

I am a director's artiste: Runa Khan

National Film Award-winning actress Runa Khan has garnered widespread praise for her acting prowess. Her latest film, 'Neel Poddo', will have its world premiere today (January 15) at the National Museum during the Dhaka International Film Festival (DIFF). Directed by Elahi Towfique, the film features Runa Khan in the titular role.

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

In an interview with The Daily Star, the actress shared her thoughts on her new film.

"Many international films from diverse countries are being showcased at the DIFF. Ten films from Bangladesh are also set to be screened, and I am glad that our film *Neel Poddo* is one of them. We will witness the first screening of this unreleased film today at the festival," shared Runa.

She further added, "On January 19, *Neel Poddo* will also be screened at the auditorium of North South University. Having the film premiere at an international festival, held in my own country, is a huge source of happiness for me."

The shooting for *Neel Poddo* took place in several locations, with a significant portion being filmed in the Daulatdia brothel.

"The term *Neel Poddo* refers to a flower that is rare and hard to find. I portray the role of a sex worker named

Neela, while the film's title has been used metaphorically. Through Neela, the film portrays the lives of sex workers, their socio-economic conditions, and the societal perceptions towards them," explained the actress. Elahi Towfique, the director of the film, is a university professor. Before making the film, he conducted extensive research and studied Daulatdia brothel and its history in depth. "As far as I know, it is one of the largest brothels in Asia. Capturing the lives of women in such a historic place and bringing them to the screen is a significant achievement in my career."

Runa Khan concluded by expressing her hopes for the film: "I wish *Neel Poddo* receives everyone's love and appreciation."



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

Naquib Khan to celebrate 50-year milestone in music



Renowned musician Naquib Khan is marking his 50-year milestone in the music industry with a special evening of songs and stories, organised by Noor's Event.

The celebration will be held on January 17 at the Yamaha Flagship Center in the Tejgaon area. The singer will perform his popular hits and share memorable moments from his career, while poets Sumi Nur and Meghla will recite poetry.

Speaking about the event, Naquib Khan said, "I look forward to sharing the stories of my musical journey with the audience, along with performing their favourite songs."

Sumi Nur shared, "This is our sixth event, where we blend Bengali literature and music, with a strong focus on poetry. We are thrilled to celebrate Naquib Khan's 50-year legacy as a composer."

Oscar nominations announcement rescheduled again

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences has delayed the Oscar 2025 nominations announcement for a second time due to the Los Angeles wildfires. Previously, the voting period was extended by two days to provide members with more time and moving the announcement to January 19.



The 97th Oscars nominations will now be announced virtually on January 23, as confirmed by the Academy's CEO Bill Kramer and President Janet Yang.

In a joint statement, Kramer and Yang expressed deep sorrow over the devastating impact of the fires and the losses experienced by the community.

Despite these changes, the Oscars ceremony is still planned for March 2 at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood.

WHAT'S THE HAPS?

'Magic and Laughs'

Dheo presents an evening of entertainment with *Magic and Laughs*, featuring a captivating blend of mind-bending magic and lighthearted comedy.

This unique event promises a delightful experience for audiences of all ages, offering an engaging combination of illusion and humor in a family-friendly setting.

**DATE: FRIDAY, JANUARY 24
TIME: 5:30PM ONWARDS
VENUE: RIDDDHI BOOK CAFE**

COUNTRYWIDE

ONGOING COLD WAVE

Sale of winter clothes peaks in Bagerhat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

Warm clothes buyers, especially people from low and middle-income groups, are thronging to different markets in Bagerhat as the prevailing cold wave continues sweeping over the region.

The arrival of winter has pushed up sale of warm clothes at different makeshift shops of the district as many low and middle-income people are thronging at those stalls to purchase winter clothes at a minimum price.

As the biting cold wave continues to sweep across the region, the district has been witnessing a surge in demand for winter clothing.

Makeshift warm clothes shops on footpaths and open spaces have become a haven for those seeking warm clothes within affordable prices.

Popular places like the Dargah Mazar field, Old Court premises and the Rail Station area are abuzz with activity, as shoppers thronging to those spots to find quality warm clothes at budget-friendly prices.

