

# DIFF closing ceremony

## ‘University of Chankarphul’, ‘Kurak’ among noted winners



## Tahsan returns with ‘Family Feud Bangladesh: Season 2’

Putting an end to viewers' long wait, the popular family game show **Family Feud Bangladesh** is set to return to television, once again hosted by musician and actor Tahsan Khan.

Produced by Bongo, the second season will begin airing from today, with episodes broadcast every Monday at 9:30pm on NTV and repeat telecasts on the same channel every Wednesday at 1:00pm. Fans can also enjoy the show anytime, free of charge, on the Bongo app and website. Updates and special moments will be shared on the official Family Feud Bangladesh Facebook page.

Following the success of the first season, Bongo has announced that Season 2 will be even more thrilling and exciting. Last season, the show recorded over 1 billion views across all platforms and awarded more than Tk 30 lakh in prizes. This season promises bigger prizes, greater excitement, and a fresh dimension to family entertainment.

Speaking about the new season, Tahsan Khan said, "This season has truly come alive. The most remarkable aspect of this large-scale production is that the survey for this season's questions was conducted across all 64 districts of Bangladesh. This is what makes each episode even more lively and engaging."

RAKSHANDA RAHMAN MISHA

After days of celebrating cinema across multiple venues, the 24th Dhaka International Film Festival (DIFF) concluded yesterday, January 18, by recognising both emerging and established filmmakers from around the world, whose works resonated with audiences and festival juries alike.

Cultural Affairs Adviser Mostofa Sarwar Farooki was scheduled to attend the closing ceremony as the chief guest but could not be present due to unforeseen circumstances. The event began at 4:00pm at the National Museum, with Jalal Ahmed, chairman of the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission, presiding over the ceremony.



Director Erke Dzhumakmatova (R) accepts the Best Film award for ‘Kurak’

Following the announcement of the winners, a special musical programme was held, where director and singer-songwriter Ahmed Hasan Sunny performed a soulful set. The closing ceremony also featured a special screening of the festival's Best Film,



PHOTOS: SHEKH MEHEDI MORSHED

‘The University of Chankarphul’ cast members pose with the award

**Kurak.**

This year's edition of DIFF showcased 245 films from 91 countries, including 44 films from Bangladesh.

The Best Film Award was presented to **Kurak**, directed by Erke Dzhumakmatova and Emil Atageldiev of Kyrgyzstan. Director Erke Dzhumakmatova was present at the event to receive the award. Visibly emotional, she said, "Finally, I am receiving the award for my film. I would really like to thank the festival juries and all the cast and crew members. We have put a lot of heart and soul into this project."

In the Asian Film Competition Section, the Best Director Award went to Emin Afandiye for **Tanha Insann Monoloqu (A Lonely Person's Monologue)**.

Yerlan Tuleutay won the Best Actor Award for his performance in **Abel**, while Fariba Naderi of Iran received the Best Actress Award for her role in **Shohar-E Setareh (The Husband)**, directed by Ebrahim Irajzad.

Among other awards, Dastan Madaliev and Aizada Bekbalaeva won Best Script Writer for **OT (Burning)**. Jolanta Dylewska received the Best Cinematography Award for **Abel**, directed by Elzat Eskendir. A Special Jury Mention for Isfandiyo Ghulomov for **Mohi Dar Shast (Fish on the Hook)**, a Tajikistan-Iran co-production directed by Muhiddin Muzaffar. An emotional moment unfolded



Bakhtiar Hossain, the lead vocalist of Bay of Bengal, has announced his exit from the band, bringing a 15-year musical journey with the group to an end. The announcement was made through an emotional post on his official Facebook account.

In the post, Bakhtiar wrote, "On the 20th, I will be standing on stage with Bay of Bengal for the last time. This final chapter with the band is being written in Chattogram—the city that taught me how to become an artiste, where I wrote my first song and dreamed my first dreams."

Reflecting on his long association with the band, Bakhtiar described Bay of Bengal as his constant companion for 15 years, a journey that has left a lasting imprint on his life.

# NEWS

## 2 bodies found in abandoned building

FROM PAGE 16

Speaking to reporters at the scene last night, Md Kamrul Islam, sub-inspector of the CID's Crime Scene Unit, said, "From our preliminary findings, we believe one of the bodies may be that of a teenage girl."

He then said the gender of the other body could not be determined, as it was completely burnt. "There is a good chance that it belongs to a woman in her early 20s. Nothing more can be confirmed at this stage."

Laboratory tests will provide final confirmation as to whether the victim was male or female, he added.

The bodies have been sent to the Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College morgue for autopsies.

Md Asaduzzaman, additional superintendent of police (Savar

Circle), told The Daily Star that three more bodies had previously been recovered from the same community centre between August and December last year.

Following the recovery of the third body in December last year, CCTV cameras were installed there.

"Authorities have also been urged to renovate and reopen the building, as its abandonment has led to increased opportunities for misuse," he added.

Earlier on August 29 last year, an unidentified youth was found dead inside the abandoned building with his hands and feet tied.

Police have yet to confirm the youth's identity.

The bodies of a woman and a man were recovered from the same

building on October 11 and December 19 last year, respectively.

The identities of these victims remain unconfirmed, and no arrests have been made in connection with these cases.

The recovery of five bodies from the same location has caused panic among local residents.

"We are passing days amid insecurity. We want a proper investigation into it and the trial of the killers immediately," said Md Shaheen Bhuiyan, a resident of the Savar municipality.

