



Farooki suggests merging culture and tourism ministries

Mostofa Sarwar Farooki, adviser to the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, has called for merging the culture and tourism ministries to streamline operations. Speaking at the National Film Conference 2025 at Dhaka University on Wednesday, Farooki emphasised the need for a unified cultural industry under the Ministry of Cultural Affairs. The event, organised by the Bangladesh Film Students' Association, saw participation from over 500 stakeholders, including filmmakers, students, and industry professionals. Attendees demanded the creation of a dedicated ministry for film affairs. The adviser suggested that consolidating ministries would resolve administrative challenges and enhance coordination, referencing South Korea's unified cultural framework as an example to follow.

A knife was thrown inches away from my body: MITHILA

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Rafiath Rashid Mithila and FS Nayeem starrer *Jole Jvole Tara* is all set to be released next month. Directed by Arun Chowdhuri, the government-funded film will showcase Mithila in a completely unique character.

In the film, Mithila plays Tara, a travelling entertainer who performs circus acts along the riverbank. Describing her character, she said, "It's a completely unique role and a one-of-a-kind story—something audiences have never seen before."

Sharing her experience on-set, she revealed, "We filmed along the banks of the Kaliganga River, and several of my scenes were shot on a boat, right in the water."

Discussing the film's narrative, she

added, "Tara works in a circus, and the story revolves around a strong female protagonist. It's a beautifully crafted film meant for viewers of all backgrounds, and I believe everyone will enjoy it."

When asked about the challenges of portraying Tara, Mithila admitted, "The role was quite demanding, especially the boat scenes. We shot for several days under the scorching sun, which was physically exhausting. But I decided to enact it as it challenged me as an artiste."

"In the circus, there's a particular set where a knife is thrown just inches away from my body. I had to actually do that. Portraying such a character was a thrilling and unique experience," she added.



Historic Madhumita Hall to close down in favour of multiplex



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

Madhumita Cinema Hall, one of Dhaka's historic film theatres located in Motijheel, has maintained a strong tradition over the years, celebrating its golden jubilee in 2022.

Yesterday, Iftekhar Uddin Noushad, the owner, confirmed that the cinema will close down following this year's Eid screenings. He also shared with The Daily Star that a new multiplex will be built in its place.

The owner additionally expressed disappointment over the hall's decline, noting his investment in upgrades, "I invested a crore to upgrade the hall, but only Shakib Khan's films run successfully. Where have the skilled directors and other heroes gone? The state of the industry is disheartening."

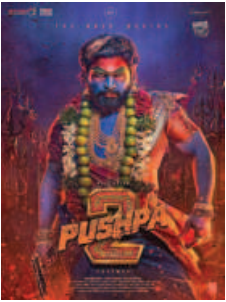
"However, a multiplex will be built in its place and I'll focus on that project moving forward," he added.

Shakib Khan starrer *Borbaad* will be released this Eid-ul-Fitr as the final screening at the hall, which first opened on December 1, 1967.

'Pushpa 2' releases on Netflix with exclusive footage

Following a record-breaking theatrical run, *Pushpa 2: The Rule*, starring Allu Arjun, Rashmika Mandanna, and Fahadh Faasil, is now available on Netflix in multiple languages, including Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, and Kannada.

Its Netflix release includes an additional 23 minutes of unseen footage. The sequel continues the story of Pushpa Raj's rise as the leader of a red sandalwood smuggling network. Rashmika reprises her role as Srivalli, Pushpa's loyal wife, while Fahadh returns as the relentless cop Bhanwar Singh. The film sets the stage for the next instalment, *Pushpa 3: The Rampage*.



WHAT'S THE HAPS?



A Journey Through July

A collaboration between July Massacre Archive and Pipra showcases women's resilience during the July Uprising and its global impact. The exhibition features three segments: *She Leads*, honouring women's courage; *Where July Meets the World*, exploring global revolutions; and *International July Archive*, presenting international media coverage of these pivotal events.

DATE: SATURDAY-MONDAY | FEBRUARY 1-3
TIME: 3PM-8PM
VENUE: DRIK GALLERY, PANTHAPATH

NEWS

EC for change in provision

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are also considering the number of voters.

"People migrate to cities. If constituencies are determined solely based on population, the number of seats in urban areas will increase, while in other areas, it will decrease. The commission believes this will not ensure proper representation," he said.

Additionally, there is a printing error in a sub-clause of the existing law. The EC will send a proposal to the authorities to correct it, he added.

So far, the EC has received 248 applications seeking redrawing of boundaries for 41 parliamentary constituencies.

Abul Fazal stated that the EC is waiting to see the decisions regarding the boundary determination as the Electoral Reform Commission has made several recommendations in this regard.

"We are in a changing situation. This reform is a national demand. We are not outside it," he responded to a query if the recommendations of the reform commission were delaying the

EC's work.