During a visit to different busy makeshift markets this correspondent found children's jumpers are being sold for Tk 150 to Tk 300, men's hoodies for Tk 250 to Tk 350, and women's sweaters for Tk 250 to Tk 550.

On the other hand, different kinds

of shawls range from Tk 250 to Tk 450, while woollen caps, gloves, and scarves are priced between Tk 60 to Tk 220.

The affordability of the winter clothes has drawn the low and middle-income people, who are eager to shield themselves from the chill but within their small budget.

Hanif Sheikh, a vendor at one of the footpath markets, described the season as a golden opportunity for their business.

"With the cold intensifying, sales have significantly increased. Sales worth Tk 6000 to Tk 8000 bring me a profit of Tk 2500 to Tk 3000 from each bundle."

Sales would rise further if the temperatures continue to drop, he said, adding that buyers are also pleased with their purchase.

A buyer Sharif Haldar said, "The quality of the clothes is surprisingly good for a footpath market. A sweater I bought for Tk 400 would easily cost me over Tk 1,000 in a regular shop."

Housewife Asiya Akter said she managed to buy warm clothes for all six members of her family from one of the makeshift shops in the town.

Harun Or Rashid, acting officer at Mongla Weather Office, said the minimum temperature in Bagerhat yesterday was recorded at 15 degrees Celsius and it may drop further in the next two to three days.



People from low and middle-income groups throng at makeshift shops to buy warm clothes at a cheaper price. The photo was taken from Badhal Bazar in Bagerhat's Kachua upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

ACC files case

FROM PAGE 12

5, 6, 9, and Rule 13A(1)(c).

The ACC alleges that during her tenure as PM, Hasina misused her authority to influence officials from the Ministry of Housing and Public Works and Rajuk. In collaboration with others, she facilitated plot allocations for herself, her children, her sister, and her sister's children.

These actions constitute criminal breaches of trust and abuse of power, punishable under Sections 161, 163, 164, 409, 420, and 109 of The Penal Code, 1860, as well as Section 5(2) of The Prevention of Corruption Act, 1947. A total of eight individuals have been implicated in this case, the commission added.

In the case against Joy, the ACC alleges that he concealed the existence of properties or housing facilities under Rajuk's jurisdiction while

obtaining a 10-katha plot in the diplomatic zone of Purbachal New Town.

According to ACC, this action violates Rules 4, 5, 6, 9, and Rule 13A(1)(c) of The Dhaka Improvement Trust (Allotment of Lands) Rules, 1969. A total of 15 individuals have been listed as accused in this case.

The ACC filed four similar cases over illegal plot allocation in Purbachal in the last two days. While Hasina's niece British lawmaker Tulip Siddiq was mentioned in three of these cases, Joy was not named in any of those.

Meanwhile, a Dhaka court yesterday asked the ACC to submit by April 10 the probe report against Hasina, her daughter Saima Wazed (Putul) and 14 others in one these cases.

Judge Md Zakir Hossain of Dhaka Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court set the date after the ACC placed the case before it seeking the next course of action.

Jubo Dal leader

FROM PAGE 12

people, including Mohsin and Khokon, were involved in the gang rape.

"They first took us out on an autorickshaw. As we were wandering around, we suspected their ill intentions. When we tried to escape, they forcibly took us to a room at the sawmill and raped us. They beat us, recorded videos, and threatened to kill us if we screamed for help. We were confined from midnight till 4:00am."

She added that the accused later released them and threatened to kill them if they spoke to the police. They had an autorickshaw drop them off at Chaudagram Bazar.

Contacted, sawmill owner Khokon Mia said, "I was not involved in this matter. Mohsin and others brought

the girls."

Mohsin's father, Ranju Mia, claimed that his son was being framed. "A group is conspiring against my son. He is innocent."

Nangalkot upazila Jubo Dal convener Monirul Islam said, "I have not heard about this incident. If anyone is found guilty, they should face punishment."

OC Fazlul Haque said both victims are in police custody.

