

Popy steps back into cinema as a producer

Sadika Parvin Popy, one of Dhallywood's most acclaimed actresses, is returning to cinema, this time as a producer and not an actress.

After disappearing from the industry following her 2020 film *Direct Action*, Popy cited personal reasons for her long absence. In an interview with Prothom Alo, she revealed that filmmaking has always been her true passion and that production offers her deeper fulfillment than acting.

Popy is no newcomer to production – she previously produced films such as *Kidnap*



and *Jibon Manei Juddho*, even facing a Tk 2 million loss on a *Monovar Khokon* project due to lack of team support. Undeterred, she plans to complete her unfinished acting projects but confirmed her career focus is now solely on producing compelling Bangladeshi stories.

THIS MOMENT LIVES IN ME: Leesa Gazi's Oscar-bound feature

MAISHA TASNIM SRESHITHA

In Bangladesh, the hardest thing for many women to own is not a dream; it's placing her name on a deed. *Barir Naam Shahana* begins there, with the stubborn courage it takes to write a woman's name into a house, a life, a future. That stubbornness has carried writer-director Leesa Gazi from a 2011 novella to an Oscar journey she still calls "unexpected."

"I'm having goosebumps right now – every part of me is alive with this moment," Gazi said, her voice catching as she searched for words after learning that her debut feature had been chosen as Bangladesh's official submission for Best International Feature Film at the 98th Academy Awards.

"This is a film where ordinary people become extraordinary. I got the news last night and I'm still processing it. After watching it, audiences – especially women – will see themselves on screen; they'll recognise their own lives in this story."

The director of *Barir Naam Shahana* (A House Named Shahana) was speaking to The Daily Star hours after Bangladesh



named her film the country's official submission for the Oscars. Earlier in the morning, at a press conference at Pan Pacific Sonargaon in Dhaka, the Bangladesh Oscar Committee announced its decision after weeks of deliberation over five shortlisted films. "For the last month we have been on this so that we can make the right decision," said jury chair Dr Mohammad Zahirul Islam.



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

SHAKIB KHAN receives Silver Jubilee Award at The Daily Star

Megastar Shakib Khan has completed 25 remarkable years on the silver screen, a milestone that cements his unparalleled impact on the Bangladeshi film industry. To celebrate this achievement, The Blender's Choice–The Daily Star OTT & Digital Content Awards honoured him with the Silver Jubilee of Excellence in Bangla Cinema



Award for his outstanding contribution to Bangla cinema, also marking his silver jubilee in films.

Although he could not attend the award ceremony on September 7 due to being abroad, Shakib Khan, yesterday, visited The Daily Star Centre to receive the honour in person. The *Toofan* actor, radiating his signature charisma, accepted the award from Mahfuz Anam, Editor and Publisher of The Daily Star.

"It is truly an honour to receive such recognition from The Daily Star. I am humbled by the endless love and support of my fans over the years. This award belongs to them. It doesn't feel like 25 years have passed; I still feel like the boy who stepped into films, planning to stay for just three months," Shakib said.

Following the ceremony, the actor toured the newsroom, greeted colleagues warmly, and left an aura of celebration behind as the evening gently descended.

NEWS

Yunus calls on int'l community

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former presidents of Bulgaria; Ivo Josipović, former president of Croatia; Mladen Ivanić, former President of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Ameelah Gurib-Fakim, former president of Mauritius.

Also in attendance were a former secretary general of the Commonwealth, a former deputy PM of Georgia, four former presidents of the UN General Assembly, several former foreign ministers, Ismail Serageldin, former vice president of the World Bank, and Kerry Kennedy, president of Robert F Kennedy Human Rights.

Yunus expressed deep gratitude for the overwhelming support. "To see you come together like this in support of us – it's unbelievable. I am truly touched."

He likened the challenges facing his administration to surviving a major natural disaster.

"This country has been through a 15-year long earthquake. Its magnitude

was 9 on the Richter scale," he said. He also pointed to the challenge of managing public expectations.

"People expect miracles overnight despite our limited resources. But we must also fulfil the dreams of our youth – they are looking for a new Bangladesh," he said.

The leaders acknowledged Bangladesh's recent progress under Yunus's leadership while also noting the serious challenges the country faces after 16 years of misrule, corruption and exploitation, said the press release.

Meanwhile, Tshering Tobgay, the prime minister of Bhutan, has expressed a strong interest in signing a free trade agreement (FTA) with Bangladesh and linking the two countries' economic zones to boost trade and investment.

