

## Bubly to make singing debut on 'Ityadi'

**The long-running TV programme 'Ityadi' has become a cherished Eid tradition in Bangladesh. Each edition of the show is known for its creative concepts and distinctive performances.**

This Eid, actress Shobnom Bubly will appear as a singer, performing alongside popular contemporary musician Imran Mahmudul.

Although Bubly is not a professional singer, she has performed the song impressively alongside Imran. Best known for her acting career, this will mark Bubly's first time singing on television.

The Eid special will air on BTv the night after Eid, following the 8:00pm Bangla news bulletin. Produced by Fagun Audio Vision, the programme is written, directed and presented by Hanif Sanket.



## Women's greatest strength is their solidarity: REEKITA NONDINE SHIMU

SHARMIN JOYA

Her acting journey has been slow and steady, yet profoundly impactful. Beginning her silver screen career with a filmmaker like Tareque Masud in *Runway* was nothing short of a dream come true for Reekita Nondine Shimu.

Shimu earned the National Film Award for Best Actress in 2023 for her portrayal of a headstrong, independent woman in *Shimu*, also known as *Made in Bangladesh*, directed by Rubaiyat Hossain. She also bagged the Best Actress Award at the Saint-Jean-de-Luz International Film Festival in France.

Shimu was also featured in *Once Upon a Time in Calcutta*, directed by Aditya Vikram Sengupta, which had its world premiere at the prestigious Venice Film Festival.

Alongside her flourishing acting career, Shimu has always sought ways to contribute positively to society. Through her roles — such as portraying female garment workers in *Under Construction* — she discovered a deeper sense of responsibility. "While performing, I realised that my work could be more than just acting; it could inspire, empower, and send positive energy to society," she says.

Last year, Shimu found her next step when she learned about IWPg's (International Women's Peace Group) Peace Leadership programme in South Korea. The organisation stands in solidarity with women around the world to build a sustainable world of peace through solidarity, education, and international cooperation.

She reached out with her profile, and the response was immediate. "They welcomed me with open arms. They said, 'It's a huge deal for us to have an artiste from Bangladesh joining our mission.' I felt truly seen and encouraged," she recalls. She also mentioned that she is the first actress from Bangladesh to be



PHOTO: JOYEETA TRISHA | OUTFIT: THE MUSLIN

involved in the initiative. "Previously, women from other sectors and professions, including the arts, have joined the initiative; however, they confirmed that, as an actress, I am the first one."

The experience, she says, was transformative. "Through virtual sessions, I met participants from all over the world — people with different perspectives, cultures, and experiences. Sharing our thoughts and listening to theirs made me realise that I am not alone in this work. There is a whole global community committed to peace, and I am part of it."

Apart from that, Shimu has worked on Rubaiyat Hossain's upcoming project, *The Difficult Bride*, sharing the screen with Azmeri Haque Badhan, Zaineen Karim and Sunerah Binte Kamal.

The film received a prestigious grant of €80,000 — approximately Tk 11.6 million — as a winner of the Fondazione Prada Film Fund at the 76th edition of

the Berlin International Film Festival, alongside 13 other films from around the world. This marks the second time the project has secured funding from one of the world's most renowned film platforms.

In 2022, the film received €50,000 at the 37th session of the World Cinema Fund.

"Working with Rubaiyat *Apu* as a woman, an artiste, and an actor has been an immense honour and a true joy for me. The way she helps an actor immerse themselves in their character is genuinely remarkable. She always encourages us to discover the character from within ourselves."

"I firmly believe that women's solidarity is our greatest strength. When we listen to each other's stories and stand by one another, our voices become stronger. As artistes, we have a powerful way to express our thoughts through cinema — a medium that allows us to connect with the world and share these experiences."



## Afraan Nisho starrer 'Domm' unveils first look

The first look of the upcoming Eid-ul-Fitr film *Domm* has been unveiled, offering a glimpse into a tense survival story. The 54-second teaser, released on social media on March 8, reveals the looks of Afraan Nisho, Chanchal Chowdhury and Puja Chery.

Set against a mountainous landscape at sunrise, the teaser shows Afraan Nisho appearing exhausted and anxious, while Puja Chery and Chanchal Chowdhury react with fear and uncertainty.

Directed by Redoan Rony, the film stars Nisho as Shahjahan Islam Noor. Produced by SVF Alpha-i and Chorki, *Domm*, tagged "Until the Last Breath", is based on true events and is scheduled for release this Eid.

### WHAT'S THE HAPS?



## 'The Handloom Tradition of Bangladesh'

Threads of heritage take centre stage as a week-long exhibition and fair celebrates Bangladesh's storied handloom legacy. From intricate Jamdani to revived Muslin traditions, the showcase honours master weavers, living craft knowledge, and the enduring artistry of cloth that has shaped the country's cultural identity.

