

Deadline extended for 2025–26 government film grants

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has extended by one month the deadline for submitting proposals under its government grant scheme for full-length and short films for the 2025–26 fiscal year.

Under the revised schedule, filmmakers may submit complete package proposals until April 1, instead of the earlier March 1 deadline. The extension was confirmed by Joint Secretary Mahfuza Akhter.

The ministry had earlier invited package



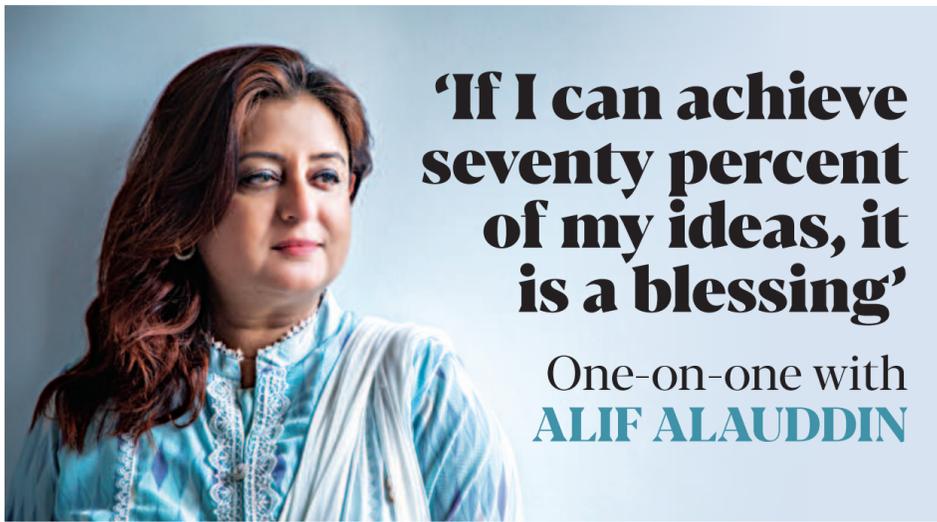
proposals from producers, directors, filmmakers, writers, screenwriters, film personalities and professional institutions for the selection of stories and screenplays. So far, 189 proposals for full-length films and 140 for short films have been submitted in three phases.

Officials expressed hope that this would be the final extension and expect the required number of proposals in both categories within the new timeframe.

As part of efforts to promote the growth of the film industry and encourage creativity, the government plans to provide grants to 32 films in the upcoming fiscal year, including up to 12 full-length features and 20 short films.

Applicants must submit one original copy along with 12 sets of the complete package proposal for both categories.

Industry insiders believe the extended deadline may intensify competition, as the additional time could allow filmmakers to submit more refined, detailed and well-structured proposals.



'If I can achieve seventy percent of my ideas, it is a blessing'

One-on-one with
ALIF ALAUDDIN

PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

MAISHA TASNIM SRESHTHA

Pop music in Bangladesh continues to evolve, with artistes constantly experimenting across genres. However, Alif Alauddin has always identified herself as a pop artiste and has chosen to stay within that space, even though the industry encourages constant change.

"Pop isn't just a genre I experiment with; it is who I am at my core," she said when asked about her place in this changing landscape. For many artistes, especially women, remaining within one genre risks being labelled predictable. The expectation is to constantly transform, to prove elasticity. Instead of adjusting herself to fit every new trend, she prefers to grow at her own pace.

This approach continues in her recent work, including the 2025 remix of *Bondhu Tin Din*, which may appear new, but actually began nearly a decade ago. She first reimagined the song in 2016 with her husband, Kazi Faisal Ahmed, when her father, the late maestro Alauddin Ali, was still alive.

"I vividly remember the discussions we had about giving the song a fresh perspective while still honouring its soul," she recalled. They were not trying to remake a hit. They wanted to keep the song alive while holding on to its original feeling.

The response to the remix reminded

her of something she has always felt. Good songs do not grow old; they simply find new listeners.

Another project connected to her father's music is also in progress. Fuad Al Muqtadir is currently working on a new interpretation of one of Alauddin Ali's patriotic anthems. The news has already drawn attention, and Alif responded with hope.

