

Salman Shah films return to big screen at Lion Cinemas

Nearly three decades after his untimely death, Salman Shah continues to hold a powerful place in the collective memory of Bangladeshi cinema audiences. Celebrating the enduring appeal of the late actor, Old Dhaka-based multiplex Lion Cinemas has launched a special week-long screening programme titled *Fire Dekhi Salman Shah*.

The initiative features three of his most popular films—*Shopner Prithibi*, *Ontore Ontore* and *Sotter Mittu Nei*—directed by Badol Khondoker, Shibli Sadik and Chhatku Ahmed. According to the organisers, each film is being screened twice daily, with the programme running until January 29. Lion Cinemas said Salman Shah shaped an entire generation's cinematic sensibility, a legacy reflected in the strong audience turnout and continued emotional connection with his films.



I am exploring, taking on challenges: PARSA EVANA

RAKSHANDA RAHMAN MISHA

With her infectious smile and effortless charm, Parsa Evana has been quietly, yet confidently carving out a space for herself in the OTT landscape. After making her Chorki debut last year with *Dimlight*, the actress is now set to appear on Hoichoi this Eid with the one-hour film, *Ekshathe Alada*.

With back-to-back projects under her belt and more in the pipeline, The Daily Star caught up with Parsa to talk about her journey so far, her creative choices, and what lies ahead.

"I have always wanted, as an artiste, to work on strong platforms and be part of big-canvas projects. I am drawn to better productions and higher-quality work. OTT projects, in particular, are very well organised, and that makes the whole process truly exciting," said the actress.

Parsa has also been drawing attention for her fresh on-screen pairings. She was recently seen opposite Mosharraf Karim in *Dimlight* and will next be paired with Yash Rohan in *Ekshathe Alada*. Speaking about audience acceptance of new pairings and how an artiste should approach them, she shared, "An artiste should work with everyone. Roles should be portrayed in a way that feels believable. Pairing is actually a crucial thing, and chemistry does not click equally with everyone. But that does not mean an actor should limit themselves to working with only one or two people. That would be a weakness. Actors should explore, take

on challenges, and push their boundaries—and that is exactly what I am doing."

Reflecting on her experience of working with Mosharraf Karim, Parsa had nothing but praise. "Mosharraf *bhai* is like an institution. Working with him is always a great experience. The audience has really liked Nayra, and I have received very positive feedback," she added.

Speaking about her character in *the project*, the actress said, "In *Ekshathe Alada*, I am playing the role of a wife—someone who is married, yet very independent. It is a very urban story, and I have not played this kind of character before. Yash is a good co-actor, and it was a great experience working with him."

When asked about her upcoming projects for Valentine's Day and Eid, Parsa said, "I am actually prioritising the story. There may be a project coming this Valentine's Day. Besides that, *Ekshathe Alada* is set to release this Eid. I haven't taken on any new projects yet. I choose my work based on the script, the director, and the strength of the story, giving more importance to quality. Hopefully, something good will come out of it. Please keep me in your prayers."



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED



Actomania stages Ibsen's final play at Shilpakala Academy

Actomania is set to return to the Dhaka stage with its third production, staging Henrik Ibsen's final play *When We Dead Awaken*, translated into Bangla as *Punurutthaner Din*. The play will premiere today at 7:00pm at the National Theatre Hall of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, with a second show on January 28 at the same venue and time.

The opening performance will be attended by Norwegian ambassador Håkon Arald Gulbrandsen. Written in 1899, Ibsen's last work explores artistic ambition, unrealised desire and the tension between creation and human connection. The Bangla translation is by Shahidul Mamun, while direction is by Nowrin Sazzad Bristy. Featuring a large ensemble cast, the production continues Actomania's commitment to experimental, idea-driven theatre.

WHAT'S THE HAPS?

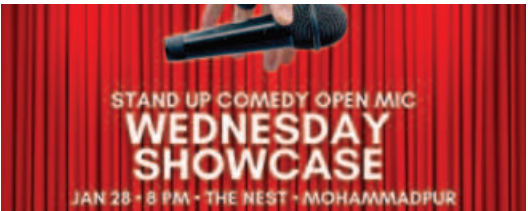
'Wednesday Showcase'

Stand Up Dhaka transforms midweek monotony into laughter with its *Wednesday Showcase*, featuring the city's sharpest, most unpredictable comedians. A stage for real stories, wit, and spontaneous humour, the evening invites audiences to immerse themselves in Dhaka's thriving comedy scene and experience the energy of live, unscripted performance.

