

Armeen
Musa weds
Saqeb
Mahbub

Composer and singer Armeen Musa has announced her marriage to Saqeb Mahbub, with the wedding taking place on February 22, 2025. The artiste shared moments from the celebration on social media on December 29. Speaking to The Daily Star, Musa said the wedding festivities were held across three cities – Hong Kong, London and Dhaka; reflecting the couple's personal and family ties. The intimate gatherings blended music, dance and poetry, including *Sangama*, a special production conceived by Musa with her band and choir.

Armeen Musa is widely known for her work across music, theatre and interdisciplinary performance, and is the founder of the Ghaashphoring Choir. She is also the first Bangladeshi composer-singer to receive a Grammy nomination. Saqeb Mahbub is a barrister, Supreme Court lawyer and partner at Mahbub & Company, with an international legal practice and notable public interest work.

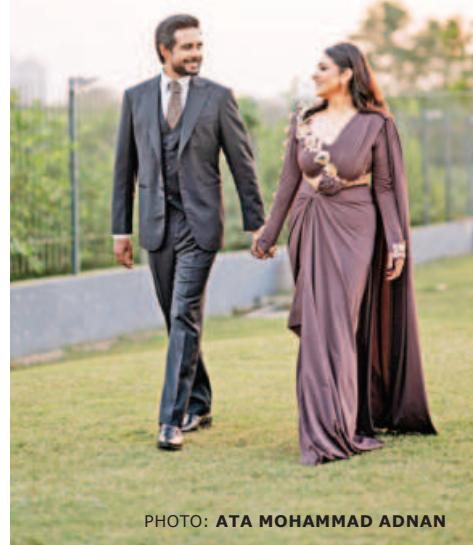


PHOTO: ATA MOHAMMAD ADNAN

Good work is what ultimately sustains an artiste:
Bidya Sinha Mim

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

National Film Award-winning actress Bidya Sinha Mim began her film career with Humayun Ahmed's *Amar Ache Jol*. Over the years, she has delivered several acclaimed performances at home and abroad, including projects in Indian Bengali cinema and on OTT platforms.

On January 4, the actress marked her fourth wedding anniversary. In a candid conversation with The Daily Star, she spoke about love, travel and her plans for the year ahead.

Four years of marriage already – how does it feel?

It feels wonderful. I honestly don't know how four years passed so quickly; it feels like yesterday. With everyone's love and blessings, we're doing well. There was no big celebration; we spent time with our family, and that was enough for me.

Did your husband plan anything special?

Yes, he's promised to take me on a trip. He said, "Wherever you want to go, I'll take you." Now I'm deciding where that should be. That promise itself feels like a beautiful surprise.

You've just returned from the Maldives. What was it like?

I love the sea, and the Maldives always feels special. We've travelled together before, but last month's trip was particularly refreshing; long walks by the shore, conversations, and simply enjoying the blue of the ocean.

You've returned to the set with 'Malik'. What can you tell us about the project so far?

I'd rather not say much right now. The director will speak at the right time. All I can confirm is that shooting has begun. The film is directed by Saif Chandan, and Arifin Shuvoo is my co-star.

There's also an upcoming OTT project...

I'll be doing a web film for Chorki. That's coming up soon. I'm also reading new scripts and choosing projects carefully.

What are you hoping to deliver this year?

I want to present audiences with quality work; stories I believe in and that audiences will enjoy. Those are the kinds of projects I want to be part of, works that appeal to everyone.

Your long-term dream as an actor?

I have just one dream – to do good work. I want to move forward with meaningful projects. At the end of the day, it is good work that sustains an artiste, and that is the path I am following. Over the years, several acclaimed and talked-about films have been added to my career. I hope to continue doing films of that calibre in the future as well.



Oscars shortlist 15 films for Int'l Feature category

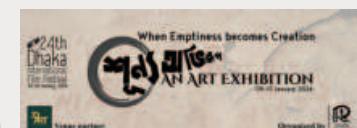
The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences has shortlisted 15 films for the International Feature Film category, narrowing submissions from 86 countries and regions ahead of the next round of voting. The final nominations will be announced on January 22.

The shortlist spans five continents, underscoring the category's global reach. Selected titles include *Belen* (Argentina), *The Secret Agent* (Brazil), *It Was Just an Accident* (France), *Sound of Falling* (Germany), *Homebound* (India), *The President's Cake* (Iraq), *Kokuhō* (Japan), *All That's Left of You* (Jordan), *Sentimental Value* (Norway), *Palestine 36* (Palestine), *No Other Choice* (South Korea), *Sirat* (Spain), *Late Shift* (Switzerland), *Left-Handed Girl* (Taiwan) and *The Voice of Hind Rajab* (Tunisia).

