

## Tanim Noor to adapt Humayun Ahmed's 'Kichhukkhon' as 'Bonolota Express'

Director Tanim Noor has announced his new feature film *Bonolota Express*, adapted from Humayun Ahmed's acclaimed novel *Kichhukkhon*.

The teaser, unveiled yesterday, confirms the film will release in theatres on Eid-ul-Fitr 2025. Presented by Buriganga talkies, in association with hoichoi studios and DOPE productions, the project follows the success of Noor's award-winning film *Utshob*.

The filmmaker revealed the adaptation while accepting the Cinematic Excellence Award at The Daily Star OTT & Digital Content Awards 2024.

Although details on the cast and shooting schedule remain undisclosed, the announcement has generated strong anticipation among audiences eager to see Noor's cinematic take on one of Humayun Ahmed's most beloved literary works.



PHOTO: RATUL CHOWDHURY

## LIVING ON DEATH ROW A voice for the wronged and forgotten

NAVEEN ISLAM TOREE

Sitting in the comfort of our homes, we often forget the unseen injustices that unfold every day. But imagine, for a moment, that the warmth of that cup of tea fades away. The soft bed is replaced by a cold, hard floor. The familiar room becomes a six-by-eight-foot cell shared with seven others. The thought alone is unsettling.

In Bangladesh, countless individuals face such realities — thrown into condemned cells after being accused of crimes they may not have committed. Some are executed, others die of illness, and a few are eventually released. But even for those who walk free, is it truly freedom? Social death lingers. The whispers, the suspicion, and the stigma follow them everywhere.

These are the questions that photographer Mostifqur Rahman Johan confronts in his exhibition *Living on Death Row*, curated by Tanzim Wahab and co-curated by Hadi Uddin. The exhibition, hosted at Drik Gallery, portrays the stories of 12 individuals who spent years in condemned cells before finally being released.

The moment visitors step into the gallery, they are greeted by a stark chart displaying death-penalty statistics from 2010 to June 2025 — a striking reminder of how many lives hang in uncertainty. The exhibition's title captures this paradox of existence



PHOTO: NAVEEN ISLAM TOREE

— living while waiting to die.

The photographs depict ordinary moments: people sitting with family, resting in their bedrooms, or walking down a street. At first glance, they appear like any other citizens. But their stories reveal the haunting truth — each portrait belongs to someone who spent years on death row. These innocent people lived in fear every day, eating their meals thinking each might be their last. Their resilience, however, shines through. Despite losing youth, loved ones, and decades of life, they continue to persevere, refusing to surrender to despair.

Through *Living on Death Row*, Johan hopes to ignite a conversation about the justice system and its consequences. He said, "There is little accountability for those who wrongfully imprison innocent people.

My goal is to raise awareness and push for judicial reform." He also intends to advocate for compensation for those unjustly sentenced, seeing it as the first step toward restorative justice.

The exhibition stands as both art and activism — a reminder that behind every statistic lies a story, a family, and a life interrupted. *Living on Death Row* is not merely a showcase of photos; it is a call to see, to remember, and to seek change.

The exhibition is currently on display at Drik Gallery, DrikPath Bhubon, in Panthapath, Dhaka. Supported by the European Union, the Embassy of France in Bangladesh, Drik Picture Library, and The Death Penalty Project, the show opened on October 10, 2025, and will run until October 19, 2025, from 3:00pm to 8:00pm every day.

## Bangladesh-China diplomacy's Golden Jubilee celebrated in Beijing

To celebrate 50 years of diplomatic relations between Bangladesh and China, a special cultural evening was held at 6 PM in Beijing, yesterday.

The event showcased the musical heritage of Bangladesh, featuring renowned music composer Emon Chowdhury and the Bengal Symphony, joined on stage by rock vocalists D Rockstar Shuvo and Oni Hasan.

The performance spanned generations of Bangladeshi music — from the timeless songs of legendary mystic bards such as Lalou Shah, Hason Raja, Shah Abdul Karim, and Abbasuddin Ahmed, to the anthems of contemporary rock icon Ayub Bachchu.



