

‘Barir Naam Shahana’ to release in theatres tomorrow

*Barir Naam Shahana*, directed by Leesa Gazi, will be released in Bangladesh on September 19. Produced by Goopy Bagha Productions Limited and Komola Collective, it marks Gazi’s first full-length feature.

Based on a true story, the film follows Deepa, a woman in 1990s Bangladesh who defies family and societal pressures after separation to live life on her own terms. Most of the shooting took place in a Bangladeshi town, with some scenes filmed in the UK, using on-location sound instead of dubbing for authenticity.

Anan Siddiqua stars as Deepa, alongside Jayanta Chattopadhyay, Lutfor Rahman George, Iresh Zaker, Kazi Ruma, Kamrunnahar Munni, and others.



CHAYANIKA CHOWDHURY

24 years and still going strong



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

MAISHA TASNIM SRESITHA

In 2001, Chayanika Chowdhury hadn't gone to "Light & Shadow" to direct – she had simply dropped by to collect a payment for another project. On that same set, a new script was being discussed, and she casually asked producer Mujibur Rahman about who would be directing it. His answer startled her: "You." The old saying "Think before you act" never suited her. "I act first and think later," she laughs. "Within two seconds I said yes." That impulsive decision became the first step of a filmmaking journey she has now pursued relentlessly for twenty-four years.

On October 28, 2001, at exactly 8:40pm on BTV, she debuted with her directorial drama, *Ek Jibone*. Actress Tamalika Karmakar served as executive producer, and Zaydan Rabbi backed the project under the AdMedia banner. "There wasn't really a budget," Chayanika remembers. "I carried everything from home—costumes, candles, even a blower to fake rain."

Music threaded through those early

**“We speak of who is worthy, but worth becomes visible only after a platform allows you to show it. Recognise the space that extended that first opportunity, it is consequential. I intend to validate each opportunity through my craft, but the opportunity itself must first be offered.”**

plays. Bappa Mazumder and Fahmida Nabi would hand her unreleased songs before the albums even came out. There was no YouTube, no instant metrics. "Today, we celebrate a million views," she smiles. "Back then, nine crore people tuned in at the same hour; no repeats—miss it and it was gone."


Her big test arrived with *Tomake Chuye*, an NTV Eid special that

reunited Bipasha Hayat and Shomi Kaiser on the same screen after a decade—a pairing audiences had not seen together in years. She took on the challenge and brought them back for the drama in 2005.

Speaking of platforms and worth, the director remains pragmatic. "Someone has to create the opening," she says. "We speak of who is worthy, but worth becomes visible only after a platform allows you to show it. Recognise the space that extended that first opportunity, it is consequential. I intend to validate each opportunity through my craft, but the opportunity itself must first be offered."

After twenty-four uninterrupted years, she rejects any notion of completion. "I once thought this span was enough," she admits. "Now I feel there's far more to do." Her signature love stories, she says, belong on OTT for a new generation to measure. All these years in filmmaking, she finds herself more determined than ever, certain that her story as a director remains very much unfinished.

Abul Foyez appointed Director General of Shilpakala Academy



Abul Foyez Md Alauddin Khan, Additional Secretary (Administration) at the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, has been given additional responsibility as Director General (DG) of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy.

The post had remained unsettled since August 5, last year, after Liaquat Ali Lucky resigned following the fall of the Awami League government.

Subsequent appointees, including theatre director Syed Jamil Ahmed and acting DG Mohammad Wares Hossain, also left the role.


Nearly six months later, Abul Foyez formally assumed office this week. In his first meeting with staff, he urged employees to view their work not merely as a job, but as a "mission and vision," emphasising the Academy's vital role in promoting cultural practices, harmony, and aesthetic values nationwide.

WHAT'S THE HAPS?

‘Monkey Trial’

Batighar Theatre presents its silver jubilee production of *Monkey Trial*, a play inspired by the 1925 Scopes Trial in the United States. Through the story of a teacher convicted for teaching evolution, the production explores enduring conflicts between science, religion, and freedom of thought, raising urgent contemporary questions.

DATE: FRIDAY | SEPTEMBER 19, 2025  
TIME: 7:15PM TO 9PM  
VENUE: EXPERIMENTAL THEATRE HALL, BSA



NEWS

Expansion okayed

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**THE APPROVAL PROCESS**

The HSD approved the expansion of the nine health facilities on September 4 and wrote to the director general of Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) and civil surgeons of the nine districts, seeking proposals for manpower recruitment and purchase of furniture and equipment within 15 days.

