

WHAT'S
THE HAPS?

Play:
‘Khona’

Experience the timeless tale of ***Khona***, a powerful play written by Samina Luthila and directed by Mohammad Ali Haider. Through captivating performances and stunning visuals, the production explores themes of wisdom, resilience, and class struggles, while addressing pressing gender and class issues that remain relevant today.

Date: Friday, January 14

Time: 7pm-9pm

Venue: Experimental Theater Hall, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy



What a debut, SUMAIYA SHIMU

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Famed television star Sumaiya Shimu made her OTT debut in the final episode of ***Dui Shaw***, appearing in ***Beshura***. Her performance mesmerised audiences, as she blended seamlessly into the role. The talented actress made her acting debut in 1999, and went on to work on numerous television projects.

When asked about how she came to work with Nuhash Humayun, the actress said, “Nuhash originally reached out to me. I wasn’t sure about being part of the series at first, because it involved filming outdoors. However, after meeting with Nuhash and having a conversation, I felt that it was a project worth pursuing, and that it would turn out well. That’s how I decided to begin my journey in the OTT space.”

Beshura was filmed in Sitakunda, and following its release both Nuhash Humayun and Sumaiya Shimu have been getting appreciation for the work. Shimu, in particular, is receiving praise from all quarters.

She shared, “Even after the shoot, many weren’t aware of the project. But once the promo aired, it caught everyone’s attention. I’ve received numerous calls, including from journalists. After



PHOTO: COLLECTED

that, everyone became aware of it. The fact that so many people have reached out to inquire about it has filled me with joy”.

Reflecting on her experience of working with Nuhash Humayun, the TV star revealed it was a wonderful experience. “Among the new generation of directors, Nuhash stands out. He has earned admiration and respect for his work, even internationally. His pre-production approach is exceptional. He is always composed and gave us artistes a lot of freedom. As a director, he communicated his vision for the camera with clarity.”

Regarding her experience in the OTT space, Shimu highlighted its advantages, crediting its high budgets, greater attention to detail, and consistent professionalism.

In response to being asked about future projects, Shimu said, “I’ll take on the work I’m passionate about, provided the right opportunities come my way. Nuhash’s project was one such example.”

As her career starts to flourish in the OTT space, Sumaiya Shimu eagerly anticipates more roles that resonate with her desire for meaningful and impactful work.



Shayan’s new track critiques political labelling

Farzana Wahid Shayan, known for her fearless voice of resistance, has released a new song titled ***Etai Amar Rajniti***.

Her song critiques the political labelling in the country, suggesting that questioning authority often invites suspicion about one’s allegiance.

Shayan’s message emphasises her independent stance, declaring that she belongs to no political party and follows her own path.

Initially performed informally two years ago, the track was officially launched last Friday (January 10).

Its lyric video, penned by Hasan Mahmud Sunny, adds to the song’s powerful message.

Since its release, ***Etai Amar Rajniti*** has sparked widespread discussion, garnering significant attention on social media platforms and YouTube.

Porshi reveals marriage to childhood darling

Sabrina Ehsan Porshi, who first rose to fame through Channel i’s reality talent hunt show ***Khude Gaanraj***, has completed an impressive 16-year journey in the music industry. Busy with stage shows and regularly releasing new songs, the singer-songwriter has reportedly taken a significant step in her personal life as well—she tied the knot with Niloy Alam, who currently resides in the United States, last year on March 4.

Porshi’s brother, Shakkhor, has confirmed the news of Porshi and Niloy’s wedding to The Daily Star. The two were in a long-term relationship before getting married. Both Porshi and Niloy were contestants in the same season of ***Khude Gaanraj*** back in 2008.

Porshi’s duet song with Imran, ***Kotha Ektai***, was a hit last year, garnering much attention. Apart from her music, the singer-turned-actress has also earned appreciation for her acting. She made her acting debut with the film ***Mental***, sharing the screen with Shakib Khan in 2016. She continued acting in television dramas from 2022 onwards.

Porshi recently announced her entry into drama production, with plans to produce her first drama for the upcoming Eid-ul-Fitr, which is set to be aired soon.



Chorki’s ‘Feu’ follows the Marichjhapi massacre

The history of the Marichjhapi massacre, a dark chapter in the Sundarbans, forms the foundation of Chorki’s upcoming web-series ***Feu***. Set against the backdrop of the 1979 massacre, the series explores the intersection of politics and humanity, highlighting the brutal treatment of refugees.