### WHAT'S THE HAPS?

#### Film Screening: Khacha

Drishyapat Film Society will screen Akram Khan's acclaimed film *Khacha* as part of its fifth showcase. Set during the 1947 Partition, the film follows a Brahmin family's perilous journey from East Pakistan to India, exploring faith, loss, and identity amid the turmoil of religious division.

DATE: THURSDAY | OCT 16, 2025  
TIME: 5 PM ONWARDS  
VENUE: DUCSU CAFETERIA, DHAKA UNIVERSITY



## NEWS

### July attacks were systematic crimes

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Tajul placed his arguments for the third consecutive day in the case filed against the trio.

Quoting physicians who treated the victims, the prosecutor said patients were shot from elevated positions and even from helicopters. Some had parts of their skulls blown off, while hundreds were hit in the eyes with metallic pellets and bullets.

"These attacks were consistent, not random, and similar weapons were used in Dhaka and other districts in a coordinated manner — hallmarks of systematic attacks," Tajul told the three-member tribunal.

He said evidence also showed that women, girls, and children were targeted, abused, and in some cases killed, detained, or tortured by security forces and armed AL supporters. "Our investigation agency and the UN fact-finding report both identified these patterns, proving the attacks were directed systematically against civilians."

Referring to the UN report, Tajul said forensic examinations of 130 victims conducted by Dhaka Medical

College's forensic department found that 66 percent died from military-grade rifles, 12 percent from shotguns, two percent from pistols, and 20 percent from other weapons.

The prosecution also alleged that injured protesters were denied medical treatment, doctors were obstructed from performing post-mortems of many victims, and bodies were buried as unidentified or under coercion.

"These meet the criteria of systematic attacks under the Rome Statute, which Bangladesh has ratified," Tajul said, referring to the treaty defining crimes against humanity, war crimes, and genocide.

To support the first charge, Tajul cited inciting remarks made by Hasina on July 14, when she branded protesters as "Rajakars", and by AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader the following day, saying Chhatra League was "ready to respond".

He added that following the statements, Chhatra League members attacked students at various universities, after which

police and armed AL supporters launched assaults on protesters, killing over 1,400 and injuring more than 25,000.

Quoting testimony from ex-IGP Mamun, Tajul named several leaders of AL-led 14-party alliance who allegedly urged Hasina to use lethal force.

Tajul cited audio recordings of Hasina's conversations with her nephew, then Dhaka South City Corporation mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh, in which she said she had already given instructions on the use of lethal weapons, drones, and helicopters. "This evidence is sufficient to establish Hasina's command responsibility."

He also referred to Hasina's alleged phone calls with Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President Hasanul Haq Inu and then Dhaka University VC Prof ASM Maksud Kamal, as well as a wireless message from then DMP commissioner Habibur Rahman directing police to open fire on protesters.

The arguments will continue today.

### 'No rank above justice'

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Iftekharuzzaman said, "How can discrimination based on identity or position be acceptable in cases involving the same allegations? In the trial process of individuals accused of crimes against humanity, there is no scope to consider professional identity or rank."

"Granting or assessing anyone with special privileges in this way goes against the principle of justice. If other accused persons can be held in civilian custody under regular procedures, what is the justification for establishing specialised sub-jails for accused military officers?"

The statement also asked, "Will the government then offer as many types of sub-jails as there are professional or institutional identities among the accused from state and non-state sectors?"

"This discriminatory behaviour by

the government will call into question the judicial process of the International Crimes Tribunal, creating the risk of public confusion regarding the government's intentions, particularly among victims and their families. Effective measures must be taken to ensure that there is no scope for even the slightest doubt about the impartiality and transparency of the trial process."

Iftekharuzzaman further said, "According to article 27 of the constitution, which guarantees 'equality before the law,' and under the basic principles of relevant international law, no person accused of crimes against humanity is entitled to any special privilege — this applies equally to members of the armed forces."

