

Nobody has the right to dictate choices: Badhan

National Award-winning Actress Azmeri Haque Badhan has strongly criticised the backlash against artistes who paid tribute to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on his death anniversary, August 15. Responding on Facebook, she condemned attempts to brand celebrities as “cultural fascists” and questioned why anyone should control whom others choose to honour. Badhan stressed that showing respect to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is a personal choice and should not be policed. She also dismissed rumours about celebrities being paid for their posts, ridiculing claims that ranged from “200 crores” during the July movement to “Tk 20,000” for remembering Mujib. She warned that intimidation and misinformation would no longer work in an era of social media and globalisation. Concluding her post, Badhan said that anyone attempting to follow Sheikh Hasina’s path would become “another failed copy of her tragedy.”



PHOTOS: AISHWARYA RAIHAN

‘Opulence of Stone’: Maynul Islam’s mastery in stone carving

AISHWARYA RAIHAN

Since the Stone Age, stones have carried culture and civilisation—first as weapons, then shelters, and later as the earliest medium of written language through carving. Though replaced by papyrus and printing, this art endures.

In the 1990s, shifting architectural tastes evoked costly stone imports into Bangladesh, while in Rajshahi, cheaper boulders and granite from India and Bhutan for the Padma River dam were repurposed into

sculptures by artists like Maynul Islam Paul.

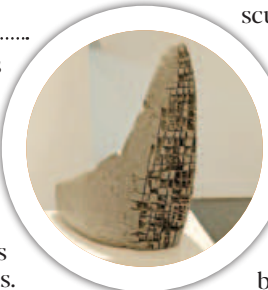
Kala Kendra in Lalmatia inaugurated **Opulence of Stone** on August 1, the fifth solo exhibition of Bangladeshi sculptor Maynul Islam Paul. Early in his career, he worked with wood, clay, and metal, but during his PhD at Rajshahi University, he began experimenting with stone carving.

Opulence of Stone is Paul’s first solo exhibition in 20 years, and this long hiatus is a strong indication of the religious prejudice against sculptures

in Bangladesh. His exhibited stone sculptures, however, offer a modern take on traditional subjects of three-dimensional art.

Paul uses chisels to craft exquisite forms—sometimes abstract, sometimes semi-abstract. The smooth, glittering surfaces of some pieces evoke a fairytale quality, while darker ones appear elegant and graceful. Human, bird, and animal forms emerge in some sculptures, while others bridge the tangible and intangible.

Opulence of Stone is a remarkable example of modern stone carving. Hopefully, this art will flourish in our country without bigotry. The exhibition at Kala Kendra runs until today (August 18).



Radiohead releases new live album ‘Hail to the Thief’

Radiohead have unveiled a surprise live album titled **Hail to the Thief Live Recordings 2003–2009**. The collection was released digitally on August 13, with a limited-edition vinyl pressing scheduled for October 31. Alongside the announcement, the band shared a live performance video of **There, There**, filmed in Buenos Aires, which also appears on the album. The record features live renditions of tracks from **Hail to the Thief**, recorded in London, Amsterdam, Buenos Aires, and Dublin between 2003 and 2009. Frontman Thom Yorke connected the project to his 2024 reimagining of Shakespeare’s **Hamlet**, titled **Hamlet Hail to the Thief**. That production incorporated reworked songs from Radiohead’s 2003 album, and Yorke said the experience ultimately inspired the release of this live collection.



Runa Khan joins cast of ‘Cholochittra: The Cinema’

Actress Runa Khan has signed on for filmmaker Ali Zulfiqar Zahedi’s upcoming project **Cholochittra: The Cinema**, where she will play the role of a film heroine. The story, she said, attracted her with its focus on the personal lives of actresses beyond the screen. “Audiences always see us on screen, but we also have our own lives, and that story will be told here,” Runa noted.

Although she portrayed a theatre princess in a telefilm directed by Noman Robin in 2007, this will be her first time appearing as a film heroine. Shooting is scheduled to begin this winter, while three of her other films — Masud Pathik’s **Bok**, Kaushik Sankar Das’ **Dafon**, and Zahid Hossain’s **Leela Manthan** — await release.



