

Dameer steps out of his 'Khancha'

ZAREEN NAWAR

"I might have been making a name for myself during the tail end of my teenage years, but that also entailed eventually making deals and working with questionable people," divulged Dameer Khan. The once-emerging, unprecedented talent recently spoke with The Daily Star over a call from Canada to share his story — involving a critical legal dispute with his former management and the rise of his nightlife business prior to the release of his brand-new song, *Khancha*.

Earlier this year, the *Amar Jaan* singer had shared what he legally could about his situation online. Now, he sounds enthused, with an assured confidence. "I had some terrible experiences that revealed how corrupt certain ranks in the industry are, but I got lucky to some extent because I am a man. It also made way for me to begin DJing."

"Generating music is my craft, but once the legal dispute began, it unfortunately kept me from making my music. However,



DESIGN: ZAREEN NAWAR

the booming nightlife in Canada saved my life," said Dameer. He acquired business skills he wouldn't have learned otherwise. The young Bangladeshi diaspora in Canada, whom he called "stubbornly patriotic," sought Bangladeshi music over other South Asian genres. "This led to my partners and me launching a show booking venture, eventually working with artistes from

other countries." On finding his way back to music, he made the most of his contacts. "To maintain my relevance, I DJed and kept my existing music around people. I negotiated with labels, secured funding for new music, and worked with a team of Bangladeshi creatives—we shot a music video last March."

He was referring to the *Khancha* music video, directed by Monzur Anik. It was released on August 5, aligning with

the day of the July Uprising. A reflection on the revolution, the track is intrinsically artistic. He recounted, "Remember how we were terrified that our phones might be tapped before and during the Internet shutdown last July? We collectively felt as if we were caged in by our government, on top of witnessing their brutalities. It made me think of the Bangla proverb, 'If you clip a bird's wings, you don't need a cage.' The concept of the song originated from that thought."

Khancha boldly calls out the lies constructed by the previous regime, serves as an anthem for Bangladeshis to have a backbone, and flaunts Dameer's dynamic vocal range, with the promise of fresher music ahead.

Looking ahead, Dameer believes Gen Z must restructure artist management to move forward effectively for the future. "We barely have institutional strength. A person with talent doesn't always have business sense, especially in a country where IP law is ignored and musicians aren't properly paid. We need labels, support, and legal protection. Don't get me wrong—the industry has many well-intentioned people. I survived thanks to my community and family. But it's a cold world, and new artistes need to be careful."

'Noya Manush' headed to Toronto Multicultural Film Festival

Bangladeshi feature film *Noya Manush* and stars Moushumi Hamid in a pivotal role. Adapted from AMM Hasanzaman's novel *Bedonar Balu Chore*, the screenplay and dialogues were penned by Masum Reza. Boyati described the film as a reflection of Bangladeshi hearts and the humanism of marginalised communities. The cast also features Rawnak Boyati, the film premiered in Bangladesh on December 6, 2024,



Hasan, Ashish Khondokar, Jhuna Chowdhury, and Nilufar Wahid.

Cillian Murphy leads Netflix drama 'Steve'

Academy Award winner Cillian Murphy returns to the screen in *Steve*, a gripping Netflix drama where the stakes are as high for the man as they are for the school he's trying to save. Adapted by Max Porter from his 2023 novel *Shy*, the film premieres at the New York Film Festival (Sept 26-Oct 13), streams globally Oct 3, and opens in select theatres Sept 9.

Set in mid-1990s England, it follows headteacher Steve's battle against mounting pressures while forging a fragile connection with troubled student Shy (Jay Lycurgo).

Directed by Tim Mielants (*Peaky Blinders*), with a cast including Emily Watson and Tracey Ullman, *Steve* blends personal redemption with the lingering shadows of political and personal violence.



WHAT'S THE HAPS?

'Agunjatra'



Prachyanat's 41st production, *Agunjatra*, adapted and directed by Azad Abul Kalam from Mahesh Dattani's work, follows researcher Uma as she delves into the hijra community and uncovers the truth behind Kamla's murder. The gripping narrative intertwines mystery, family ties, and political intrigue into a powerful stage experience.

DATE: Saturday | August 16, 2025
TIME: 7pm onwards
VENUE: Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy



'Notun Kuri' returns after 20 years

After two decades, Bangladesh Television (BTV) is reviving its iconic children's talent hunt, *Notun Kuri*. Applications open from August 15 to September 5, with the country divided into 19 regions for preliminary rounds, leading to divisional selections and the final in Dhaka.

The competition features nine categories: acting, recitation, storytelling/comedy, general/classical dance, patriotic/modern song, Rabindra Sangeet, Nazrul Sangeet, folk song, and Hamd-Naat. The *Ka* group is for ages 6-10, and the *Kha* group for ages 11-15. The finals will take place from November 2-6.