"With his unique sense of groove and musical poise, I'm hopeful he will present something that connects with the younger generation while honouring the original spirit," she said, without sharing further details ahead of the release.

Her fourth solo album, slated for release after Eid, is her first major project following a kidney transplant. Healing after a major surgery affects every part of life. It naturally influenced the tone of this album. The album includes two tribute tracks; one dedicated to her parents, another to Ayub Bachchu and Kawsar Ahmed Chowdhury. The remaining songs are originals, written by her and composed by Kazi Faisal Ahmed.

"The journey shaped the spirit of the project," she said. Her health struggles made her approach music more honestly. The album explores different styles and lets her create based on what she truly feels.

Revisiting *Tumi Chole Gecho* formed part of that reckoning.

Originally sung by her mother, Salma Ali, and written and composed by her father for Bangladesh Television, the song is inseparable from memory. Singing it now feels both personal and emotional. "I may never sing it the way my mother did," she admitted. The rearrangement by Ahmed preserves its emotional depth while situating it within a contemporary soundscape.

Beyond solo work, her band

Pentagon is preparing an EP expected around Eid-ul-Azha. Parallel to that, she is developing her own show and other music-oriented projects. In addition to her music, she also takes on other responsibilities. The singer is deeply involved with Bangladesh Lyricist, Composers & Performers Society (BLCPS), the country's music collective management organisation. Artist royalty collection and rights management sit at the centre of that effort. It may not be the most visible work, but it is important. It involves paperwork, processes, and long-term effort. But it helps fix a problem that many musicians have faced for years.

Looking ahead, "My first and foremost prayer is to remain in good health," she said. If that remains steady, she plans to focus deeply on music and continue creating. "Even if I can achieve seventy percent of my ideas, I would consider that a blessing," Alif noted.

Fazlur Rahman Babu undergoes heart surgery



Acclaimed actor and singer Fazlur Rahman Babu is recovering in hospital after undergoing open-heart surgery. The veteran artiste was admitted to a private hospital in Dhaka on February 16 following a heart attack. He was later transferred for further evaluation, where an angiogram revealed severe blockages.

Theatre director Kamruzzaman Sagar confirmed on Facebook that actor and singer Fazlur Rahman Babu was admitted to hospital after falling ill. He said that Babu is under close medical observation and is recovering, requesting prayers for his swift recovery.

Fazlur Rahman Babu has built a distinguished career across film, television, and music, earning widespread acclaim for his performances.

WHAT'S THE HAPS?

'The Human Voice'

Written by visionary poet-playwright Jean Cocteau, this haunting Bangla adaptation turns a single telephone conversation into a fragile battlefield of memory, desire, and emotional collapse. Director Prajna Tasnuva Rubayat crafts a stark, intimate world where Marsha Shawon's solo performance exposes love at its most vulnerable and unsparing.



DATE: SATURDAY | MARCH 7, 2026
TIME: 7 PM ONWARDS
VENUE: ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE DE DHAKA, DHANMONDI

NEWS

ACC chief, his two deputies quit en masse

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Under the ACC Act, the chairman may resign at any time by submitting a written letter addressed to the president through the Cabinet Division, typically giving one month's notice. In this case, the commissioners were not retained for the notice period and vacated their posts after meeting the cabinet secretary.

ACC officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, claimed the BNP-led government, formed last month, had earlier indicated it did not wish to continue with the Momen-led commission and that members were asked to step down voluntarily.

A career bureaucrat who served as deputy commissioner of Dhaka, chairman of BRTA and CEO of Biman Bangladesh Airlines, Momen had been forced to retire in 2013 – a decision by the Awami League government for his earlier role as APS to former prime minister Khaleda Zia.

The interim government reinstated him to head the ACC in December 2024 for a five-year term. Now he has resigned less than a year and a half into office. The other two commissioners who stepped down are Miah Muhammad Ali Akbar Azizi and Brig Gen (ret'd) Hafiz Ahsan Farid. During Momen's tenure, the commission reported significant enforcement activity.

In 2025, it confiscated or froze 6,979.43 acres of land worth Tk 5,459.6 crore, compared to 281.17 acres worth Tk 63.2 crore by the previous commission.

