

Documenting our legendary artists: Anonna Ruma's earnest initiative



From (L) Artist Monirul Islam, Spanish Ambassador to Bangladesh, HE Gabriel Sistiaga along with director Anonna Ruma.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF AFD

MAISHA TASNIM SRESHTHA

How does a nation remember its artists? "What Novera is doing now will take us a long time to understand," said legendary artist Zainul Abedin, decades ago. On Thursday (February 27) evening, as audiences watched the stories of Novera Ahmed and Monirul Islam unfold on the screen at Alliance Française de Dhaka, the weight of those words became clear.

Directed by Anonna Ruma, the documentaries *Novera*, a 22-minute film, and *Monir: Tale of Two Countries*, a 3-minute trailer, capture the artistic legacies of Novera Ahmed, Bangladesh's first modern sculptor, and Monirul Islam, a master printmaker whose innovative techniques have earned him international acclaim.

The screening was followed by an interactive discussion with notable attendees, including artist Monirul Islam himself and the Spanish

Ambassador to Bangladesh, HE Gabriel Sistiaga.

When asked what led her to document the lives of these two legendary artists, the director shared, "To have known a person like Monir sir, his philosophy, artistic approach—it has always amazed me."

She further explained that Novera Ahmed, Bangladesh's first modern sculptor, spent much of her life in Paris, far away from the country she once sought to transform through art. As a result, her story remained largely unknown—her aspirations, struggles, and groundbreaking contributions in the 1950s and '60s fading into obscurity.

"I knew I had to bring her story to life," Ruma said. "Her artistic vision extended beyond borders, and one of her most enduring contributions—the design elements she contributed to the Shaheed Minar—now stand not only in Bangladesh but also in Paris."

APURBA'S STELLAR RUN

Ziaul Faruq Apurba is receiving widespread acclaim for two major projects—Indian film *Chaalchitro* and the Valentine's Day special *Mon Duari*. Released on Hoichoi on February 21, *Chaalchitro* showcased Apurba in a never-seen-before role, earning praise from co-star Tota Roy Choudhury and director Pratim D Gupta, who compared his charm to Shah Rukh Khan's. The film also features Anirban Chakrabarti, Shantanu Maheshwari, Indrajit Basu, and Raima Sen in key roles.

Meanwhile, *Mon Duari*, directed by Jakaria Showkhin, has been a massive hit, surpassing 15 million views. Audiences lauded its family-centric storyline and Apurba's on-screen chemistry with Nazneen Niha. Expressing gratitude, Apurba credited his audience as his greatest inspiration.

Looking ahead, Apurba's next project, *How Sweet*, directed by Kajol Arefin Ome and co-starring Tasnia Farin, is set to release this Eid-ul-Fitr.



PRITOM HASAN announces 'USA Tour 2025'

Pritom Hasan is set to captivate international audiences with his **USA Tour 2025**, organised by Deshi Music & Entertainment. The tour will take the dynamic musician to major cities, including Washington, D C, New York, Boston, Los Angeles, Houston, Dallas, Miami, New Jersey, and Michigan.

Announcing the tour on social media, Pritom shared a poster featuring him in a red jacket, exuding his signature high-energy style. "Get ready, America! See you in a few months!" he wrote, sparking excitement among fans.

The upcoming tour is expected to be a milestone in his career as he brings his energetic performances to international stages. While specific dates and venues are yet to be announced, fans in the USA are eagerly awaiting the chance to witness Pritom Hasan live in concert.



Katy Perry joins first all-female crew on flight into space

Pop star Katy Perry is set to journey into space as part of the first all-female crew aboard Blue Origin's New Shepard rocket. She will be joined by Lauren Sanchez, CBS host Gayle King, ex-NASA scientist Aisha Bowe, activist Amanda Nguyen, and producer Kerianne Flynn.

The historic NS-31 mission, expected this spring, will take the crew beyond the Kármán line on an 11-minute autonomous flight. Perry, thrilled by the opportunity, called it a childhood dream come true. Sanchez, who led the mission's formation, sees it as a step toward empowering women in space exploration. Fans reacted with excitement and humour, celebrating Perry's unexpected adventure. The singer will embark on her Lifetime Tour from April, making this spaceflight a remarkable prelude to her next big chapter.



