

Flawed people can change, and I love showing that on-screen: TANIM NOOR

“Growing up with music from the ’80s and ’90s, I fell in love with band culture,” he said. “Those musicians were dreaming big, trying to reach global audiences, yet their songs still feel so close to us. Music is more than just sound—it’s emotion, it’s memory, it’s part of who we are. That’s why I always try to bring it into my work.”

RAKSHANDA RAHMAN MISHA

Amid a wave of violence and full on action movies, director Tanim Noor is choosing a different path—one rooted in emotion, music, and stories that bring families back to theatres. After delivering *Utshob* last year, he returns this Eid-ul-Fitr with a new film inspired by Humayun Ahmed’s short story *Kichukkhon*, with a multi-starrer cast.

In a conversation ahead of the release, the director opened up about what drives him as a filmmaker and it’s clear that for him, cinema is as personal as it is creative.

“We recently had an event where we showcased the trailer on the big screen,” he shared. “We’ve already released the lyrical version of *Chaitte Paro* by Aurthohin, and more songs will follow. Audiences will get a new track on Chand Raat, and we’ll be visiting halls during Eid as well. We’re still planning the promotions, but I just want people to come in and have a really good time watching the film.”

Music, in many ways, defines Tanim Noor’s storytelling. It’s not just a stylistic choice—it’s something deeply personal. From using *Oniket Prantor* by Artcell in *Contract* to bringing *Chaitte Paro* into his latest film, he consistently weaves nostalgia and emotion through songs.

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reach global audiences, yet their songs still feel so close to us. Music is more than just sound—it’s emotion, it’s memory, it’s part of who we are. That’s why I always try to bring it into my work.”

That same emotional connection is what drew him to literature—particularly the works of Humayun Ahmed. For



Tanim Noor, adapting *Kichukkhon* wasn’t just a creative decision, but a deeply personal one.

“I used to read a lot growing up—even newspapers—and at one point I wanted to become a journalist,” he said with a smile.

Humayun Ahmed’s writing always stayed with me. His characters are quirky, imperfect, yet incredibly relatable. *Kichukkhon* felt special because of how beautifully all the characters are layered. I felt this is a story people will instantly connect with.”

In an industry where commercial success is often tied to action and spectacle, Tanim Noor stands firm in his own beliefs.

“I’m a very non-violent person, and I don’t enjoy showing violence on screen,” he said. “It goes against what I believe in. I’m more interested in telling stories about flawed people who grow and change. But that doesn’t mean I want to stay in one space—I do want to explore other genres, even horror. Audiences will see me experiment more in the future.”



Babita to headline BTV’s Eid special ‘Adda’

Bangladesh Television is set to air a special Eid edition of its talk-based programme *Adda*, bringing together artistes from two generations for an evening of stories, music and memories.

The highlight of the show will be legendary actress Babita, a recipient of the Ekushey Padak. In a segment with Shafiqul Alam Babu, she will share her acting journey, Eid memories and career experiences. Produced by Abdullah Al Mamun, this segment will air at 6 pm on the second day of Eid.

Other guests in the programme include veteran actor Abul Hayat, actress Dilara Zaman, singer Khurshid Alam, actress Ainun Nahar Putul, vocalist Tania Sultana Liza, Muhin Khan and actor Nirob.

The two-part programme will be broadcast at 6 pm on Eid day and the third day of Eid.



PHOTO: SHAHREAR KABIR HEEMEL

‘Smritir Sur’ revisits five legends of Bangla music

This Eid, singer Agun returns to television with *Smritir Sur*, a tribute to five icons of Bangla music—Azam Khan, Ayub Bachchu, Shafiqul Alam, Khalid and Farida Parveen.

Produced and directed by Najmul Alam Rana, the programme assembles those who knew these artistes best—their peers, collaborators, and family members.

Each episode moves between recollection and performance, pairing intimate conversations with live renditions of the artistes’ most enduring songs.

Smritir Sur will air from Eid day for five consecutive evenings, from 6 pm to 7 pm, on Channel 24. It will also be streamed on the channel’s Facebook and YouTube platforms.



NEWS

Extortion, weak sales double

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don’t know how we will manage.”

He has been running his small stall for over a decade, laying out a wooden platform on the pavement. Over the years, he said, paying regular extortion money to local collectors has become an unavoidable part of doing business in the area.

“When sales were good, it wasn’t too hard to pay the extortion. But this year, sales are slow across the entire market.”

