ARTS & ENTERTAINMEN

'I don't see films through a gender-biased lens'

Planning a cinema outing can feel like an all-day affair. Moreover, attention spans have shortened, but I'm hopeful that viewers will find the experience rewarding.

SHARMIN JOYA

On December 20, Priyo Maloti graced 20 cinema halls nationwide. Featuring Mehazabien Chowdhury in the titular role of Maloti Rani Das, the film marks a significant milestone for both the actress and its director, Shankha Dasgupta, as their silver screen debut.

Shankha, who began his career as a journalist, transitioned into the entertainment industry and eventually established himself as prominent director of television commercials (TVCs), and later OTT platforms. Reflecting on this journey, Shankha shares, "The best feeling a director can have is when the audience experiences your story on the big screen. Witnessing my project screened at an international festival, where the language and context were foreign to the audience, yet

being applauded for its visual storytelling,

was surreal. It reinforced my confidence for

Shankha describes his career as a steady

evolution. "In my early days on television, I

often felt like I underperformed, believing I

wasn't producing work matching the calibre of

my contemporaries due to various limitations.

Transitioning to TVCs changed my perspective.

It demanded a process-oriented approach,

allowing me to work with some of the best

resources in the industry. Between 2013 and

2018, I honed my skills as a TVC director, which

presenting the film to our local audience."

Determined to delve into long-form narratives, Shankha ventured into OTT projects like Boli. While visually striking, the project faced criticism for its screenplay and storytelling. "The mixed reception taught me invaluable lessons, which I applied to my next project, Guti. I implemented everything I'd learned in my career, and that success inspired me to take the next big step, thus making a feature film," reflects Shankha.

The journey to create **Priyo Maloti** began with a clear vision. "I was certain that this story deserved the silver screen. When I proposed the idea to stakeholders, including Frame Per Second, Chorki, and Mehazabien, everyone believed in its potential," says the director.

The film serves as a philosophical reflection of Shankha's own societal and political views. It addresses pressing issues and flaws within society, layered with a deeply personal and universally echoing narrative. Despite initial concerns about censorship, the film received uncut clearance. Shankha notes, "Members

acknowledging the importance of the issues addressed. Such support might not have been possible during the previous regime."

already earned acclaim the international festival circuit. While 'festival films' often struggle local attract audiences, Shankha confident project resonate simple yet powerful

of the censor board personally called to congratulate me,

Maloti this will widely. "We've crafted a

story that connects

with ordinary people. It's not about traditional entertainment or item songs; it's a story about life—a tale that educated and progressive audiences will appreciate. I believe that word of mouth will work in our favour," he adds.

Shankha acknowledges the challenges of drawing audiences to cinemas, particularly with the limited number of halls and the logistical hurdles audiences face. "Planning a cinema outing can feel like an all-day affair. Moreover, attention spans have shortened, but I'm hopeful that viewers will find the experience rewarding. They won't leave disappointed; the film will leave them with something to reflect upon."

Breaking stereotypes, Shankha's debut centres on a female protagonist, risky in a film industry where male-centric narratives dominate. However, the director

> dismisses the notion of risk. "I've never viewed stories through a gender-biased lens. This could have been about a male character or a transgender individualwhat mattered was the story itself. When envisioning Maloti, I immediately thought of Mehazabien. Her passion, talent, discipline, and dedication made her the perfect fit." Shankha is effusive in his praise for his leading lady.

"Mehazabien is exceptional artiste. incredibly ľm fortunate have her in my debut film and to witness her own silver screen debut through this project. From until one now, her contribution

has been tremendous. I have no regrets about casting her or preferring to produce a female-centric film for my debut."

Aurthohin's former guitarist Piklu no more

Minhaz Ahmed Piklu, former guitarist of iconic Bangladeshi bands Rockstrata and Aurthohin, passed away last Friday at around 9pm. He was 56.

Piklu fell ill during a performance in Rampura and was rushed to a nearby clinic, where he was pronounced dead, his close friend Sipat Altamus told The Daily Star.

Piklu, a student of legendary guitarist Niloy Das, started his musical journey in the mid-1980s, playing with hard rock bands like Rockstrata, Jolly Rogers, and briefly with Warfaze in the early 1990s.