First aired in 1976 and last held in 2005, *Notun Kuri* has launched the careers of many celebrated Bangladeshi artistes.

NEWS

They won't boycott polls

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He said the chief adviser, in his speech to the nation, clearly said that reform proposals with national consensus will be implemented by the next parliament. "We have given our commitment to it. We have also promised to sign the national charter," he added. Replying to a question, Salahuddin said that there is no possibility for an electoral alliance with Jamaat. Saying people have fought for 16 years for their voting rights, Salahuddin said parties discouraging voting would be rejected by the public. He said some parties, as a political strategy, are making various statements to put pressure on the BNP. "I will call on everyone that, in

the national interest, we should rise above narrow party interests and work together on this path of democratic transition." Salahuddin said, "We hope they will realise that there is no alternative to holding a free and fair election. So, to avoid the uncertainty like in the past, all political statements should be made keeping this in mind. This is our advice." When asked if there could be attempts by any political groups to obstruct the polls process, Salahuddin said, "I don't think any party will take that risk." He said certain political leaders are making "street talks" for various strategic reasons to create pressure, but it seems they do not genuinely intend to boycott the polls.

The BNP leader said the party has already announced its election strategy, which is to take part in the polls as part of an alliance with those who participated in the movement against the Awami League's fascist rule. Salahuddin advised the parties with doubts about the polls to contact the government and the Election Commission and hold discussions to settle the differences. He said an operation by joint forces to recover illegal weapons should be carried out under a proper plan, which would bring relief to the public. "If these illegal weapons remain in the field, the fallen fascist forces could create a chaotic situation during the polls. This cannot be ruled out."

CA's Malaysia tour boosts Dhaka, KL ties

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two lakh more Rohingya fled to Bangladesh since 2023 amid conflicts between the Myanmar military and rebel group Arakan Army. Former ambassador M Shafiqullah said Bangladesh wants to improve relations with the ASEAN bloc plus the regional countries by joining the regional grouping like Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, where Malaysia is an important player. "Being an important country in ASEAN, it can play an important role in addressing Rohingya crisis. This is crucial for us," he told this correspondent, adding that Bangladesh and Malaysia share the burden of the Myanmar and Rohingya crisis. On the trade front, he said, Bangladesh traditionally imports energy from the Middle Eastern countries. Malaysia, comparatively, is closer. "It's great that we are diversifying our sources of energy imports," Shafiqullah, a former senior research fellow at the Bangladesh Enterprise Institute. Also, Malaysia is a market and producer of halal food and the semiconductor industry — which were discussed as priorities during Yunus's visit. "We can enter new fields of cooperation with Malaysia if we can follow up properly," he said. Rights activists say ensuring a fair recruitment system while holding

accountable the perpetrators, who were engaged in labour exploitation in the past, should have been top of the agenda. "We haven't seen any notable progress towards this end. Rather, we found Bangladesh's law enforcers cleared the syndicate of agents and other related officials of labour trafficking charges," said Shakirul Islam, chairperson of Oviabashi Karmi Unnayan Programme. That was done following Malaysia's request to withdraw the cases for the sake of its reputation. A syndicate of 101 recruiting agents selected by Malaysia sent 480,000 Bangladeshis there between 2022 and 2024. Under a memorandum of understanding, the recruitment cost was fixed at Tk 78,000 but the actual cost was between Tk 450,000 and 600,000. Earlier in 2017-2018, there was another syndicate of 10 agents who similarly charged hefty sums from the workers. "The most important thing now should have been the regularisation of more than four lakh undocumented Bangladeshis, because they spent huge amounts of money and went there legally but became victims of syndication," Islam said. They remain jobless, underpaid, unpaid and were not issued work permits — not their fault but of the employers and agents, he added. Many migrants also often face

crackdowns in various parts of Malaysia and detention for reasons they are not responsible for, he added. "We had expected the interim government to be tough against the syndicate and create an example," Islam said. Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit Chair Tasneem Siddiqui said she thinks Dhaka has not forgotten the issue of fair recruitment, regularising the undocumented migrants and other welfare. However, there are elements on both sides preventing the end of the syndication in recruitment, she added. According to government officials, Bangladesh discussed the labour welfare issues and making the recruitment system fair and transparent; Yunus too discussed it with Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim. "But the syndicate and their affiliates are very strong — political elements are involved in it," said ambassador M Shafiqullah. Anwar Ibrahim is in a coalition government and he alone cannot take many decisions because of the pressure from the coalition members, said another labour migration expert. Experts lauded Malaysian officials' confirmation that Bangladeshi workers will now be entitled to the same social security benefits as Malaysian workers and will be able to lodge complaints in Bangla.