The atrocities that occurred during this period inspired ***Feu***, a fictional web-series directed by Sukorno Shahed Dhiman for the OTT platform Chorki. Dhiman explained,



“There are many stories in the Sundarbans—tales of Bonbibi, bandits, and local myths. I, however, focused on the region’s politics for ***Feu***’s story to stem from.”

The story, written by Sukorno Shahed Dhiman and Romel Rahman, is set against a real historical backdrop. Dhiman and Siddiq Ahmed penned the screenplay. The director infused the series with his personal experiences from Mongla, his region, and his knowledge of local politics.

NEWS

Three-day mobile data packages return

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logic doesn’t apply to the younger generation. It would be an insult to their intelligence to suggest that they cannot choose from a variety of packages,” he added.

Previously, the operators were limited to offering a maximum of 40 packages. Now, there are no restrictions on the number of products, data volume or validity.

However, the packages come with limits: 200MB for per-hour, 3GB for one day, 5GB for two-day and 8GB for three-day.

The new directive requires operators to provide unlimited packages that include both validity and data volume.

Offering packages between 12:00 AM and 6:00 AM is prohibited. Any unused data—both main and bonus—must be carried forward.

The mobile operators are barred from giving gifts to retailers. In emergency situations, the operators may offer free data, call minutes or SMS with post-facto approval.

The operators can send no more than three promotional SMS to each customer per day.

Earlier, only three unlimited packages (25GB, 50GB and 75GB) were allowed. Now, mobile operators can

offer unlimited packages based on customer demand, though a time limit must be set for unlimited data plans.

For loyalty point redemption, operators were previously limited to offering telecom products. Now, they can offer both telecom and approved non-telecom products.

International roaming, the Internet of Things, and corporate and SME services remain excluded from this directive.

Additionally, the mobile operators have been advised to optionally provide 200MB of free data each month to all active users to promote digital inclusion and increase internet usage.

TIM Nurul Kabir, a telecom policy analyst, expressed concern over the lack of long-term policy in the telecom and internet sector.

“I welcome the reintroduction of smaller packages. But I don’t understand why smaller packages were discontinued in the first place, as it hinders flexibility and compromises user freedom.”

He emphasised the need for consistent policymaking, criticising the contradictory approach of reducing package options at one point without justification and later reinstating them.

“Such inconsistent decisions,

combined with rising internet taxes, are limiting individual internet usage and leading to a decline in per-user internet consumption,” he added.

Telecom operators welcome the measures in the new directive.

“We believe this is a timely initiative for a data-driven digital society—this will greatly alleviate the accumulated dissatisfaction of consumers using digital services,” said Shahed Alam, chief corporate and regulatory officer of Robi.

The directive will enable Banglalink to offer more straightforward, customer-centric products while simplifying operations, said Taimur Rahman, its chief corporate and regulatory affairs officer.

“We welcome the directive as it creates opportunities for us to deliver innovative services to our customers, ultimately enhancing their overall experience,” said Tanveer Mohammad, chief corporate affairs officer of Grameenphone.

The country’s largest operator however called for flexible and principle-based guidelines/directives as it can “play a significant role in bringing more people under digital inclusion, helping to reduce the digital divide”.

EC thinking about nat’l polls

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elections together or even all the local polls together.”

He added that right now election reforms are ongoing and if needed, they will change the laws and rules in line with the possible reform proposals, which will also take time.

Sanaullah also said the EC will implement whatever decision is taken by the government, the relevant ministry and all authorities concerned.

“But our stance is that it won’t be possible to conduct all elections [parliamentary and local elections] together or even all the local government elections together.”

In the meeting, the EC also decided to keep activities regarding National Identity cards under its jurisdiction, including the cancellation of the National Identity Registration Act-2023 and restoring the 2010 act.

As per the proposal, a demi

official (DO) letter was sent from the commission to the government in this regard on September 10, 2024.

“Today [yesterday], we’ve decided to officially start talks in this regard through letters.”

About Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), he said the EC decided to take over the maintenance of the existing EVMs, though the use of the machines is uncertain.

Sanaullah also said the door-to-door voter updating process will begin this month, adding that the EC will formally launch the process on January 20.

Regarding the special forms for voter enrolment in certain areas to ensure that Rohingya and foreign nationals are not in the voter list, he said many people were facing difficulties in filling out the forms, which was delaying voter registrations in those places. “So, we’ve, in principle, decided to make the forms easier.”