It also froze and attached assets totaling Tk 29,309.8 crore – Tk 6,137 crore in immovable property and Tk 23,172.8 crore in movable assets – against Tk 11 crore seized in 2024 by its predecessor.

The commission submitted charge sheets against several influential figures of the previous Awami League government, long viewed as beyond scrutiny.

Among them was Mohammed Saiful Alam of S Alam Group. In October 2025,

the ACC submitted a charge sheet accusing him of loan

misappropriation through shell companies and laundering funds via Reliance Finance Limited.

At least 14 cases were filed against him. He and 66 others were prosecuted for allegedly embezzling Tk 10,479.62 crore from Islami Bank – one of the largest cases in the commission's history.

Additional cases allege embezzlement of Tk 15,671.60 crore from two Janata Bank branches and Tk 1,102 crore from First Security Islami Bank. Around 2,250 acres of land were confiscated or frozen, including land worth Tk 700 crore transferred to government ownership.

The ACC also prosecuted Nassa Group boss Nazrul Islam Mazumder, submitting a charge sheet on January 6 over allegations of embezzling Tk 616 crore from EXIM Bank, which he headed.

Similarly, former land minister Saifuzzaman Chowdhury was charge-sheeted this week over alleged embezzlement of Tk 25 crore from United Commercial Bank's Chattogram Port Branch. On February 26, the ACC secured a court order to attach his UK properties to prevent their transfer during the probe.

Investigations were also intensified against businesses linked to S Alam, including Nabil Group. Its managing director, Md Aminul Islam, was prosecuted in multiple cases over alleged embezzlement of Tk 2,358 crore from three Islami Bank branches.

In total, 1,360 bank accounts holding Tk 2,619 crore and shares worth over Tk 8,000 crore in 105 companies were frozen.

The commission was finalising investigations into Sayem Sobhan Anvir of Bashundhara Group and former industries adviser Salman F Rahman. In February 2026, it filed a case against Bashundhara founder Ahmed Akbar Sobhan, his son Safiat Sobhan and 24 others over alleged embezzlement of Tk 575 crore in funded loans; the charge sheet is being finalised.

An investigation was also launched into Muhammed Aziz Khan,

chairman of Summit Group, and his family.

The case against Salman was filed on January 8, alleging the embezzlement of Tk 136.68 crore through fictitious import-export transactions and reportedly embezzling Tk 2,858 crore from Janata Bank by taking export development fund facilities in the name of four different garment factories.

A separate ACC case accused him of misappropriating Tk 800 crore where funds collected through overvalued land-backed bonds were diverted to Beximco Engineering Limited and other entities.

On November 25, 2025, a Dhaka court ordered the attachment of all movable and immovable foreign assets belonging to the Sobhans, and the order was sent to authorities in the UK, UAE, Singapore, Switzerland, Slovakia, Cyprus, St Kitts and Nevis, and the British Virgin Islands.

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman yesterday criticised the way the ACC chairman and two commissioners had to quit.

"While it is disappointing, it is hardly surprising. It reflects a deep-rooted politico-governance culture in the country, where ruling authorities seek to ensure that critically important state oversight institutions are led by individuals of their choosing," he said.

Within political and bureaucratic power structures, he added, it is "unthinkable" for entities like the ACC to operate outside partisan and bureaucratic control. Such practices are not new or isolated.

Iftekharuzzaman further noted that power-holders, hostage to short-term gains, disregard the long-term consequences of undermining institutions.

"No matter what was pledged in the election manifesto about ensuring independence and effectiveness of such institutions, it now remains to be seen who are going to be the successors, in what process, and what eventually happens to the ruling authority's rhetoric of corruption control," he said.

Thousands of Afghans displaced by Pakistan conflict

AFP, Kabul

More than 8,000 Afghans have been forced from their homes by fighting with Pakistani forces along the border in recent days, the Taliban government said yesterday.

The neighbours have clashed along the frontier since Thursday, when Afghanistan launched a border offensive in retaliation for Pakistani air strikes.

Islamabad has hit back along the border and with fresh air strikes, bombing multiple sites including the former US air base at Bagram, the capital Kabul and the southern city of Kandahar.