Talking about the chief election commissioner's comment that implementing several recommendations of the reform commission would undermine the EC's independence, Abul Fazal said the EC would convey its observations to the government through the relevant ministry.

In yesterday's meeting, the EC decided that the matter of possible changes in the voter list, policies for international and domestic observers, and guidelines for journalists covering elections will be further reviewed. These have been sent to the relevant committee for scrutiny.

It also discussed further simplifying the process of providing national identity cards to expatriate Bangladeshis. The EC is considering three alternatives to ensure the voting rights of expatriate voters: postal ballots, proxy voting, and online voting.

Proxy voting means if someone is unable to vote in person, the voter can ask someone to vote on his or her behalf.

Quotas in edn

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regarding quotas. It was decided that the ministries of health, law, education, and Liberation War affairs would take necessary actions.

The relevant ministries and departments have been entrusted with the responsibility of taking decisions regarding the application of the quota system in medical admissions, entry into government jobs, and secondary and higher secondary admissions.

The public administration ministry has been directed to present a summary with opinions or recommendations on the quota system in government recruitment, considering the current context.

Similarly, the Secondary and Higher Education Division has been instructed to submit a summary with opinions or recommendations on the quota system in educational institution admissions.

In the ongoing 2024-25 academic year, admission test results for government and private medical and dental colleges were published based on a 5 percent quota for the children of freedom fighters, martyred freedom fighters, and Biranganas. However, following criticism, the results of 193 candidates were later suspended.

At least eight BPL matches

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In these matches, there were instances of bowlers conceding three consecutive wickets, big no balls, suspicious playing XI selection, and slow batting in the middle overs while chasing big totals.

The documents also suggest that the matters the ACU is taking into consideration include match manipulation, affected betting markets, and, most importantly, the names of players involved.

However, the fact that the payment, accommodation, and other allowances of the seven designated ACU integrity officers for each of the seven franchises are taken care of by the respective sides raises concerns regarding their work process.

"It was brought to the attention of both [BCB] CEO [Nizamuddin Chowdhury] and [BCB] president [Faruque Ahmed] that when the ACU officials are with the team, how could they work properly if their expenses are taken care of by those franchises. They will definitely be biased," a BCB official, requesting anonymity, told The Daily Star.

"When I told them about the matter, the president and CEO agreed on the point. But later nothing changed, I don't know. But this is obviously an absurd matter," he concluded.

With integrity officers being directly involved with the franchises, the ACU's dependence on anonymous tips and media reports for such sensitive matters also hints that a lot of issues could be deliberately kept under the rug.

Other questionable incidents could be observed in this BPL. The Daily Star identified at least two cricketers outside of the official team list — one each from the Rajshahi and Chittagong franchises — who were seen in the players' dugout.

BCB's head of ACU, Major (Retd) Raiyan Azad, confirmed to The Daily Star that no PMOA [Players Match Officials Area] had been issued for any of them, insisting that he would look into it after he was provided with evidence of them being present at the dugout with the team on several occasions.

The PMOA comprises dressing rooms, viewing areas (dugouts), nets, dining areas, medical rooms, and operational rooms used by players, support staff, and match officials.

Being at the dugout without PMOA not only violates the security protocols but also raises doubts regarding suspicious activities by the franchises, including attempts of spot-fixing and match-fixing.

"If they stay at the dugout all the time during the match, it's a matter of concern for me. He may have taken the pass by some unfair means," said Raiyan, admitting that they are working on a few alleged suspicious matches in this year's competition.

"This is very common in international and franchise tournaments. When a tournament takes place, we get tips from many corners. The Intelligence hub of the ICC, our ACU network, and the media also have their network. So it's a regular process," said Raiyan, who also lamented not having enough permanent officials at the ACU.

"In the Dubai IIT20, there is an ICC ACU official for every match. Here I have been covering all 46 matches. The integrity officers aren't working here permanently. They come here, work for a certain time, and then leave," he added.

Since its inception in 2012, BPL has often been entangled in controversies, with instances of spot-fixing and match-fixing coming to light. In 2014, former Bangladesh skipper Mohammad Ashraful also admitted his involvement in match and spot-fixing in BPL in 2013 and was subsequently banned for eight years (three years suspended) by the BPL anti-corruption tribunal.

UGC considers 'July 36 univ'

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During the meeting, "July 36 University" was proposed as a possible name.

Prof Faiz said, "We are still working on the modalities and structure of the university. For example, we have a national university that oversees colleges, as well as Dhaka University that also manages colleges."

"We are also considering a new model for this university and we will decide on that soon," he added.

Asked about when the new university would be established and start academic activities, the chairman said, "We are still working on it. We will decide with the best interest of the students in mind."

On the name of the university, he said, "Students played a major role in the July uprising. In graffiti across the country, it is referred to as 'July 36'. We believe this name would be a fitting way to remember, recognise, and honour the sacrifices and contributions of the students."

