



## Jaya Ahsan named UNDP Goodwill Ambassador for third term

**Acclaimed Bangladeshi actress Jaya Ahsan has been reappointed as a Goodwill Ambassador for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), marking her third consecutive term in the role.**

The announcement was made on Friday, September 12, with Ahsan expressing her gratitude for the renewed opportunity. "I have served as UNDP's Goodwill Ambassador twice before. This third appointment feels equally special," she told The Daily Star. She also noted that while she engages in various philanthropic activities individually, working as an ambassador for a global institution like the UNDP brings a different sense of fulfillment.

The actress first became a UNDP Goodwill Ambassador in 2022. Her continued involvement highlights both her long-standing commitment to humanitarian causes

## ANONNO PROTEEK CHOWDHURI talks 'Noya Note', rising career

MAISHA TASnim SRESHTHA

"I spent most of my life studying and playing football," Anonno Proteek Chowdhuri says with a small shrug. He trained as a chartered accountant and worked in the field long enough to know the claustrophobia it carried. "I kept telling myself that if I ever reached a point of stability, I'd make a film one day."

However, years of quiet resolve caught up with him. He had seen his parents, directors Chayanika Chowdhury and Arun Chowdhury, leave their marks on the entertainment industry, and he was building up his repertoire to do the same. Anonno's debut web film *Noya Note*, released on September 12, grew directly out of that decisive leap. The film opens with the striking line, "In this world, everyone begs—some for five taka, others for millions," setting the tone for a story that follows a homeless man, begging for money. Working on a tight budget, he sent lead actor Nasir Uddin Khan onto real streets in character, unannounced.

"The gamble even paid off. Strangers on the street took Nasir *bhai* for a homeless man, and he walked back counting Tk 330 in his palm," he recalls with a wry smile. "I didn't have the money to gather hundreds of extras. And if people didn't actually believe Nasir *bhai* was a beggar, the scene would never feel real." To the public, he was just another man seeking alms; the camera, pulled back to a wide frame, captured an unfiltered scene.

Anonno's apprenticeship began in 2019 on the set of *Mayaboti*, where he worked as an assistant director. "It struck me early that a director juggles far more than what appears on the monitor, so I chose to shoulder the smaller tasks, so



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

that the core team can keep their eyes fixed on the lens."

That sense of responsibility has never left him. On the set of *Jole Jwole Tara*, he personally arranged restrooms for the cast and crew members. "As an AD, my crew's well-being is my duty on humanitarian grounds."

To Anonno, the digital screen is the perfect balance between the global and local audience. "Our market is still in a flux," he explains. "Streaming creates avenues for

stories that sit somewhere between a TV serial and a full-length feature film." He calls Bangladesh's modest scale a blessing in disguise. "Even with slim budgets, the craftsmanship can rival global productions."

Anonno finally concedes his one concern, "Scale is my greatest challenge," he says. "To realise these stories as I imagine them, I need a bigger canvas, a stage expansive enough to hold their full weight. If I can get there, I know I'll shine."

## NEWS

### 'Govt silent over attacks on Mahfuj'

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His statement was a reaction to an incident on Friday where Awami League activists in London hurled eggs at two vehicles of the Bangladesh high commission after an event of Information Adviser Mahfuj at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS).

Mahfuj attended the SOAS programme Friday afternoon. The event, jointly organised by SOAS and the Bangladesh high commission, marked the first anniversary of the July uprising in Bangladesh.

Awami League activists gathered outside the venue and demonstrated. After the event concluded, the adviser and senior commission officials departed in several vehicles.

According to an official statement, shortly afterwards, two empty high commission cars exiting the campus were attacked by Awami League leaders and workers, who threw eggs at them. Some protesters also lay on the road in an attempt to obstruct the vehicles, the post read.

Police quickly intervened and removed those blocking the road.

Meanwhile, Ganosamhati Andolan also issued a statement decrying the attack on Mahfuj.

The party's chief coordinator, Zonayed Saki, and executive coordinator, Abul Hasan Rubel, said,

"From the very beginning of the post-uprising period, we have repeatedly called for maintaining national unity and refraining from inciting division. The defeated forces are being emboldened to carry out such attacks repeatedly by taking advantage of the disunity among the forces of the mass uprising. If we had remained united on questions of national interest, we could have avoided such situations."

Earlier, in August, Mahfuj faced assault attempts in New York. Awami League supporters tried to disrupt his entry into the Bangladesh Consulate. They also threw eggs at the adviser, shouted slogans against him, and even broke the glass door of the consulate building.

**GOVT CONDEMNS ATTACK ON MAHFUJ**

Later in the night, the interim government, in a statement, condemned the attempted attack on Mahfuj in London.

Noting that the Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam publicly condemned the attack on Mahfuj in New York, the statement read that the government condemns this latest attack with the same conviction.