In 1999, he joined Aurthohin, contributing to several of the band's timeless tracks, including Odbhut Shei Cheleti, Shurjo, Rater Train, and Guti from Hell.



Payal Kapadia's 'All We Imagine as Light' to compete at Oscars

Co-producers Slideshow announced yesterday that Payal Kapadia's debut feature, All We *Imagine as Light*, will independently compete in the 97th Academy Awards across all categories, including Best Picture, Director, and Original Screenplay, despite not being India's official entry.

The Film Federation of India chose Kiran Rao's Laapataa Ladies over All We Imagine as Light as its Oscar submission. Still, Rao's satire on rural patriarchy failed to make the Oscar shortlist revealed last week.

This recognition adds to the growing list of accolades for Kapadia's film. All We Imagine as *Light* was named the best international feature film at several film festivals worldwide.

COUNTRYWIDE

Mustard cultivation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Farmers in different upazilas of the district are busy sowing mustard seeds in their standing Aman paddy crops, applying relay method.

Using this unusual method, farmers will get the opportunity to produce an additional crop, alongside Aman or any other Rabi crops, in same land, without spending any additional cost.

Patuakhali Agriculture Department has set up 347 demonstration plots - 100 in Bauphal, 60 in Galachipa, 40 in Dashmina, 30 each in Kalapara and Dumki, 22 in Rangabali, 20 in Mirzaganj and 45 in Sadar upazila -- to motivate local farmers to cultivate mustard using relay method.

Meanwhile, many farmers are now showing their interest in cultivating mustard using this unusual method in order to meet the demand of edible oil.

Local farmers said Aman is their main crop. After harvesting Aman paddy their land remain fallow for about two and a half months as nothing can be grown in this period.

Dashmina Upazila Deputy Assistant Agriculture Officer Robi Faisal said in relay method farmers have to spray mustard seeds prior to harvesting their Aman paddy when the land remains much soft.

One kilogramme of mustard seed is required for one bigha of land, he said, adding that relay method offers farmers the opportunity to harvest an additional crop within a short time.

Usually, farmers have to plough their land before sowing mustard seeds, which would cost them Tk 3,000 to Tk 3,500

Moreover, sometimes farmers have to irrigate their mustard field at least once that would cost them another Tk 1,000

But, farmers does not require such extra expenses if they apply the relay system in their standing crop fields, Robi

Farmer Majnu Pyada of Gachani village in Dashmina upazila said it costs at least Tk 5.000 to cultivated mustard in one acre land, but since he is applying the relay method this year he doesn't required any extra money.

Sadek Matbor, another farmer of the village, said earlier they used to keep their land fallow for several weeks in order to prepare it for another crop. Patuakhali Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) Deputy Director Mohammad Nazrul Islam said they have set up a total of 347 demonstration plots in all the upazilas of the district with the goal to motivate more farmers to cultivate mustard, applying relay method.



A farmer in Patuakhali's Dashmina upazila spraying mustard seeds in his standing Aman field, using relay method.

| Political clout intertwined with chaos on roads | 12-party |

institutional and structural reforms to restore order in the transport sector, reports UNB.

"Political influence is intertwined with the chaos on our roads. Resolving this issue will not be easy," he said.

The adviser urged political parties to take an active role in tackling corruption, noting that many of the issues involve their leaders and activists.

their failure to prioritise public-focused development.

"Development past governments was not centered on the people. As a result, the public did not benefit. Future government policies must prioritise inclusive development that addresses the needs of the population."

Mohammed Yasin, chairman of the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority

He also criticised (BRTA), emphasised the solutions such as evictions "FROM PAGE 12" "We have initiated the Nahid stressed the need for previous governments need to modernise the are insufficient. "The dialogue, and the parties sector and transport outlined steps to improve the system.

> "Old buses will no longer be allowed to operate. A timeline has been set, and necessary measures must be implemented within this period.'

> Yasin also highlighted the importance of a long-term plan to clear roads and footpaths of that temporary

solution must be wellplanned and sustainable."

PIB Director General Faruk Wasif, Road Safety Foundation Vice Chairman Syed Jahangir, Executive Director Saidur Rahman, and several other stakeholders from the transport sector also addressed the programme, which was chaired by Road Safety Foundation encroachments, pointing Chairman Mahbub Uddin

> chairman of Jatiya Party (Kazi Zafar), noted that the meeting also addressed the possibility of organising joint programmes between the BNP and its allied parties.

talks conclude."

