

CELEBRATING HUMAYUN AHMED

The man who turned everyday life into cinematic poetry

ANIKA TAHSIN HAFSA

They say that thirteen is an unlucky number. Superstition marks it as a shadow on the calendar, a date to avoid. Yet on November 13, Bangladesh received one of its greatest gifts, Humayun Ahmed, a storyteller who transformed our screens and preserved our souls through cinema. Novelist, screenwriter, and director, Humayun Ahmed reshaped the way Bangladeshi see themselves on screen. His films, much like his writings, portrayed simplicity, emotional honesty, humour, and a deep understanding of ordinary life. His films were never about grand spectacles or artificial drama. They were about us: our families, our wars, our silences, our laughter

1971 Liberation War was not that of a soldier holding guns, but of a young man holding memories. His father, a police officer, was killed by the Pakistan Army. At the age of 23, he witnessed the brutality of conflict. These experiences turned into *Aguner Poroshmoni* (1994), a film that preserves our history through sharing food, hiding a wounded freedom fighter, singing quietly during curfew. The story of a Dhaka family sheltering Badi, a wounded freedom fighter, becomes a powerful portrayal of the war. The characters here are portraits of real Bangladeshi. Through waiting, whispered plans, and the weight of a hidden presence upstairs, Humayun Ahmed captured the moments of 1971: the fear, the love, the impossible choices.



PHOTO: STAR

journey in *Amar Ache Jol* (2008). The characters are regular people dealing with regrets and unsaid words. Humayun's literary technique of showing rather than telling reaches its peak here, as characters communicate through pauses, glances, and things left unsaid. Rain, water, and flowing time become visual metaphors for their emotional states. Through these ordinary characters, Humayun showed how real people experience romance—messily, incompletely, beautifully.

Then came his final and most daring work, *Ghetu Putro Komola* (2012), which stands apart from everything before it. Based on the tradition of *Ghetu* songs, the story follows Komola, a boy performer who faces exploitation. Young Komola, dressed

while questioning its human cost. Even in darkness, Humayun finds heartbreaking beauty. He has created a testament to the victims of historical exploitation.

Humayun's cinema flows like our rivers. It flows naturally, unhurried, sometimes flooding with emotion, sometimes running quiet and deep. His characters could be our neighbours, our relatives, ourselves. He portrayed simple things with such care that they became beautiful. Most importantly, he preserved our history, not just dates and battles, but how people actually lived, spoke, loved, and struggled. Future generations will watch these films and understand who we were.

Born on an unlucky number, Humayun Ahmed proved that luck is what you make



echoing through tin-roofed houses. His movies preserve our history, celebrate our rural and urban culture, and show how life flows naturally, without exaggeration or artificial drama.

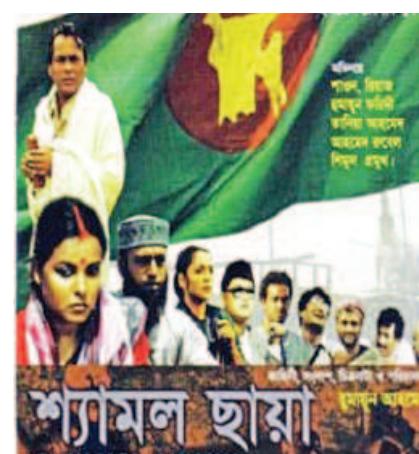
Humayun Ahmed's journey through the

After exploring the war, Humayun delved into the world of folklore with *Chandrokotha* (2003), where rural life blends naturally with imagination. He portrays village life with the warmth of courtyard laughter, night-time gatherings,

local music. The story shows the real picture of Bangladeshi society.

However, his exploration of Liberation War experiences continues in *Shyamol Chhaya* (2004), where the struggle unfolds on a boat filled with people fleeing in 1971. Unlike typical war films filled with violence, he focuses on the psychological journey to escape, to survive, to reach safety across the river that separates death from life. The boat becomes a floating microcosm of Bangladesh: rich and poor, Hindu and Muslim, brave and frightened, selfish and selfless—all trying to survive together. Even in this confined space, Humayun highlights religious harmony amid chaos, showing how communal identity dissolves into shared humanity when survival is at stake. Through silence, fear, suspicion, and fragile hope, *Shyamol Chhaya* captures the psychological truth of 1971 and transforms a simple boat journey into an instance of unity and survival.

