

BETWEEN BOOKS AND PROJECTOR LIGHT

## How Tara Books Banani is harbouring a community of film enthusiasts

FAIZA RAMIM

Tucked away on the first floor of a quiet building in Banani 11, Tara Books has gradually become one of Dhaka's most intimate cultural sanctuaries. What began as a small independent bookshop has evolved into a rare space for film enthusiasts in the city's otherwise commercial northern neighborhoods. Managed by Arfun Ahmed, the shop now doubles as a micro-cinema, hosting regular weekend screenings that have turned into a refuge for conversation, curiosity, and community.

For the past two years, Tara Books has hosted film screenings almost every weekend. The setup is modest yet intentional; a projector positioned between a bookshelf and a narrow corridor, encircled by a handful of cushions and low seats for ten or twelve viewers. Tickets are sold on the spot for Tk 200, just enough to cover the electricity bill. "There is no profit," Arfun explains. "The ticket price is mostly to keep the lights on and the community alive."

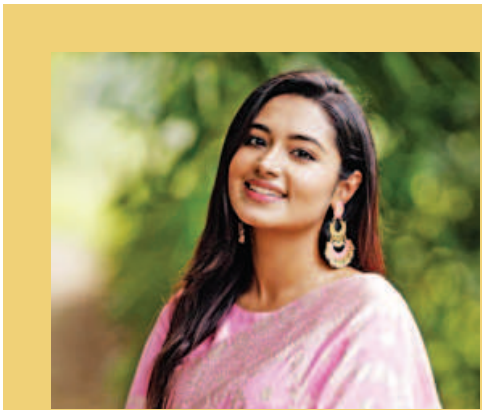
The films selected for screening are personally curated by Arfun Ahmed, reflecting a distinct and thoughtful vision. Instead of following trends or commercial appeal, the selections emphasise cinema of depth, culture and conscience and a high aestheticism. Over the past two years, Tara Books has screened films such as *Chinatown*, *Ikiru*, *La Grande Illusion*, *Quatre Nuits d'un Rêveur*, *The Man Without a Past*, *Millennium Actress*, *Barfi!*, *Just 6.5*, and *Ghashful* – a cross-section of world cinema spanning Japanese humanism, French poetic realism, American neo-noir, and South Asian social narratives.



PHOTOS: COLLECTED



Tara Books addresses cultural engagement with great conviction. Over time, it has nurtured a small yet cohesive community of regular visitors who come not only to watch films but also to engage in thoughtful discussions afterward. The shop has additionally hosted musical performances by Gonje Feresta and premiered Akram Khan's *Ghashful*; the first Bangla film screened there – with the director himself in attendance.



### Chanchal and Farin coincidentally met in Kolkata for the same project

Chanchal Chowdhury and Tasnia Farin recently travelled to Kolkata to attend a special screening of *Swarthapar*, hosted by actress Koel Mallick. After the event, both actors were scheduled to meet noted filmmaker Aniruddha Roy Chowdhury regarding his upcoming project – though neither knew the other had been invited for the same reason.

"None of us knew that we were both going to meet for the same project – it was purely coincidental," Chanchal shared. "I came here to meet Tony da (Aniruddha Roy Chowdhury) about a film, and Farin also came for the same reason. We ran into each other and were surprised to learn we were here for the same purpose."

When asked if they will share the screen, Chanchal said, "Nothing is confirmed yet, but discussions are ongoing. Hopefully, we'll work together." Farin echoed similar sentiments, keeping details under wraps. Fans now await official confirmation of their collaboration.



### Alimuzzaman and Raihan Rafi receive Fazlul Haque Memorial Award 2025

Journalist Alimuzzaman and filmmaker Raihan Rafi have been honoured with the Fazlul Haque Memorial Award 2025. The award, instituted by noted writer Rabeya Khatun, was presented at a grand ceremony held at the Channel i premises.

The event was attended by filmmaker Matin Rahman, Director General of the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, poet Rezauddin Stalin, and veteran actor Afzal Hossain, along with several journalists, writers, publishers, and directors.

It is worth mentioning that the Fazlul Haque Memorial Award has been presented for the past 22 years in memory of the late Fazlul Haque, the founding editor of the country's first film magazine, Cinema and the maker of Bangladesh's first children's film, *Son of Pakistan*.

#### WHAT'S THE HAPS?

### 'Charukola Animation Festival 2025'

The Charukola Animation Society presents the **Charukola Animation Festival 2025** – a three-day celebration of imagination and innovation in animation. Uniting artists, studios, and storytellers from across Bangladesh, the festival will showcase screenings, workshops, live art jams, cosplay, and dynamic discussions shaping the country's fast-growing animation industry.

**Date:** Tuesday-Thursday | Oct 28-30, 2025  
**Time:** 11 am - 6 pm

**Venue:** Faculty of Fine Arts, Dhaka University



## NEWS

### Living conditions appalling

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"I had to wait three months to get a bed on the second floor... But the living area is stretched beyond its limits," he said.