WHAT'S THE HAPS?

'Shunyo Abhirup'

Presented alongside this year's festival, this group exhibition explores how absence transforms into artistic expression. Curated by Lutfa Mahmuda, the show brings together diverse contemporary voices, turning



emptiness into form, thought, and visual resonance within a reflective and immersive gallery setting.

Date: Friday-Saturday |

January 9-17, 2026

Time: 5 pm onwards

Venue: Bangladesh Military Museum

NEWS

'Level-playing field is still absent'

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candidates Abdul Awal Mintoo of Feni and Abdul Malek of Sylhet, among around 12 to 13 such candidates, fall into this category. Some of their nominations were accepted. However, in a similar case, the nomination of Jamaat's Kurigram candidate Mahbub Salehin was not accepted. Jamaat has drawn the Election Commission's attention to this issue, he added.

Referring to another incident, he said that during the Awami League regime, three Jamaat leaders were unlawfully punished in a case. While the nomination papers of two of them were accepted, that of Jamaat candidate AHM Hamidur Rahman Azad was rejected.

"There are two different decisions in the same country; two different interpretations of the same law. We have informed the Election Commission of this and lodged our protest."

He said the reason is that partisan DCs have been appointed in various places, and they have made decisions from a party perspective rather than in

accordance with the law. "We have said such DCs and SPs must be removed and neutral DCs and SPs must be appointed in their places."

Asked whether Jamaat submitted any list to the EC seeking the removal of partisan DCs and SPs, he said they did not.

Taher said Jamaat informed the EC that a level playing field was currently absent, alleging that one party was receiving disproportionate promotion and media coverage. "We have urged initiatives to ensure equal election campaigning."

He claimed that selective security and protocol for certain individuals create public perceptions of favoritism, undermining the electoral fairness.

"If one person is given a lot of protocol, people may get the impression that he may become something in the future, which is damaging the level playing field. An attempt is being made to send a wrong message to the public. We have drawn attention to this matter."

Emphasising equality, the Jamaat leader said all major political parties

must receive the same treatment in terms of protection, protocol, and related matters.

Calling for a fair election with an equal level playing field, he said, "If the upcoming election is held in this kind of arranged manner, Bangladesh will face an existential crisis and the country will move towards an even more dangerous situation."

Meanwhile, Election Commissioner Abul Fazal Md Sanaullah said the 13th national election is like bringing a derailed train back on track, adding that the EC's task is to restore momentum in the electoral process.

Speaking at a programme on citizen election observation in Dhaka, he said the EC faced difficulties in registering local observer organisations, as many failed to perform their duties properly during the last three controversial polls.

His body hanging from the bamboo ceiling of their home and sent it to Chattogram Medical College Hospital for an autopsy. A dark bruise was found around her neck during the inquest, but there were no other injury marks.

"We are waiting for the post-mortem report to know whether it was a homicide or a death by suicide."

An unnatural death case was filed by the victim's maternal uncle, Rana Das, on Sunday, he added.

The incident came to light after a photo of the girl circulated on social media over the past two days.

The victim lived with her mother and younger brother in a one-room rented house on the ground floor of a building in the Panik Tanki Pahar area. The father lives on the KEPZ premises and visits the family once or twice a month.

Speaking to The Daily Star yesterday, the mother, Rosy Ghosh, said, "My children usually stay at my father-in-law's house near our home from morning to night, as my husband and I work. That night, my daughter was at her grandmother's house and returned home alone around 10:00pm while I was at work."

"Around half an hour later, my father-in-law brought our son home and found the door ajar. When he opened it, he saw Srabanti hanging. I rushed home immediately after receiving his call."

"Srabanti's feet were still planted on the bed – something that would not have been the case if it were a suicide."

"My daughter was just a minor; she didn't even know what suicide was."

Pakistan eyes

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On Tuesday, Pakistan's defence minister said the success of its weapons industry could transform the country's economic outlook.

"Our aircraft have been tested, and we are receiving so many orders that Pakistan may not need the International Monetary Fund in six months," Khawaja Asif told broadcaster Geo News.

Taher's current holdings include non-agricultural land and buildings valued at Tk 1 crore (acquisition cost Tk 22.16 lakh), and movable assets declared at Tk 1 crore, including Tk

Labour migration up 12%

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The report links the decline to unsafe working conditions, violence against women workers abroad, negative media narratives and conservative social attitudes that discourage women from working outside the home.

Professional and highly skilled workers make up only 3 to 4 percent of total migration.

Weak training quality, a lack of international recognition of skills, budget shortages, vacant trainer positions and a lack of interest from recruiting agencies are identified as major barriers to skill-based migration, the report said.

