

'Roid' joins hands with 'Delhi Crime' production house

Bangladeshi filmmaker Mejbaur Rahman Sumon's latest feature film *Roid* has received a major international boost, with Widishaa Originals, the production house led by International Emmy Award-winning producer Apoorva Bakshi of *Delhi Crime* fame, joining the project as executive producer. The development was announced while the film is competing in the Tiger Competition section at the ongoing International Film Festival Rotterdam (IFFR).

The film marks Sumon's second feature film following the critically and commercially successful *Hava* (2022).

Speaking to Variety, Apoorva Bakshi described *Roid* as "powerful, mythic and deeply human," adding that the film presents emotion as a natural force. Sumon told Variety that the film was inspired by a real-life story shared by his mother.



DREAMS COME TRUE: Putul's two-decade journey earns first National Award

SHARMIN JOYA

Aynun Naher Putul's Best Actress win for *Saatao* at the National Film Awards 2023 came as an unexpected but welcome moment in her two-decade-long career. An independent, crowd-funded film, *Saatao*—internationally known as *Memories of Gloomy Monsoons*—is directed by Khandaker Sumon and claimed three major honours at this year's National Film Awards, including Best Actress, Best Director, and Best Film. The film also received international recognition, including screenings at major festivals abroad and winning the Best Feature Film award. The Daily Star spoke to Putul about the film, her career journey, and her newly launched theatre production house.

Congratulations on such a big win! Must you be on cloud 9 right now? Thank you so much! Honestly, it still feels unreal. It feels like I'm in a daze, as if this is a dream that might break at any moment. I've been shooting since morning, I have a live programme later, and the phone hasn't stopped ringing. I haven't really had the chance to sit with the feeling yet.

'Saatao' faced uncertainty in its early days. What was that phase like?
At one point, we weren't even sure whether the film would be made, let alone released. We couldn't find anyone willing to invest in it. Eventually, it was made with public funding. From there, it travelled to different places, won awards, and today it has reached this point.

In your career of two decades, you've worked across theatre, television and



films. Tell us how the journey began.

It started in childhood in Jamalpur, through Monimela Khelaghor. From a very young age, I was drawn to singing, acting and dance. My interest in the arts was always stronger than my interest in formal studies. I studied Drama and Dramatics at Jahangirnagar University. I completed my Honours and Master's there, then an MPhil in Film, and I am currently pursuing a PhD in Film Studies. My brother and my teachers encouraged me to take this path. I've been a founding member of Theatre Arshinagar since 2012. Theatre is my emotional nourishment.

You've also recently stepped into production. What led to that decision?

It's a very recent step. My husband and I felt we could try to see what happens. There wasn't a detailed plan—we simply decided to begin. And then, quite unexpectedly, this moment arrived.

You've worked on many major projects with legendary Humayun Ahmed. How significant was your experience of working with him?

It was incredibly significant. At the time, I was very young, and working with him became part of my learning process. You don't learn everything through academic study—experience shapes you. My first project with him was *Chandra Karigor*, and the last was *Ghetuputro Komola*. I also worked on *Chhitika* in 2012, which was written by him. Observing his direction and working under him enriched my understanding of acting. Being able to work with him remains one of my greatest achievements.



Prachyanat revives Tagore's 'Achalayatan' at Shilpakala today

Prachyanat has returned to the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy with its acclaimed staging of Rabindranath Tagore's *Achalayatan*, reviving the play for two performances today and tomorrow, February 5 and 6, at 7:00pm at the National Theatre Hall in Shegunbagicha.

Directed by Azad Abul Kalam, the production—Prachyanat's 42nd—revisits Tagore's symbolic drama through a sharp contemporary lens. Set inside a rigid educational institution ruled by ritual and fear, the play questions obedience, conformity, and the cost of inherited rules. Reimagined as a women's institution, the revival foregrounds power, patriarchy, and complicity.

WHAT'S THE HAPS? Amar Bhashar Chalachitra 1432

Dhaka University Film Society returns with its flagship Bangla film festival, celebrating cinema's poster-lined past and enduring legacy. From classics like *Deya Neya* and *Rupban* to contemporary works including *Taandob* and *Ekhane Rajnoitik Alap Joruri*, the festival brings Bangla cinema back to the big screen.

