

Directors who ruled 2024

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

From romantic tales to gripping thrillers, the Best Director (Film) nominees at Blender's Choice–The Daily Star OTT & Digital Content Awards 2024 showcase the impressive diversity and innovation driving Bangladeshi streaming. Each filmmaker brings a unique vision—whether exploring human psychology, portraying aching relationships, offering comforting stories, highlighting authentic regional voices, or experimenting boldly with genre—crafting narratives that resound powerfully with both viewers and critics.

Let us have a look at the nominees this year.



MOSTOFA SARWAR FAROOKI
The filmmaker, renowned for his trademark humour, infused *The Last Defenders of Monogamy* with wit and originality. The film became one of the highlights of 2024, featuring a powerhouse performance from Chanchal Chowdhury and marking an impressive debut for Xeler Rahman.



SHIHAB SHAHEEN
Among the most memorable projects of last year was the director's film *Kacher Manush Dure Thuiya*. Staying true to his signature style—blending romance, separation, and reunion—he delivered a story that struck a bold emotional chord with audiences. The film's impact was heightened by the undeniable on-screen chemistry between Tasnia Farin and Pritom Hasan.



RAIHAN RAFI
Depicting the ongoing struggles and painful realities faced by the family of a drug-addicted individual, Raihan Rafi once again drew from his strength of portraying narratives inspired by true events in *Mayaa*. His sensitive yet impactful direction captured the raw emotions of such a troubling situation, earning him this nomination.



ROBIUL ALAM ROBI
Aching emotions poured across the screen in *Forget Me Not*, as if winter had vanished only to summon summer, leaving spring behind. Directed by Robiul Alam Robi, the film marked a bold departure from his usual genre, showcasing his willingness to experiment with storytelling. The honest performances of Mehazabien Chowdhury and Yash Rohan added depth and sincerity, making the project not only memorable but also a standout in 2024.



KAJAL AREFIN OME
This director earned his nomination for the web film *Osomoy*, a contemporary story. His vision was elevated by the remarkable performances of industry favourites. Blending strong character work with compelling direction, he created a project that not only engaged audiences but also stood out as a notable achievement in the Bangladeshi OTT industry.

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NEWS

‘They dragged my brother out of a shop

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IGP Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun, who has already confessed and turned state approver.
Around 10-15 policemen, including joint commissioners Sudip and Proloy, DC Iqbal, ADC Masudur, ACs Nahid and Tanzil, OC Abul Hasan, and inspector Wahidul Hoque were present when he was shot, he added.
Imam was later taken to Jatrabari Police Station, where five to six policemen – including ADC Shamim, ADC Masudur, and AC Nahid – stomped on his face with their boots, disfiguring it. He was eventually taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, where doctors declared him dead.
Robiul said Imam had over 200 pellet wounds on his body. He said their father, senior sub-inspector Moynal Hossain Bhuiyan, broke down upon seeing the body at the hospital and cried out, “How many bullets does it take to kill a person, sir?”
Imam, a second-year student at Government Adamjee Nagar MW College, had gone out during a two-hour curfew relaxation, telling his mother he was going for tea but instead joined the quota reform protests. Around 12:50pm, his mother

was informed he had been shot. She later found only his blood and shoes near the Kajla footbridge.
Robiul said police refused to register a murder case despite repeated attempts. He went to the office of then DMP commissioner Habibur Rahman, but he did not see him. He later visited Jatrabari Police Station, the Wari DC office but failed to file a case over his brother's killing.
Holding Hasina, Asaduzzaman, ex-IGP Mamun, then home secretary and police officers responsible, Robiul demanded their execution. The court also played videos showing Imam bleeding as police obstructed his friend from rescuing him.
Apart from Robiul, two other prosecution witnesses testified before ICT-1 yesterday, including the father of As-Sabur, who was allegedly shot and later burned along with five others in a police pickup near Ashulia Police Station on August 5 last year.
Enab Najef Jaki, 60, a retired garment factory officer, said his son had joined a peaceful student procession in Baipail when police opened fire. Around 3:30 pm, As-Sabur took shelter in a nearby house

amid heavy shooting but later could not be reached. After searching hospitals, the family learned of burned bodies found near Ashulia Police Station.
Jaki's nephew and cousin identified As-Sabur by a charred piece of his t-shirt and checking his SIM card on a another phone.
He broke down in tears as a video was played in the courtroom, showing his son's body among others piled on a rickshaw van, followed by footage of the bodies being burned on a police pickup near Ashulia Police Station.
He blamed Sheikh Hasina, Asaduzzaman, ex-IGP Mamun and ex-MP Saiful Islam and other policemen and demanded justice.
Another witness, Jasim Uddin, who got injured while participating in a procession that came under attacks by police and members of Awami League, Jubo League and Chhatra League in Rajshahi on August 5 last year, in his statement said two protesters were killed in the attacks and many others were wounded.
Defence counsel for Sheikh Hasina and Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal cross-examined the prosecution witnesses.