According to him and several other vendors, around Tk 100 is collected nightly from each stall, along with an additional Tk 150 weekly—allegedly in the name of local law enforcers.

Expressing frustration, he said, “Before the election, MP candidates promised that extortion would stop if elected... but the reality is different.”

The same allegations were echoed along the stretch from Jahangir Tower to the BTMC building and up to Ambar Shah Mosque, where around 100 makeshift stalls operate, selling clothes, shoes, and other items. Vendors there also said daily collections typically range between Tk 100 and Tk 150.

Meheraj (not his real name), who has been selling clothes on the footpath for nearly five years, said the amount of extortion used to be higher before August 5.

“For a few days after August 5, the collections stopped, but resumed after a while, though the amount has somewhat reduced.”

Following government directives, several police units recently prepared a list of alleged extortionists across the country, including in the capital, categorised into six groups.

A list related to the Karwan Bazar area, seen by The Daily Star, includes 37 individuals allegedly involved in collecting extortion from footpath vendors. According to the document, most are political actors.

However, a separate investigation by The Daily Star found that at least 50 to 60 individuals are involved in extortion in the area.

There are also allegations that some members of Tejgaon Police Station are involved in the collection process.

Rabeya Begum (not her real name), a vegetable vendor near Super Market No-2 in Karwan Bazar, said she personally does not pay extortion, but others nearby are forced to pay between Tk 200 and Tk 500 daily.

“People are afraid to speak about

extortion... if someone speaks out, the extortionists beat them, harass them, and sometimes force them to leave the area.”

Karwan Bazar, one of the capital’s largest wholesale markets, sees hundreds of trucks arrive every night carrying vegetables, fish, and other goods from across the country. Vendors allege that large sums are also collected from these trucks and vans as well.

A small trader, preferring anonymity, said,

“At the makeshift wholesale spots near the Prothom Alo office, vendors have to pay between Tk 500 and Tk 1,000 per stall every day... In addition, Tk 100 is collected from each shop in the name of Tejgaon Police Station.”

Contacted for comment, Kya Swee Nue Marma, officer-in-charge of Tejgaon Police Station, denied the allegations. “If anyone collects extortion in the name of the police, provide the names. They will be brought to justice.”

ATTACK ON ANTI-EXTORTION PROTEST: CASE FILED

On December 29 last year, traders organised a human chain in Karwan Bazar protesting extortion, which was later attacked by a group of assailants armed with sticks.

At the time, several participating traders alleged that some local leaders and activists of Jubo Dal were present during the attack.

A case was filed with Tejgaon Police Station the next day against around 30 individuals, including the expelled member secretary of the local Jubo Dal.

Contacted recently, several small traders who had led the anti-extortion movement declined to speak on record. Others, requesting anonymity, said extortion continues in the area.

“Collections are still ongoing using the names of different political leaders,” one trader said, alleging that law enforcement agencies are aware of the issue but remain silent.

Anwaruzzaman Anwar, a senior member of the convening committee of Dhaka North BNP, said several leaders and activists accused of involvement in extortion in Karwan Bazar had already been expelled from the party.

“If anyone still uses the party’s name to carry out extortion, action will be taken based on evidence, and they will be handed over to law enforcement agencies.”

Another Bangladeshi killed in ME

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Mamun’s family would receive financial assistance in line with the government rules, the ministry said.

Mamun’s cousin Shawon Morol said he was the father of a son and that his death had cast a pall of grief over both the family and the village.

He urged the authorities to bring Mamun’s body back to Bangladesh quickly.

Earlier on March 8, two other Bangladeshis—Bacchu Miah of Katiadi in Kishorganj and Mosharrif Hossain of Shakhipur in Tangail—were killed in the same Al Kharj aerial attack, where several others, including Mamun, were injured.

Another Bangladeshi, Ahmed Ali, also known as Saleh Ahmed, died in the UAE on February 28, while SM Tareq died in Bahrain’s Salman Industrial Area on March 2.

Amid the deteriorating situation, the ministry said its control room set up on March 10 to support Bangladeshi migrants will remain operational during the Eid holidays.

The control room will operate round-the-clock, seven days a week, until March 24, according to an office order on March 16.

A total of 20 officers and 24 staff members will work in three shifts at the Probashi Call Centre, located on the seventh floor of Probashi Kallyan

Bhaban in Eskaton.

