

‘ESHA MURDER’ is the perfect detox from your Eid blockbusters



DESIGN: DOWEL BISWAS

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SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

One of the perils of writing about a murder-mystery thriller is that you can't really divulge the details about what really makes a film great. In the case of *Esha Murder*, one that audiences and critics largely ignored because of its unfortunate placement within the sea of star-studded Eid releases, including *Taandob* and *Utshob*, it holds doubly true. However, competing against these marketing behemoths was the entire point, according to what Azmeri Haque Badhan told me before the special screening of the film last Tuesday. "We never intended to compete; it was simply about making a statement. The statement was that I, Badhan, am here regardless of what happens. My name is up there with blockbusters and megastars, with an unconventional female-led film."

And unconventional it is. *Esha Murder*, directed by real-life cop Sunny Sanwar, doesn't

care about our frantic, ADHD-ridden brains that now expect fantastical action or mind-bending twists on every festive release. It is, sometimes to its detriment, a slow burner that takes quite a while to get going. The plot revolves around the brutal murder and dismemberment of Esha, played by Puja Agnes Cruze. However, the film makes it abundantly clear that it is not just the murder, but the systematic subjugation of Esha by all the men around her, that is criminal. Not a single man in Esha's life, whether it be her stalker, landlord, or actual lover, respects her enough to give her any agency over her own life. This is where Badhan steps in as the lead, playing officer Leena. From the get-go, she is a no-nonsense character. She is a strong police officer, but a heavily traumatised woman. It is the trauma that leads her to train, persist, and become a law enforcement officer in the first

place, a plot device that pays off to its fullest near the end. Perhaps a trigger warning would be fair at this point – *Esha Murder* is unabashedly gruesome. It holds little back from graphic descriptions and gore, attempting to portray the realities of such a gruesome crime. However, the gore and the action sprinkled in aren't the USP of the film; it is the intrigue and setting. The dreary Mufassal town in Mymensingh is rife with mystery, and seemingly, every other character has something to hide. The secrets are, however, so well kept that a seasoned critic like myself, or the director friend that I watched the movie with, could not unravel them before the very end, to our absolute surprise. The supporting cast of the film is stellar, with Nibir Adnan, Sharif Siraj, Sushama Sarker, Tanisha Islam Mahi, Faruque Ahmed, Misha Sawdagor, and Syed Azaz Ahmed delivering organic performances that are symbiotic with one another. Nonetheless, make no mistake, *Esha Murder* is not without its shortcomings. The aforementioned pacing issues leave a lot of drawn-out scenes, which lead to the audience squirming to get to the next scene. Absolutely unnecessary songs, in all likelihood conceived to promote the films, disrupt the film's flow. While the songs are admittedly functional, with Jahid Nirob's *Bondi Shudhu Jane* being hummed outside the halls immediately after the credits roll, the film did not need it. In fact, even with no experience in film editing, I'd bet a dollar and a half that I could simply throw out many scenes in the film to make it more compact, without hurting the plot at all. Despite these flaws, *Esha Murder* is the grounded *dudh cha* after the hefty servings of biriyani that *Taandob*, *Insaaf*, and *Utshob* have given the audience. It is an underdog that, as time passes, will only receive more adoration from fans of thrillers. The film is an honest effort, with Badhan giving it her all, both on-screen and post-release, showing up every single day to promote it. Whether the content is worth your time is subjective. But according to an editor who has watched way too many mindless action flicks this season, this might just be the perfect detox.

Tom Cruise to receive first-ever honorary Oscar



Tom Cruise will receive an honorary Oscar for the first time in his career, the Academy announced last Tuesday. The award will be presented at the 16th Governors Awards in November 2025, ahead of the 2026 Oscars. Cruise, 62, is being recognised for his outstanding contributions to cinema. He will be honoured alongside choreographer Debbie Allen and production designer Wynn Thomas. Country icon Dolly Parton will also receive the Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award for philanthropy. Despite four prior nominations, Cruise has never won an Oscar. Renowned for blockbuster franchises like *Mission: Impossible* and *Top Gun*, he remains one of Hollywood's most enduring and bankable stars.

Jaya Ahsan's fourth film in three months set for July release



Jaya Ahsan is on a roll. With three films already released within three months, the acclaimed actor is now gearing up for her fourth, Aniruddha Roy Chowdhury's *Dear Maa*, set to hit theatres in Kolkata on July 18. Her Eid-ul-Azha releases, *Taandob* and *Utshob*, have successfully captivated local audiences, while *Jaya Aar Shamin* premiered in May. Adding to her momentum, she told local media that *Dear Maa* explores complex familial bonds, with Jaya portraying a mother for the first time. The film stars Jaya alongside Chandan Roy Sanyal in the lead roles, with an ensemble cast featuring Saswata Chatterjee, Dhritiman Chatterjee, and Malayalam actor Padmapriya Janakiraman.