Tobgay made the proposal during a meeting with Yunus at the United Nations headquarters in New York on the sidelines of the 80th UN General Assembly on Friday.

Both countries could greatly benefit

if Bhutan's special economic zone (SEZ) and Gelephu Mindfulness City are connected with the SEZ in Kurigram that Bangladesh has officially allocated for Bhutanese investors, Tobgay said.

Yunus welcomed the proposals, stressing that both countries should explore all avenues to expand trade and investment.

Bhutan is eager to share its hydroelectric potential and is ready to welcome investment from Bangladesh's pharmaceutical companies, Tobgay said. He also sought Bangladesh's support to set up fibre optic connectivity in Bhutan.

Tobgay confirmed that Bhutan would join the upcoming UN-organised plenary session on the Rohingya issue in New York on September 30.

Yunus invited Tobgay to visit Bangladesh. Tobgay accepted, suggesting he might undertake the visit before Bangladesh's planned general elections in February next year.

Tarique warns of 'covert autocracy'

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country also requires collective effort.

"But to destroy a house, it doesn't take many. This country is yours, mine and all of ours. It must be rebuilt. And as political workers, our first duty is to go to the people, because they are the true strength behind nation-building."

Tarique instructed the BNP leaders and activists to form small groups of two or three and go door to door, reaching people directly.

"We must tell them how the BNP will rebuild the country if supported by the people – how we will reform the education system for their children,

improve communications, empower women, stand beside farmers and build better education and healthcare systems."

Tarique emphasised that the BNP's message must reach every section of society – young and old, men and women, in every household.

Speaking at the programme, BNP Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed said the people of Bangladesh are ready for the election though some parties are trying to derail it on various pretexts.

A vested quarter is carrying out negative campaigns against the BNP by spreading disinformation and

misinformation on social media to malign the party, he said.

Subsequently, he urged the BNP leaders and activists and its associate bodies across the country to be active on social media and counter the propaganda against the party.

He went on to criticise those talking about a single ballot box for Islam and urged all to remain alert about attempts to divide the people by playing the religion card.

He also called upon the BNP leaders and activists to remain cautious so that no one can obstruct the restoration of democracy by hatching different plots.

Section 144 amid blockade over rape

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deterioration in law and order in Khagrachhari municipality and Sadar upazila.

However, despite Section 144 being in effect, violence erupted near the Youngdo Buddhist Temple in town around 7:00pm. Two individuals were rescued and taken to Khagrachhari Sadar Hospital; one was later transferred to a private facility for advanced care.

Khagrachhari Civil Surgeon Md Saber reported that 23 injured people sought treatment throughout the day. Of them, 21 were discharged after receiving primary care, while two were admitted.

Meanwhile, around 2,000 tourists were escorted from Sajek to Khagrachhari by security forces protection last night.

In a statement, Border Guard Bangladesh said, "Seven platoons of BGB have been deployed to maintain law and order in Khagrachhari."

During yesterday's blockade, which started at 5:00am under the banner of "Jumma Chhatra-Janata", traffic on the Chattogram-Khagrachhari, Khagrachhari-Rangamati and Khagrachhari-Sajek roads became suspended.

Tyres were set on fire, and tree trunks were placed on the roads at different parts of the district. Protesters alleged that during the blockade, they were attacked near the Sadar upazila office premises, leaving protesters injured.

Jumma Chhatra-Janata spokesperson Ukenyu Marma said, "From the

beginning, we have been observing the blockade peacefully. We urge everyone to end the blockade in a peaceful manner."

"However, some miscreants have tried in different ways to undermine the legitimacy of our student- and public-led blockade," he added.

Khagrachhari Superintendent of Police Arefin Jewel said police were trying to restore order in the area.

The rape incident reportedly occurred on September 23 when the class-eight girl was returning from private tuition around 9:00pm.

The victim's father filed a case on September 24 with Khagrachhari Sadar Police against three unidentified men.

So far, police have arrested one suspect, who was placed on a six-day remand.

Feminism in Bangladesh

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a series and that work on the second part had already begun.

The book documents the struggles, experiences, and achievements of 12 women – Hameeda Hossain, Fauzia Moslem, Nazmunnessa Mahtab, Selina Hossain, Khushi Kabir, Sultana Begum, Sultana Kamal, Aroma Dutta, Shaheen Anam, Nirupa Dewan, Shameem Akhter, and Meghna Guhathakurta – all considered feminist pioneers of the country.

Speaking at the event, veteran rights activist Hameeda Hossain expressed her gratitude to the organisers. "I am very grateful to be here."

