

# ‘Ensure our safety’ SHOWBIZ STARS SPEAK OUT

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Questions surrounding the safety and security of women in Bangladesh have long been a matter of concern. However, the recent onslaught of gender-based violence (GBV) incidents has once again highlighted the alarming rise in brutality against women and, by extension, children. Cases of sexual violence, including those against children, have left society outraged.

The recent incident of the rape of eight-year-old Asiya, being abused by her relatives, has left the entire country shocked. Some of the prominent Bangladeshi artistes have shared their deep concern over these horrifying incidents, calling for justice, stricter punishments, and a fundamental shift in societal attitudes.

**Fahmida Nabi**

“Women are being subjected to rape in various places, including the case of little Asiya. I firmly believe such heinous crimes must be punished with exemplary punishment—strict and unavoidable. The fact



Fahmida Nabi

that perpetrators often escape justice only emboldens them to commit more crimes. Our primary focus should be ensuring that criminals are punished completely.

The eight-year-old child was visiting her sister’s home, yet she was not safe. Similar incidents are happening almost everywhere. Where is the safety for women and girls? Why are we so helpless? When will this end? In 2025, what will we tell the world about our progress? We demand safety for all women.”

**Mousumi Hamid**

“Can you imagine an eight-year-old child being raped? I can’t even bear to log into social media nowadays—whenever I do, I come across news of murder and rape, which makes me feel ill. We talk so much about women’s empowerment, yet monsters swoop in and attack women whenever they get the chance.

What causes this mentality? Where are we headed as a society? Have we deteriorated this much? Why can’t we be more humane, more compassionate? If a woman isn’t even

safe inside a car in the city, then where can she feel secure? This is a reflection of our society’s decay.

Even children are not spared from these predators. How do we accept this? These criminals are worse than animals, and wild animals are not capable of this viciousness. I don’t believe that our society was always like this! What has happened now? There has been a severe psychological degradation in people. We all want to live in a safe society. We don’t want to hear ‘someone has been raped’ anymore.”

**Apu Biswas**

“A woman should be seen first and foremost as a human being—a mother, a sister, a wife. Even rapists are born to mothers—do they not have even this basic sense? The little girl Asiya is not even old enough to be considered a woman. I am at a loss for words on how to acknowledge this horror. We demand safety for all women. The incident is extremely disturbing. However, she is just one example—there are many more like her. The fact that we even have to talk about this is heartbreaking.



Deepa Khandakar

Why should such incidents happen at all? We want to see and hear about positive societal changes, not horrific tragedies.”

**Tanzika Amin**

“I recently received an award during an event on the occasion of International Women’s Day, and there I mentioned that celebrating Women’s Day feels pointless in a country where eight-year-old girls are raped, and where women’s bodies are openly discussed and criticised. What could be more painful than this? Previously, I never heard people openly commenting on women’s physical attributes. Now, it happens in the streets. Who knows when someone will physically harass us? Why has the situation deteriorated to this extent? We, as women, are terrified. When will we be free from this fear?

Those in positions of power who make big statements should take a hard look at our current situation. The degradation of morality and humanity has hit rock bottom. They need to find a solution—urgently! If we respect and uphold women’s dignity, our

society and country will flourish.”

**Deepa Khandakar**

“Above all, I am a human being—only then comes my gender. What is happening to women today is unacceptable. This applies to little girl Asiya alongside all other women who have faced such horrors.

Some people say, ‘Let Asiya survive.’ I say—she is already dead. Even if she survives, she would still be branded as a victim, stripped of her innocence through no fault of her own.

Another thing—why should anyone dictate what a woman should wear? Who gave them that right? A woman can wear jeans, a tee-shirt, Western clothes, or a saree, she will wear whatever she chooses to wear. Have women ever questioned men about wearing *lungis*? Has any woman ever dictated a man’s clothing choices? Then why do men feel entitled to control women’s attire?

It is time to change this mindset. We need to move beyond these toxic attitudes and work towards a society where women are respected, valued, and, most importantly, safe.”



Apu Biswas



Tanzika Amin



Mousumi Hamid PHOTOS: STAR & COLLECTED

## NEWS

### Seize assets of ex-land minister Saifuzzaman

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In the application, the commission said that a seven-member investigation team has been formed to probe the allegations of money laundering against Chowdhury, individuals and organisations connected with him.

Information on the company’s shares was found from the Directorate of Joint Stock Companies and their firms. In this situation, it is necessary to pass an order for freezing the shares in question.

Attempts are being made to transfer their immovable properties, so an order is needed to prevent them from transferring the properties, the application said.

Therefore, it is necessary to attach the said immovable properties per Section 14 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2012.

