predictable, the episode remains faithful to its psychological horror, fantasy, thriller, and mythology roots.

The second episode is one of the weakest in the series. While Mosharraf Karim and the young child actor did a commendable job, the plot didn't seem to make much sense to me. It was full of repetitive tropes and jump scares, to the point where it became annoying.

The story follows Rafique, a middle-aged man who has never lived alone and loves *khashir paya*. When a boy asks him for money to buy the dish, Rafique refuses, and strange events begin to occur. Despite starting with an intriguing premonition, the latter half fails to build the story, making it tedious and illogical.

*Hasher Salun* redeems the disappointing aftertaste of the second episode, by introducing us to a serial killer named Mozaffor Gayen, alias Moju, who murders people without mercy. After being severely injured, he stumbles upon a mysterious hotel called *Adhunik Bangla Boarding*. Then the question arises—who are the hotel's tenants, and why is Moju unable to leave?

After each murder, Moju indulges in *chaler ruti* (traditional rice flour flatbread) with *hasher salun* (duck curry) and traps pigeons in his cage. This episode, like the first, features impressive cinematography, sharp dialogues, and Mosharraf Karim's flawless portrayal of a morally complex character, which will make you simultaneously admire and hate him. The lighting and colour work in this episode fit perfectly into the series. While not particularly scary, this episode is packed with suspense and thriller.

However, the mystery of who Moju works for and his true motives remains unsolved till the end.

One of the greatest parts of the series is its supporting cast—Gazi Rakayet, Salahuddin Lavlu, Shilpi Sharkar Apu, AK Azad Shetu, and Nidra Dey Neha. All did a fantastic job, but I was particularly blown away by Salahuddin Lavlu. He played a character completely opposite to what fans are used to seeing from him. In *Hasher Salun*, he plays a mysterious and nonchalant receptionist whose presence adds layers to the plot right up to the end.

Overall, director Kazi Asad did a commendable job, though I hope future seasons focus on quality storylines with fewer loose ends and perhaps more episodes. If you're a fan of Mosharraf Karim, this anthology series is definitely worth a try. All episodes of *Adhunik Bangla Hotel* are available for streaming on the OTT platform Chorki.

## ‘Priyo Maloti’ officially selected for IFFI 2024



Mehazabien Chowdhury starrer *Priyo Maloti* has been officially selected for the International Film Festival of India (IFFI), one of Asia's oldest and most prestigious festivals.

Known in English as *Whispers of a Thirsty River*, the film is directed by Shankha Dasgupta. It will represent Bangladesh in the Cinema of the World category at

IFFI's 55th edition, which will take place from November 20 to 28 in Goa, India.

The official selection, confirmed on the festival's website, features 71 films from various countries. *Priyo Maloti* will be screened at Panjim Auditorium-4 on November 27.

Earlier, the film was selected to compete in the World Cinema category at the Cairo International Film Festival (CIFF).



## RUNA LAILA launches official YouTube channel

Legendary singer Runa Laila marked her 72nd birthday yesterday by launching her official YouTube channel titled, @TheRunaLaila, offering fans access to her extensive music collection.

The channel debuted with the iconic track *Shilpi Ami Tomaderi Gaan Shonabo*, originally aired on BTV, and followed by *Hello Hi*, from her 1982 album *Superuna*.

With over 10,000 songs in 18 languages in her repertoire, Runa Laila's channel offers a mix of Bollywood hits, Bengali folk, and patriotic songs.

She expressed gratitude for the love and support that has been pivotal in her career spanning over 60 years.

# NEWS

## London to help Dhaka

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Earlier, she met Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus at the State Guesthouse Jamuna.

She told him the UK government would extend full support to Bangladesh in its efforts to bring back billions of dollars that was laundered.

Yunus said returning the money laundered by corrupt politicians, oligarchs, and bureaucrats is a top priority of the interim government, and quoted a recent Transparency International Bangladesh report saying over 12 billion dollars were annually siphoned off abroad.

According to a statement from the chief adviser's press wing, Prof Yunus said the reforms undertaken by the government are aimed at ensuring free and fair polls in the country, and to break away from the rampant vote rigging practiced by the previous regime.