"The need for unity We remains. must strengthen this unity moving forward. will announce our joint programmes soon," he said. BNP Secretary General

have assured us of their

continued support, as they

did during the anti-Awami

meeting focused on the

country's current political

and economic situation,

with further discussions

planned with other like-

minded parties. "We will

make decisions after these

Mostafa Jamal Haidar,

He added that the

League movements."

Mirza Fakhrul Alamgir, Bangladesh LDP Secretary General Shahadat Hossain Salim, Bangladesh Jatiya Dal Chairman Syed Ehsanul Huda, Bikalpadhara Bangladesh Chairman Nurul Amin Bepari, and Jatiya Ganatantrik Party President Rashed Pradhan, among others, were also present at the meeting.

Education disparities once designed to serve FROM PAGE 12

growth rates, high per capita incomes and the most impressive human development indicators, Prof Sobhan said.

He said that the distinguishing feature of the educational system European many countries was the move to universalise the provision of quality public education.

Children from working class families, if they are talented, could enter well-known universities, whatever may be the economic circumstances of their parents. The offspring of a prime minister and business elite or workers and schoolteachers attend a common school system in these countries. In countries like China,

Vietnam, Japan, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan, a common school system is the preferred mode of choice for public education. But in Bangladesh, the education system is trifurcated between public, religious school systems catering to different social and economic classes.

Sobhan said Prof English medium schools Bangladesh have proliferated. International English medium schools, expatriate residents in Bangladesh, are now largely occupied by children of the Bangladeshi elite. Many local English medium schools cater to the upper middle-classes and some of them now drawing in the lower middle-class and even children from the working class.

There are a few betterquality Bangla medium schools such as the cadet colleges and some private schools serving the middle class and lower middle-class children of professionals or civil servants.

The largest number schools, providing education to children of the lower middle- and working-class in the rural and urban areas, are mostly run by the state, but some are operated privately.

With the elite sending their children abroad and the next tier sending their children to the private universities, the principal casualties of such a system have been the public universities, Prof Sobhan said.

renowned universities largely cater to lower income households who cannot afford to pay fees to the "profit-making" private universities, he said.

governance the public failures politicisation universities, of the administration and teaching faculties, and the domination of the students' bodies have corrupted higher education system to a level where surgical intervention may be needed to restore both administrative discipline and quality education, he said.

"Today Bangladesh's ruling class no longer have any stake in improving the quality of public education because their children or grandchildren have been, are being, or will be expected to be educated in quality English medium schools private universities."

Prof Sobhan proposed making it mandatory for all candidates of the national polls to demonstrate their children are being educated in Bangla medium schools.

recommended setting a goal to re-build the public education provides system that quality education at least to the level of cadet colleges.

He also recommended raising the number of seats in the cadet colleges as well as top state and private schools to allow entrance of children of low-income

households

Ahmed.

scholarships. He proposed to bifurcate one high-quality secondary school in every upazila into general and technical sections which would exclusively cater to lower income households.

Furthermore,

suggested tripling the allocation for education in the national budget to at least 5 percent of the GDP. However, this large investment in education would only be meaningful

advancement in the quality of governance in the education system, Prof Sobhan added. Prof Abu Sayeed said it is hard to have democracy in the society and state if

if there is a quantum

the education system is not democratised. Unfortunately,

politicians do not listen to what educated people say and expert opinion does not have any place in politics, he added.

Prof Rounaq Jahan, CPD; Prof Mustafizur Rahman, executive director of CPD; Dhaka University Prof MM Akash; Mahfuz of The Daily Star; and Ala Uddin Ahmad, CEO of Metlife Bangladesh also spoke at the programme.

150 broadcast FROM PAGE 12

minority of the channels only about 20 percent provide this benefit, while 72.4 percent do not provide any life insurance.

Only about a quarter distinguished fellow of of the channels provide provident fund, while 10 percent provide gratuity.

Additionally, 90 percent of the channels do not have Anam, editor and publisher regular annual increments, and as many as 72.4 percent do not pay for overtime when workers are on duty on government holidays.