



A filmy, star-studded Eid mired by logistical questions

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The biggest religious festival in Bangladesh is Eid-ul-Fitr, and in just a few days, it will be celebrated in harmony with the rest of the world. This is a crucial window for the film industry, as it is the time when most moviegoers choose to grace the halls.

Several major films are set to release this Eid, starting with Tanim Noor's *Bonolota Express*. Following the success of his previous work, *Utshob*, Noor presents a story based on the novel *Kichukkhon* by the late Humayun Ahmed. The film has already generated buzz with its poster, featuring a powerhouse cast including Mosharrar Karim, Chanchal Chowdhury, Azmeri Haque Badhan, Zakia Bari Mamo, Sariful Razz, and Sabila Nur. Notably, it marks the onscreen reunion of Mosharrar Karim and Chanchal Chowdhury after nearly sixteen years. By focusing on the diverse lives of passengers on a train journey, Noor continues to cater to the distinct audience he built through

Utshob—viewers who appreciate ordinary life portrayed beyond the tropes of global violence or thrillers.

After a long hiatus, filmmaker Redoan Rony returns to the camera with *Dom*. Since its announcement, the film has been widely discussed and is finally arriving on the big screen this Eid. Shot partly in Kazakhstan, the film stars Afran Nisho in the title role, alongside Chanchal Chowdhury and Puja Chery. The narrative explores the perilous journey of illegal immigrants and the obstacles they face while attempting to go abroad through unlawful means.

Meanwhile, *Prince*, starring superstar Shakib Khan, is considered a frontrunner for the season. Directed by Abu Hayat, the film features a cast from both Bangladesh and India and is set within the crime world of the nineties. Despite the pressure of a tight schedule and filming locations spanning Hyderabad, Sri Lanka, and Kolkata, the director maintains that no compromise is being made on quality. Opposite Shakib Khan are Jyotirmoyee

Kundu and Tasnia Farin, making this high-budget action film a main attraction, provided the final shooting wraps in time for its scheduled release.

This Eid also sees Mehedi Hasan Hridoy helming *Rakkhosh*, an action-packed film starring Siam Ahmed and Kolkata's Sushmita Chatterjee. The film's first look hints at a story wrapped in violence, psychological conflict, and darkness, with scenes shot in Sri Lanka and Malaysia. Parallel to this, Raihan Rafi presents *Pressure Cooker*, his first self-produced film, which he has dedicated to the late filmmaker Tareque Masud. The story focuses on the internal struggles of women living in Dhaka, a city Rafi metaphorically describes as a "pressure cooker" where the "whistle" represents their silent cries. The central roles are enacted by Shabnam Bubby, Nazifa Tushi, Maria Shanta, and Snigdha Chowdhury.

While these five major films are poised to dominate the conversation, a lingering concern remains regarding their financial viability. Productions like *Prince* and

Dom far exceed typical budgets, yet Bangladesh currently has only 60 to 70 cinema halls suitable for high-quality screenings. This infrastructure limitation makes it extremely difficult to recoup massive investments, especially when distributing multiple big-budget films simultaneously. While some old halls may undergo temporary renovations to meet demand, issues like poor management and the persistent threat of piracy—both locally and during international releases—remain significant hurdles. Ultimately, for these films to succeed commercially, they must find ways to sustain longer theatrical runs through superior storytelling and visual treatment. In a crowded market, the films that truly resonate with the audience will survive, eventually increasing their number of screenings while others fade. One can only hope that the dedication shown by these filmmakers results in a successful season that defies these logistical odds.

Govt weighs review of National Film Awards 2023

Bangladesh's Ministry of Information and Broadcasting is considering a review of the National Film Awards 2023 after allegations that the jury's recommendations were not fully reflected in the final gazette.

Officials have begun contacting jury members following questions over several categories, including lifetime achievement and best screenplay.