Savar declared

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industries that may cause air pollution, and other activities outlined in the action plan.
Data from DoE's Continuous Air Monitoring Stations (CAMS) shows that the annual average concentration of ambient air pollutants in Savar is nearly three times higher than the national standard, posing severe health risks.
During the dry season, northwestern and northeastern winds carry pollution from Savar into Dhaka for almost five months, aggravating air quality and creating serious health hazards for city dwellers.
The government said the declaration is expected to play a key role in curbing air pollution in both Savar and Dhaka.
In September last year, Environment Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan announced that no new permits for brick kilns would be issued in an effort to reduce air pollution.
She added that 3,491 brick kilns operating without environmental clearances would be shut down, and all kilns built illegally in hilly areas would be relocated.
Brick kilns in Dhaka city and its surrounding areas are responsible for 58 percent of the city's air pollution.
The increasing use of firewood, collected through tree felling, has caused severe deforestation, while toxic emissions from brick baking pose acute health risks, especially to school-going children.
On February 24, the High Court ordered the removal of all illegal brick kilns nationwide.
Kiln owners were required to submit their valid documents to their respective upazila assistant commissioner (land) offices by March 1. Most failed to comply, demonstrating blatant disregard for the law.
Under the existing legislation, brick kilns cannot be established near residential areas, protected zones, commercial areas, municipal towns, educational institutions, or agricultural land.

Several hundred Rohingyas

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Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) Mohammad Mizanur Rahman, however, told The Daily Star he had no official confirmation of such gatherings. He acknowledged, though, that Myanmar's military carried out airstrikes on Maungdaw and surrounding areas three days ago, intensifying violence there.
Mohammad Kamal, a leader from Camp-27 in Cox's Bazar, said more than 300 Rohingyas are sheltering near Laldwip in Myanmar, opposite Jaliya Dwip in Bangladesh. “Every day, some Rohingyas slip into the camps evading BGB patrols,” he said.
“The junta is bombing towns to recapture them. At the same time, clashes are raging between the Arakan Army and Rohingya armed groups. Trapped in a three-way conflict, families fear for their lives and are desperate to flee to Bangladesh.”
Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) officials, meanwhile, said strict surveillance is preventing illegal crossings.
“With the sea rough, boat entry is blocked, which may have left some Rohingyas stranded across the border,” said Lt Col Ashiqur Rahman, commander of the BGB's Teknaf-2 Battalion.
Syed Alam, secretary of FDMN-RC, a Rohingya rights group, warned of a potential new influx if the conflict escalates further. He accused

the Arakan Army of committing atrocities that have forced Rohingyas to flee their villages.
Clashes between Rohingya armed groups and the Arakan Army have also flared in recent weeks across the border from Naikhongchhari upazila of Bandarban.
Meanwhile, BGB claimed to have detained two individuals, including an alleged associate of the Arakan Army, from the Ghumdhum border area.
According to BGB, the two were picked up near the Tumbru Pachimkul check-post along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border on Sunday by members of the Tumbru Border Outpost (BOP) under Cox's Bazar Battalion-34.
In a press release, BGB said one of the detainees, Ulai Chakma, 24, from Dekubuniya village in Myanmar, is an associate of the Arakan Army. The other detainee was identified as Nayan Chakma, 30, from Rangamati town in Bangladesh.
The press release, signed by Lt Col SM Khairul Alam, commanding officer of BGB Battalion-34, said the two disclosed the information during interrogation.
BGB added that preparations were underway to hand them over to the local police for legal action under Bangladeshi law.

Man dies

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of this statement.
Fazlur died at RMCH around 8:00pm on Friday.
The victim's cousin Enamul Haque said Fazlur borrowed Tk 30,000 from Dhulu and later repaid Tk 43,000 with interest. Dhulu demanded another Tk 30,000, which Fazlur could not repay.
Confirming the case and arrest, Mohanpur Police Station Officer-in-Charge Ataur Rahman said Fazlur named one of the accused in a video recording before his death. “The accused has already been arrested. Police are investigating the matter.”

‘Drastic’ measures at Biman to regain

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Biman are not doing their jobs properly. Multiple sources attributed the crisis to improper execution of scheduled “checks” and “servicing”, a shortage of experienced engineers and a lack of spare parts.
At least three of its 10 widebody planes, three Boeing 787s and one Boeing 777 are grounded.
Subsequently, flight schedules have been seriously disrupted, affecting multiple onward services and increasing operational and passenger-handling costs, Biman officials said.
Biman's present fleet comprises

six Boeing 787s, four Boeing 777-300ERs, four Boeing 737s and five Dash-8Q400s.
The carrier is now operating flights to 21 international and seven domestic destinations.
Under the increased direct supervision programme, the director of the engineering department and three chief engineers have been asked to strengthen their existing monitoring system, Raoshan said.
Besides, Biman has taken measures so that spare parts remain available at all times. For instance, the airline will store wheels of aircraft, he said.
An engineer from Chittagong has

also been withdrawn over negligence, The Daily Star has learnt from people with direct knowledge of the matter.
“I welcome Biman's such measures although they realised it late -- I hope their drastic measures will be fruitful in removing the passengers' negative perception and lack of confidence in the airline,” said Kazi Wahidul Alam, an aviation expert and a former member of the Biman board.
Biman will have to take a zero-tolerance policy for effectively implementing its new measures in a bid to regain public confidence, he added.