"Due to these brutal bombings and attacks, 8,400 of our families have been displaced, forced to leave their villages and homes," Afghan deputy government spokesman Hamdullah Fitrat said at a news conference.

An AFP journalist near the frontier has spoken to residents who have fled the clashes.

Afghanistan's defence ministry reported "extensive and heavy offensive and revenge attacks" across seven provinces over the past day.

The government acknowledged earlier air strikes on Bagram for the first time.

"Yes, the enemy targeted Bagram as well, but there were no casualties or damage," defence ministry spokesman Enayatullah Khwarazmi said.

Two residents told AFP on Sunday that they heard air strikes in Bagram, north of the capital.

Pakistani security sources said strikes at Bagram were based on "credible intelligence" to disrupt the "supply of critical equipment and stores" for Afghan soldiers and militants fighting Pakistan forces along the frontier.

They said Pakistan reserves the right to respond to the Taliban government's "aggression along its border by striking legitimate targets at the time and place of its own choice".

Pakistani fighter jets also flew nighttime sorties over Kabul, another security source told AFP.

BB governor offers

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allowing a business to repeatedly withdraw, repay, and withdraw funds up to an approved maximum limit to manage daily operations.

The decisions come less than a week after the government appointed Md Mostaqur Rahman, a garment entrepreneur by profession, as the governor of the central bank, replacing Ahsan H Mansur.

"This is a classic conflict of interest, and what was feared is now happening," said Md Deen Islam, professor of economics at the University of Dhaka.

The decisions were taken in view of global and domestic economic headwinds, declining exports, delays in opening letters of credit and liquidity stress, which have disrupted production in many export-oriented industrial establishments, the BB said.

Earlier in 2020, Bangladesh Bank had announced soft loans for export-oriented companies to pay workers' wages to weather the global coronavirus pandemic.

If the garment sector has to rely on easy-term loans just to pay workers' wages, it is easy to imagine the state of the sector – and what it will face after LDC graduation, Islam said.

"If political considerations influence banking decisions, it will be difficult to maintain control," he said, adding that during the previous government's tenure, businesses were given extensive privileges, which largely contributed to the current condition of most banks.

The decision on who will receive a loan and when should depend on the relationship between the banker and the client, said Mustafa K Mujeri, executive director at the Institute for Inclusive Finance and Development.

"Why should the central bank issue directives on that?" he said, adding that excessive intervention by the central bank in all areas does not send a positive message.

The central bank's role is to formulate policy and ensure monitoring, said Mujeri, also a former chief economist of the BB.

"When it remains within its mandate, there will be no conflict of interest," he added.

Under the special term loan facility, banks have been instructed to provide loans outside existing working capital limits to solvent export-oriented firms.

The loan amount cannot exceed the average wage and allowance payments

of the preceding three months.

To qualify as export-oriented, firms must export at least 80 percent of their total production and must have paid workers' wages from November 2025 to January 2026.

Their "export-oriented" and "operational" status must be certified by relevant trade bodies, including the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association and the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

Banks will disburse wages directly into workers' bank accounts, including through mobile financial services.

The loans will carry market-based interest rates and must be repaid within a year, including a three-month grace period, either in monthly or quarterly instalments.

The central bank has barred lenders from charging any additional fees, commissions or penalties beyond regular interest.

The move came after the BGMEA sought a two-month wage-equivalent loan facility on easier terms to ensure timely payment of salaries, allowances and bonuses.

Meanwhile, the BB has allowed banks to renew continuous loan facilities before they turn default, aiming to support businesses amid ongoing economic challenges.

Banks must initiate the renewal process at least two months before loan expiry.

If renewal is delayed for reasons beyond control, lenders may still renew the facility before it is classified as default, provided the reasons are properly documented.

Excess amounts over approved limits must be adjusted before renewal.

Banks are prohibited from separating excess portions into new loans or transferring them to other accounts to avoid proper classification.

The policy will remain in force until December 31, 2027. A previous circular, issued in June 2025, which has now been revoked, was a much stricter attempt by the central bank to enforce credit discipline.

Specifically designed to stop banks from endlessly rolling over bad debt and artificially keeping struggling borrowers off the defaulters' list, the circular mandated that banks had to renew continuous loans strictly within their current tenure. There was no leniency or extended window for delays.