

# The pride of Noakhali AL AMIN'S METEORIC RISE TO CANNES

SHARMIN JOYA

Who could have ever imagined a boy making it to Cannes from the narrow, winding lanes in the outskirts of Noakhali? Certainly not Al Amin, not even in his wildest dreams. Nonetheless, that dream has become a reality. *Ali*, the short film directed by Adnan Al Rajeev, has received a Special Mention at the prestigious 78th Cannes Film Festival.

Since Saturday, *Ali* has been on everyone's radar—celebrated for making history in the Bangladeshi film industry. With his deeply moving portrayal of the titular character, Al Amin is still trying to take it all in.

"I never even thought I'd act," he confessed, "And now this opportunity of attending Cannes still feels like a dream."

The journey, he says, came out of nowhere—completely unplanned. Hailing from Bashirhat in Companiganj, Noakhali, Al Amin is a third-year BSS student at Govt Mujib College.

While returning to Paris by train from Cannes, Al Amin reflected on the extraordinary path that took him from the quiet corners of rural Bangladesh to the glitz and grandeur of one of the world's most revered film festivals.

For the role of Ali, director Adnan Al Rajeev had been searching for a certain kind of presence—an innocent face, someone with long hair and eyes expressive enough to speak volumes without uttering a single word. "They auditioned around 40 people for the part," Al Amin shared. "But they weren't looking for someone to perform. They wanted someone who could simply be Ali. And they saw that in me."

So, how did they even find him—a complete

newcomer with no media background?

"Well, I had auditioned for a few music reality shows," he explained. "I got some attention for singing in dual voices. I made it through the initial rounds but was eventually dropped because the others were far more polished. *Ali's* team then somehow found me."

*Ali* is set in a coastal town, where singing is considered forbidden. A teenage boy, driven by his dreams, secretly enters a singing competition and longs to leave for the city. But beneath the surface lies a haunting mystery.

Although *Ali* marked his very first acting experience, Al Amin believes it won't be his last. "This film gave me a kind of courage I didn't know I had. I now truly believe I can build something with this."

He was initially nervous about not speaking English fluently. "But I soon realised that language isn't a barrier," he smiled. "At the screening, people from France, Germany, and Japan came up to me and said, 'Your story moved us.' That's one of the greatest rewards I'll ever receive."

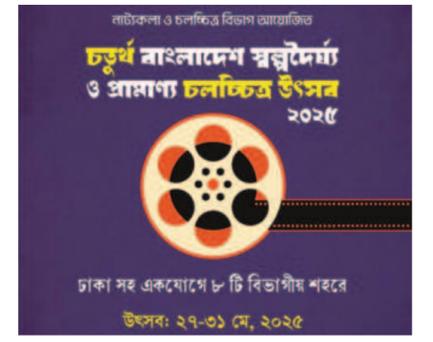
When he returns home, Al Amin plans to begin work on a full-length feature film. "It'll be in our language, about our land and our people. I want the boys and girls from our villages to see themselves on screen—to hear their own stories."

At the 2025 Cannes Film Festival, the Short Film Palme d'Or was awarded to *I'm Glad You're Dead Now* by Tawfeek Barhom—who personally praised Al Amin for his performance. "I was overwhelmed when he came up to me and said he loved my work," he recalled while signing off. "It felt surreal."



PHOTOS: COURTESY

## Bangladesh Short & Documentary Film Festival to kick off this week

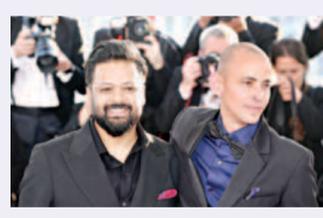


**The fourth Bangladesh Short and Documentary Film Festival, organised by Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, will run from May 27 to 31 across eight divisional cities.**

This year's festival received an overwhelming response of 322 film submissions. Among these, 89 films—60 fiction shorts and 29 documentaries—were selected for their artistic and thematic merit. Awards, involving prize money and recognition, will include Best Film (Tk 150,000), Best Director (Tk 100,000), and Special Jury Mention (Tk 50,000), alongside special award for cinematography, editing, sound, and production design. These special award recipients will each win Tk 30,000.

Filmmakers will receive certificates and memorabilia. A masterclass on **Sound and Cinematography** led by Nahid Masud and Rashed Zaman will be held on May 30.