NEWS

Rooppur loan utilisation

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terms: LIBOR+1.75 percent, with a cap at 4 percent. A proposal to defer the start of principal repayments was also rejected. Repayment will begin in September 2028, in two instalments per year, March and September, and continue for 20 years in 40 tranches. The JCC also reviewed the project's progress. The first 1,200MW unit of

the 2,400MW Rooppur plant was initially scheduled to begin commercial operations by December this year. Salehuddin said the plant is expected to begin trial electricity supply between September and October, following an inspection and certification visit by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in August. "We won't take the full load at once. The trial run will start under IAEA

supervision," he said. He added that several safety protocols, including nuclear waste disposal measures, must be completed before full operations can begin, possibly in early 2026. As for the power tariff, Salehuddin said it has not been determined yet. "Once the trial run is over and the plant is connected to the national grid, the Power Development Board will fix the tariff," he added.

Fakhrul slams Jamaat for skipping talks

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and a membership renewal campaign for the Turag unit of Dhaka North BNP. According to media reports, the Jamaat skipped the consensus commission's discussion with political parties on Tuesday as a form of protest against the outcome of a recent meeting between Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus and BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman in London. The party reportedly informed

the commission that it felt ignored after Yunus and Tarique issued a joint statement agreeing to hold the election in February next year. Fakhrul described the meeting as a rare and historic event, as it paved the way for a peaceful democratic transition. He said Yunus invited Tarique to the meeting when a debate was going on and a rift was developing between the interim government and political

parties over an unfavourable election timeline in April next year. At the meeting, Fakhrul said, both Prof Yunus and Tarique moved away from their earlier stances on the election schedule and agreed to hold the polls in the week before Ramadan. "This is what we call statesmanship. Without fuelling division or conflict, these two leaders have created an opportunity for a peaceful election," he said.

Chikungunya resurfaces

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IEDCR, in its report published early this month, said: "A notable increase in both suspected and confirmed cases has been recorded since the second week of April, indicating rising transmission in multiple urban areas." The affected areas are: Mohakhali, Tejgaon, Nakhlaipara, Khilkhet, Niketon, Mohammadpur, Dhanmondi, Uttara, Lalbag, Azimpur, Hazaribag, Shantinagar, Malibagh, Khilgaon, Mugda, Goran, Rampura and Shahjahanpur. "Cases have been reported from both Dhaka North and South City Corporations, reflecting widespread urban transmission," reads the report. Given the absence of a routine national surveillance system for Chikungunya, limited diagnostic capacity, and the clinical overlap with dengue, the reported numbers likely underestimate the scale of infections, it adds. Thousands of people travelled across the country during the Eid vacation and that may end up further spreading the disease, it reads. The IEDCR recommends that healthcare providers remain watchful for Chikungunya symptoms and prioritise testing for the disease. It also calls for intensifying public awareness campaigns on mosquito control and personal protection measures, expanding surveillance activities to identify new hotspots, and taking preventive measures to avoid

mosquito bites. The first confirmed cases of Chikungunya were reported in Rajshahi and Chapainawabganj in 2008. In 2011, some cases were reported in Dhaka's Dohar upazila; and in 2017, a major outbreak occurred, affecting Dhaka and 16 other districts, according to IEDCR data. Dengue, Zika, and Chikungunya are transmitted by the same Aedes aegypti and Aedes albopictus mosquitoes, and symptoms of these diseases are often similar, it says. The mosquitoes typically breed in clear, stagnant water, putting people living near such breeding spots at greater risks. IEDCR Director Prof Tahmina Shirin said an outbreak of such a disease was usually likely to recur after a gap. "Last year, only a few cases were reported in October, but this time, significant numbers are being observed. The current trend indicates that the numbers may increase further," she told The Daily Star yesterday. HM Nazmul Ahsan, an associate professor at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital, said, Covid-19 patients often report loss of smell and mild diarrhoea along with fever and cold while a fever without cold may mean dengue or Chikungunya. "Since most Chikungunya patients do not require hospitalisation, these cases often go undetected," he added. Chikungunya symptoms include

joint pain that can last for a week. It may leave patients unable to stand, he said. In contrast, dengue typically causes muscle pain that subsides within seven days. Since Chikungunya testing is not widely available, patients who test negative for dengue are observed for several days. If symptoms persist, physicians may treat them as Chikungunya patients. "Anyone with a fever should see a doctor immediately and stay hydrated. Coconut water, saline, and fresh fruit juices may help," Nazmul said. According to public health expert Mushtuq Hussain, the authorities should launch a tiered healthcare system comprising clear primary, secondary, and tertiary care levels. "A stronger primary healthcare network is crucial. Many people, particularly in underprivileged areas, avoid dengue testing due to lack of access to local facilities, which leads to delayed diagnoses," he said. He proposed expansion of blood sample collection centres and secondary care units to manage moderate cases, allowing medical college hospitals to focus on critical patients. Serious cases should be transferred from secondary to tertiary hospitals as needed, Mushtuq said. According to the IEDCR, there is no specific cure for Chikungunya. Infected individuals are advised to take rest, and take medication prescribed by a doctor, it said.