Prof Faiz also mentioned that several other names were suggested. "Now, it's up to the students to decide."

The seven colleges that are supposed to be under this new university are Dhaka College, Eden Mohila College, Begum Badrunnesa Government College, Government Bangla College, Kabi Nazrul Government College, Government Titumir College, and Government

Shaheed Suhrawardy College.

Around 2 lakh regular and irregular students are currently enrolled in graduate and postgraduate programmes at these colleges.

However, students of Titumir College have been demonstrating for an independent university of their own. Yesterday, they blocked a city street to press home this demand.

Habibullah Rony, one of the organisers of the demonstrations, told this newspaper, "We don't have anything to say about the name of this new university. All we want is not to be included in it. We want a separate university."

On January 27, the Dhaka University authorities decided to sever ties with their seven affiliated colleges following demands by the students of the colleges.

According to the officials, no new students from the seven colleges would be admitted under the DU for the 2024-25 session. However, existing students would continue their studies under DU's administration.

The decision followed a 24-hour ultimatum issued by the college students, demanding the academic and administrative ties with the DU be severed. They issued the ultimatum after clashes broke out between DU students and students of the seven colleges late Sunday and early Monday.

Sluggish probe, failure

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prosecution's reply on the matter did not satisfy the tribunal.

The tribunal then instructed the prosecution to ask the home adviser to take action in this regard, if necessary.

The prosecution was scheduled to submit the probe report of a case filed against six police officials, including Tanzil Ahmed, former assistant commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, and Abul Hasan, officer-in-charge of Jatrabari Police Station, over the killing of a person on August 5 last year. But they prayed for a two-month extension of the deadline.

ICT judge, Justice Shoful Alam Mahmood, asked how many people were accused in the case, to which Prosecutor BMS Sultan Mahmud replied there were six. Upon further query from the tribunal, the prosecutor explained that two of them had been arrested and although arrest warrants had been issued, the four others had yet to be arrested.

ICT chair, Justice Md Golam Mortuza Mozumder then asked, "What is the progress of your investigation? Is the investigation agency working properly?"

In reply, Sultan said, "My lord, due to the wide range of massacres, it is taking some time."

At this time, another prosecutor, Gazi Monawar Hossain Tamim, stepped in to explain that the arrest warrants were not being executed promptly. "This is the problem."

Sultan added, "My lord, we have even heard from a victim's family that the police officer who had shot and killed their dear one had been on duty right up to the time that the warrant was issued. And yet he has not been arrested."

The ICT chair said, "Then how can you begin the trial? How will the trial be done?"

The tribunal then set April 6 for submission of the investigation report.

Justice Mortuza said, "Ask the home adviser to take action. If needed file an application, and we will direct all authorities concerned to take action."

The prosecution then filed another application for three more warrants.

Justice Shoful said, "How many people have you been able to arrest so far?"

When the prosecutor replied that 35 people had been arrested, Justice Shoful said, "We have issued 105 warrants so far, 2,000 people were killed, and you were able to arrest just 35. Why are the orders not being executed properly?"

Economy

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When the FT pointed out that one of the arguments India makes is that Bangladesh is very fragile under Yunus and Islamists are taking over the country, the chief adviser said he did not see any such signs.

Asked about the "enormous problems" the government is facing, Yunus said, "Deal with them. You don't run away with the problem because you have tremendous support internally, globally. What else do you need?"

Speaking about the future of Bangladesh's economy, he pointed to the vast young population bubbling with ideas and technology in their hands. "They're international young people, although born and raised in Bangladesh."

He said Bangladesh showed the world what it can do when the garment industry was "thrown at us". It can do the same thing if it is given the chance to make machinery or vehicles.

The country has designated enough space for that, and if power is a problem, it can be solved with hydroelectricity in Nepal, he said. "All you'd have to do is to persuade India to let it come over India."

Confiscate

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billion to Singapore and several other countries.

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) is conducting an inquiry into corruption allegations against S Alam and his family members.

Judge Md Zakir Hossain of the Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court in Dhaka passed the order after the ACC Deputy Director Md Abu Sayeed, head of the inquiry team, submitted an application in this regard.

ACC Public Prosecutor Mir Ahmed Ali Salam moved the applications on behalf of the anti-graft body.

In the application, the ACC official said it's necessary to get a confiscation order for the 58 acres of land located in Dhaka, Narayanganj and Chattogram, so that the ownership cannot be transferred.

On January 16, the same court ordered the freezing of over 321 million shares in 24 companies owned by S Alam and his family members. The value of these shares stands at Tk 350 crore.

On January 14, the same court also ordered the confiscation of immovable properties worth Tk 200 crore and the freezing of 87 bank accounts owned by S Alam, his wife Farzana Parveen and 16 of his family members.

Earlier on October 7 last year, the court issued a travel ban on S Alam, his wife Farzana Parveen and 11 members of his family.