1 dies as BNP factions

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deceased, said the attack was planned to kill his uncle ahead of the party council.

“We will file a case in connection with my uncle’s murder soon,” he said.

Md Mazharul Islam, the district BNP general secretary, said that the party would take action against those responsible for the violence.

No arrests have been made so far, he added.

In Jhenaidah and Kusthia, at least 36 people were injured in separate clashes between BNP and Jamaat men over the formation of school management committees yesterday.

In Jhenaidah, at least 21 people were injured in a clash between BNP and Jamaat men over the management committee for Nadpara Jubomilon Secondary School in Shaikupa upazila.

In Kusthia, at least 15 people were injured when BNP and Jamaat men clashed over the formation of Burapara Miton Secondary School management committee in Mirpur upazila.

DMCH doctor

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smartphones, and a laptop.

“The kidnappers assaulted my husband and forced him to cry in calls, in an effort to pressure us into paying the ransom,” said Aminur’s wife Luna.

Police are investigating the incident, and further legal steps will be taken, added the OC.

Tk 2,300cr

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Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Dhaka and the Policy Research Institute.

“We want Nagad to become a worthy competitor to bKash. While bKash is doing a fantastic job, we need competition in the market, and Nagad is the closest contender to provide that. We are not killing Nagad; we are rebuilding it to a stronger position.”

He stressed the need for dialogue with the National Board of Revenue on the overall taxation of financial intermediation.

“Why is a deposit being taxed? That is not an activity; simply keeping a deposit is not a taxable action. It actually deters financial intermediation and discourages deposits.”

Bangladesh is already facing a serious problem with deposits not growing.

“Many households have complained to me, including my wife, asking why they should keep money in the bank when it’s being taken away by the government in the form of taxes. Is this really the best way to collect revenue? This is an issue we need to address.”

Yunus for probing UK properties linked

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minister, to five London properties bought with the help of offshore companies.

These properties are not currently under formal investigation, but Yunus urged the Bangladesh Anti Corruption Commission to look into them as part of its ongoing inquiries into corruption and embezzlement under Hasina’s regime.

According to The Times reporter, one of these properties was a Hampstead home bought by an offshore company named in the Panama Papers. This particular company was connected to two Bangladeshi businessmen with ties to the Awami League. Tulip, who has previously spoken out against the use of offshore trusts to evade financial transparency, now faces intense scrutiny over her family’s dealings.

Tulip has denied any wrongdoings and described allegations against her as politically motivated.

The reports have triggered a storm in the UK, with opposition Conservative MPs calling for Tulip to resign. However, UK Prime Minister Kier Starmer has said he has full confidence in Tulip.

Tulip has referred herself to the UK

prime minister’s ethics watchdog. A Downing Street spokesman said it was “completely untrue” to suggest the party had drawn up a shortlist of candidates to replace her, as reported by some media.

In his remarks, Yunus expressed disbelief at the situation, noting that it was an “irony” that Tulip Siddiq, an anti-corruption minister in the UK, had been linked to these controversial properties.

While Yunus did not call for Tulip’s resignation, he emphasised that her defence of the properties raised serious ethical questions.

“Maybe you [Tulip] didn’t realise it, but now you do. You should say: ‘Sorry, I didn’t know it [at] that time, I seek forgiveness from the people that I did this and I resign.’ But she is not saying that. She’s defending herself.”

The scandal comes amid wider allegations of corruption surrounding Hasina’s government.

Asked whether Tulip’s properties should be investigated by the ACC, Yunus said, “Absolutely”.

He added that the commission should look at the “whole thing”.

He also said that, if feasible, the properties bought by AL allies outside the country using illegal wealth should

be returned.

“That’s the intention of the interim government. How to bring them back,” he said.

One of the key figures involved in the property purchases related to Tulip is Shayan Rahman, the son of Salman F Rahman, a billionaire and former adviser to Hasina. Shayan Rahman used an offshore trust to buy a £12 million property in Golders Green, London, which was used by Sheikh Rehana, Tulip’s mother.

Shayan is currently under investigation by the Bangladesh Criminal Investigation Department for laundering more than \$80 million out of Bangladesh, with funds allegedly funnelled through Dubai.

Salman F Rahman was arrested after attempting to flee the country, and his son’s whereabouts remain unknown.

Shayan Rahman is also known for his ties to the British Asian Trust, an anti-poverty charity founded by King Charles. He reportedly donated over £250,000 to the charity, and Charles publicly praised him for his support during a gala dinner at Buckingham Palace.