After exploring collective struggles, Humayun turns toward an emotional



as a girl to perform, becomes trapped in a system where art and abuse intertwine. The Zamindar's mansion, which should be a palace of culture, instead becomes a prison of power imbalance. The film preserves a vanished cultural practice

it. Through his lens, every ordinary Bengali life became worthy of cinema, every simple moment contained magic. On his birthday, we celebrate not just a filmmaker, but the mirror in which Bangladesh saw its most honest reflection.

NEWS

Indigenous

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inside until the area was clear. Within the compound, the United Nations is responsible for security.

"Earlier this evening, a group of protesters breached security barriers at the main entrance to the COP, causing minor injuries to two security staff, and minor damage to the venue," a spokesperson said in a statement.

"Brazilian and UN security personnel took protective actions to secure the venue, following all established security protocols. Brazilian and UN authorities are investigating the incident. The venue is fully secured, and COP negotiations continue."

The main entrance to the venue had been closed for repairs and the UN climate agency said it was set to reopen yesterday morning.

Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has highlighted Indigenous communities as key players in this year's COP30 negotiations.

Earlier this week, dozens of Indigenous leaders arrived by boat to participate in the talks and demand more say in how forests are managed.

Bodies of man, daughter

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About two years ago, Julekha went to Dubai for work. Ratan then kept their daughter at his in-laws' while continuing his work at a garment factory.

Quoting locals, Md Abdullah Al Mamun, additional superintendent of police in Mymensingh, said Julekha returned about one and a half months ago on leave and was scheduled to return to Dubai yesterday.

Ratan allegedly did not want his wife to return to Dubai. Frequent quarrels reportedly occurred between them over this issue, the additional SP said, citing neighbours.

Yesterday evening, Ratan visited his in-laws' house, where his wife was staying. Around 3:00am yesterday, neighbours heard screaming and rushed to the house. They found Ratan's body on the floor, Naria's body on the bed, and Julekha with wounds on her throat and hands, said the police officer.

On information, police recovered the bodies around 4:30am and rescued Julekha, who is currently undergoing treatment at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital.

The additional SP said police recovered a piece of paper with a short note from the spot. It is believed that the short note was written by Ratan before his death.

Police have detained Ratan's father-in-law, Dusal Mia, and his mother-in-law for questioning.

Primarily, police could not say about the motive behind the killings or the involvement of others.

"We are investigating the matter," Md Abdullah Al Mamun told The Daily Star.

Amir Ali, father of slain Ratan Mia, filed a murder case against four people, including Julekha's father, Dusal Mia, with Haluaghat Police Station last night, said Additional SP Md Abdullah Al Mamun.

The three other accused are: Md Yusuf Ali, Md Nazim Mia, and Mosammam Rahima Khatun, all relatives of Julekha.

In the case statement, Amir Ali alleged that his son and granddaughter were brutally

Jamaat, allies

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holding a referendum on the order of the July National Charter before the national election, holding national election under a proportional representation (PR) system, ensuring a level playing field for all, ensuring visible justice of the previous "fascist government" and banning the activities of the "dictatorial collaborators" Jatiya Party and the 14 party alliance.

"Our main demand is now to hold a referendum on the order of the July National Charter before the national election," Parwar said, adding that they want the polls to be held on time in February next year.

Mujibur Rahman, Jamaat's Nayeb-e-Ameer and former MP, read out the next programmes at the press conference.

The leaders and activists of the eight parties will occupy the streets nationwide today to resist any untoward incidents surrounding the likely announcement of the verdict date in a case against former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

"We urge all the patriotic, anti-fascist forces to join us on the streets," he said.

The alliance announced demonstrations and protest marches at the district and metropolitan levels on Friday to press home their demands.

Its top leaders will meet at 11:00am on Sunday and decide on the sit-in programme through a press conference if demands remain unmet.

The leaders of Khelafat Majlish, Bangladesh Khelafat Majlish, Bangladesh Andolon, Nezame Islam Party, Jatiya Ganatantrik Party and the Bangladesh Development Party also joined the press conference.

Fair price for farmers

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The production and storage cost of potatoes stands at Tk 25-27 per kg but they are unable to sell them even at half that price, he said, adding that growers could incur losses of about Tk 3,000 crore this season.

"If a so-called referendum is held to satisfy one party's demand, the state will have to spend a similar amount [Tk 3,000 crore]. Farmers getting a fair price for their produce is far more important than a referendum."

Bangladesh still has one of the highest road accident death rates in the world and yet "road safety has not been addressed in the interim government's discussions".

Among the high school graduates and degree holders in the country, one in every five is unemployed.

"Spending thousands of crores on a so-called referendum is less important to a person who has lost their job than having a job or employment," Tarique said.