Constructed between 2001 and 2006, the community centre was operational for only a short period before a legal dispute over ownership left it abandoned for more than 15 years.

Sarwar Tushar for Narsingdi-2, and Mazedul Islam for Munshiganj-2.

The party also named candidates for various districts across the country. The list includes Mahbub Alam for Lakshmipur-1, SM Saif Mostafiz for Sirajganj-6, SM Suja Uddin for Bandarban, Maulana Ashraf Mahdi for Brahmanbaria-2, and Mohammad Ataulah for Brahmanbaria-3.

Besides, Jobairul Hasan Arif will run for Chattogram-8, Sultan Muhammad Zakaria for Noakhali-2, Md Abdul Ahad for Dinaipur-5, Atiq Mujahid for Kurigram-2, Zahidul Islam for Mymensingh-II, Saifullah Haider for Tangail-3, Shamim Hamidi for Pirojpur-3, and SM Jarjis Kadir for Natore-3.

The announcement follows a press conference held on Thursday by the 10-party electoral combine, where a consensus on 253 seats was declared.

the government said the greater risk lies not in advocacy, but in equivocation.

An interim government that declines to support the reforms it has championed would weaken public confidence, confuse voters, and undermine the coherence of the transition, it said.

## Unlock women's power, unlock the economy

FROM PAGE 16

Chairman Tarique Rahman, in her keynote speech, said if Bangladesh wants real progress — not symbolic success stories, but sustained national development — then empowerment cannot stop only in classrooms, offices or policies.

"They must reach our homes, our institutions and our mindsets. Policies and access alone do not create equality. You can expand education, pass laws and set national targets, but if social norms, daily expectations and mindsets remain unequal, empowerment remains fragile."

Gender equality is not a women's issue but an economic and national one, she said, while pointing out that when women shoulder most unpaid care and household responsibilities, their participation in the formal economy declines.

In Bangladesh, women still perform around 85 percent of unpaid household and care work, spending over seven times as many hours as men on this labour each day.

This work, valued at nearly 19 percent of GDP, remains largely invisible in economic planning and national decision-making, said Zaima, also a barrister.

"If systems and expectations continue to rely on women's sacrifice as the default, inequality continues comfortably."

Fahmida Khatun, executive director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, underscored access to finance as the biggest barrier to developing women entrepreneurs in Bangladesh, despite the country having sufficient liquidity in its banking system.

"Many women do not have collateral or mortgages, and often even family members — including husbands — are unwilling to provide guarantees. This becomes a major barrier."

Explaining the need for

entrepreneurship, she said Bangladesh's labour market is limited, with over two million new entrants every year but few jobs available.

"Until investment increases, entrepreneurship is necessary to create employment. Small entrepreneurs already contribute around 25 percent of GDP and must form the backbone of our economy, especially for women."

Khatun also pointed to a lack of information, noting that many small women entrepreneurs outside Dhaka are unaware of government incentives or support programmes.

"Post-financing guidance — on profitable sectors and marketing — is equally crucial. Large policies alone will not work. Implementation at the field level is essential," she said, urging that government and chamber associations expand support beyond Dhaka.

Skills development, technological upgradation and inclusive policies are critical to preventing women from dropping out of the workforce, she added.

Tamara Abed, managing director of BRAC Enterprises, said fostering women's entrepreneurship requires a multi-faceted approach and support across various areas.

"Access to finance alone is not enough. Skills are equally important. Often, access to inputs is lacking, and market linkages are a huge factor. Women need to be linked to markets, and various types of support, including legal assistance, are often necessary."

Abed also stressed the importance of structural market linkages and improved infrastructure, such as safe transportation and inclusive procurement policies, to integrate women into the national economy.

Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, BNP standing committee member, highlighted the party's targeted

approach to women's empowerment.

"The majority of the beneficiaries of our policies will be women," he said, citing the party's proposed Family Card initiative.

Every household will receive a Family Card issued in the name of the matriarch.

"Many homemakers work from morning to night without a formal salary, even though they contribute immensely to family and household management. Under this scheme, every woman will receive Tk 2,500. It may not seem like a large amount, but it is a matter of respect and independence. It is her money, and she decides how to spend it."

The budgeting and funding for the scheme have been planned.

"It is not just a promise or a political statement but a concrete, implementable policy."

He also called for a shift away from mega projects towards direct investment in human capital, particularly through education, healthcare and specialised skills training for women.

A central pillar of BNP's strategy is women's empowerment through targeted support, including micro-financing, branding for rural artisans and vocational training in high-growth sectors such as ICT and digital commerce.

The aim is to foster a diversified, modern economy where women can achieve financial independence and pursue varied careers in sports, culture and the arts, he added.

The event was followed by an open discussion, with audience interaction and broader engagement on women's rights and governance issues. The session featured a mixed panel, including Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury and Zaima Rahman, focusing on political accountability, women's participation in politics and future policy directions.

## Govt clarifies CA's support for ‘Yes’ vote

FROM PAGE 16

Recent commentary has raised concerns that the interim government and the chief adviser's open support for a "Yes" vote in Bangladesh's forthcoming referendum on institutional reforms may be inconsistent with the expectations of an interim administration.

These concerns deserve respectful consideration, said the interim government.

In Bangladesh's current transitional moment, silence would not represent neutrality; it would represent a failure of leadership, said the government.

For Bangladesh at this juncture,