DATE: MARCH 8-16, 2026  
TIME: 12:00 PM - 8:00 PM  
VENUE: BENGAL SHILPALAY, DHANMONDI

## NEWS

### Country's legal framework

FROM PAGE 12  
a comprehensive anti-discrimination law, post-divorce maintenance for Muslim women, and divorce rights for Hindu women.

**GBV: OUTDATED LAWS AND GAPS**  
The study found that Bangladesh's criminal justice system often fails to prosecute sexual violence, highlighting urgent reform needs in laws on rape, sexual offences, dowry-related violence, and domestic abuse.

Serious flaws were identified in the legal definition of rape under Section 375 of the Penal Code, creating four major barriers for survivors.

The law's narrow definition of penetration recognises only penile-vaginal intercourse, excluding assaults involving objects or other body parts.

Ambiguity around consent forces courts to rely on outdated stereotypes, often requiring proof of physical resistance rather than the absence of willing agreement. Child brides remain vulnerable, as forcible intercourse with a married girl over 13 is not considered rape, despite the statutory age of consent being 16.

Section 9 of the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act (WCRPA) 2000 exempts husbands from rape charges, leaving child victims without recourse and undermining Bangladesh's obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

While the 2022 repeal of Section 155(4) of the Evidence Act was a significant step, the study warns its impact remains limited. Because the repeal applies strictly to the narrow definition of rape in the Penal Code, survivors of other sexual offences can still face character assassination in court.

Furthermore, both the Penal Code and WCRPA assume perpetrators are male and victims female, leaving men and transgender persons, including members of the Hijra community, structurally unrecognised and unprotected as victims of sexual violence.

Other laws on sexual assault and harassment also remain vague. Sections 354 and 509 of the Penal Code criminalise acts that "outrage a woman's modesty", but the colonial-era language and intent requirement allow victim-blaming and leave many forms of harassment unaddressed.

High Court guidelines issued in 2009 define sexual harassment and require complaint committees in workplaces and schools, but the lack of legal enforcement leaves survivors with little practical protection.

The study called for amendments to the definition of rape, criminalisation of sexual abuse of child brides, revision of sexual assault and torture provisions, and formal inclusion of sexual harassment in law.

Meanwhile, the Dowry Prohibition Act 2018's technical language complicates prosecutions, while treating both giver and receiver equally ignores social pressures on brides' families.

The study recommends simplifying the law and revising penalties.

Domestic violence protections also remain inadequate, particularly for divorced women. The study calls for expanding definitions in the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, introducing criminal sanctions, and criminalising deaths or injuries resulting from abuse.

**LABOUR LAWS LEAVE WOMEN VULNERABLE**  
Bangladesh's labour laws also reveal serious gaps in protections for women, particularly regarding sexual harassment, maternity leave, and childcare.

Sexual harassment at work remains largely unaddressed. The Labour Act 2006 penalises vaguely defined indecent behaviour with minimal fines or prison terms, and cases are rare due to fear of retaliation and court backlogs.

The 2022 Labour Rules amendments introduced prevention committees and broadened the definition of harassment, but compliance is not mandatory, sanctions are absent, and protections apply only to women, excluding other gender identities.

The study recommends a standalone law covering all workers, aligned with ILO Convention 190.

Maternity protections remain limited to eight weeks before and after childbirth, with no provision for medical complications, falling short of ILO standards recommending 14-18 weeks.

Amendments on miscarriage leave and revised wage calculations may reduce benefits for some workers. Childcare facilities are mandated only in large workplaces, and breastfeeding breaks are not legally required.

More than 85 percent of women work in the unregulated informal sector, including domestic workers, leaving them especially vulnerable.

The study calls for comprehensive workplace harassment laws, extended maternity leave, mandatory breastfeeding facilities, removal of hazardous work restrictions, and

inclusion of informal workers, in line with ILO Conventions 183, 189, and 190. **CITIZENSHIP, PROPERTY AND MARRIAGE LAWS**

The study also highlighted discrimination embedded in personal laws tied to religion, lineage, and community.

Women cannot pass citizenship to foreign spouses, while men can. Property policies such as the Agricultural Khas Land Settlement Policy discriminate against widowed or divorced women by requiring "working sons" to qualify.

Family laws under Muslim, Hindu, and Christian codes continue to disadvantage women. Hindu marriage law allows child marriage and often disregards consent, while widow remarriage can lead to loss of property.

The study proposes amendments to the Special Marriage Act, post-divorce maintenance for Muslim women, divorce rights for Hindu women, and removal of discriminatory provisions in citizenship and trust laws.

Amending 19 laws and introducing four new ones is more than a legislative checklist; it is a test of political will.

Until the government moves beyond symbolic gestures to concrete legal reform, "equality before the law" will remain a hollow promise for those seeking protection in a system that still prioritises technicalities over justice, the study says.

### Five envoys

FROM PAGE 12  
favouring Awami League.

Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman was present with him; both had flown to London to attend the 26th Commonwealth Foreign Affairs Ministers Meeting.