The gazette named filmmaker Tareque Masud and cinematographer Abdul Latif Bachchu for lifetime achievement. However, the awards guidelines state that the honour should be considered for living individuals. Both recipients had died before the announcement, raising concerns over whether the rules were followed.

Controversy also emerged over the film *Roktojoba*, amid claims that the best screenplay award went to someone who did not write the script.

Jury members Maksud Jamil Mintu and Nazmun Munira Nancy said some recommendations appeared to have been overlooked.

Officials said the review aims to ensure transparency in the final list.



WHAT'S THE HAPS?

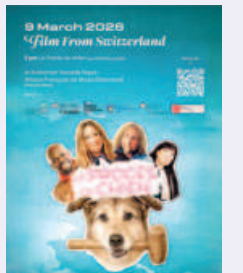
FILM SCREENING Le Procès du chien

A courtroom takes an unexpected turn in *Le Procès du chien (Dog on Trial)*, the acclaimed Swiss film by Laetitia Dosch. At the centre stands a dog whose trial unfolds with sly humour and sharp intelligence, quietly probing questions of justice, responsibility, and the fragile line between law and compassion.

Date: Monday |
March 9, 2026

Time: 2 pm
onwards

Venue: Alliance
Française de
Dhaka, Dhanmondi



NEWS

Don't make NHRC 'toothless' again

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"We want these powers to remain intact and the ordinances to be enacted into law without any changes," he said, urging the NHRC to remain independent and not function as "an extension of the executive".

NHRC Chairperson Justice Moyeenul Islam Chowdhury assured those at the meeting that the commission will take firm action on behalf of the victims of human rights violations.

He said the previous legal framework — the National Human Rights Commission Act 2009 — was fundamentally flawed.

The old law, he noted, lacked the "potency, biting teeth, and pointed claws" required to hold powerful violators accountable.

Justice Moyeenul expressed hope that the relevant ordinances would be preserved in their current form and swiftly enacted into law to ensure effective remedies.

NHRC Commissioner Nur Khan said the commission will stand by the victims and will not bow down to any pressure — "even at gunpoint". He urged people to judge the new body by its actions over the next 12 months.

Another commissioner, Professor Shariful Islam, said, "We are not here just for the salary; if we cannot work, we will leave."

Commissioner Elira Dewan said the NHRC would fully exercise its legal powers under the current ordinances and work independently.

Commissioner Nabila Idris moderated the meeting.

The discussion brought together officials from prominent rights organisations, including Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust, Ain o Salish Kendra, Odhikar, and Human Rights Support Society, who represented families seeking justice after years of state-led intimidation.

Reshma Akter, whose husband Mohammad Chanchal has been missing since 2013, broke down while recounting how her child knows his father only through a photograph.

A similar story of survival was shared by the wife of Mohammad Firoz Khan Kalu, who was forcibly disappeared from Chattogram in 2012. She still does not know his fate and struggles to make ends meet through tailoring work.

Shahed Shahriar, son of Sultana Jesmin, who died in RAB custody in 2023, said that the family was still unable to collect her death certificate or pension.

Shahadat Hossain, who was shot in the leg by police in 2019, spoke about the "price" of justice. He alleged the officer responsible was fined a mere Tk 15. "Is the price of my leg only Tk 15?"

Some testimonies focused on religious persecution and mob violence.

Meer Mahub Mostafa Ali, secretary (external affairs) of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at Bangladesh, said 117 homes were burned in Panchagarh in August 2024, and that one 16-year-old — Shariar Rakib — died.

Sunil Das, uncle of Dipu Das, a Hindu man who was killed and burned by a mob over what the family described as false blasphemy allegations, broke down while describing how Dipu was beaten, dragged for around one-and-a-half kilometres, and then burned. He demanded the maximum punishment for those responsible.

Joy and Dulal Robidas said their fathers, Pradip Lal and Rup Lal, were beaten to death after being branded "thieves", while police allegedly did not intervene.