BTRC moves to punish

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However, services or content with a legal ownership or entity status shall not be included under this definition. Under this definition, intermediaries would include platforms like Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, WhatsApp, Telegram and other social media platforms. Upon written instructions from the government, the BTRC will have the authority to instruct any telecom service provider, intermediary, or social media intermediary to block or remove such content without providing any explanation. Failure by a service provider to comply with such directives immediately will also be considered a criminal offence, carrying the same maximum penalty of five years' imprisonment, or a Tk 300 crore fine, or both. For the purposes of this section, the term "government" refers to the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Defence, or any relevant ministry, depending on the matter. In the BTRC's proposal, section 66-ka has been made non-bailable. However, it will be compoundable in applicable cases upon payment of compensation and administrative fines. Earlier, under the Awami League regime, a similar non-bailable clause in the Digital Security Act was widely abused, and experts had slammed it for its repressive nature. Abu Nazam M Tanveer Hossain, principal at Stratagem, a consultancy firm and telecom policy analysis expert, said the proposed section 66-ka of the draft telecom ordinance "risks reviving the spectre of the Digital Security Act." "Without a precise definition of the offence and clear parameters for what constitutes "anti-state" or "anti-sovereignty" the provision leaves wide scope for abuse, enabling suppression of legitimate freedom of expression." He said that while safeguards are necessary against incitement, misinformation, or hatred that genuinely threatens national security, such measures must not erode constitutional rights. "Any such clause should be accompanied by a clear, detailed definition, illustrated with examples, and be subject to mandatory judicial oversight before punitive action is taken." He also said that a penalty of Tk 300 crore is very high and should be reduced. "Penalties should be based on actual impact." Barrister Shahed Alam, chief

corporate and regulatory affairs officer at Robi Axiata, said the newly introduced non-bailable provision is likely to stifle innovation and curb freedom of expression. "The authority can impose these measures without prior justification." Besides, the draft ordinance poses significant risks to Bangladesh's digital development, he added. "By introducing provisions such as the power to freeze accounts, impose substantial penalties on digital services, and levy fines of up to Tk 300 crore, the draft moves away from internationally recognised regulatory practices toward a more restrictive framework." Notably, certain provisions, previously considered for removal to encourage sectoral growth, are now being reintroduced, alongside elements reminiscent of the more rigid 2010 telecom law, he added. Given the scale of Bangladesh's \$3 billion digital economy, there is a real risk that the ordinance could slow innovation, constrain open communication, and discourage investment. "We therefore urge consideration of withdrawing the current draft, reverting to the Bangladesh Telecommunications Act 2001 as a base, and pursuing amendments aligned with modern communications needs, fundamental rights, and sustainable economic growth through a transparent, participatory process." BTRC Chairman Maj Gen (retd) Md Emdad Ul Bari said the fines were not newly introduced but were a continuation of provisions from previous laws. "Earlier, the law focused on crimes committed using telecom networks or related issues. It has now been expanded to cover social media, as technology has evolved," he said. On the non-bailable provision, Bari said it was introduced for offences deemed anti-state activities. "This is just a draft, and it will go through further scrutiny. It can be altered if the government and stakeholders deem it unnecessary," he added. The BTRC's draft came after the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications, on July 28, instructed the regulator to prepare proposals for amending and updating the Telecommunication Act, 2001. Following the directive, the BTRC submitted a proposal with several amendments to the ministry on August 12.

Israeli forces

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Khalil Al-Hayya. He told mediators in Cairo on Wednesday that Hamas was ready to resume ceasefire talks to achieve a temporary truce, and was open to discussing a comprehensive agreement that would end the war, Egyptian and Palestinian sources said. Meanwhile, new Israeli legislation regulating foreign aid groups has been increasingly used to deny their requests to bring supplies into Gaza, according to a joint letter signed by more than 100 groups published yesterday. According to the letter, whose signatories include Oxfam and Doctors Without Borders (MSF), at least 60 requests to bring aid into Gaza were rejected in July alone. Ties between foreign-backed aid groups and the Israeli government have long been beset by tensions, with officials often complaining the organisations are biased, reports AFP. The rocky relations have only gotten more strained in the wake of Hamas's unprecedented attack on Israel in October 2023. "Israeli authorities have rejected requests from dozens of NGOs to bring in lifesaving goods, citing that these organisations are 'not authorised to deliver aid'," the joint statement reads. ACC sues Joy FROM PAGE 12 "Meanwhile, Joy's total assets, both movable and immovable, amount to Tk 61.18 crore. Upon investigation, his legitimate income amounted to Tk 1.32 crore. "This indicates that Tk 60.14 crore was acquired illegally." Akhtar also alleged that Joy laundered an additional Tk 54.04 crore through hundi or other channels to purchase or invest in two properties in the United States. "This money was not declared in Bangladesh's income tax records and was illegally transferred abroad," he added. The ACC has decided to file a case against Joy under Section 27(1) of the Anti-Corruption Commission Act, 2004; Sections 4(2) and 4(3) of the Money Laundering Prevention Act, 2012; and Section 5(2) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1947, according to a press release issued by the ACC.