The festival's opening ceremony will be graced by filmmaker Anam Biswas. The closing ceremony will feature Cultural Affairs Adviser Mostafa Sarwar Farooki. Both ceremonies will be presided over by Mohammad Wares.



Adnan Al Rajeev & Short Film Palme d'Or winner Tawfeek Barhom.



Cate Blanchett & Juliette Binoche presented Jafar Panahi with the Palme d'Or top prize.



Alice Rohrwacher, president of the Camera d'Or Jury with filmmaker Hasan Hadi, Camera d'Or award winner.



Director Jafar Panahi, Palme d'Or award winner at the closing ceremony of the 78th Cannes Film Festival.

## Dissident filmmaker Jafar Panahi's revenge thriller clinches Cannes' top prize

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Dissident Iranian filmmaker Jafar Panahi made history on Saturday as his revenge thriller *It Was Just An Accident* claimed the Palme d'Or at the 78th Cannes Film Festival. He is now one of the few directors to have secured top awards at all three major European film festivals, having previously won the Golden Bear at Berlin for *Taxi* (2015) and the Golden Lion at Venice for *The Circle* (2000).

Panahi, 64, who faced a 15-year

filmmaking ban in Iran and has endured multiple imprisonments, dedicated the award to the people of Iran and their fight for freedom.

*It Was Just An Accident* follows a garage owner who kidnaps a man resembling his past torturer, exploring revenge and trauma. It's only the second Iranian film to win the Palme d'Or after *Taste of Cherry* (1997).

Jury President Juliette Binoche praised the film's emotional depth and artistic courage, stating, "Art transforms darkness into forgiveness,

hope, and new life."

Other major wins include Joachim Trier receiving the Grand Prix for *Sentimental Value*, while the Jury Prize was jointly awarded to Mascha Schilinski's *Sound of Falling* and Oliver Laxe's *Sirat*.

Kleber Mendonça Filho won Best Director for the Brazilian film *The Secret Agent*, which also earned Wagner Moura the Best Actor award. *Young Mothers* by Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne took home Best Screenplay, while Nadia Melliti won Best Actress for

*The Little Sister*. Bi Gan's *Resurrection* received the Special Prize.

The Camera d'Or for Best First Film went to *The President's Cake* by Hassan Hadi, and Tawfeek Barhom's *I'm Glad You're Dead Now* won the Palme d'Or for Best Short Film, with Special Mention for Bangladeshi director Adnan Al Rajeev's *Ali*.

In Un Certain Regard, Diego Céspedes's *The Mysterious Gaze of the Flamingo* won the top prize, with several other honours recognising bold storytelling across the board.

### WHAT'S THE HAPS?

#### 'Monday Rated R'

Stand Up Dhaka presents *Monday Rated R*, a dark comedy stand-up show, at Moar, Dhanmondi today. The event, costing a Tk 200 entry fee, features Syed Ridwan Hossain Bipro, Rummam Rafi, and surprise acts.

Comedians will tackle taboo themes—trauma, injustice, identity—with bold honesty and humour. Audiences can expect a night of raw, reflective laughter where storytelling meets courage and catharsis.

Date: Monday | May 26  
Time: 8pm onwards  
Venue: Moar, Dhanmondi



Yesterday, Bangla Academy celebrated Kazi Nazrul Islam's 126th birth anniversary with tributes, a seminar, and cultural performances. Nazrul Awards were conferred to researcher Anwarul Haque and singer Shabnam Mushtari for their contributions to the works of our National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam. However, Shabnam Mushtari couldn't attend the ceremony due to poor health, so her daughter received the award on her behalf. Each received Tk 1 lakh, a crest, and an *uttorio* at the event titled *Chobbisher Gonobhyuthan*. PHOTO: COURTESY OF BANGLA ACADEMY

## A unique celebration of Nazrul's 'Thumris' at Chhayanaut



Auditorium last Saturday evening. Departing from conventional patriotic or devotional renditions, the programme spotlighted Nazrul's lesser-known contributions to the *thumri* genre, presenting his compositions alongside classical thumris rooted in foundational ragas. Featuring both seasoned vocalists and emerging talents, the performance showcased Nazrul's artistic versatility and deep engagement with classical forms.

Marking the 126th birth anniversary of Kazi Nazrul Islam, Bangladesh Nazrul Sangeet Sangstha hosted a special concert, *Thumri'r Jalsa*, at Chhayanaut

Organisers aimed to reaffirm the national poet's musical legacy—not only as a voice of resistance, but as a sophisticated composer.