

Exclusive ‘Rickshaw Girl’ screening to be hosted for rickshaw pullers

Bongo, the digital content partner of *Rickshaw Girl*, is hosting a special screening for 100 rickshaw pullers, honouring their struggles and resilience. The screening will take place today at 4pm at Joy Cinemas in Keraniganj, with appearances from the film’s director Amitabh Reza Chowdhury and cast members.

The film, adapted from Mitali Perkins’ novel, follows Naima, a young artist who takes up rickshaw pulling after her father, the family’s sole breadwinner, falls ill. Starring Novera Rahman, Champa, and others, the Bangladesh-US production highlights the realities of rickshaw pullers.

Following its theatrical run, *Rickshaw Girl* will premiere on Bongo’s OTT platform from February 12, expanding its reach to wider audiences.



WHAT’S THE HAPS?

Dhaka Sessions with Sovvota and The Band

Dhaka Sessions, in collaboration with Graam Cha, presents *Sheeter Adda* featuring Sovvota and The Band live. Led by vocalist Karishma Sanu Sovvota, the band includes Rahin Haider (saxophone), Raquib Mahmud (guitar), Samiul Wahid (drums), and Alistair Sarkar Raj (bass).

DATE: THURSDAY | FEBRUARY 13
TIME: 7:15PM-9PM
VENUE: 128 GRAAM CHA, GULSHAN 1



I love seeing people with books in their hands: Mamo

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Zakia Bari Mamo recently starred in Vicky Zahed’s web film *Ondhokarer Gaan*, alongside Mosharraf Karim and Shahnaz Sumi. The project premiered on January 8 on the OTT platform Binge, and has been met with much acclaim.

“*Ondhokarer Gaan* has received great appreciation, and the entire credit goes to director Vicky Zahed. He has done an outstanding job, putting in immense effort and care,” she said.

Praising her co-star Mosharraf Karim, Mamo remarked, “Mosharraf Karim is a phenomenal actor. I always enjoy working with him, and this time was no different. I often wonder—how does he act so brilliantly?”

Following the release of *Ondhokarer Gaan*, the actress has been involved in a documentary project.

Discussing her current engagements, Mamo shared, “At the moment, I am focusing on some personal projects. I have been reading books and spending my time differently. I also visited the book fair and bought quite a few books.”

When asked about her experience at the book fair,

she shared, “I always enjoy visiting the book fair, and this year was no exception. So many people are attending, but I wonder—what if everyone who came also bought books? That would be even better. I wish I could see everyone with books in their hands!”

This year, she collected a short story collection by Shahaduzzaman, books by actresses Sushoma Sarkar and Shanarei Devi Shanu, and novels by Sadat Hossain and Alvi Ahmed.

Mamo also expressed her deep admiration for Humayun Ahmed. Having made her acting debut in *Daruchini Dwip*, a film based on one of his stories, she won the National Film Award for her performance. “He is one of my all-time favourites. He built a vast readership, and even today, countless people still read his books. The new generation continues to buy his works. To be honest, he instilled the habit of reading in so many people. His writings are very special to me.”

Addressing whether there is a shortage of strong narratives, she admitted, “Yes, there is a crisis of good stories. We must prioritise quality storytelling.”

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

It’s a miracle that I’m alive: Saif Ali Khan

After a terrifying encounter with an intruder inside his own home, Bollywood actor Saif Ali Khan has finally broken his silence. In an interview with Indian outlet Bombay Times, the actor recounted the harrowing night.

Saif described how an intruder, armed with knives, broke into his son Jeh’s room at 2am. Acting on instinct, he wrestled the attacker, unaware that he was being stabbed. His house help Geeta, helped him escape, and the actor was rushed to Lilavati Hospital with his son Taimur.

“Yes, I have stitches—25 here, 30 there. The slashes on my palm could have severed an artery, but they didn’t. It’s a miracle my hands are functioning. I don’t know how he missed my carotid and jugular—it’s not possible to cut someone’s neck the way mine was cut and not kill them,” he exclaimed.

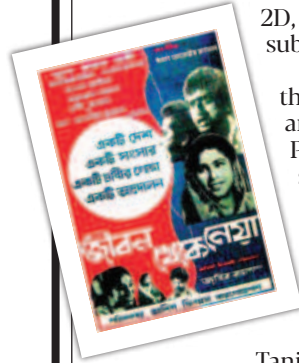
Despite the ordeal, Saif refuses to let fear dictate his life, “My life isn’t changing. It was a mistake—a burglary attempt gone terribly wrong. And honestly, that poor guy’s life is more screwed than mine,” he concluded.

Restored version of ‘Jibon Theke Neya’ to screen in Australia

A restored version of Zahir Raihan’s classic *Jibon Theke Neya* will be screened in Australia, an initiative led by Tanim Mannan, founder of BongOz Films. With permission from Raihan’s family, he remastered the film into 2D, enhanced its audio, and added subtitles for international audiences.

