

Adnan Al Rajeev's 'risktaking' pays off, lands him in Cannes

PHOTOS: COLLECTED

“Set against the rugged, untamed beauty of Sylhet, filming for *Ali* was far from easy. “We set out to capture images that reflected the raw, scenic beauty of nature, but reaching those places was a battle on its own,” he recalls.

SHARMIN JOYA

When *Ali* was selected for the Cannes Film Festival, it wasn't just a personal triumph, but a historic moment for Bangladeshi cinema. For Adnan Al Rajeev, the filmmaker behind it, the road to this milestone was anything but straightforward. It was a journey shaped by doubt, discovery, and the quiet courage it takes to start again.

He never set out to make short films. “I was never really interested in making short films,” laughs the director. “I used to believe they weren't necessary for me — I was already working prominently in the industry with a tone of voice of my own. But filmmaking is a never-ending journey of discovery.”

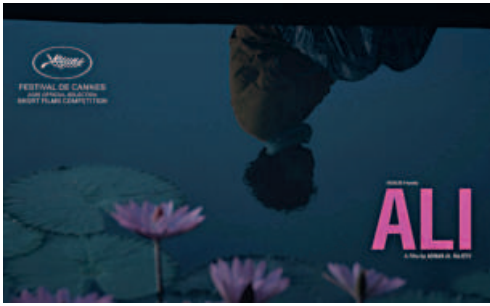
Last year, while attending Cannes as part of the producing team for the Filipino short film *Radikals*, he found himself drawn into a world he hadn't paid much attention to before. Watching short films on the big screen, he saw something different — pure, fearless storytelling. “They weren't just ‘shorts’; they were powerful artistic expressions,” he says. “That experience sparked something in me — a desire to explore new forms of visual narrative. I returned home with a different perspective and began studying short films, realising how they challenge and refine a filmmaker's vision. As they say, short films shape how you truly see yourself as a storyteller.”

The result was *Ali* — a film born not just from ambition, but from a genuine hunger to tell stories differently, and to challenge himself in ways he hadn't before.

Set against the rugged, untamed beauty of Sylhet, *Ali* features Al Amin and Susoma Ranjan Indrani in the lead roles. Filming, however, was far from easy. “We set out to

capture images that reflected the raw, scenic beauty of nature, but reaching those places was a battle on its own,” he recalls.

With little tourism infrastructure, Sylhet's hidden treasures remained just that — hidden. Bikes, boats, and long, exhausting walks became their daily routine. The team endured bad roads, blistering heat, and countless setbacks. Yet, even as exhaustion set in, there was a fierce kind of joy that came from pushing through. “Sometimes,” he says simply, “the toughest journeys lead to the most beautiful frames.”



The news that *Ali* had been selected for the Official Competition section in the Palme d'Or segment in the 78th Cannes Film Festival — arrived in a way that still feels almost cinematic. At first, they missed the call — an unknown French number flashing on their phones. “We honestly had no idea why anyone from France would be calling,” he laughs. It was only later, during a video call with his producers Kristine De Leon and Tanveer Hossain, that the truth began to sink in. Even then, he found himself frozen, blank, struggling to believe it.

He was watching *Black Mirror* on Netflix

at the time — a show about alternate realities and strange, parallel worlds. “For a moment, I genuinely thought I'd slipped into one,” he jokes. Tears came soon after.

The first person he wanted to tell was his wife, Mehazabien Chowdhury. “She was in a shoot and couldn't pick up the phone, so I sent her a video message instead. When she finally called back, she screamed so loudly that everyone on set thought something terrible had happened.”

But even as this chapter opens, Adnan is already thinking ahead. His new production house, ‘katalog’, has started its journey.

“katalog. is more than just a company — it's our shared dream. For me, the ultimate goal is to develop my feature film under this banner. I also look forward to being part of Arvin Belarmino's feature projects — not only an incredible filmmaker but also my partner in *katalog.* — and supporting Kyla Romero, a brilliant director and screenwriter, in her feature journey.”