Explaining the expansion process, a top DGHS official said that when a medical facility sees a rise in admissions or the occupancy rate, it usually applies to DGHS for increasing the number of beds.

Upon receiving the application via DGHS, the health ministry verifies information before giving approval, said the official seeking anonymity.

In reply to a query, the official said the duration of the approval process depends on the persuasion and efforts of officials at a given health facility.

Once the ministry approves the application, it seeks proposals from the facility over manpower recruitment and equipment purchase.

Another DGHS official said it usually takes around 60 weeks – from submission of a proposal for equipment purchase to the installation of the devices at a facility.

The official noted that the process of recruiting manpower takes at

least two years, as it involves several agencies. However, in the meantime, the health authorities can temporarily assign doctors to any facility to address manpower shortage.

**MANPOWER CRISIS**

All nine health complexes are operating with fewer doctors and nurses than the approved number of posts, according to upazila health and family welfare officers (UHFO) in the nine upazilas.

At Nikli Upazila Health Complex, there are only four doctors against 17 sanctioned posts, Sajib Ghosh, UHFO of Nikli, told this correspondent on September 8.

He further said the facility in the haor area has 24 nurses against 29 sanctioned posts. Around 500 outpatients receive treatment, while 45 to 50 patients are admitted to the health complex every day.

Replying to a question, Sajib said he wrote five times to the authorities over the past three years, seeking the facility's expansion.

In Jashore's Chowgachha Upazila, only 10 doctors are working against 32 sanctioned posts at the health complex there.

About 700 outpatients are treated and around a hundred inpatients are admitted to the facility daily, said Ahsanul Mizan Rumi, UHFO of Chowgachha.

At Balaganj Upazila Health Complex, only six doctors and 11

nurses have to deal with 300 to 350 outpatients and around 50 inpatients daily, Happy Das, UHFO of Balaganj told this newspaper.

A similar situation prevails in the other six health facilities.

Acknowledging the manpower crisis, Prof Sayedur Rahman, special assistant to the chief adviser for the health ministry, said, "It is true that some health facilities did not receive the required manpower even five years after the approval of their expansion."

"However, the manpower crisis is likely to ease within a year," he told The Daily Star on September 8.

The process of appointing 3,000 doctors is underway, and they are expected to join the service within two months, he said.

Sayedur further said the ministry has recommended recruiting 2,000 more doctors through a special BCS examination. Besides, around 3,800 doctors are expected to be recruited through three regular BCS examinations.

"We hope that the entire recruitment process will be completed within a year."

Asked whether any lobbying influenced the approval of facility expansions, he said such practices may have taken place during the past government's tenure, but not under the current administration.

Govt to reclaim khas land to save farmland

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He said, "We have made a decision today that a large amount of government khas land remains unused. This information will be kept centrally. Whenever a new project is undertaken and land is required, the nearby khas land will be used first."

Wahiduddin said, "There is now serious concern that with increasing urbanisation, industrialisation, and government activities, many projects are being approved at the expense of farmland while plenty of khas land remains unused. Why should farmland be taken instead of that land?"

The Ecneec yesterday approved 13 projects with a total expenditure of

Tk 8,333 crore.

According to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, the country lost one percent of its net cropped area, falling to 19.83 lakh acres in 2023 from 20.08 lakh acres in 2020, the largest decline in a decade.

The net and gross cropped areas have both been shrinking in recent years as farmland is steadily lost to housing, roads, infrastructure, and industrial expansion, raising concerns among officials and experts about future food security.

Wahiduddin also expressed concern about the low implementation of the Annual Development Programme (ADP) in the current fiscal year.

Implementation in the first two months has reached its lowest point in at least 16 years, with about Tk 5,715 crore being spent during the period. At the same time of the last fiscal year, ADP implementation was about Tk 7,143 crore.

Wahiduddin said the political situation is calm in the current fiscal year. "We had expected that the pace of ADP implementation would accelerate from the very beginning of the fiscal year, because the previous excuses will no longer hold," he said.

An inter-ministerial meeting with all ministries and divisions has been called next week to discuss ways to speed up implementation.

Act now to stop Gaza genocide

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emphasising that Israel's actions meet the criteria.