"As we said after the attack in New York, violence is not protest; intimidation is not free speech. Those words apply with full force in London as they did in New York.

"Fundamental freedoms of speech,

assembly and peaceful protest are cornerstones of democracy—but they must be exercised with responsibility and respect."

In the statement, the government called on the Metropolitan Police in London to complete a full investigation, using available footage to identify the miscreants and bring them to justice.

It also urged political leaders and community organisers to publicly and unequivocally repudiate violence and intimidation in the diaspora, whatever their factional loyalties.

Finally, the government affirmed the right to peaceful protest—and the equal right of officials, students and citizens to speak and assemble without fear.

**Jamaat, 6 other parties**

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considered "an accomplice in terrorism and fascism".

IAB spokesperson Gazi Ataur Rahman told The Daily Star that each of the like-minded parties will announce their programmes as part of the simultaneous movements in separate press conferences. He said the IAB will hold its press conference at its headquarters tomorrow.

"The like-minded parties will first hold the programmes in Dhaka. We will announce tougher programmes in phases and gradually we will spread our programmes to division, district, upazila and union levels," he added.

Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis, in a statement yesterday, said it will hold its press conference today at its central office in Purana Paltan, where its Ameer Muhammad Mamunul Haque will announce its programme.

Jalaluddin, secretary general of the party, told The Daily Star they will also toughen their programmes gradually to force the government to meet their demands.

Jamaat Assistant Secretary General Ahsanul Mahboob Zubair said if the government holds the election without fulfilling their demands, the polls will not be able to meet the people's expectations.

Asked whether they would join the election if the government does not accept their demands, he said they would contest the election only after having their demands realised.

Besides Jamaat, IAB and several others, NCP was also vocal in the dialogue of the National Consensus Commission on major reforms, including upper house election under the PR system.

### Nepal sets polls date

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She has not spoken publicly since being appointed late on Friday, but started her work to restore government by meeting some of the scores wounded in hospital.

Regional leaders congratulated Karki. Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus congratulated Karki.

"Your assumption of this high office, at a critical and challenging time, is a reflection of the trust and confidence reposed in you by the people of Nepal," Yunus said in a statement yesterday.

"As a longstanding friend and neighbour of Nepal, we are confident that under your able leadership and guidance, Nepal and its resilient people will continue to progress on the path of peace, development and stability."

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said India supported "the peace, progress and prosperity" of Nepal.

Protests began on Monday and quickly escalated, with parliament and key government buildings set ablaze, as they fed into long-standing economic woes in Nepal.

The capital Kathmandu took a step back towards normality yesterday

as a curfew was eased and daily life returned, with markets opening, traffic returning, and families visiting temples.

Soldiers scaled back their presence on streets, where they had been deployed in large numbers since the protests.

"We don't know what will happen in the future now, but we are satisfied today," said Durga Magar, a 23-year-old Kathmandu shopworker.

A fifth of people in Nepal aged 15-24 are unemployed, according to the World Bank, with GDP per capita standing at just \$1,447.

International rights groups issued a joint statement calling for the new administration to end the "impunity of the past".

Nepal is at a turning point, where the hard work of securing human rights for all could be built upon or sent into reverse," Amnesty International's Isabelle Lassee said.

For many Nepalis, Karki's appointment carried both symbolic weight and the promise of change.

"Nepal has got its first woman prime minister," said Suraj Bhattarai, 51, a social worker, adding he hoped she would "take good governance forward".

### Businesses request Yunus

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Similarly, biologic drugs such as trastuzumab (breast cancer) are available locally for about \$200-400 per vial, whereas international prices are often \$3,000-4,000 per dose, the letter said.

The graduation will be particularly impactful for the apparel sector, which accounts for over 81 percent of the export value.

Duty-free access will end, production costs will rise and compliance rules will tighten.

Electricity and gas constraints pose a major challenge for Bangladesh in its post-LDC graduation journey.

Frequent power cuts, gas shortages and rising energy costs disrupt industrial production, raise export prices and reduce competitiveness.

Several countries such as the Maldives, Vanuatu, Samoa and Nepal have delayed their UN-designated LDC graduation

despite meeting the eligibility criteria, usually due to economic or political challenges, said the joint letter sent to Yunus on August 24.

The Solomon Islands were granted a six-year delay.

Myanmar met the UN graduation criteria in years such as 2018, 2021 and 2024.

However, due to political instability following a military coup, the UN Committee for Development Policy (CDP) deferred its graduation until 2027.

Timor Leste also fulfilled the criteria in 2015, 2018 and 2021. Yet, the CDP postponed its graduation decision until 2024.