In March, the court ordered the ACC to freeze 39 bank accounts of Saifuzzaman in connection with corruption allegations against him.

Also yesterday, Judge Zakir ordered the freezing of 191 bank accounts of Muhammad Aziz Khan, chairman of Summit Group, and his family members in connection with corruption allegations following an

ACC application.

Aziz Khan, also the brother of former Awami League lawmaker Faruk Khan, and his family members deposited Tk 41.74 crore in the accounts.

Information about savings, fixed deposit receipts and other accounts in their names was found during the investigation, the official said in the application.

There is a huge amount of money deposited in the accounts, the application said, adding that the amount is unusual and suspicious.

On October 7 last year, the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit instructed banks to freeze the accounts of Aziz Khan, his brothers and other family members.

Aziz Khan’s wealth stood at \$1.1 billion last year, according to Forbes.

Summit, however, dismissed reports of closure or freezing of company accounts.

“Summit’s power generation, LNG terminal operations and all other businesses, payments from their customers as well as bank accounts are functioning as usual,” Mohsena Hassan, Summit’s head of public relations, told The Daily Star.

However, the Khan family’s

accounts have been frozen for about five months and remain frozen without any charge, the statement added.

Meanwhile, the court yesterday ordered the freezing of 42 BO (Beneficiary Owner) accounts of the former chairman of National Bank and Sikder Group founder late Zainul Haque Sikder and his family members in connection with corruption allegations after the ACC filed an application in this regard.

In addition, the court yesterday ordered the authorities concerned to confiscate five properties in the UK and two properties in the Isle of Man owned by former chairman of EXIM Bank Nazrul Islam Mazumder, also chairman of Nassa Group, and his family members in connection with corruption allegations.

ACC deputy director Md Rauful Islam filed a petition before the court yesterday seeking confiscation of the properties.

On March 6, the same court ordered the confiscation of six houses and eight flats, situated at Dhaka and Purbachal, owned by them in connection with a graft case. It also ordered the seizure of 56.6 crore shares of 55 companies.

### ‘We can’t stay silent anymore’

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They also demanded identifying and bringing to justice those who bullied the student and threatened her with rape and murder.

A thorough investigation should be launched to identify and sue the men in the mob that glorified the accused and the crime he was accused of, said the teachers.

The teachers’ network also denounced Home Adviser Lt Gen (retd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury.

“For the last four months, we have been demanding the resignation of the home affairs adviser. Now, I want his dismissal... Why don’t we have an accountable government?” DU teacher Tasneem Siraj Mahboob said.

Prof Geeti Ara Nasreen and Prof Samina Luthfa also addressed the rally. **PROTESTS ON OTHER CAMPUSES** Students of Jagannath University (JnU) marched and held a rally in the evening.

The protesters marched to Tantibazar intersection and kept the road blocked for almost 30 minutes. They later demonstrated in front of the gate of their campus.

Evan Tahsib, a student leader, said, “The culture of impunity surrounding sexual violence has allowed such crimes

to continue unchecked.”

Sifat Hasan Sakib, another activist, said, “Time and again, we see officers delaying rape investigations. It continues even after the mass uprising. It’s a shame for our nation. We can no longer stay silent! We demand the highest punishment for rapists.”

Tania, a student of literature, said, “People often blame women’s outfits. But if that were true, why do women in burqas and even innocent eight-year-old children fall victim to such heinous crimes? The real problem is the deeply rooted perversion of some men.”

Hundreds of Rajshahi University students, mostly women, kept the Dhaka-Rajshahi highway blocked for 30 minutes, declaring a boycott of classes and exams. “As women, we suffer every single day. We are not safe, even in our own homes. The interim government must ensure our safety,” said Samarita Nag.

At Jahangirnagar University, students and teachers demonstrated throughout the day.

Faculty members formed a human chain at the Central Shaheed Minar, demanding fair investigations and maximum punishment for rapists.

JU Vice Chancellor Prof Mohammad Kamrul Ahsan said, “The ongoing

violence against women reflects the moral decay of society. The students are protesting rightly. We urge the government to take immediate action.”

Students of journalism boycotted classes and exams. A student-led platform, Dhorshon Birodhi Mancha, was formed.

Late at night, JU students blocked the Dhaka-Aricha highway, disrupting traffic for 30 minutes.

Students of North South University, Independent University Bangladesh, Shahjalal University of Science and Technology in Sylhet, and Comilla Victoria Government College also held rallies.

In the early hours today, students of DU, RU, JU, and Khulna University took to the streets.

At DU, Ashrefa Khatun, spokesperson of Bangladesh Democratic Students’ Council, and Umama Fatema spoke.

They demanded that the home adviser, law adviser, and women and children affairs advisor be held accountable for their failure to ensure the safety of women and children.