West told him that Britain would like to see vibrant debates on the key aspects of electoral, judiciary, and constitutional reforms.

"Debates are very important," she said.

Yunus also reiterated his call for creating a "UN-overseen safe zone" for communities in Myanmar's violence-

plagued Rakhine so that they don't have to flee across the border to Bangladesh.

The chief adviser and UK minister discussed geopolitical issues, minority rights, ties with South Asian neighbours, and Bangladesh's recent 40 megawatt energy deal with Nepal.

Yunus said his government has fully backed the creation of a South Asia electricity grid to bring power from hydroelectricity-rich Nepal and Bhutan.

He said Bangladesh can ease off its reliance on fossil fuels if it can import renewable energy from the two Himalayan countries, adding that Bangladesh needs collaboration with India to this effect.

At the meeting with Touhid Hossain, West conveyed British Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer and Foreign Secretary David Lammy's greetings. She also underscored UK's priorities on migration, maritime cooperation, and cyber security.

Touhid sought the international community's support for the Rohingyas and said the only solution to this crisis lies in their safe and sustainable repatriation to their homeland in Myanmar.

With regard to the Point-based

Immigration System, he called for the arrangement of mutual recognition of qualifications.

Responding to a reporter's question on BNP acting chairperson Tarique Rahman's return, West said they did not discuss individual cases but they want to support the government because it is in a period of transition.

"We want to support the interim government in all the works that it is doing,"

She announced £10.3 million of UK grant support for the Rohingya and host communities affected by natural disasters in Bangladesh.

West also had a meeting with BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir and discussed various issues of mutual interest between the two nations, reports UNB.

The hour-long meeting, which began around 4:30pm, was held at the British High Commissioner's residence in the capital's Baridhara, said BNP media cell member Sayrul Kabir Khan.

British High Commissioner to Bangladesh Sarah Cooke, BNP Standing Committee Member Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury and its Organising Secretary Shama Obed were present at the meeting, he said.

## Biman to be sole ground handling

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expectation of quality ground handling services at Terminal-1 and -2. Our hope was that we would be able to provide international standard services at Terminal 3," he also said.

No international airport in the world has a single ground handling service provider, he said.

CAAB had appointed International Finance Corporation, a concern of the World Bank Group, as a transactional adviser. It submitted a report in favour of appointing multiple service providers at the third terminal for better service.

Mofidur said the number of passengers and carriers serving Dhaka will increase after the third terminal is properly launched, and multiple ground handling service providers would be needed to ensure quality service.

"In Bangladesh, no one has the ability to deal with the cargo handling job at the third terminal. I can guarantee that no one in Bangladesh has the ability to operate these facilities as they are totally automated," said the former CAAB chief.

The third terminal, funded with Japanese loans, requires efficient revenue generation to meet debt repayment obligations, and any lapses in ground handling could jeopardise this goal.

The third terminal project, with a budget of Tk 21,300 crore, began on December 28, 2019. The government contributed Tk 5,000 crore, while the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) provided the rest.

Aviation expert Kazi Wahidul Alam said monopoly in ground handling will benefit Biman, but passengers will suffer.

Wahidul also said, "Foreign airlines will not have any other option than to become hostages to Biman."

Wishing anonymity, officials of several foreign airlines said they do not want to remain hostages to Biman.

"We want multiple ground handling service providers at the third terminal for ensuring better services through competition," said a top official of a foreign carrier.

CAAB Chairman Monjur Kabir Bhuiyan recently told the media that operations of the third terminal were likely to start next year.

The 230,000 square metre terminal has 115 check-in counters, 66 departure immigration desks, 59 arrival immigration desks, and 3 VIP immigration desks.

HSIA's annual passenger and cargo handling capacity is expected to double when the terminal is properly operational.

The annual passenger handling capacity of the HSIA would be 24 million (including the old terminals). At present, the Dhaka airport can handle 8 million passengers and 500,000 tonnes of cargo each year.