Abida, a diplomat from the 15th batch, was appointed high commissioner to the UK on January 27, 2025. She previously served as Bangladesh's ambassador to Mexico and South Korea, and as deputy high commissioner in Kolkata.

The four contractual ambassadors were appointed by the interim government.

Mahfuzul Haque is a former secretary while Mainul Islam a former inspector general of police.

Mushfiqul Fazal Ansarey is a journalist who lived in the US and frequently briefed the US State Department and UN on BNP repression and rights violations under the Awami League.

Nazmul Islam is an academic who taught at a university in Turkey before being appointed to the Maldives post.

### Edible oil prices surge

FROM PAGE 12  
The refiners are supplying soybean oil in limited quantities to the market, said Anwar Hossain, a Khatunganj-based wholesale trader.

The impact is already being felt at the retail level. In Chattogram city, the price of loose soybean oil has increased by about Tk 7 per kg over the past four days to Tk 200-202 and loose palm oil prices by around Tk 6 per kg to about Tk 172.

Over in Khulna district, bottled soybean oil has become increasingly difficult to find and the prices have increased accordingly: a five-litre bottle that previously cost Tk 990 is now selling for about Tk 1,060, a one-litre bottle that previously sold for Tk 183 is now Tk 195.

Supplies from companies have dropped sharply in recent weeks, according to traders.

### Family Card brings hope to families in slums

FROM PAGE 12  
The pilot phase over the next four months, which will cost about Tk 39 crore.

In Dhaka's Sattala slum, the 30-year-old Shiuli Akter, a single mother of three, is equally excited.

To make ends meet, she works in different households from morning to night.

"With this money, I will at least be able to buy some better food for my children — just thinking about that makes me happy," said Shiuli, who rushed to fill out the form when announcements were made in the area.

Not everyone, however, was able to apply. For those without national ID card, mobile number or mobile financial services account, the assistance remains out of reach.

Nearly one-third the women in Bhashantek slum was unable to sign up for these reasons, according to local Jubo Dol leader Mosharrar Sardar.

Motaleb Hossain, assistant head teacher of Moonlight High School, a kindergarten school in Korail slum, said they had spent the last week helping poor families, especially women-headed households, fill out the six-page form. Four days were

It is the same situation over in Barishal, according to Mahatab Akon, a grocery shop owner in the city.

Contacted, Md Hasan, general manager of public relations for Meghna Group of Industries that sells the 'Fresh' brand oil, said the supply remains stable and there is no cause for concern.

"We maintain sufficient reserves to ensure continuous market availability," he told the reporter.

City Group, another major edible oil importer and processor, echoed the same.

"We are providing the same amount daily as usual, and reports on the supply are being submitted to the commerce ministry and various government agencies," said Biswajit Saha, director for corporate and regulatory affairs at City Group.

However, the government should look into why this situation is occurring in the retail market. The issue lies in the lack of sufficient vehicles to transport supplies outside Dhaka, mainly due to diesel issues, he said.

Commerce Minister Khandakar Abdul Muktedir acknowledged that shortages may be occurring at the marginal or retail level in some areas.

The government will strengthen monitoring by the Directorate of National Consumers' Rights Protection and encourage local administrations to be more active.

"Hopefully, the situation will improve within the next two to three days."

[Our Khulna correspondent Dipankar Roy and Barisal correspondent Sushanta Ghosh contributed to this report]

spent filling out forms, followed by three days correcting errors.

Officials and field-level workers from the Social Welfare Department were involved in the process. For families with up to five members, one card was issued in the name of the woman heading the household. In some cases, families with six or more members received two cards.

There is a lot of information that has to be entered in the form: national ID numbers, parents' information, husband's information, nominee, names of family members, their ID or birth registration numbers, assets, household furniture, annual income and whose mobile number is being used.

Many women in the slum did not have their own mobile phone numbers. Some used the numbers of their husbands, brothers or children. Later, many opened new bKash accounts and returned to have the forms corrected.

According to him, the work was completed on Friday. But even on Saturday and Sunday, people kept coming, saying they had been left out. Some had been in their villages, some lacked the required documents, and some had only birth registration certificates, which were not accepted

in place of national ID cards.

"We worked day and night so that everyone could apply. There were loudspeaker announcements for two days, and we also went from house to house. This is a pilot project. The first four months will show how it works," Motaleb said.

During a visit to Korail's TNT field yesterday between 10:30am and noon, preparations were underway for the programme's inauguration event scheduled for March 10. There was visible excitement among residents.

Many women said they had not seen such a transparent process in a long time, where no money was demanded and even mistakes in the forms were later corrected after applicants were called back.

The 14 upazilas selected for the pilot phase included Banani (Korail, Sattala and Bhashantek slums) and Mirpur/Shah Ali (Oli Miar Tek and Baganbari slums) in Dhaka, among other districts.

The pilot phase, which will cost the state Tk 39 crore, will last for four months and 40,000 families will be selected.

The government's ultimate objective is to gradually bring two crore families under monthly cash support, as per the guideline.