

‘I don’t see films through a gender-biased lens’

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

was a pivotal phase in my growth.” 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 uncensored clearance.

Shankha notes, “Members of the censor board personally called to congratulate me, acknowledging the importance of the issues addressed. Such support might not have been possible during the previous regime.”

Priyo Maloti has already earned acclaim on the international festival circuit. While ‘festival films’ often struggle to attract local audiences, Shankha is confident this project will resonate widely. “We’ve crafted a simple yet powerful 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 individual—what 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 an exceptional artiste. I’m incredibly fortunate to have her in my debut film and to witness her own silver screen debut through this project. From day one until 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 Choleti*, *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 in Aman fields

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.



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

PHOTO: STAR

Political clout intertwined with chaos on roads

from page 12

Nahid stressed the need for 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.

Education disparities

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 in many European 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 private, public, and religious school systems catering to different social and economic classes. Prof Sobhan said English medium schools in Bangladesh have proliferated. International English medium schools,

He also criticised previous governments for their failure to prioritise public-focused development. “Development under 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

(BRTA), emphasised the need to modernise the transport sector and 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 encroachments, pointing out that temporary

solutions such as evictions are insufficient. “The solution must be well-planned 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 Chairman Mahbub Uddin Ahmed.

12-party

FROM PAGE 12

“We have initiated the dialogue, and the parties have assured us of their continued support, as they did during the anti-Awami League movements.” He added that the 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 talks conclude.” Mostafa Jamal Haidar, 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. “The need for unity remains. We must strengthen this unity moving forward. We will announce our joint programmes soon,” he said. BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam 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.

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 of the channels provide provident fund, while 10 percent provide gratuity. Additionally, 90 percent of the channels do not have regular annual increments, and as many as 72.4 percent do not pay for overtime when workers are on duty on government holidays.