Prominent human rights defender Sultana Kamal reflected on the contradictions in society. "In the current culture, we can lift someone up today and trample them down tomorrow without hesitation. [The line between] Truths and lies, black and white, good and bad are all blurred.

"Whether we speak of activism or of work, historical consciousness is necessary. Where we came from, where

we want to go, what we want to do – these are questions we must constantly reflect on."

She added, "Ideals must be built, shaped, understood, internalised, and carried forward."

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad President Fauzia Moslem described her lifelong struggle as "the fight to become human."

"I want those around me to become human as well. This is the fight we have carried on."

Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation, said the term feminist is often ridiculed. "But I believe that a person who has humanity, who believes in equality, and who is respectful to everyone – that person is a feminist."

Calling the Liberation War the defining event of her life, she said, "We wanted to build a country where there would be no discrimination..."

"Sadly, even after so many years, we haven't been able to achieve that. But we're still hopeful. The women of this country have achieved a lot and they stand strong.

I place my trust in the next generation to carry this movement forward."

Khushi Kabir, coordinator of Nijera Kori, said, "If this work had been done earlier, the stories of those who inspired us would also have been included."

Meanwhile, former lawmaker Aroma Dutta said, "I became a feminist from my mother. I am proud that I was part of the Liberation War. That was the first step of my becoming a feminist."

In her speech, filmmaker Shameem Akhter observed that cinema remains "male dominated" but expressed hope that more women would come forward.

Khodeja Sultana Lopa, country director of Diakonia, said recording these stories was essential for the next generation.

Publisher Hasan Tareq, editor-in-chief of Dyu Publications, said the book was being released "at the right time, with the right title".

The event also featured poetry recitation, music, and a short film screening, while guests were presented with scarves, saplings, and a copy of the book.

Make 'political investment' for Rohingyas

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Addressing a panel discussion on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York yesterday, he said many Rohingyas were brought to their villages from the internal displacement camps and that new mosques were built for them.

Speakers, including the US Deputy Secretary of State Christopher Landau, officials from Kosovo, Liberia, Panama, and Hungary, took part in the event titled "Global Refugee Asylum System: What Went Wrong and How to Fix It".

"I'll give you some good news. The place where they [Rohingyas] came from is called Rakhine State of Myanmar, and 85% to 90% of the territory has been taken over by the Arakan Army (AA)," said Khalilur, also chief adviser's high representative on the Rohingya crisis and matters of priority.

Stating that he is in frequent touch with the AA, he said last week the AA sent him pictures where their army head was talking to Rohingyas who had been brought in from the internal displacement camps back to their villages.

"The village headman is being chosen from among them. They build some new mosques; they opened a grand mosque in one of the major

towns. So, things are getting better. This is the time when you actually make the political move," Khalilur said.

"So, I would urge everybody to make sure that in the next few months we come together and pledge – to ourselves and to the refugees – that we will make this political investment."

About 7.5 lakh Rohingyas fled a military crackdown in Rakhine, joining the others who had fled in the previous years. Every year some 30,000 children are born in Bangladesh Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar, with the total number of them being more than 1.2 million.

Rohingyas want to return to Myanmar but say they had no guarantee of citizenship, safety and fundamental rights as their citizenship was denied by a law in 1982.

Meanwhile, Myanmar has been in crisis since a military coup in 2021, and the AA has taken control of about 90 percent of Rakhine.

Bangladesh experienced a fresh exodus of Rohingyas from Myanmar in recent months amid escalating conflicts and reports of atrocities against the Rohingyas by the Arakan Army.

Khalilur said the world has spent more than \$5 billion on the Rohingyas, with the US being the largest donor

and Bangladesh spent probably way more, and in many more ways beyond just money.

"But how much did we all spend on the Rohingyas before they came to Bangladesh? Nothing. Their lands are bountiful, their waters are plentiful. We used to buy food from them. They don't need us – we need them," he said.

However, he added, "As long as they are here, they have to be fed, they have to be taken care of. But I see far fewer attempts to resolve the issue. It's ridiculous that we keep spending our taxpayers' money, but we are not mobilising enough political resources to resolve this issue."

Referring to the September 30 high level conference to be organised by the UN in New York, Khalilur said Rohingyas from different parts of the world have expressed their desire to go home.

"We are talking about refugees who have been given asylum in Western countries, the United States included. These people want to go home. Please help them go home.

"I don't want any money to be spent on the Rohingyas in three to four years from now. Rather, spend a little money – a fraction of it – in Myanmar so that they can restart their lives and get their future back," he said.