Risk-taking has always been part of Adnan's nature. From directing *@18* to producing stories like *Mohanagar* and films like *Priyo Maloti*, and most recently *Chokkor 302*, he has never shied away from telling bold, sometimes uncomfortable stories. But it's not recklessness — it's something much deeper.

“It takes a lot of courage to try, to fail, and to keep trying until you get where you truly want to be,” he says. “Taking risks is essential. I trust in my craft. If I fall, I'll rise again.”

There's no arrogance in his voice when he says it — just the quiet certainty of someone who knows that the real magic lies not in the destination, but in the journey itself. “And right now, for me, that journey is just beginning,” he concludes.

Court orders AR Rahman to deposit Rs 2 crore in copyright case



The Delhi High Court has issued an interim order directing renowned music composer AR Rahman and production houses Madras Talkies and Lyca Productions to deposit Rs 2 crore in a copyright infringement case filed by Padma Shri awardee and Dhruwad vocalist Ustad Faiyaz Wasifuddin Dagar.

The case pertains to Rahman's track *Veera Raja Veera* from the film *Ponniyin Selvan: II*, which the court noted was musically “identical” to *Shiva Stuti*, a devotional composition by the late Dhruwad maestros Ustad Nasir Faiyazuddin and Ustad Nasir Zahiruddin Dagar, collectively known as the Junior Dagar Brothers.



‘Mastul’ secures Special Mention at Moscow Int’l Film Festival

Bangladeshi film *Mastul* has received the Special Mention Award (Jury) from the Federation of Film Societies at the 47th Moscow International Film Festival.

Director Mohammad Nuruzzaman was presented with the certificate on Thursday, April 24, local time, for the film's “humane perspective on everyday life.”

Speaking from Moscow, Nuruzzaman shared that the film's premiere was met with strong appreciation from audiences, critics, and journalists. *Mastul*, which explores the lives of seafarers, features performances by Fazlur Rahman Babu, Deepak Suman, Aminur Rahman, Arif Hasan, and Sifat Bannya, among others.

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Allegations of corruption

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in taking money for transfers?” he asked.

“I know that most advisers are not involved in corruption, but some allegations are being raised, and the scale of that corruption is serious,” he said.

He said his party has deep respect for the students' movement and their pivotal role in the mass uprising against Sheikh Hasina's regime.

Mentioning graft allegations against student leaders, he added that the students should have exercised greater caution upon becoming part of the government.

Some leaders of Students Against Discrimination (SAD), which spearheaded the 2024 uprising, are reportedly exploiting their influence in various ministries for personal gains, the BNP leader said.

“Why should the students go to different ministries? Like parliamentary standing committees on the ministries, there now seem to be committees of students. This is tarnishing the image of the students.”

Referring to a former director general of railways, he claimed that SAD leaders were involved in black marketeering in tickets worth several hundred crores of taka ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr through a committee to oversee the railways ministry.

He said the interim government should have addressed these issues sternly.

“Why should students play the role of a watchdog in a department like the railways? They are supposed to be on campus, where they will speak out against injustice, corruption, and irregularities in the state, politics, society and bureaucracy. Their strong

voices are needed to root out myriad injustices and misdeeds that have infiltrated the state,” the BNP leader said.

The event he was speaking at was on the cases filed against BNP leaders and activists on false charges during the Awami League regime.

Rizvi alleged that Hasina's regime implicated around 60 lakh BNP leaders and activists in these cases to suppress the dissent and continue her authoritarian rule and plundering.

He asked why these cases have not been withdrawn even eight months after the interim government assumed power, while the cases against Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus were dismissed.

“These cases should have been archived in the courts ... these cases should have been disposed of,” he observed.