Russell Sarowar, officer-in-charge (OC) of the station, admitted that the living conditions are appalling.

"The available space is grossly inadequate for the 130 members stationed here," he said, adding that 85 policemen, who are mostly constables, live in the barrack. The others, mainly SIs and ASIs, rent houses and live with their families.

Sarowar said the station faces a shortage of policemen, forcing it to form patrol teams of just two while three to four officials are required for such teams.

The limited living space has forced the authorities to keep the number of policemen at the station low, the OC clarified.

"Senior officials are aware of the situation. They are exploring options for land to build a new complex, but no decision has been made yet," he added.

Conditions are no better at Shah Ali Police Station in Mirpur 1. A small three-storey building can barely accommodate the constables.

Golam Azam, the OC of Shah Ali Police Station, said most of the 145 members posted there live on the first and second floors or in temporary sheds. Like Banani, the SIs and ASIs of

Shah Ali have rented houses to live with their families.

The footpaths outside have been turned into makeshift quarters with tin roofs where constables endure sweltering heat and mosquito attacks in the summer.

"There is no kitchen. We eat at nearby restaurants, spending around Tk 6,000 each a month. The cost could have been cut significantly if we could cook," said a constable of the station, requesting anonymity.

Those who do not get space to sleep at the quarters go to a nearby community centre. "When it gets too crowded even there, some end up sleeping on the veranda of an adjacent mosque," he said.

Another constable said the appalling condition hampers their sleep, and eventually impacts their work. "We can't even talk to our families over the phone privately at night," he said.

The OC added that the station has no resting space for reserve police officers. They wait outside until their duty hours begin.

During a visit to the station on October 6, several policemen in uniform were seen waiting on footpaths, parked rickshaws or tea-stalls outside.

According to officers, 25 of Dhaka city's 50 police stations operate from

rented buildings, while the rest are on land owned by the force. Many of the stations are in poor condition. Banani and Shah Ali are among the worst.

Police officials said some barracks have recently seen minor improvements following repairs and pest control. Still, for many, living conditions remain a daily struggle.

Several inspectors said it has become extremely difficult for many of them to ensure public security when they cannot rest properly after 12-14 hours of duty.

When contacted on October 6, Sarder Nurul Amin, additional inspector general (development) at the Police Headquarters, said a project has been taken up to develop and renovate barracks in 107 out of 639 police stations across the country.

"Construction and repairs of structures in 52 stations is expected to be completed within this fiscal year, and the rest by the next fiscal year," he said.

On July 2 last year, the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) approved a Tk 1,600-crore project for infrastructure development of 107 police stations.

"Besides, we have initiated another project for constructing 116 police outposts. The proposal will soon be sent to the home ministry for placing it before ECNEC for approval," he added.

### BNP seeks symbol sharing

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"But suddenly we saw in the newspapers that even if an alliance is formed, each party must contest with its own symbol. The BNP does not agree with this amendment, and this change is not acceptable to us."

He said the main purpose of forming alliances is to maximise electoral success, and parties should retain the freedom to select their preferred symbol within the coalition framework.

"Until now, symbols have been allocated according to alliance

preferences, and this has never led to any problem. We fail to understand why this well-established system has been changed."

He also criticised the decision for being taken without talking to political parties.

Regarding the issue, EC Senior Secretary Akhtar Ahmed yesterday said, "In line with the recommendations of the Election Reform Commission, we have amended everything starting from the RPO to various conduct rules, as

well as all laws and regulations related to election management."

However, Zabiullah said the BNP believes that the amendment to the RPO undermines the democratic rights of political parties.

"The right of allied parties to contest using any of their symbols is a democratic right. The BNP sees no justification for curtailing that right. Therefore, we have written to the Election Commission to take necessary steps to retain the previous provision of article 20."

### At least 37 animals dead or missing

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3,690 acres. Tourist Police Superintendent Nihad Adnan Tayan added that a help desk system is being planned to enhance security.

Meanwhile, official records show that animal deaths have increased in recent years. A lion and a wildebeest died in December 2021; 11 zebras, a tiger, and another lion died between January and February 2022. Ten giraffes were imported from Africa in 2013 and multiplied to 13 through breeding, but all have now died. The park has also been without kangaroos since three died in 2021.

Environment ministry sources said the giraffe's death was not unexpected given the park's ageing population and poor structure, though some new births have occurred. "We don't announce these publicly for security reasons," said a source, preferring anonymity.

Core In-Charge Rahul Pal said the park now houses about 1,300 animals, including tigers, lions, bears, wildebeests, nilgai, chitra deer, maya deer, zebras, and nyalas.

Visitors said the once lively park has grown quiet. "People are losing interest since there are no giraffes," said visitor Nazmul Hasan. Ticket sellers also said sales have fallen sharply except on Fridays.

Tarique noted that the park has 30,000 visitors per month.