NEWS

Farooki questions Syed Jamil's claims

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Facebook status yesterday. "I have long admired Syed Jamil Ahmed's work. In fact, I wrote what may be the most in-depth article about his work ever published in a Bangladeshi newspaper, in the Jai Jai Din's entertainment magazine Mouchake Dheel. Since then, I've written for several Bangla and English newspapers. Even today, I regard him as the most talented director in Bangladesh's theatre. Just a few days ago, I asked a foreign ambassador in front of him to have Jamil Ahmed direct a theatre production in their country," Farooki shared.

He then discussed the challenges of navigating a bureaucratic environment.

"Being a talented artiste and effectively running an institution in a bureaucratic system are two different skills. The latter requires patience and management abilities. You can achieve a lot through love and respect without intimidating your colleagues.

However, the attitude needed to work in a government institution differs from the one needed to lead a theatre troupe. What works in my film unit doesn't work in a government institution," he explained.

Farooki also expressed his reluctance to discuss Jamil Ahmed's resignation in detail.

"I didn't want to comment on Jamil Bhai's dramatic resignation because doing so would require mentioning things that would make him uncomfortable. I didn't want to do that out of respect. But now, I feel the need to speak up. We have much to do today, and I'll write more on it when I have time," he said.

The adviser further questioned some of the statements made by Jamil Ahmed.

"For now, I'll say this: many things he said aren't entirely accurate, some are outright false, and some seem to come from frustration due to not being able to manage certain situations. Writing about this in

detail may embarrass him, but I'm compelled to speak the truth, even if it's uncomfortable for him," Farooki added.

"I wish him all the best. The ministry would be honoured if it could assist with his creative endeavours. Although our areas of work differ, I'd gladly be of service to him even after I leave my position," the adviser concluded.

Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam declined to comment on the matter at a press briefing at the Foreign Service Academy.

"The cultural affairs adviser has already addressed the matter on his Facebook page. This was a personal decision by the director general, and I have no further comments," he said.

"He [Syed Jamil] served with us for six months, which we consider an honour. He is a distinguished playwright and a leading figure in Bangladesh's theatre scene. We hope he will continue to enrich the country's cultural landscape."

BGB warns of 'stronger response'

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round of rubber bullet at Al-Amin. BSF did not yet return the body, he said. Senior officials were informed, and a flag meeting between the commanding officers of BGB and BSF was scheduled to be held to determine the next course of action.

Citing BSF, BGB chief Maj Gen Siddiqui said the Indian border force fired rubber bullets during a clash with individuals attempting to cross the border illegally. Al-Amin died after he was hit by a bullet in a vulnerable spot.

Sharing images with BGB, BSF also claimed that one of their personnel was injured during the clash, the BGB chief said.

"We have always emphasised that illegal crossings must be tackled with lawful means, not through killings. If these incidents continue, we will escalate our protests and take a stricter approach to border management," he warned.

The BGB DG further said, "At the same time, everyone should try to ensure that no one crosses over there (to India) illegally. We, the BGB, are trying. The administration is trying. And the locals are trying, yet we are failing to prevent some individuals from crossing the zero line."

"We will continue our efforts in two

ways—one through discussions with BSF and another through human rights organisations, and the third is that no one can cross the zero line," he added.

Speaking at the event as chief guest, Home Adviser Lt Gen (ret'd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury stressed the need to strengthen BGB's capacity to ensure border security.

"Today, we have added three more units to the 64 BGB Battalion, enhancing our capability. But we need to further expand our border security measures," he said.

On the Rohingya issue, he said the influx of refugees remains a challenge. Around 60,000 Rohingyas have entered Bangladesh recently, according to him. "While we continue to emphasise border security, humanitarian concerns and international pressure must also be considered," he said.

Regarding the death of Al-Amin at the Brahmanbaria border, Jahangir said such incidents continue to occur despite high-level discussions between BGB and BSF.

"We are working to reduce the number of such incidents, but the situation remains complex," the adviser said.

[Our Correspondent in Brahmanbaria contributed to this report]

Cyclone death toll rises to four on La Reunion

AFP, Saint-Denis De La Reunion

At least four people have died in the Indian Ocean island of La Reunion during the passage of a devastating cyclone that sowed destruction across the overseas French territory, officials said on Saturday.

On Friday, Cyclone Garance struck the territory of 900,000 people, uprooting trees, tearing off roofs and flooding homes. Entire streets were inundated and cars washed away.

A red alert, ordering the population to stay indoors, was lifted on Saturday morning after Garance was downgraded to a severe tropical storm.