The chambers and trade bodies are the International Chamber of Commerce Bangladesh, the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the

Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The other chambers and trade bodies are the Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Foreign Investors' Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Bangladesh Chamber of Industries, the Bangladesh Association of Banks, the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association and the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

The Bangladesh Textile Mills Association, the Bangladesh Association of Pharmaceutical Industries, the Bangladesh Association of Publicly Listed Companies, the Bangladesh Insurance Association, the Bangladesh Semiconductor Industry Association and the Leather and Footwear Manufacturers & Exporters Association of Bangladesh also signed the joint letter.

### Govt cuts specialist care

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resident physician in Dhaka Medical College Hospital's paediatrics department, said that removing experienced specialists—who need to spend nearly an hour with each child—will harm both quality and access.

"An outpatient doctor already sees 70 patients a day. How can they spare the time or expertise for these children with special needs? The very purpose of the centres will be lost, and low- and middle-income families will be left with nowhere to go."

"We talk about universal health in line with SDG commitments. But true universal health is only possible if the quality of life of these children is improved."

Dr Toshiba Rahman, who has been running the Child Development Centre and Neurology Clinic at DMCH since 2009, said, "Neurodevelopment is a complex, stage-based process. Using scientific tools and evidence-based assessments, we evaluate motor, cognitive, language and socio-emotional growth—allowing early detection and timely intervention that can transform a child's future."

From January to August this year, her centre treated over 5,000 children. "You can't just glance at a child for five minutes and write a prescription... Each case takes 30-45 minutes of observation, reviewing reports, listening to parents and consulting therapists. If we compromise on quality, diagnosis and planning will fail—and the children will pay the price."

Parents are equally alarmed.

Speaking to The Daily Star,

Sufia Akter, mother of a child with developmental delays, said, "This is not just about my child—every child with developmental issues first goes to a general paediatrician, who blindly refers them to Shishu Bikash Kendras. If you remove the specialists and expect general doctors to handle it, what's the point?"

"The government ignores low- and middle-income families, for whom 10-taka services are a lifeline."

However, finance ministry's Joint Secretary Rownak Jahan defended the government decision, saying staffing in development projects must follow strict regulations. "We've provided all that was possible within our purview and authority," she told The Daily Star.

But the move contradicts the Health Reforms Commission's recommendation to set up multidisciplinary child development centres in all district and medical college hospitals, supported by new legislation to ensure continuity.

Health Secretary Saidur Rahman acknowledged the limitations. "Since this is a project, it'll have to be discontinued at some point."

He added that integrating the centres into the mainstream system—like other hospital units with revenue support—could provide a permanent solution.

About hospital paediatricians replacing specialists, he said, "It may take some time for them to adapt, but their specialisation is in children." He insisted that quality care could be maintained with proper monitoring. "It actually depends on who is dedicated to

it."

However, specialists fear otherwise. Professor Naila Zaman Khan, paediatric neurologist who pioneered the centres and is a member of the Health Reform Commission, said, "Removing any one component will collapse the service."

Even if general paediatricians are redeployed, she said, they would require at least three months of structured training.

She urged integrating training for paediatricians and child health physicians as a regular part of the Directorate General of Health Services's system.

"Dhaka Shishu Hospital earlier offered a three-month course for child health physicians, but it was discontinued in 2018. Since then, training has been piecemeal. We need a comprehensive approach. Establishing a centre in any major government specialised hospital could ensure continuity; otherwise, marginalised families will bear the loss."

The Health Reform Commission has also proposed a Child Development Centre Act to guarantee sustainability. Without it, Naila said, services remain prone to disruption, leaving hundreds of children referred from primary and secondary care facilities without support.

Ashrafun Nahar Mishti, executive director of the Women with Disabilities Development Foundation, said, "Our country already lacks initiatives for children with developmental needs. If the quality of existing services is also reduced, families will stop coming and their children's development will be shut down entirely."



### Obscure marks 40 Years with vinyl record album 'Reincarnation'

Bangladesh's iconic rock band Obscure is embracing the vinyl revival with their upcoming album *Reincarnation*. Marking 40 years in music, the record will showcase 10 of the band's most celebrated tracks—freshly re-recorded and newly arranged—alongside other selected favourites. Released under Gaan Baksho Music, the vinyl edition is already in production, with pressing underway in Ireland and a planned launch in January 2026.

This will be Obscure's 14th studio album and their first in six years, offering longtime fans a classic format to rediscover the songs that defined the group's four-decade journey. By reimagining their iconic hits for vinyl, the band joins a global wave of artists reviving the warm, timeless sound of long-play records for a new generation of listeners.

#### WHAT'S THE HAPS?

##### 'Melody & Memories'

For the very first time, the Romeo Brothers take the stage to meet, greet, and celebrate with you. Enjoy an evening of pure nostalgia with timeless modern Bengali classics, mesmerizing ghazals, and vibrant qawwali. Together, relive the songs our mothers cherished, the cassettes our fathers played, and those unforgettable moments of claps,