Tanim retrieved the film from the Bangladesh Film Archive and preserved its Digital Cinema Package (DCP) for future screenings. “Given its relevance today, I felt it was important to improve its quality and make it available for cinema screenings. Now, anyone who wishes can release it in theatres. That’s why I’ve prepared the DCP,” Tanim shared.

Australian audiences can watch the remastered version on February 23 at Campbelltown’s Dumareshq Street Cinema, with another screening planned for February 21 to honour Zahir Raihan. The 1970 classic, featuring Khan Ataur Rahman, Anwar Hossain, and Razzak, among others.



NEWS

Corruption pervades every level of admin

FROM PAGE 12
The report said that under a centralised and undemocratic governance system, many officials received undeserved promotions and benefits, ultimately becoming enablers of authoritarian rule.

The commission said although 26 commissions and committees were formed over the past 50 years to reform public administration, the traditional bureaucratic system remains unchanged, with centralised authority still prevailing.

It recommended that all public representatives, including ministers and members of parliament, as well as government employees, are put under obligations to submit their wealth declarations annually. These wealth records should be made publicly accessible online to ensure transparency and allow public scrutiny.

It suggested strengthening the existing National Integrity System (NIS), a measure that was introduced in 2012 to prevent corruption in the administration. The NIS, however, was never fully implemented.

To prevent nepotism, no employee should be allowed to work in the administrative division where they are from. No employee should remain in the same station for more than three years, the commission recommended.

It also recommended encouraging whistleblowers to expose unethical, unjust, and corrupt practices. To this end, it proposed reviewing the Information Protection Act-2011 to empower and protect whistleblowers.

Acknowledging its limitations, the commission said, “Public administration is a complex structure composed of multiple components, and its operational procedures are highly intricate.”

“Various groups hold differing and often opposing views on administrative reforms. Therefore, formulating comprehensive reform proposals in just three to four months in alignment with national interests is an almost impossible task. As a result, there may be some shortcomings in our work,” it added.

The commission recommended the formation of a Permanent Public Administration Reform Commission or

Reform Implementation Commission, recognising that the reform is a continuous process.

It proposed the development of a “generic roadmap” to guide the implementation of reform decisions. It stated, “The Cabinet Division will formulate a generic roadmap for the public administration reform program.”

The commission, in its report, suggested that various ministries and divisions should prepare their respective reform programs and submit them to the Permanent Reform Commission through the Cabinet Division.

The Permanent Commission will then review these proposals and make recommendations to the government. Once approved, the relevant ministry will instruct its subordinate offices and agencies to implement the necessary reforms, said the report.

It suggested the establishment of an “Innovation Lab” to encourage new reforms in public administration and policy development. It proposed utilising institutions such as the Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre (BPATC) to facilitate this initiative.

PECE, similar tests should be scrapped

FROM PAGE 12
primary education has expanded quantitatively, but the quality of education remains disappointing. Significant weaknesses persist in students’ learning outcomes.

“Post-pandemic learning loss, unsatisfactory levels of foundational literacy and numeracy, lack of remedial education, inadequate training on student-friendly and inclusive teaching methods, weak assessment for learning, and the absence of school accountability in ensuring children’s education are major obstacles to achieving quality education.”

For the NSA-based system, Manzoor said assessments for pre-primary to second grade students will be age-appropriate, with a focus on continuous evaluation.

“Schools will conduct periodic and annual exams to assess students’ competencies against grade-level expectations.”

As an immediate recommendation, the report prioritised improving Bangla and math skills, proposing that 60-75 minutes be allocated daily for each subject in the class schedule.

“Furthermore, schools should have the flexibility to adjust their routines, provided the total learning hours remain unchanged, to meet all students’ learning

needs,” the report said.

It also called for at least 50 percent of primary schools to adopt a single-shift system within five years under the Fifth Primary Education Development Programme, with all schools making the shift in 10 years.

Additionally, the report stressed the need for a teacher-student ratio of no more than 1:30 in each classroom.

It highlighted that many government primary schools, which offer education up to eighth grade, lack the necessary infrastructure, with inadequacies in both the number and competence of teachers.

“The justification and feasibility of defining the primary level up to eighth grade remain questionable. Enrolment of students in the sixth grade at these schools could be stopped immediately.”

Addressing student attendance in remote areas, such as chars and haor regions, it was suggested that schools collaborate with local communities to arrange transportation, with the option of floating or mobile schools where necessary.

It also recommended prioritising the recruitment of teachers for vacant positions; appointing para teachers; providing remedial education; and constructing essential infrastructure, including accommodations, in those areas.