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSEHD

Aryan Khan introduces his first web-series with a thrilling teaser

The first teaser of **The Ba***ds of Bollywood**, Aryan Khan’s directorial debut, dropped yesterday, brimming with cinematic flair. Narrated by Aryan in a style echoing his father Shah Rukh Khan, the teaser begins with the **Mohabbatein** violin theme before twisting into action-packed chaos.

Romantic glimpses of leads Lakshya and Sahher Bambha soon give way to brutal fight scenes, broken noses, and dazzling glamour, highlighting Aryan’s focus on action alongside romance.

Written and directed by Aryan, with Gauri Khan producing, the series is co-created by Bilal Siddiqi and Manav Chauhan.

The ensemble cast includes Bobby Deol, Manoj Pahwa, Mona Singh, Raghav Juyal, and more. Slated for release on Netflix later this year, the show promises a stylised yet grounded world.



NEWS

Landmine-related injuries on the rise

FROM PAGE 12
Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) sources said mines were placed only 300-400 yards inside Myanmar territory, near Naikhongchhari border in Bandarban.

TRAGEDIES ON THE BORDER

The Bangladeshis injured by hidden landmines were either foraging for wood and bamboo in forests or trying to cross into Myanmar illegally for trade.

Moreover, Naikhongchhari has become a major escape route for distressed Rohingyas fleeing Rakhine.

On July 13, Mohammad Hosain from Ukhiya’s Patabari village lost a leg after he stepped on a mine while collecting bamboo. He is now receiving treatment at Chattogram Medical College Hospital.

Several BGB officials said the AA plants mines not only to bar Rohingyas from returning to Myanmar but also to control informal trade routes. Many Rohingyas said they had to pay the AA while crossing the border.

Lt Col SKM Kafil Uddin Kayes, commander of the 11 BGB Battalion, pointed out that in the past, landmines were laid by Myanmar border guards. “Now, it’s Arakan Army. Those who enter Myanmar territory illegally are the ones getting injured in mine explosions.”

He said these incidents are regularly reported to higher authorities. But coordination among all relevant entities remains difficult, as the AA is a non-state actor.

Quoting a smuggler interrogated while in detention, an official of the Armed Police Battalion (APBN), said, “Arakan Army controls many of the routes and landmines are planted to deter movement outside those.”

MEASURES NEEDED

The use of antipersonnel mines goes against the Ottawa Treaty that aims to ban such weapons worldwide, said security analyst Ishfaq Ilahi Choudhury.

Myanmar is not a signatory to this treaty.

“The 271-kilometre border is now largely under Arakan Army’s control, but Bangladesh should raise this issue with the Myanmar government and international bodies like the UN Refugee Agency,” he said.

“Awareness among locals is vital so that they don’t cross the border,” he noted.

Naikhongchhari Upazila Nirbahi Officer Mazharul Islam Chowdhury said the administration is working with local representatives to raise awareness among locals.

“We are coordinating with BGB to avert such incidents, but the strengthening of border infrastructure and logistics will make a big difference,” he added.

During a visit to Rohingya camps in Ukhiya on July 14, Home Affairs Adviser Md Jahangir Alam Chowdhury said the government was taking measures to mitigate landmine risks and enhance safety along the border.

He, however, did not clarify how the government would do so.

Election, reforms must proceed

FROM PAGE 12
changes of the constitution and protect it from judicial challenges.

On the issue of secularism versus religious identity in the constitution, Saki reaffirmed the party’s commitment to building an inclusive state.

He opposed replacing “secularism” with “absolute faith in Almighty Allah” as demanded by BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami, and instead advocated for equal rights for all citizens irrespective of religion, ethnicity, gender identity, or political beliefs.

“The spirit of the July uprising is to ensure every individual’s rights and dignity. A citizen’s identity should not be undermined by religion, profession, or ethnicity,” he said.

Regarding issues where consensus could not be reached, he said, “If some issues remain unresolved, they will be placed before the people. The election will serve as the platform for the public to give their mandate.”

“Any proposal should not be imposed forcibly.”

Regarding the election, Saki said people will make the ultimate decision.

“Some may try to delay elections in the name of reforms, or bypass reforms for quick elections — but the people want both,” he said.