DATE: WEDNESDAY | JANUARY 28, 2026

TIME: 8:00PM ONWARDS

VENUE: THE NEST, 1/6 NURJAHAN ROAD, MOHAMMADPUR



NEWS

A witness to Bangladesh's Liberation War

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that tumultuous time, the authoritative voice of Sir William Mark Tully became synonymous with the broadcaster's reporting and lent it the credibility for which the BBC is admired across the world.

His broadcasts were a vital source of information for millions, exposing the atrocities committed by the Pakistani army in East Pakistan and providing credible news when local media had been silenced by the military.

With Tully's passing, Bangladesh remembers not only a veteran British journalist but also a steadfast friend of the nation. For this country, his contribution went beyond reporting. His commentaries inspired freedom fighters at the frontlines and strengthened the resolve of a people fighting for independence abroad, reminding them that not everything was alright.

The Connected Histories of the BBC project showcases the corporation's remarkable archive of oral history interviews with its staff. As part of this initiative, the team interviewed Tully.

During the conversation, the BBC's coverage of the 1971 events came up, and the interviewer asked Tully about accusations that the broadcaster had been biased in favour of Bangladesh.

Tully responded: "Well, I think it's a bit like the Pakistan story, it's very difficult because there's no – the government has clamped all information down, we get information, we know things are happening, so we report them, and that is our job to report them. And one answer to this criticism is to say, well, the Pakistan government should have stopped the incidents happening. And no-one – I can't remember a time when any of our reports were challenged."

He continued: "And I remember when I went to Bangladesh I was among the party of journalists, the first party after the military crackdown who went there and were free to report. And, you know, I found the situation was quite as bad if not worse than we had been reporting it."

In the interview, conducted in May 2018, Tully emphasised that there was clear evidence supporting what had been broadcast. It was also telling of his methodical and sincere approach that he validated and verified what had already been reported.

One of his accounts was translated and published by Prothom Alo on March 26, 2024.

After the military crackdown, Tully was among the first group of journalists permitted to enter East Pakistan. They were allowed to travel across the country with relative freedom, unlike an earlier group of journalists who had been tightly restricted.

Tully recalled: "Thus, I was among those journalists who were able to assess the impact of the army's assault, to gauge the feelings of the people around us. At the same time, I tried to calculate what might happen in the future."

"What we saw and heard at that time was evidence of the attack. We clearly understood that the soldiers had come out of the barracks firing. We saw the destruction they had caused. We saw the damage done to the university. Especially when we went outside Dhaka – Rajshahi, for instance – we found that almost every village along the roadside had been burned down."

"It was evident that, in their sheer desire to establish control over the land, the Pakistani army had set fire to the villages. By force, they had driven the residents away so that no resistance could be organised against

them."

Tully, long known as the BBC's "voice of India", passed away on Sunday at a hospital in India at the age of 90.

His death carries deep significance for Bangladesh's history, especially at a time when falsehoods about the Liberation War continue to circulate even 54 years after the country's hard-fought victory over marauding Pakistani forces.

In recognition of his role, the Bangladesh government awarded him the "Friends of Liberation War Honour" in 2012.

The citation noted: "Through his reports, the true picture of the war situation and the importance and justification of the Liberation War was made clear and this resulted in getting worldwide support for our struggle for freedom."

During the Liberation War, Bangladesh had to work tirelessly to garner international support at a time when the world was divided by the Cold War. The US, leading the capitalist Western bloc, sided with Pakistan.

In 1971, portraying the true picture of the Liberation War was crucial. That need has not diminished with time. Even today, both national and foreign quarters continue to spread false and unfounded narratives. Some still attempt to overturn even thoroughly documented truths of Bangladesh's struggle for freedom.

Against this backdrop, Bangladesh needs credible international voices to confront distortion and denial. The clarity and courage of journalists like Mark Tully remain invaluable, offering undeniable evidence of what the Pakistani military did.

His reporting had that rare quality of transcending journalism and rising to the level of testimony.

mother and child were laid to rest in Sabekdanga early Sunday.

Speaking to reporters, Swarnali's brother, Shubho, earlier said his sister had married Saddam around five years ago.

"My sister had been mentally distressed since her husband's imprisonment. She tried in many ways to secure his release... This caused severe mental stress and depression. Out of frustration, she drowned her nine-

month-old child in a bucket of water and later took her own life," he claimed.

Officer-in-Charge of Bagerhat Sadar Police Station Mohammad Masum Khan said a murder case had been filed over the death of the child.

"At this stage, whether the death of Swarnali was a murder or a suicide will be determined after the official autopsy report is received," he said, adding that further legal steps would depend on the findings.