The committee further recommended a play-based learning environment with sufficient toys and learning materials, suggesting that teachers act as playmates and undergo training with simulations to improve their ability to engage in play-based learning.

“To facilitate this, teacher training should incorporate more simulations and practical exercises to help educators overcome hesitation and develop the necessary skills for spontaneous participation in play-based learning.”

On teacher career progression, the report recommended abolishing the “assistant teacher” designation, with recruits starting as “teachers” and progressing to “senior teachers” after sufficient experience.

The committee also recommended that, in the long term, primary and other school teachers be given distinct status and a higher pay scale.

It suggested new teachers start at Grade-12, with confirmation after two years, and promotion to senior teacher at Grade-II after two more years. Headteachers should be on the Grade-10 pay scale and appointed through promotion.

The committee also proposed filling vacant positions at the field level, establishing regional offices, and creating a primary education cadre service.

Custodial torture, deaths continue

FROM PAGE 12
extrajudicial killings.”

The report stated that on September 8, 2024, a man named Elahi Sikder died in custody. He had been arrested on September 3 on charges of attacking members of the army. The report quoted doctor Jibitesh Biswas of Gopalganj General Hospital as saying that Elahi Sikder’s body had multiple injuries.

On September 10, members of joint forces in Gaibandha arrested Mosharof Hossain Sweet, chairman of Saghata union and president of Awami League’s Saghata unit, and his associates Shafiqul Islam and Sohrab Hossain Apel.

Shafiqul later died while undergoing treatment at Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital, Bogura, and Apel died while undergoing treatment at Gaibandha General Hospital.

“Relatives of Shafiqul and Apel alleged that both men had died due to brutal torture while in the custody of joint forces,” said the report.

A total of 83 individuals died in prison in 2024, and 63 of those deaths happened when Sheikh Hasina was in power.

“The authoritarian Sheikh Hasina regime imprisoned many people in order to suppress the political opposition. When the quota reform movement began, the number of

inmates increased significantly. The inmates inside overcrowded prisons faced a shortage of food, living space, bathrooms, showers, and access to medical care,” said the report.

Several BNP leaders died as prisoners as those associated with opposition parties were deprived of access to medical care, it added.

On January 2, 2024, Kamal Hossain, a BNP leader, died in Bagerhat District Jail. On January 28, another BNP leader named Abdus Sattar died in Satkhira Jail, while on February 8, Monoarul Islam, a BNP leader of Gongachora subdistrict, died in Rangpur Central Jail.

On February 14, a 16-year-old teenager named Maruf Ahmed was allegedly tortured to death while imprisoned at Gazipur’s Tongi Juvenile Development Centre.

A total of 293 people were killed in political violence throughout the year, and of them 90 died between August 9 and December 31, 2024, the report finds.

“It is to be noted that between August 6 and 8, when there was no government in the country, at least four people were killed and nine injured in political violence,” it said.

After the fall of Hasina’s government, there have been allegations against leaders and activists of the BNP of

attacking Awami League leaders and activists, looting and breaking into their homes, and committing arson, it stated.

“Leaders and activists of BNP are allegedly taking illegal control over markets, fish bazars, shrimp markets, public land sand extraction sites, and other establishments that were being controlled by Awami League leaders as part of an extortion-based political economy,” said the Odhikar report.

The report went on to say that BNP and AL have even joined hands in places to take control of sand extraction sites.

The report further stated that leaders and activists of the BNP and its affiliated organisations were also accused of attacking and looting the homes of general people and businessmen for refusing to pay bribes, as part of the shifting control over the system of extortion.

“The president of Chhatra Dal’s Narsingdi district unit is accused of attacking the chambers of the president of the Bar Association of the district. Jubo Dal and Jubo League leaders were accused of jointly attacking and looting the office of the Jugantori’s Chattogram Correspondent Abed Amiri. Leaders and activists of Jubo Dal and Krishak Dal attacked a Victory Day celebration of the citizens’ platform in Barisal,” noted the report.

Touhid likely to meet Jaishankar

FROM PAGE 12
relations,” a diplomatic source in Dhaka told The Daily Star last night.

After the political changeover in Bangladesh, India on several occasions complained of repression against minorities, especially the Hindus. Bangladesh has repeatedly said the accusations were inflated, and majority of the attacks were political in nature, not religious.

Dhaka has complained of misinformation about Bangladesh in the Indian media and protested the statements of Hasina via social media, saying that those statements were inciting instability in Bangladesh.

There was also tension over India installing border fences within the 150 yards of the international borders at several places along the Bangladesh-India border.

After the demolition of Bangabandhu Memorial Museum in Dhanmondi 32, Bangladesh foreign ministry summoned Pawan Badhe, the Indian deputy high commissioner in Dhaka, to lodge a strong protest against Hasina’s statements.