DATE: TUESDAY-SUNDAY (FEBRUARY 3-8, 2026)

TIME: 10:00AM ONWARDS

VENUE: TSC, UNIVERSITY OF DHAKA



NEWS

'No reason to fear going to polling stations' Govt decides to rename Rab instead

FROM PAGE 16
attended by the three service chiefs and senior civil and law enforcement officials, the army chief said the armed forces were there to support the civil administration in ensuring a secure electoral process.

Waker said two considerations prompted the joint presence of the three service chiefs: to ensure the administration receives all necessary assistance from the armed services, and to send a clear message to voters and the nation that the authorities are serious and capable of holding a "beautiful" election.

"We are fully capable of conducting fair elections," he said. "Everyone—the government, the Election Commission, the police, the army, the navy, and the air force—is committed to holding the polls. There is no scope for the elections not taking place."

He said the armed forces would ensure robust patrolling to cover any shortfall after police are assigned to static duties, urging the civil administration, particularly deputy commissioners, to provide transport support so patrols can continue uninterrupted.

Warning about potential troublemakers, Waker said some criminals may attempt to create disorder in constituencies by instigating violence on election day, blocking voting, or preventing voters from reaching polling stations.

He said he expected the forces to take action against such offenders, including detention, and called on the authorities to ensure legal measures are taken against those involved.

"If criminals are detained and handed over but no legal steps are

taken, it will be counterproductive," Waker said.

Referring to the use of technology, the army chief said body-worn cameras, drones, and the Surokkha apps would make law and order management easier, including through live monitoring of activities at polling stations.

Waker said discussions had been held with the EC on monitoring financial transactions through bKash and limiting such transactions to prevent undue influence on the polls. He added that engagement was ongoing with the commission on restricting misinformation and propaganda, including content generated using artificial intelligence.

Describing claims that minorities were being targeted as "exaggerated information" and "not true," Waker said special attention was still needed to ensure minority voters can leave their homes, cast their votes, and return safely.

At the programme, Navy Chief Admiral M Nazmul Hassan said the navy aims to create a safe environment in which domestic and foreign observers can operate freely during the polls.

Nazmul said the navy is using drones, has deployed body-worn cameras in some areas, and, for the first time, has collected non-lethal weapons and riot control gear from police.

He noted that remote and char areas remain challenging due to poor communication systems and said some locations are known as safe havens for miscreants, requiring increased patrolling.

The navy chief also said social

media and artificial intelligence have emerged as major challenges, adding that personnel have been trained and instructed so they are not influenced or misled into making wrong decisions.

Air Chief Air Marshal Hasan Mahmood Khan said the air force is fully prepared to support the polls, including transporting ballot boxes, personnel, and logistics to remote areas, particularly in hill tracts and coastal regions.

He said the air force would remain ready to provide air transport, casualty evacuation, and medical evacuation if needed, noting that air force personnel will also be deployed directly in the field alongside the army during the election.

He said specialised UAVs would provide live feeds to the Election Commission and the air command operations centre, while helicopters and transport aircraft would remain on standby, with assets positioned in Dhaka, Chattogram, Cox's Bazar, and Jashore.

The air chief emphasised that all deployed personnel must maintain a visible presence, remain alert before and after voting, and ensure strict neutrality while on duty.

Political violence

FROM PAGE 16
including vandalism of homes and places of worship. These left one person dead and 27 injured, while 17 temples, 63 idols, and 65 homes were vandalised. Six cases of land grabbing targeting minority communities were also reported.

FROM PAGE 16
Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the agreement would contribute to closer cooperation between Japan and Bangladesh on defence equipment and technology, while helping maintain and enhance the production and technological base of Japan's defence industry, thereby contributing to Japan's security.

FROM PAGE 16
Age-wise, the highest proportion of cancer cases was recorded in the 51-60 age group (28.6 percent), followed by the 41-50 age group (24.5 percent). The team carried out follow up on 1.28 lakh participants, registering 69 new cases (53.6 percent 1,00,000 population) and the proportion of deaths is 11.1 percent. A history of smoking was reported by 72.9 percent of the male cancer patients, while none of the female patients reported smoking. However, smokeless tobacco use was more common among females (60.3 percent) than males (38 percent), the data show.