Recently, the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association reported that in the last 14 months, at least 353 garment factories in Savar, Gazipur, Chattogram, Narayanganj and Narsingdi have shut down, leaving about 120,000 workers unemployed, he said.

"Isn't a job more important to these unemployed people than spending thousands of takas on the so-called 'referendum'? What do you think?"

Tarique pointed out that the results of the Higher Secondary Examination published last October revealed the lowest pass rate in 2025.

A concerning issue is that the highest number of students failed in English.

"However, in today's global village, it is more critical to focus on education reform research than on the so-called referendum."

He also said that if any political party tries to push their demands for a referendum by exploiting the interim government's weakness, it will not bode well for that party.

"If any political party, seeing the interim government as weak, tries to get whatever it wants or uses tricks to deny BNP a victory, such actions could ultimately lead to political disaster for that party."

At the event commemorating the

civil-military uprising on November 7, 1975, senior leaders from various political parties, including Jamaat-e-Islami, highlighted the importance of unity among anti-fascist parties to restore democracy and resolve their differences.

"I urge our allies on the streets -- and anyone trying to muddy the waters -- please do not try to make the situation volatile," Tarique said.

Some parties are attempting to obstruct the election by imposing various conditions. If the election does not take place, it will pave the way for the return of the fugitive fascist.

"Is an opportunity being given to rehabilitate the fallen, defeated evil forces in politics under the cover of a referendum?"

Associates of the "runaway autocrat recently carried out arson attacks" even in the capital. "This should serve as a warning for all forces that once fought against fascism."

During the fascist rule, a party protected itself as part of its strategy by taking shelter under the umbrella of the fascists, Tarique said.

"In the current situation, it is time for us all to reflect and consider whether the fallen, defeated and fugitive autocrats have also taken shelter under the umbrella of that party involved in the anti-fascist movement."

Many of the BNP's allies from the anti-fascist street movement are expressing doubts about the February election.

"I would like to draw the attention of our allies present here today that instead of issuing threats to the interim government, let us face the people in the upcoming February election. Let us all come forward and stand before the people."

He also expressed concern that a party may be trying to create scope for the rehabilitation of fallen, fugitive forces into politics under the guise of a referendum before the national election.

"I call upon all democracy-loving people of the country to remain vigilant against such moves," Tarique added.

At the event, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said the ongoing crisis is unnecessary. "I believe it has been intentionally created to obstruct the path to democracy."

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eight administrative divisions between October 10 and 21, 2025, through in-person interviews. Rural participants made up 56.7 percent of respondents.

Among them, 89 percent are registered voters, and 97.2 percent of them intend to cast their votes in the upcoming national election. When explaining their political preferences, 41.6 percent cited party ideology or policies, 31.1 percent valued leadership quality, and 10 percent mentioned past performance. Notably, 56.9 percent of those planning to vote for the Awami League said they would abstain if the party does not contest the election.

To strengthen democracy, 73 percent of youth emphasised free and fair elections, while 54.2 percent called for an independent judiciary.

In education, 66.9 percent stressed improving teacher quality and recruitment, and 52.6 percent viewed student politics negatively for disrupting academic environments.

Graft, law and order top concerns

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Despite challenges, 81.7 percent of respondents said they want to stay in Bangladesh, while 18.3 percent prefer to live abroad, mainly citing poor economic conditions (58.1 percent), political instability (44.5 percent), and limited job opportunities (33.5 percent).

Social media is the main news source for 62.3 percent of youth, though 59.6 percent believe it does not reflect the country's actual situation. Fahim Mashroor, co-coordinator of Voice for Reform, also spoke at the event.

At the event, media personality Abdun Noor Tushar said country's youth hold diverse thoughts and aspirations. Acknowledging the youth's concerns and frustrations, he said the survey also showed their strength. "Despite these challenges, 61.7 percent of them remain hopeful and positive about the country's future."

Highlighting the importance of youth engagement, Tahsinah Ahmed, executive director of BYLC, said: "Listening to young people, involving them in decision-making processes, and formulating policies aligned with their aspirations are now extremely urgent."

Jannatul Mawa, Senior Executive at BYLC, called for restoring public trust in institutions, while Munira Sultana, Lead Faculty at BYLC, said, "The youth of our country have the power to build a better nation -- all they need is the right set of skills and opportunities to grow."

Fahim Mashroor, co-coordinator of Voice for Reform, also spoke at the event.

JAIL BREAKS
Nepal boosts anti-poaching patrols

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal has intensified anti-poaching operations to protect its prized tigers, elephants and rhinos after dozens of convicted poachers escaped prison during an anti-government uprising in September, conservation officers said yesterday.

At the event commemorating the