Others who spoke at the meeting included Rocky, brother of custodial death victim Johnny; Ema Akhter, wife of bodybuilder Faruk, who also died in custody; and Kajol Mia, who survived a gunshot to the head in Jatrabari during the July uprising.

The NHRC concluded the session by assuring the victims that their recommendations would be reviewed and that the commission would take the necessary steps to make remedy mechanisms more effective.

25,000 to be picked

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It will be finalised in a meeting next Sunday, the official added.

During the pre-pilot phase of the Farmers' Card programme, information for all categories of farmers will be collected, and the cards will be distributed within the next 45 days.

The government has allocated Tk 17,000 crore in the fiscal year 2024-25 budget and Tk 17,000 crore in the fiscal year 2025-26 budget for subsidies in fertiliser, seeds, machinery, and other agricultural inputs.

For the fiscal year 2025-26, the government has proposed allocating Tk 27,224 crore to support the agriculture sector, according to the finance ministry document.

In Bangladesh, agriculture continues to be the chief source of employment in 2022. In 2016-17, the sector accounted for 40.6 percent of employment. In 2022, that ratio increased to 45.33 percent, according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

Agriculture Minister Mohammad Amin Ur Rashid told this newspaper that they hope the pre-pilot phase will start by Pahela Baishakh. Farmers at the very margins, the most vulnerable, will receive certain benefits similar to those provided under a Family Card.

He added that the main purpose of this card will be to ensure that farmers can systematically access everything related to production, consumers,

agricultural land, crops, and crop varieties, while the government receives all the information accurately.

After the pre-pilot and pilot phases, the Farmers' Card programme will be rolled out across all upazilas in the country over the next four years, he added.

Obaidur, director of the DAE's field service wing, said the government has identified the need for a centralised digital registry of farmers. Currently, no comprehensive database exists, which limits data-driven policy decisions.

A digital system will provide real-time information on crop production and subsidy needs while preventing ineligible individuals from receiving benefits, he said.

The government is drafting the Farmers' Card Implementation Policy 2026, which will be finalised soon. The data will follow international security standards and be stored at the National Data Centre, he added.

Farmer information will be updated every agricultural season (three times a year) to support production forecasting for seasons such as Boro, he said.

Lost cards or data errors can be corrected through online applications or via the local agriculture officer, with the final validation at the central level, he said.

The number of agriculture-based households in the country has increased to over 16.88 million, according to the report of the Agriculture Census 2019.

Writ petition

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Mansur was removed from the post without any prior notice, which he was supposed to get before his termination, as per the law.

The same legal framework bars the appointment of a loan defaulter as the central bank governor.

Mostaqur is a loan defaulter and has connections with a company belonging to the controversial S Alam Group, Sarwar said.

The HC may hold a hearing on the writ petition before a bench as early as next week.

On February 25, the government removed Mansur from the post of central bank governor and appointed Mostaqur Rahman to the position.

The decision was announced through separate gazette notifications issued by the Financial Institutions Division of the finance ministry.

One notification stated that Mansur's remaining tenure as governor had been cancelled with immediate effect "in the public interest".

Another notification said Mostaqur had been appointed governor on a four-year term from the date of joining, subject to relinquishing all professional ties with other institutions and organisations.

The order was also stated to take immediate effect "in the public interest".

India edge England

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bat by Brook, earlier flayed England's attack to all parts of the ground, hitting 19 sixes and 18 fours.

Samson signalled his intent with a four and six off Jofra Archer's first over but was given a life on 15 when Brook dropped a simple chance at mid-off off Archer.

It proved a costly mistake as, helped by some ill-disciplined bowling, Samson raced to his half century off 26 balls with another huge six off Liam Dawson's first over was pummeled for 19 runs.

Ishan Kishan put on 97 from 48 balls with Samson for the second wicket before the left-hander holed out to Jacks off Adil Rashid in the 10th over to make it 117-2.

Samson powered on until Jaks returned to have him caught by Salt in the deep in the 14th over at which point India were 160-3.