Referring to the example of a former military officer accused of crimes against humanity, Iftekharuzzaman said, "In some cases, the army arrested

the accused at the airport and handed them over to the police, which we consider a positive precedent. That individual is currently detained under civilian control.

"Therefore, why are other accused military officers required to remain in military custody? The military authorities and the government must provide an explanation," reads the statement.

TIB also said, "All parties involved must ensure that accountability for crimes against humanity, such as enforced disappearances, killings, and torture, is secured in accordance with constitutional commitments and internationally recognised procedures."

"The opportunity for exemplary justice, achieved through immense sacrifice, must not be undermined by discriminatory behaviour that grants special privileges to a particular group."

### WFP reaffirms Rohingya food

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— stating that it had successfully "brought international attention back to the crisis."

"It was an important meeting. We must ensure it remains high on the international agenda," said Skau.

The duo also discussed the potential for securing funding from new sources, including wealthy nations and multilateral financial institutions.

Skau noted that following fresh humanitarian aid commitments from the United States and the United

Kingdom announced during the UN high-level meeting in New York, WFP would continue providing the \$12 monthly food stipend to each Rohingya.

Prof Yunus expressed appreciation for WFP's global leadership in combating hunger and famine. He also thanked the UN agency for its support in launching a new school feeding programme in Bangladesh.

"Some Asian countries have made amazing progress with school feeding. We aim to strengthen our efforts,

ensuring both quality and gradual expansion," the Chief Adviser said.

The discussion also touched on the hunger conditions in the world. Skau mentioned WFP's ongoing efforts to deliver hundreds of food trucks into Gaza, amid rising food insecurity affecting nearly 300 million people globally.

Food Adviser Ali Imam Majumder, Fisheries and Livestock Adviser Farida Akhter, SDG Coordinator Lamiya Morshed and Foreign Secretary Asad Alam Siam were present at the meeting.

### 'We're trapped, we can't get out'

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slum on Road-12 of Rupnagar residential area, only 300 yards away from work.

Her mother, Yasmin Begum, told The Daily Star that the couple, who got married three months ago, had come to Dhaka to build a better future.

"Joy used to work at a garment factory in Gazipur before her marriage. They then joined the same factory [Arian Fashion] — Joy as an operator and Alo as a helper on the same floor.

"We can see the factory from our home," Yasmin said, adding, "There was a loud bang, and then we heard people shouting that the factory caught fire."

At the scene, Sultan was standing with a photograph of his daughter and son-in-law. "I called her when I heard about the fire."

"She picked up and said they were trapped. I told her to find a way out,

like everyone else."

Firefighters recovered 16 bodies from the site. The fire service said DNA tests will be required to identify the victims as the bodies have been badly burnt.

Joy's mother, Sheuly Begum, who arrived at the site in tears, said, "My son took this job hoping for a better life. Now I can't find my son or his wife."

Another worker, Munni Akhter, who lived next door to Alo and worked on the same floor, was also missing. Her husband, Naim, was seen running frantically from one end of the street to another, searching for her.

Munni's mother-in-law, Tahera Begum, said, "She left for work after breakfast. Later, we heard about the fire."

Munni had married Naim only six months ago.

"Naim works at a sweet shop, but his income wasn't enough. So, Munni started working at the factory for Tk

7,500 a month. She even managed to send money home."

Grieving relatives crowded the entrance of the emergency department of Dhaka Medical College Hospital, some clutching photos.

Among them was Parvin Begum, holding a photo of her niece Asma Akhter.

Asma came to Dhaka from her village three months ago to live with her aunt. Her parents sent her to the city hoping she could help support their family of eight. Asma worked as a helper on the third floor of the RMG unit.

"She was supposed to come home for lunch but never did," Parvin said. "When we heard about the fire, we ran to the factory but couldn't find her."

Dhaka Medical College Hospital said families of the missing victims would be called to provide DNA samples for identification once testing begins.