Tarique said a new UN commission report is detailed and direct in concluding that Israel is responsible for this crime against Palestinians in Gaza.

"No more excuses or hiding behind

propaganda can continue. History teaches us many lessons about acting morally and bravely, even when it may not be the easiest path. We cannot stand by when the very existence of Palestinians is at risk," he said.

Tarique called upon Bangladeshis around the world, whether at home or abroad, to use their collective voice

and ensure that their leaders stand with Palestine in the face of brutal destruction by Israel.

In another statement, he urged party leaders and activists to remain vigilant ahead of the Durga Puja.

"You must stay on high alert and be prepared to resist any attempt," he said.

Polytechnic students block roads

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Satrasta intersection in Tejgaon, triggering traffic congestions on adjacent roads.

Witnesses said students gathered on the campus in the morning before marching towards Satrasta around 11:15am.

They continued the blockade until 2:30pm and left after announcing fresh protest programmes for today.

Mashfiq Islam Dewan, president of Technical Students Movement of Bangladesh, said they would wage a tougher movement until their demands were met.

"Today [yesterday], students of all polytechnic institutes across the country staged sit-ins, demos, and blockades at key points in their respective districts. Tomorrow [today], we will paste the unjust three-point demands of the BSc engineering students on scarecrows across polytechnic institutes and set them on fire as a symbolic protest,"

he said.

The four-point demand of protesting diploma students includes ensuring the maximum punishment for those who, under the banner of the Engineering Rights Movement, threatened them; immediately stopping all state activities in support of what they termed the "unreasonable" three-point demand of BSc engineering students; fully implementing the six-point demand framework and recommendations raised by the Technical Students' Movement of Bangladesh; and introducing a one-channel education system in engineering.

Similar rail and road blockade programmes were observed yesterday in Kushtia, Dinaipur, Rangpur, Tangail, Pabna, Bogura, Cumilla, Barishal, and Gazipur.

The conflict between polytechnic (diploma) students and BSc engineering students has been going on for a long time. Polytechnic

students have been waging protests to press home various demands, including converting the diploma engineering programme into a full four-year course, and ensuring that only diploma holders can apply for the post of deputy assistant engineer (Grade-10) and equivalent positions.

On the other hand, BSc engineering students' three-point demand includes recruitment for Grade-9 (assistant engineer or equivalent) posts based on competitive examinations with a minimum qualification of a BSc in engineering; scrapping the existing 100 percent quota for diploma holders in Grade-10 (sub-assistant engineer or equivalent) posts; and allowing BSc and MSc degree holders to apply for those positions as well.

On August 27, the government formed an eight-member committee, headed by Energy Adviser Fouzul Kabir Khan, to examine the demands raised by graduate and diploma engineers.

Free, fair and festive polls

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The chief adviser said public enthusiasm was rising, particularly among young people, as student body elections had resumed in universities after long intervals, some returning after more than three decades.

"Bangladesh will witness a new beginning through the February election. The general election will be peaceful, clean, transparent, and festive," he said.

He expressed confidence that record numbers of young voters would turn out, many casting their ballots for the first time in over 15 years.

During the hour-long meeting, the two sides discussed the interim government's reform agenda, the

European Union's continued support for Bangladesh's development and democratic transition, and the ongoing Rohingya humanitarian crisis.

The MEPs expressed optimism that the upcoming election would prove a pivotal moment for the country.

A Dutch MEP observed that Bangladesh may be among the few countries where "things are moving in the right direction."

Yunus thanked the EU for its steadfast support and urged increased funding for the more than one million Rohingya refugees living in Bangladesh. In particular, he sought assistance to help reopen schools in the refugee camps, which were recently shut down due to an aid shortfall.

Pak qualify

FROM PAGE 12

just around 7:00pm (Bangladesh Time) yesterday

Just before the delayed start of the Pakistan-UAE game, the PCB released a statement saying that Pycroft "apologised to the manager and captain of the Pakistan cricket team", having termed the incident a result of a "miscommunication".

Earlier, the Pakistan camp claimed that Pycroft requested their captain Salman Ali Agha to not shake hands with India skipper Suryakumar Yadav during the toss for their Group A match last Sunday.

Suryakumar avoided shaking his Pakistani counterpart's hand at the toss and he and his team did not shake hands with the Pakistan players after the match as well, later saying that it was done in alignment with the BCCI and the Indian government.