Observers

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The 2014 and 2024 elections were condemned as "one-sided", as almost all opposition parties boycotted them. Even 153 MPs were elected unopposed in the 2014 polls.

In the 2018 national polls, ballot boxes were reportedly stuffed on the eve of voting. BNP and other opposition parties did not take part in the 2014 and 2024 polls. In 2018, BNP contested under the "Jatiya Oikyafront" banner but faced widespread intimidation and received little redress from the Election Commission.

Of the local observers monitoring the February 12 election, 7,997 will be stationed in Dhaka and 47,457 others across the country.

Among the international observers, the European Union has planned to deploy up to 200 observers for the polls. Of them, 56 are long-term observers, who are in Dhaka, marking the first such mission since 2008.

The Commonwealth mission, whose pre-election team visited Bangladesh in October last year, will comprise 14 observers.

Bangkok-based Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL) conducted a pre-election assessment mission in Bangladesh from November 21 to December 5, 2025. It will send a 28-member mission.

International Republican Institute (IRI), a US-based think tank, will send at least 10 observers. An IRI pre-election delegation visited Bangladesh in October last year and published its report.

The number of observers from the US, including the IRI delegation, can increase, said EC officials.

Besides, 25 international freelance observers, including the former Nepalese chief election commissioner, have also shown interest in monitoring the polls, they added.

The EC has invited representatives from election authorities around 50 countries and international organisations to observe the polls.

Munira Khan, president of the Fair Election Monitoring Alliance (Fema), told this newspaper, "International interest in how free and fair election will be has grown compared to previous years, as the last three polls were not credible."

Another reason for the increased attention is the interim government led by Nobel laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus, she added.

Defence industrial zone

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partners, with potential for private sector participation in later phases.

Shortages are often seen in basic military supplies and not just advanced weapon systems, Chowdhury said, emphasising the importance of having captive production capacity.

The zone will be developed gradually over a long-term horizon and only a small portion of the land will be utilised in the initial five years.

In response to questions from reporters, Chowdhury declined to name specific partner countries or potential defence products, describing such discussions as diplomatic and bilateral matters.

He, however, expressed confidence that the project would remain on course regardless of political changes, calling defence industrial capacity a national, non-partisan priority.

The meeting also approved Bangladesh's first free trade zone in Anwara, Chattogram on 600 to 650 acres of land.

Inspired by Dubai's Jebel Ali Free Zone spanning more than 14,000 acres, the zone aims to facilitate storage, manufacturing and re-export of goods, particularly raw materials like American cotton, without the burden of regular customs regulations.

The zone, which will be open to both domestic and foreign investors, would function as a de facto overseas territory, helping to resolve time-to-market challenges that global investors often face, Chowdhury said.

However, implementation will require amendments to eight laws and regulations, including customs and foreign exchange rules.

The next government is expected to oversee this process, with authorities hoping for a functional launch by the end of the year, he said.

The board also approved a plan to repurpose Kushtia Sugar Mill into an economic zone under BEZA's supervision, making use of existing infrastructure to attract investment and generate employment.

BEZA will now be allowed to establish economic zones within municipalities, reversing a restriction under the 2012 Act, Chowdhury said.

This aims to revive unused industrial spaces in urban areas while reducing pressure on agricultural

land.

A new incentive scheme has been approved for non-resident Bangladeshis (NRBs) who bring in foreign direct investment, said Chowdhury, also the executive chairman of the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA).

NRBs will receive cashback up to 1.25 percent of their equity investment, following a model similar to remittance incentives.

The government has ratified the merger of six investment promotion agencies – BIDA, BEZA, the Bangladesh Export Processing Zone Authority, the Hi-Tech Park Authority, the Public-Private Partnership Authority and Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation – into a single unified body.

An independent third-party consultant will design the new organisational structure to ensure fairness and efficiency.

Chowdhury defended the merger, arguing that current decentralisation forces investors to navigate through multiple agencies with inconsistent policies.

A centralised structure would streamline services and create a more investor-friendly environment.

Plans were also announced to establish BIDA offices abroad, starting with China, followed by South Korea and an EU country, he said, adding that the offices will operate on a commission-based model, where local agents will be incentivised to bring in investment.

Speak up

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US President Donald Trump told Wall Street Journal in an interview published on Sunday that his administration is "reviewing everything and will come out with a determination" about the fatal shooting in Minneapolis.

Trump also signalled a willingness to eventually withdraw immigration enforcement officials from the Minneapolis area, the report said.

With tensions high, protesters gathered Sunday in Minneapolis, denouncing Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). One person held a cardboard sign that read: "Be Pretty, be Good."