"We have completed their medical examinations and recorded their statements." No arrests have been made in connection with the case yet.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer Al Amin Sarker said, "We have asked the police to take necessary action if the allegations are found to be true."

Yunus urges swift resolution

FROM PAGE 2

Yunus assured Sung that the KEPZ land issue, a major deterrent to FDI, would be resolved by February 6.

"We want the KEPZ to be a model for Bangladesh, attracting significant investments and creating numerous jobs," he said.

Sung welcomed the government's expedited efforts to address the longstanding issues with the KEPZ, stating that more Korean investors would now be interested in investing in Bangladesh.

"It will open doors for other investors, making

the KEPZ a model for investment," he added.

The Youngone Corporation chairman also called for faster shipment processing through Chittagong Port, pointing out that slow turnaround times hinder high-end fashion orders from global brands. He cited Vietnam as an example of how expedited exports can boost the fashion industry.

Yunus acknowledged the need for efficient port operations and stated that Special Envoy Lutley Siddiqi is working on plans to elevate Chattogram to a top regional port.

Both Kihak Sung and British investor Mohammed A Matin emphasised the need for a unified investment promotion body to provide efficient one-stop services for foreign investors.

In response, the chief adviser revealed that he had instructed the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) to consolidate all five investment agencies under a single office.

BIDA Chief Chowdhury Ashik Mahmud Bin Harun said that the fragmentation of investment agencies was a legacy of previous ineffective governments.

Will break the pen

FROM PAGE 12

Hasnat also said it is too early to consider rehabilitating the Awami League in politics.

"Whether the Awami League will be rehabilitated in politics is not a relevant question for now. First, every leader and worker must face justice."

"Those who speak of rehabilitation before the trial, those who say the elections will not be participatory without Awami League, we think, are also complicit in the oppressive politics that the Awami League had established," he said.

He also alleged that the state apparatus made various attempts to rehabilitate the AL.

However, it won't be tolerated, he added.

In a strong message to the interim government, Hasnat gave an ultimatum until January 15 to announce the declaration of the July revolution based on political consensus.

"We gave an ultimatum, and the interim government has committed to declaring it based on the consensus of all political parties. However,

it is unfortunate that we have not seen any visible action yet. We have made you our advisers, you represent us. ... If you fail, step down from your advisory role," he said.

Samanta Shermeen, spokesperson for the Jatiya Nagorik Committee, also addressed the event.

Later, as part of the event, leaders of Jatiya Nagorik Committee and the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement distributed leaflets in Chashara, Shimrail, and Kanchpur areas in Narayanganj.

Court orders

FROM PAGE 12

According to an ACC application submitted before the court, around 16 acres of land located in Gulshan, Dhanmondi, Badda, Mohammadpur, and Uttara were bought with Tk 200.23 crore in the names of Saiful Alam; his sons Ahsanul Alam, Ashrafal Alam and Asadul Alam Mahir; daughter Maimuna Khanam; son-in-law Belal Ahmed and nephew Jawadul Alam Chowdhury.

Five flats amounting to 30.34 decimals are among the properties in Gulshan, also read the application.

The 87 accounts were opened in the names of Saiful Alam, his mother

Chemon Ara Begum, wife Farzana Parveen, and 15 other family members, said another ACC application.

The anti-graft body reported that they deposited Tk 12.24 crore in 19 Union Bank PLC accounts and Tk 13.53 crore in 68 Global Islami Bank PLC accounts, raising concerns over potential fund transfers or laundering.

ACC Public Prosecutor Md Rezaul Karim Reza represented the commission in court.

On October 7, the same court issued a travel ban on S Alam, his wife, and 11 family members following the ACC's petition.

In the petition at that

time, ACC officials also cited a report published by The Daily Star from August 4, 2023, headlined "S Alam's Aladdin's lamp".

The newspapers investigation revealed that S Alam Group built a business empire in Singapore worth around \$1 billion without Bangladesh Bank's permission for foreign investments.

Despite the central bank authorising only 17 companies to make foreign investments, excluding S Alam Group, the investigation found that Saiful Alam acquired properties in Singapore over the past decade while attempting to conceal his involvement.