#### CONCERNS OVER MISMANAGEMENT

Animal rights activists have blamed poor management and planning for the park's losses.

"The repeated deaths of giraffes represent not an accident but a systemic collapse," said Rubaiya Ahmad, founder of Obhoyaronno Animal Welfare Foundation.

Poor habitat design, lack of professional staff, and outdated equipment, she said, have left veterinarians overworked and animals uncared for.

She added that the park's vast land could have been turned into a model for humane, semi-free wildlife management. "But most of it remains unused due to poor planning and lack of scientific vision."

Rubaiya called the import of exotic animals "ecologically irresponsible", adding that without proper conservation partnerships, it is a misplaced ambition rooted in vanity rather than science.

Conservation biologist Shahriar Caesar Rahman echoed concerns about management but noted that importing foreign species is not inherently wrong. "Such animals thrive elsewhere when provided proper care and habitat design. The problem is not that they're here – it's that we fail to keep them well."

He urged a focus on native wildlife and rewilding efforts. "Bangladesh has countless native species people barely know about. Parks should prioritise their rehabilitation."

Meanwhile, Environment Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan said the park should not have been under the Forest Department, which "struggles to manage the forests themselves".

"Running a safari park requires different expertise," she said, suggesting a joint public-private management model where professionals handle operations while the department retains ownership.

Rizwana also opposed importing exotic animals. "If we can't care for our own wildlife, why bring in foreign species? International law under

CITES requires trafficked animals to be returned to their countries of origin, not displayed in captivity."

She said the government is working to overhaul the existing model and amend the Wildlife Act to allow joint management of safari and eco-parks, combining conservation with responsible tourism. The amendment is expected to be placed before the advisory council within two weeks.

### Bias in police postings

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the main was the ongoing efforts to reduce the number of mobile SIM cards used by individuals to curb fraud and crime.

"We want to reduce the number of SIM cards per person gradually, through a process," he said. "Currently, a person can use up to 10 SIMs, but we aim to bring it down step by step. Our target is two SIMs per person, but before the election, we may make it down to seven."

Jahangir mentioned that discussions were held with the IT adviser to tighten controls and monitor SIM ownership.

He also urged the public and businesses to be more vigilant about fire safety, following several major fire incidents in recent weeks. The fire service has been instructed to hold mock exercises to enhance preparedness.

Regarding misinformation, Jahangir called on journalists and citizens to help curb the spread of false reports on social media, which often cause unnecessary panic.

### Rights bodies urge focus

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shortages, human trafficking and drug smuggling.

In a statement, ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR) said civilians in Myanmar face relentless violence, mass displacement and collapsing services, with over 22 million needing aid and 3.5 million displaced by ongoing airstrikes and destruction.

At the same time, more than 1.3 million Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar endure dwindling aid, food shortages and fading prospects for safe return.

APHR Chairperson Mercy Christy Barends said ASEAN can no longer sideline Myanmar and the Rohingya crisis to the margins of diplomacy.

"These are immediate humanitarian and security crises that demand urgent and decisive leadership," Barends said.

Thai MP Rangsiman Rome said ASEAN must reject the sham election, which will only deepen the oppression of the Myanmar people, entrench military impunity and erase any remaining prospects for a genuine democratic transition.

The APHR said the ASEAN heads of state must treat the Myanmar conflict and the Rohingya humanitarian emergency as a regional crisis requiring a coordinated response.

They must promote an inclusive, people-centred federal democracy by supporting 'federalism from below', resourcing locally driven initiatives and bringing the National Union Government, ethnic actors, women leaders, and civil society into meaningful political dialogue, it said in a statement.

"This is also a call for all Southeast Asian lawmakers and democratic allies elsewhere to champion a people-centred, rights-based approach in all regional and international fora pertaining to the Myanmar crisis and the humanitarian catastrophe confronting Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh," said Charles Santiago, APHR Co-Chair.

In a statement, Tom Andrews, UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Myanmar, said the regional grouping was at a crossroads with regard to its Myanmar strategy.

"The military junta has been scoffing at ASEAN's Five Point Consensus since

the moment it was signed over four years ago. Now, it wants ASEAN to legitimise a sham election despite the fact that tens of thousands of political prisoners are behind bars, freedom of speech and the press are outlawed and military attacks against civilians continue unabated," he said.

"To recognise the junta's fraudulent election would be to move Myanmar backward and defend the indefensible," Andrews said.

Human Rights Watch Asia Advocacy Director John Sifton said Myanmar's junta has demonstrated neither the intention nor the capacity to organise and hold elections that would even remotely meet international standards.

The military's widespread atrocities in recent years have included crimes against humanity and war crimes, arbitrary detention of opposition politicians and the dissolution and criminalisation of opposition political parties, he said.

"ASEAN and ASEAN partners should categorically reject the idea that free and fair elections can currently be held in Myanmar and refuse to support the elections in any way," Sifton said.