RMMRU criticised the budget for fiscal 2025-26, which reduced allocations for the expatriates' welfare and overseas employment ministry.

Despite recommendations to increase migration sector funding, the budget allocation declined from the previous year, with most funds again focused on infrastructure rather than worker protection and services.

The report also raised alarm over irregular migration and migrant

deaths.

Between January and early October 2025, more than 15,000 Bangladeshi migrants arrived in Italy by sea, the highest among all nationalities.

This figure is nearly double that of the previous year, showing that dangerous migration routes remain active despite stricter border controls.

Several key developments in 2025 were discussed in the report.

For the first time, Bangladeshi migrants abroad were allowed to vote through a postal voting system using a mobile application called Postal Vote BD.

By the end of December 2025, more than 1.5 million migrants had registered for postal voting, marking a historic step toward political inclusion of migrant workers.

RMMRU called for urgent reforms to ensure good governance in the migration sector.

Key recommendations include increasing the national budget for migration, reducing the number of recruiting agencies, strengthening skill training and international recognition, ensuring women's safety

in migration, digitising recruitment and certification systems, and holding agencies accountable for fraud and excessive fees.

Addressing the event, renowned photographer Shahidul Alam criticised corruption in recruitment agencies and Bangladeshi embassies abroad, calling them "centres of exploitation".

Migrants are forced to pay bribes even inside embassies through brokers, while basic facilities are denied to them.

He further pointed out that thousands of migrant workers' bodies return home every year, leaving families unable even to afford burial costs.

Stressing the need for structural reform, he said laws will not change unless decision-making shifts away from vested interests, and he demanded easier voting access for migrants, including a digital method.

"Those who shed blood for change rarely benefit from it. The benefits go to those in power, not the people who built this country with their labour," he said.

Sarwar earns

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one as "researcher".

According to the affidavit, Sarwar, who earns Tk 3.40 lakh a year, paid zero income tax as the income fell below the taxable threshold of Tk 3.5 lakh.

While his affidavit lists Tk 3 lakh as his sole asset, his tax return for fiscal 2025-26 shows a net wealth of Tk 2.20 lakh.

In the affidavit, the columns for spouse and dependents were left blank.

Sarwar also declared that he has no liabilities or loans and has never been accused in any criminal case.

Mitu has movable assets

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owns no agricultural or non-agricultural land.

According to the affidavit, the couple's combined movable assets amount to Tk 1.27 crore – Tk 74.31 lakh held by Mitu and Tk 53.42 lakh by her husband.

Mitu paid zero income tax in fiscal 2025-26 as her income of Tk 3 lakh a year was below the taxable threshold of Tk 3.5 lakh. Her husband, who earns Tk 8.49 lakh annually, paid Tk 31,457 in income tax.

Her tax return shows net wealth of

Tk 28.40 lakh, while her affidavit lists assets worth Tk 74.31 lakh.

In the affidavit, Mitu stated that she has never been accused in any criminal case and has no loans.

In her election expenditure statement to the EC, Mitu said that she expects to spend Tk 5 lakh from her own earnings and another Tk 3 lakh from her husband.

She also mentioned receiving Tk 9.9 lakh from six individuals who are not her relatives, and another Tk 7.1 lakh through crowdfunding.

Shishir Manir declares Tk 1.12cr asset

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legal practice and paid Tk 11.43 lakh in tax. During the same period, his wife earned Tk 89.27 lakh and paid Tk 19.82 lakh in tax.

According to the affidavit, Sumaiya receives an annual salary of around Tk 65 lakh from her job. Shishir Monir earned Tk 96,593 in bank dividends last fiscal, while his wife received Tk 20.87 lakh from the same source.

The affidavit further shows that Shishir Manir has Tk 9.52 lakh in cash, while his wife holds Tk 9.94 lakh. He

has only Tk 2,300 deposited in his bank account, whereas his wife has bank savings amounting to Tk 38.26 lakh.

Sumaiya also has investments worth Tk 91.90 lakh in savings certificates and fixed deposits.

Shishir Monir declared 25 bhoris of gold jewellery which he received in gifts. His wife on the other hand declared gold ornaments worth Tk 5 lakh.

The value of Shishir Manir's declared movable assets stands at around Tk 51 lakh, compared to Tk 1.95 crore worth of movable assets owned

by his wife.

Although the Jamaat candidate declared no immovable assets in his affidavit, his tax return shows that he holds immovable property worth Tk 7.55 lakh. Sumaiya owns nearly two acres of non-agricultural land valued at Tk 1.81 crore.

Shishir Manir, his wife and their children have no outstanding liabilities, according to the affidavit.

He faces two cases, one under investigation and another stayed by the High Court.