Cops to get directives over polls

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of the PHQ, told The Daily Star that issues including law and order will be discussed, and steps will be taken to address field officers' demands, adding that officials are aiming for a more focused event this year, without the usual grand celebrations.

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus will inaugurate Police Week-2025 at the Rajarbagh Police Lines Auditorium. He will deliver election-related directives and present Bangladesh Police Medals and President Police Medals to 62 officers selected by the PHQ.

Awardees include former IGP Moinul Islam, RAB DG AKM Shahidur Rahman, several acting additional IGPs, DIGs, commissioners, SPs, and other officers. A letter has been issued asking them to be in Dhaka from today (April 27).

Following the inauguration, sets of demands prepared by the PHQ will be presented before Yunus and among police officials. Priority will be given to the formation of an independent police commission, which would include a public complaint cell and a Grievance Redressal Committee for police members.

A senior PHQ official, requesting anonymity, said, “Only an independent commission could bring the police force back on the right track and make it service-oriented.”

Other demands include a compensation allowance, more police vehicles, financial support for burial or cremation of personnel, infrastructural development, establishment of an independent cyber unit, enhancement of manpower, medical upgrades for divisional police hospitals, founding

a police medical college, creating a women-friendly work environment, and policies to manage overtime from land disputes and environmental enforcement.

Older demands, such as repealing the Custodial Death (Prevention) Act, expanding DIG posts, and launching an aviation unit, are expected to be raised again at meetings with advisers and secretaries on April 30.

For the first time, a meeting will also be held with religious leaders, journalists, and community leaders on May 1, the final day of Police Week, to discuss public expectations from the police.

Unlike previous years, there will be no parade at the Rajarbagh Police Lines, no meeting with the president, and no competitive events, as the celebrations have been scaled down.

Over 12,700 arrested in eight days

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arrests made during special drives on April 23, sent by Rangpur Metropolitan Police to the Police Headquarters. The first column on the list is titled “arrest of instigators/planners/associates of destabilisation”, while the other columns pertain to drives against illegal arms, smuggling, robbery and mugging, and extortion.

The law enforcers have stepped up their drives after Home Adviser Lt Gen (ret'd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury last week ordered them to prevent the AL from bringing out processions, warning that officers who would fail to stop such gatherings would face disciplinary action.

Lately, the AL and its affiliated bodies, including the banned Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), held flash processions in various parts of the country, including Dhaka, Khulna, Kishoreganj, Jashore, Shariatpur, Narayanganj, Cumilla, and Barishal, according to media reports.

In Dhaka, processions were reported in Jatrahari, Shahbagh, Rampura, Demra, and Mirpur. Photos and videos of the processions have also been circulating on social media.

In response, the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) recently issued a statement urging city dwellers not to panic over the processions.

The DMP said the banned BCL and like-minded groups watch police movements and march for a minute or two before dispersing. They would then post photos and videos of the

processions on social media. “Law enforcers were analysing photos and videos to identify the participants,” the DMP said.

In the last nine days, the DMP and its Detective Branch arrested at least 74 leaders and activists of the AL and its associate bodies, according to the DMP.

The DB yesterday arrested eight members of the AL and its affiliated organisations, including BCL, from different areas of the capital for their alleged involvement in organising flash processions.

DMP spokesperson Talebur Rahman said the arrestees are accused in several cases filed with different police stations.

“They were involved in attempts to destabilise the country. By organising flash processions in various parts of the city, they aimed to spread panic among the public,” he said.

During a visit to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court premises in Dhaka on April 21, these correspondents found some relatives of AL and BCL leaders and activists waiting there.

One of them, Bhuiyan Rafiqul Islam, told this newspaper that his son-in-law was involved with BCL in the Khilkhet area. Police arrested him, alleging he took part in flash processions near the airport. Rafiqul refuted the allegation that his son-in-law was involved in a procession.

Apart from Dhaka, the drives against AL leaders and activists are also underway in other parts of the country.