Dube continued the onslaught with 43 off 25 balls before being run out by Brook's direct hit.

Hardik Pandya hit 27 off 12 balls and Tilak Varma 21 off seven to take India past the 250 mark. Jaks claimed 2-40 but the wayward Archer was plundered, leaking 1-61 off his four overs.

Voters seek change after youth-led protests

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chill in the capital Kathmandu to vote early.

Voting started at 7:00 am local time (0115 GMT) and closed at 5:00 pm, with counting scheduled to start soon after, according to the country's election commission.

Early trends are likely to emerge by today but complete results could take a week or more as counting of proportional representation votes would take time, election commission officials said.

Officials said more than 300,000 security personnel, including the military, had been deployed to ensure peaceful voting in the more than 23,000 polling booths across the country.

Oli, who leads the moderate Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist, UML), is once again in the fray, along with more than 3,400 other candidates from 65 parties.

They include the country's oldest party, the Nepali Congress led by 49-year-old Gagan Thapa, and the Nepali Communist Party (NCP)

comprising former Maoist insurgents who joined mainstream politics.

Together with UML, these parties have dominated Nepali politics for the last three decades, although the country has seen 32 government changes in the past 35 years.

But the frontrunner for these polls is the three-year-old Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP), which has fielded the charismatic rapper-turned politician Balendra Shah as its prime ministerial candidate.

The 35-year-old former mayor of Nepal's capital Kathmandu is drawing large crowds, connecting with legions of young voters clamouring for change on the ground and online, even as he takes on Oli, 74, on his home turf in the Jhapa constituency along the Indian border.

In Jhapa, Mentuka Chauhan, 70, standing in line for more than 40 minutes at a polling booth, said she was worried about her son who was working in Qatar as a security guard, as tensions in the Middle East escalated.

"I can't sleep at night. I worry all

the time. My son tells me bombs keep dropping there. I wish there were employment opportunities here," she said.

Promises of jobs, reining in corruption and improving governance — all demands raised during the September protests — have dominated much of the election campaign.

"The election is critical to address the aspirations of the youths expressed during the Gen Z protests," said political analyst Puranjan Acharya.

"If the newly elected leaders are seen as unfit to do so, there is a risk of further trouble."

Some 19 million voters are eligible to cast their ballot for 275 members of parliament through a mixed electoral system — 165 seats in direct first-past-the-post elections and 110 through proportional representation.

"Voting is not just about sending someone to victory," Interim Prime Minister Sushila Karki, who took over after Oli, said in a public broadcast this week. "It's a decision you make about your future and that of your children."

Husband accuses staffer

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"During Shyam Sundar's tenure as chairman, Fazlur, Biswajit, and he allegedly embezzled and misused departmental funds. Biswajit and Shyam Sundar used office assistant Fazlu at different times to refuse to cooperate with and harass my wife. At one stage, Fazlur told my wife, 'You cannot act like a saint and leave the department's money untouched.'"

The statement further said when Fazlur was served a show-cause notice for breaching departmental discipline and non-cooperation, he apologised. However, at the instigation of Biswajit and Shyam Sundar, he again continued non-cooperation, which led to him being relieved of his duties.

Fazlu was transferred to the political science department and he joined there on February 18.

Biswajit also received a transfer order from the university

administration. Unable to accept the transfer orders, they collectively planned the murder, the FIR said.

Another accused, Habibur, was promoted from lecturer to assistant professor and he began harbouring intentions to become chair of the social welfare department, the FIR added.

Shyam Sundar and Biswajit could not be contacted over phone despite repeated attempts.

Talking to this correspondent, Habibur said he did not know why he was accused in the case.

Runa was buried at the central municipal graveyard in Kushtia town after Zohr prayers yesterday.

While conducting the autopsy, doctors found 20 stab wounds to her chest, abdomen, hands, and legs, said Hossain Imam, resident medical officer of 250-bed Kushtia General Hospital.