Asif, Ishraque trade barbs

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Asif said the law adviser clearly explained the issue. "As per his explanation, and my understanding of the process, no legal violation was committed by the government." He accused Ishraque and his supporters of blocking DSCC offices, disrupting services, and illegally occupying the mayor's chair. "Blocking DSCC offices and preventing officials from working amounts to obstruction of government duties. Sitting in the mayor's chair without legal authority is also a criminal offence." He warned that the collapse of services like waste removal would affect over one crore residents. Political actors had misled Ishraque for their own ends, he said. "Decisions on DSCC were made collectively by the advisory council. I did not act unilaterally," he asserted. Ishraque, on the other hand, said, "We have learned that the adviser [Asif] has allegedly directed officials not to perform their duties. Even regional executive officers have been told not to

sign birth or citizenship certificates." It was disgraceful of the government to try to create administrative disruption to be able to shift the blame, he said while inaugurating a mosquito control programme at the Nagar Bhaban, presenting himself as the "elected mayor". He also chaired a meeting with mosquito control supervisors from all wards, followed by discussions with officials and employees of DSCC's health department. During the meetings, the BNP leader warned of potential dengue and Covid-19 outbreaks, urging health officials to be vigilant. "Although our movement is ongoing, essential civic services are being maintained under our supervision. We want to ensure citizens do not suffer. With dengue season approaching, we are intensifying mosquito control efforts," Ishraque said. On Monday and Tuesday, he held meetings with cleanliness inspectors and ward secretaries across DSCC's 70 wards. The banners at the meetings referred

to him as "Honourable Mayor, Dhaka South City Corporation". Subsequently, the banners at yesterday's event referred to him as "Elected Mayor". Meanwhile, DSCC staff continued their protests at the Nagar Bhaban for the second consecutive day, demanding that Ishraque be formally handed the mayoral responsibilities. Supporters of Ishraque, under the banner "Dhakabashi", also joined the demonstrations. Around 1:00pm, Ishraque entered the Nagar Bhaban and addressed the demonstrators before officially launching the mosquito control programme on the premises. Regarding the remarks made by the adviser, Ishraque said: "Yesterday [Tuesday], Asif Mahmud accused me of committing a criminal offence. If that's the case, why hasn't your government filed a case against me? Why haven't you ordered my arrest?" He called Asif immature and said it was insulting that he was engaging with him. "Whatever is happening now, the government must bear full responsibility."

Budget expectations give way

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But they did not bring in any changes, he added. This budget is not inclusive, and it was just several value adjustments of previous budgets, said Mahdi Amin, adviser to BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman. "This budget did not address how peoples' confidence will be boosted, or how the capacity of industries will be increased. If the government sought recommendations, the BNP could have provided those," he added. There is a huge gap between expectations and what was provided in the budget, said Selim Raihan, professor at the University of Dhaka's economics department. The expectation was the government would raise direct tax, lower indirect tax and provide higher allocation for the health and education sectors. "But that did not happen. It is also not clear what the government would do to bring back macroeconomic stability." Many targets were set in the budget that are not realistic, he said, citing the targets for private investment, GDP growth and revenue collection. "Entrepreneurs are living in an uncertainty and they are suffering

from lack of confidence – this was not addressed in the budget." The budget did not give priority to incorporating reforms, said Raihan, also executive director of the South Asian Network on Economic Modelling. "We have missed an opportunity to bring a good change," he added. Personal income tax was imposed in a way that middle-class people will face a higher burden in comparison to the high-income people, said Mustafizur Rahman, a distinguished fellow of the CPD. While the interim government raised the social safety net allowances, the hike was lower than the rate of inflation. "How will disparity be reduced then?" he asked. The government could have reduced its own operational expenses in the budget, said Snehasish Barua, managing director of SMAC Advisory Services. Mahmud Hasan Khan, president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, questioned the rationale for increasing the salaries of government service-holders. He suggested reducing wastage and corruption in budget implementation as it would allow the government to do

more for marginal people. He cited the case of a family that has 11 TCB cards to further his point. If the cards were distributed properly, 10 families could have benefitted from the government's spending, he said. Vietnam hands death penalties to three drug traffickers AFP, Hanoi A court in southern Vietnam has sentenced three drug traffickers to death for smuggling and selling more than 50 kilos of heroin and synthetic drugs, state media reported yesterday. Communist Vietnam has some of the toughest drug laws in the world with courts routinely handing out death sentences for drug convictions. After the one-day trial in Long An province, 35-year-old gang leader Pham Trung Hieu and his three accomplices were found guilty of trafficking. Three were given the death penalty while one was jailed for life, VNExpress news site reported.