Following several flash processions in Khulna on April 20, Khulna Metropolitan Police (KMP) has so far arrested 50 AL men over the past one week. The KMP said the drives would continue.

Meanwhile, the number of inmates at Dhaka Central Jail stood at 8,179 yesterday, said Suraiya Akter, senior jail superintendent.

Asked whether the number of political inmates was on the rise, she said it had increased slightly in recent days. Some inmates are being transferred to Kashimpur Central Jail, while others are being released on bail, she added.

Chattogram Jail's Senior Jail Superintendent Iqbal Hossain also said the number of inmates had slightly increased, though he could not provide specific figures.

Chapainawabganj District Jail Superintendent Amzad Hossain said there were 620 inmates at the jail yesterday, up from 580 on April 7.

On February 8, the government launched Operation Devil Hunt, in which around 12,500 people were arrested till March 1, according to official data. Most detainees were AL leaders and activists, media reports said.

Following criticism over the operation's name, alleged arbitrary arrests, and rising crimes, police stopped releasing information about the operation, and the crackdown on AL activists slowed down.

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groups and political pressure, the interim government's commitment to reforms remains questionable.

Anu Muhammad, who presided over the event, also said that several longstanding cases, including the murder cases of Taqi, Tonu, and Sagor-Runi, have seen no visible progress over the past eight months.

He added that although many cases have been withdrawn, the false case filed by the previous government against protesters at the capital's Courtbari during the July uprising has yet to be withdrawn, despite the interim government's commitment to doing so.

The former Jahangirnagar University teacher said there is a specific group that is frightened by the individuality of women, adding that most of the reactions are directed at recommendations of the Women's Affairs Reform Commission.

He said that whenever the issue of equal rights to inheritance and women's rights is raised, sharp reactions come from those who uphold discriminatory political ideologies under the guise of religion or nationalism.

According to him, these individuals tend to invoke religion in matters of women's rights, despite practising their own faith selectively.

“When women rise up, speak out, and assert their identity, this group feels like everything is falling apart.

What's stopping the govt from reforms?

“If the government protects people with such discriminatory mindsets, fails to take action against them, and instead the repressed are sued — if such incidents continue, then how can we trust it?”

He also said that when a state is secular, it must not show any bias towards any religion. “If the government wants to promote pluralism — meaning bringing everyone together — then the state must remain unbiased. How can pluralism be endorsed while eliminating secularism?”

Anu Muhammad also said, “We often hear many people say, ‘We don't accept India's dominance’... But when it comes to demanding the cancellation of the Rampal power plant — which is clearly causing great harm to Bangladesh — why don't the allies of the government raise their voices?... Dominance will not vanish into thin air. The agreements, projects, and arrangements — whether transparent or not — through which dominance has been established must be dismantled.”

He further said that there has been an unnecessary controversy over whether elections or reforms should come first, adding that many reforms could be carried out by the interim government, while others would be mandated to the elected government.

The interim government has many responsibilities for which it does not need to rely on the reform commission, he said.

He also stated that he is unsure of what obstacles are preventing the interim government from carrying out the reforms that fall within its jurisdiction.

The Gonotantrik Odhikar Committee assessed the interim government's performance over the past eight months in areas including the economy, power and energy, workers and farmers, education and health, indigenous communities, culture, democratic rights, and the treatment and compensation of the July martyrs and injured.

The committee will submit a report, including recommendations, to the interim government for consideration.

Barrister Jyotirmoy Barua; Dhaka University teachers Dr Moshahida Sultana and Samina Luthfa; researcher and writer Dr Maha Mirza; political activist Baki Billah were among the discussants.

India cracks down

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The high commission has assured full cooperation with the Indian government in their deportation provided their nationality and overstay status are conclusively established, he said.

In recent months, more than 50 Bangladeshi nationals were also detained in Delhi. However, none have been deported yet as verification is still underway, Mahmud added.