Addressing the deterioration of law and order after August 5, Saki said the collapse of law enforcement and state institutions — long misused by the former authoritarian regime — was a key factor.

He called for rebuilding these institutions to ensure public safety and accountability.

He condemned recent attacks on shrines, minorities, and women, which he said were often orchestrated by fascist elements, and criticised the exaggerated portrayal of these incidents by some foreign media.

“We demand accountability for each incident. At the same time, we reject disinformation campaigns and believe

in standing for justice, truth, and unity,” he stated.

On calls to ban the Awami League over its role in past violence, including the July massacre, Saki maintained that such matters should be handled through democratic and judicial processes.

“There must be justice for 15 years of crimes, including the mass killings in July and August. Those responsible, including Sheikh Hasina and her party, must be held accountable through proper investigations,” he asserted.

As for election preparedness, Saki said Ganosamhati Andolon is gearing up to contest in all constituencies.

He said the party’s campaign would focus on democratic transformation, accountability, and economic justice.

“We are working to build a broad alliance for democratic change. We want an inclusive Bangladesh where reforms and elections happen simultaneously, with the people guiding the process,” Saki added.

Mother tells tribunal

FROM PAGE 12
prosecution witness in the crimes against humanity case against deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina, former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, and ex-IGP Chowdhury Abdullah Al Mamun.

Mamun, now a state witness after pleading guilty, sat in the dock yesterday.

Apart from Shahana, the tribunal recorded statements of three more prosecution witnesses, including vegetable trader Abdus Samad and student Naim Shikder who were shot “in police firing” during the July uprising in Dhaka’s Uttara area and Khulna, respectively.

Shahana, 41, said she had called her son repeatedly that morning as victims of gunfire poured into a hospital in Savar where she worked as a cleaner. Sajal told her, “I’m your only son, Ammu, but I cannot abandon my brothers who are dying beside me. If I die, thousands of sons will stand by you.”

As she kept calling repeatedly while the bodies of victims continued to arrive at her hospital from Ashulia’s Baipal area, by 2:45pm, Sajal told her, “If I become a martyr, identify me with my ID card.”

Moments later, his phone went silent forever.

That night, Shahana searched

hospitals, morgues, and ICUs in vain. At dawn, a student told her that several youths had been killed and burnt near Ashulia Police Station.

“When I reached there, I saw a heap of charred bodies inside a police pickup. I recognised my son by his shoe stuck to one of his leg’s charred bones,” she testified. His half-burnt ID card of his work place and his twisted university ID card later confirmed the identity. Sajal had a part-time job at a food shop to support his poor family.

“When I first took a photo of my son’s body, I saw his mobile phone lying next to his burned hand. Seeing that, I realised that he was still alive just moments before being burned. I think as he was being set on fire, he desperately tried to let us know what was happening by writing a text message. But because other bodies were piled on top of him, he couldn’t send a message or make a call,” she added.

While visiting his grave in Gaibandha, Sajal’s two-year-old daughter cried out, “Baba, wake up. Baba, get up.” The court was shown a video clip of that moment, along with another showing of Sajal waving the national flag and holding a stick during protests.

Shahana ended with a plea for justice. “I demand justice for my son

and the two thousand others who were killed during the uprising. I hold Sheikh Hasina, Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, IGP Mamun, Obaidul Quader, MP Saiful, the Awami League, Jubo League, Chhatra League, and ‘Police League’ responsible for this.”

Another witness, Naim, a student of Mohsin College in Khulna, told the tribunal that police shot him from inside the residence of then Khulna City Corporation mayor on August 4 last year. He was hit by around 500 pellets, and he still has pain.

He claimed that doctors denied his treatment due to alleged orders from Hasina, and he was left untreated at Khulna Medical College Hospital for five hours.

Samad, a vegetable trader from the capital’s Uttara, said he was shot in the head during the uprising on July 19 and the bullet was removed months later.

Defence counsel for Hasina and Kamal cross-examined the witnesses.

The ICT-I adjourned recording of statements of prosecution witnesses till today.

Meanwhile, the tribunal extended time for submission of probe reports in four cases filed with Jatrabari, Rampura, Gazipur, and Mohammadpur police stations over the atrocities during the uprising following the prosecution’s appeals.