The body of a man was found trapped under a tree in the capital, Saint-Denis, authorities said on Saturday giving the new toll.

The other victims, two women and a man, were carried away by flash floods, trapped in a mudslide or killed by an electrical fire, authorities said on Friday.

3 suspected robbers killed

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SP Nazrul said the five wounded robbers were brought to Shariatpur Sadar Hospital. Doctors confirmed the deaths of two at 1:00am.

A local weapon was recovered from the scene and will be confiscated through legal procedures, he added.

Dr Muntasir Khan, emergency department physician at

Shariatpur Sadar Hospital, said four injured civilians, including gunshot victims, were brought to the hospital around 9:30pm. Two in critical condition were transferred to DMCH, while one remains under treatment and the other was discharged.

The filing of a case in this regard was underway, police said.

Daring midnight robbery

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intensified to ensure security on highways and connecting roads," the OC added.

Meanwhile, the Chief Adviser's Press Wing said several media outlets put the number of vehicles affected by the robbery at 40, which was an "exaggeration".

The CA's Press Wing later forwarded a statement from OC Saidur.

In the statement, the OC said the robbers took away over 7 bhoiri of gold worth around Tk 11,50,000, nearly Tk 2,00,000 in local and foreign currencies, a laptop, and mobile phones from the expatriate and his relatives on the microbus.

The robbers also made off with mobile phones from an autorickshaw driver and a motorcyclist at that time, he added.

Pirojpur DC requisitioned buses for students

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during the movement were with the team, he said.

"At the request, which was also kind of pressure, the DC helped students with the requisition of five buses," Shafiqul said.

However, the DC office did not have any monetary involvement, as the district administration did not pay for fuel or any other travel expenses, he added.

"The interim government had no role in the matter. The government is working to create a level playing field so that all political parties can participate in a fair election," Shafiqul added.

TIB CONCERNED
International Transparency Bangladesh, in a statement yesterday, expressed concern over the incident and said the interim government cannot evade responsibility for such abuse of power and unethical actions at the very inception of NCP.

TIB has urged NCP and all its leaders, activists, and supporters at every level to shun such old authoritarian practices under the

banners of "Second Republic" and "New Political Settlement."

Meanwhile, two notices regarding eight bus requisitions in Pirojpur went viral on social media.

The district's Nezarat Deputy Collector (NDC), on behalf of the Pirojpur deputy commissioner, issued two separate notices for bus requisitions on Thursday.

In one notice, the NDC directed five bus owners to arrange as many buses. In another notice, the NDC directed three owners to arrange three buses.

The district administration came up with the initiative under the jurisdiction of The Requisition of Movable Property Act, 1988, in public interest, according to the notices.

In the notices, the administration also asked local traffic police authorities to oversee the bus requisition process.

Contacted, NDC Reaz Mahmud confirmed the matter and said he arranged the buses only for students, not for any political party.

At least 37 dead in Bolivia after two buses collide

AFP, La Paz

Two passenger buses collided Saturday on a highway in southern Bolivia, leaving at least 37 dead, including two children, and some 30 people injured, police said.

"So far we have 37 confirmed deaths," Colonel Wilson Flores told AFP about the crash near the city of Uyuni in the department of Potosi.

The accident, the country's most serious so far this year, occurred on a narrow two-way road early Saturday.

One of the buses was heading to the city of Oruro, the scene this weekend of the Oruro Carnival, one of the largest festivals in Latin America that attracts tens of thousands of people.

Bolivia's winding mountain roads are notoriously deadly.

DC said he couldn't do that. Then, the students demanded the arrangement of the buses. Finally, he agreed and arranged the buses for the students," Reaz Mahmud told The Daily Star yesterday.

Asked, Pirojpur Traffic Police Inspector Mohammad Moniruzzaman also confirmed the matter and said the traffic police acted as per the directive of the district administration.

Contacted, Shahnewaz Ovi, one of the key organisers of the Students Against Discrimination in Pirojpur, also admitted that the district administration arranged the buses for them.

"But we bore all the fuel expenses," he added.

The Daily Star yesterday talked to at least four transport operators in Pirojpur, who confirmed that eight buses were requisitioned by the district administration for students.

On Friday, the NCP was officially launched at a ceremony on Manik Mia Avenue in Dhaka.

[Our correspondent from Pirojpur contributed to the report.]