The study shows that tobacco use is a major factor driving the country's growing cancer burden, said Khalequzzaman.

"However, tobacco-related cancers are preventable by avoiding tobacco use, and the rising cancer burden can therefore be reduced."

Greater emphasis should be placed on controlling smokeless tobacco use, which has become more or less culturally accepted, as it is a leading cause of lip and oral cavity cancers—the most commonly reported cancers in the study.

FROM PAGE 16
On March 26, 2004, Rab was formed amid rising militancy and a deterioration in law and order during the BNP-led four-party alliance government.

The US imposed sanctions on Rab and several of its former and serving officials in December 2021 over serious allegations of human rights violations. After that, Rab's "crossfire" incidents nearly stopped.

Most recently, in a report on alleged human rights violations during the 2024 student movement, the UN human rights office, OHCHR, recommended the abolishment of Rab. Ignoring the calls, the interim government decided to rename Rab, 22 years after it was formed.

At the briefing, a reporter cited Transparency International Bangladesh's warning that the failure to control "mobs" could affect the election. The reporter also referred to survey findings indicating that more than 600 police personnel were attacked in various ways in 2025, asking how the polls could be ensured when the police themselves were under threat.

Tobacco major driver of cancer

FROM PAGE 16
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The study identified 38 types of cancer, with breast cancer accounting for the highest number of cases at 42 (17 percent), followed by lip and oral cavity cancer with 19 cases (7.8 percent).

Of the 38 cancer types, 14 are tobacco-related, accounting for 46 percent of all cancer cases, Khalequzzaman said.

Lip and oral cavity cancer accounted for 7.8 percent, followed by larynx cancer (6.9 percent), stomach

The home adviser said TIB shared its concerns and referred to the situation with the police between August 5 and 8, as well as the period that followed.

He said police morale and efficiency had since improved then and that there would be no problem in holding the election.

The adviser also urged reporters to compare the situation after the declaration of schedules in previous elections with the current environment.

At the briefing, Brig Gen Mohammad Ali Haidar Siddiqui, director general (operations and plans) of Armed Forces Division, said the joint forces recovered 199 weapons and arrested 1,807 people since the election schedule was announced.

He added that 106,223 personnel from the three services have been deployed nationwide.

Describing the recoveries as encouraging, the army officer said members of the forces have reached every district and upazila and would continue coordinated drives with the district administration, police, and other agencies.

Asked about the ownership of the weapons, Haidar said a full breakdown was not immediately available.

However, he said that of weapons that went missing from police and Rab, forces have so far recovered 4,432. Besides, 65 weapons missing from jail authorities and 328 missing licenced weapons were recovered.

He added that 2,906 weapons were recovered in cases involving illegal arms missing from police station storerooms. "In total, 7,731 weapons have been recovered since September."

Fines for illegal gas

FROM PAGE 16
exceeding the approved hourly load, will be treated as offences.

In formulating rules under the ordinance, the government has curtailed the role of the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC).

While the Bangladesh Gas Act 2010 required the government to frame rules through a gazette notification in consultation with the regulator, the new ordinance omits any reference to BERC's involvement.

Dhaka inks deal with Tokyo to upgrade defence

FROM PAGE 16
Bangladesh Navy's monitoring, surveillance, and disaster-relief capabilities, it added.

The ISPR said the defence agreement reflects deep mutual trust, a shared vision, and cooperation between the two countries, achieved through the far-sighted and effective diplomacy of Bangladesh's interim government.

Signed in full conformity with the principles of the UN Charter, the agreement will establish an institutional framework for the

acquisition of advanced defence technology and equipment, as well as joint research and development, to promote international peace and security and safeguard Bangladesh's independence and sovereignty, it added.

"At the same time, the strategic partnership between Bangladesh and Japan in South Asia will be further strengthened, making an important contribution to regional stability and global security.

"As a result of this historic agreement, exchanges of military

experts between the two countries are expected to increase, playing a significant role in enhancing Bangladesh's defence capabilities and implementing future plans," the statement read.

Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the agreement would contribute to closer cooperation between Japan and Bangladesh on defence equipment and technology, while helping maintain and enhance the production and technological base of Japan's defence industry, thereby contributing to Japan's security.