A major portion of Biman's income comes from ground-handling services. The airlines earned around Tk 1,500 crore from this in 2023.

Baggage handling remains a thorn in passengers' sides. Many complain of delayed baggage delivery, damage to

their belongings, and theft.

Public hearings at the airport highlight these issues, reflecting poorly on Biman.

Foreign carriers have consistently complained about Biman's services. Several airlines told this correspondent that despite paying for ground handling service, they often receive insufficient support from Biman.

In some cases, the carriers deploy their own people at the airport to maintain service quality.

"We need to deploy 30 to 40 staffers at the airport during departures of flights and for cargo handling. It is Biman which is supposed to carry out these jobs," said an official of a foreign carrier.

Biman, however, said they are prepared for the third terminal. In addition to recruiting and training Biman's personnel, new equipment is being purchased.

"Several types of equipment have already been added to Biman's Ground Support Equipment (GSE). Over the next few months, approximately 70 types of equipment will be given to Biman's GSE," Bushra Islam, general manager, public relations, Biman said in a message.

Due to the adoption of modern technology and strong management initiatives, there has been a significant improvement in service quality, she said.

Bushra said outsourcing this responsibility to any external entities would result in a substantial loss of national revenue and harm the country's interests.

## BJP wants Manipur

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hateful divisive politics," Kharage said.

He also said at least 17 people have lost their lives since November 7, adding new districts are being added to the list of strife-torn regions and the fire is spilling over to bordering northeastern states, reports The Indian Express online.

Meanwhile, Indian Home Minister Amit Shah has cancelled his election rallies in Maharashtra in view of the escalating violence in Manipur.

Protesting against the death of six hostages from Jiribam, a mob tried to barge into the personal residence of Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh on Saturday evening, reports NDTV online.

Earlier Saturday, protesters attacked the residences of at least three state ministers and six lawmakers, prompting the government to impose prohibitory orders in five districts for an indefinite period and suspended internet services in parts of the state.

## Women key to Bangladesh's economic progress

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economic empowerment," said Bouldin. "When women succeed in business, their families, communities, and economies thrive."

Bouldin also announced an additional \$30,000 grant to fund a business pitch competition among 140 participants from all AWE cohorts.

"We are thrilled to announce this funding, which will allow women from all cohorts to compete for multiple \$5,000 awards to support their entrepreneurial ventures," she added.

Bouldin presided over the event, reaffirming the US government's commitment to women's economic empowerment and fostering economic growth that is both gender-inclusive economic growth and provides opportunities to religious and other minorities across the country.

The ceremony celebrated the achievements of 78 exceptional women entrepreneurs from across Bangladesh—including Sylhet, Cumilla, Barishal, Khagrachari, Jashore, Chattogram and Dhaka—who successfully completed the second cohort of the US government-funded

AWE programme.

During the ceremony, six top business pitch winners from the latest cohort were awarded for their outstanding business proposals.

The event featured a mini-fair and exhibition where participants showcased and sold their products, demonstrating the entrepreneurial skills they developed through the programme.

Many participants come from marginalised and minority communities, exemplifying their resilience and determination throughout their entrepreneurial journeys.

The AWE programme, a global initiative of the US Department of State, equips women with essential business knowledge and skills, according to the Embassy.

Delivered in partnership with Arizona State University's Thunderbird School of Global Management and the Freeport McMoRan Foundation, the programme uses the DreamBuilder platform to provide online learning resources and soft-skills training.

This year's cohort included 90

participants from Dhaka, Chattogram, and Sylhet, with priority given to women from indigenous, minority, and economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

The three-month course, conducted in Bangla by industry experts, emphasised sustainability, peer-to-peer learning, and networking—creating a solid foundation for business growth.

The US Embassy's partnership with BRAC University's Centre for Entrepreneurship Development reflects a shared commitment to fostering sustainable programs that address the needs of underrepresented women entrepreneurs and promote the growth of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Bangladesh.

The AWE initiative aligns with the US National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality, promoting women's full economic participation and supporting a future where women from diverse backgrounds can contribute meaningfully to global economic growth, strengthening the prosperity of their communities and industries.