In Magura, hundreds of students gathered at Bhaina Bus Stand, blocking the Dhaka-Khulna highway.

They also laid siege to Magura District Court.

### India clinch another global silverware

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Men in Blue have turned their fortunes around in recent times. They ended their trophyless run in June last year by clinching the T20 World Cup in the West Indies and the USA, securing a dramatic win against South Africa in the final.

India seemed to have finally acquired the winning edge needed to overcome their struggles in global tournaments, having spent over a decade falling short in the knockout stages. Their most painful setback came in the 2023 ODI World Cup, where they suffered a heartbreaking defeat to Australia in the final on home soil.

The fact that India advanced to the knockout stages in six of the last seven ICC events speaks volumes about their cricketing prowess. Now, having won two major ICC titles in such a short span, they have reaffirmed their authority on the global stage.

However, India’s latest Champions Trophy triumph did not come without controversy. Having refused to travel to Pakistan, the hosts of the event, India played all their matches in Dubai. While other teams, including Pakistan, had to travel between cities and even visit the UAE for matches against India, Rohit Sharma’s side enjoyed the advantage of being acclimated to Dubai’s conditions.

Rohit, however, emphasised that his team’s success was built on their performance throughout the tournament.

“We played some really good cricket throughout the tournament. To come out and have the result go our way is a great feeling. Very happy with how we played this game,” said Rohit, who set the tone for the chase with a match-winning 76 off 83 balls.

Meanwhile, New Zealand skipper Mitchell Santner praised India’s spinners and acknowledged Rohit’s impact on the game while also lamenting that his team were about 25 runs short in the crucial contest.

“We lost a couple of wickets after the Powerplay. Credit to the way their spinners bowled— all four of them, world-class. We were 25 runs short, but we had a total and tried to fight,” said Santner.

“The Powerplay was the best time to bat. Rohit and [Shubman] Gill cashed in, and Rohit’s innings was outstanding, putting us on the back foot,” he added.

With this loss, New Zealand have now suffered five defeats in ICC white-ball event finals since their ICC Knockout Trophy win in 2000. Meanwhile, India, after years of near misses, may have ushered in a new era of dominance on the world stage.

### Cancel passports of 10 Rab, seven police officials

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superintendent of police Shyamal Chowdhury.

Members of the commission at a recent press conference said they found a secret detention centre inside Bogura police lines.

The commission’s list contained the names of Ali Ashraf Bhuiyan, former superintendent of police in Bogura and current deputy commissioner of Barishal (south) range; Arifur Rahman Mondal, former ASP of Bogura and current a deputy inspector general in Barishal; Nur e Alam, former officer-in-charge

of Detective Branch in Bogura and current inspector of Bogura Police Hospital; and Zulhas Uddin, former sub-inspector and current OC of Armed Police Battalion-7.

The Commission’s letter also included the names of two additional deputy commissioners of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime Unit of police, Ahmedul Islam and Zahidul Haque Talukder.

“The commission has evidence of their involvement with enforced disappearance, and the commission will need to interview them further,” said the letter.

### Eid train tickets go on sale

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on the Dhaka-Mymensingh Highway, 43 on the Dhaka-Sylhet Highway and eight on the Dhaka-Aricha Highway.

After the meeting, Fouzul Kabir said the authorities would closely monitor these locations to ensure smooth traffic flow.

Additionally, four major bus terminals—Mohakhali, Phulbaria, Sayedabad, and Gabtoli; Sadarghat Launch Terminal; and Kamalapur Railway Station, would be brought under CCTV surveillance, with actions taken based on the footage.

He said the authorities concerned have been directed to complete road repairs within 15th Ramadan.

The authority will take prompt action once it notices ticket black marketing and overcharging of fare, he added.

He said bikes and pillions both have to wear helmets while using highways. Illegal three-wheelers will not be allowed on the highways, he added.

### Implementation delay irks Yunus

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groundwater levels to drop by 2–3 metres annually—posing a severe sustainability risk. The Meghna River Protection Master Plan aims to address this by providing an eco-friendly water supply system through the Sayedabad treatment plant.

Germany, France, Denmark, and the European Union have pledged support for the project and may increase funding if necessary. However, despite preparations beginning a decade ago, implementation has yet to start.

With the Buriganga and Shitalakkhya rivers heavily polluted and unusable, the government is prioritising the protection of the Meghna river as a key water source.

“There is great concern over the Meghna river. We must act swiftly to save it. Ensuring Bangladesh’s rivers are pollution-free should be a top government priority, or we risk making the region uninhabitable,” Yunus said.

He directed the authorities to complete all administrative procedures and begin project implementation within the current fiscal year.