The hotline numbers are toll-free 16135 for callers within Bangladesh and +8809610102030 for calls from abroad. Officials have been instructed to maintain communication with labour welfare wings abroad, if necessary, and to collect and submit information in a structured format.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh missions in Qatar and Kuwait have issued separate notices restricting public Eid-ul-Fitr gatherings due to the ongoing conflict.

In a notice dated March 17, the Bangladesh embassy in Doha said Eid congregations would not be organised at Bangladesh MHM School and College premises this year, in line with the directives from Qatari authorities.

Bangladeshi nationals have been advised to offer prayers at nearby mosques and follow local instructions.

In Kuwait, the Bangladesh embassy announced on March 18 that all public gatherings, including cultural programmes, concerts and community events, have been prohibited by the government as part of security measures.

As a result, the traditional Eid greetings programme at Bangladesh House will not be held this year.

The mission urged the expatriate

Bangladeshis to remain cautious and comply with the host country guidelines.

Over in Bahrain, the Bangladesh embassy has arranged a special flight to facilitate the return of Bangladeshi nationals.

In notices issued on March 15 and March 18, the mission said a Gulf Air flight on the Manama-Dammam-Dhaka route would be operated, with a tentative travel date set for March 20 or a nearby date.

The fare has been fixed at approximately 300 Bahraini dinars. Each passenger will be allowed to carry 23kg of checked baggage and one handbag.

Interested passengers have been asked to register through the embassy’s official Facebook page and complete ticket formalities at the Gulf Air office in Seef Mall. Airline representatives will be available on March 18 and March 19 from 9:00am to 3:00pm.

Passengers have been instructed to report to the designated assembly point at the Golden Tulip Hotel in Manama at least 10 hours before departure.

The embassy said further instructions would be provided by Gulf Air and urged passengers to strictly follow the guidelines.

Meanwhile, flight operations at Hazrat Shahjalal International

Airport in Dhaka have remained disrupted since February 28 due to the closure of airspace in Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, the UAE, Bahrain, Qatar and Jordan.

A total of 614 flights out of the scheduled 714 have been cancelled in the last 19 days since February 28, according to the airport’s flight management department.

Of these, 26 flights were cancelled yesterday, including those operated by Kuwait Airways, Air Arabia, Gulf Air, Qatar Airways, Emirates, Jazeera Airways and flydubai.

At Shah Amanat International Airport in Chattogram, flight operations on Middle East routes have also been severely affected, with eight international flights cancelled yesterday.

Of these, Biman Bangladesh Airlines cancelled two outbound flights, US-Bangla Airlines cancelled one arrival and one departure flight and Air Arabia cancelled two arrival flights from Sharjah and two departures to the same destination.

Since February 28, a total of 145 international flights have been cancelled at the airport.

Despite the disruptions, nine arrival flights and five departure flights on the Middle East routes were operated by different airlines yesterday.

Drive against extortionists after Eid

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For instance, in Dhaka city alone, there are about 1,000 names, with most of them located in Mohammadpur, Mirpur and Pallabi.

The Karwan Bazar area has 30 extortionists who collect tolls from the street vendors. Jatrabari has 17 people who collect tolls from the footpath.

Four police stations in Mirpur division have 284 names in total, including 162 narcotics dealers.

Lists from several divisions have already been received, and the remaining divisions are expected to submit their lists very soon, said Tareq Jubayer, deputy commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police’s crime division.

The other police units and agencies are also preparing separate lists.

“Once those are completed, we will cross-check them to ensure that innocent people are not harassed. Before that, the lists cannot be shared,” he added.

This newspaper contacted Feni, Magura, Satkhira and Nilphamari district police and Khulna, Chattogram and Rajshahi metropolitan police and all of them said that it will require at least another week to finalise the list.

The form has sought the names of extortionists under five categories, along with a separate list of top criminals. Along with their personal information, the areas from which

extortion was collected, the amount of money they received weekly or monthly and details of cases in which they were previously accused in—have been sought.

“Such information cannot be gathered within three days. There is also a concern that a wrong person’s name might be included, which could cause personal harm,” said an official of Rajshahi Metropolitan Police.

Khandakar Rafiqul Islam, additional IGP (crime and ops), however, acknowledged that it may take some more time to prepare the final list.

The government must take strict action without giving weight to anyone’s political identity, said Md

Tawohidul Haque, associate professor at the University of Dhaka’s Institute of Social Welfare and Research.

“Often, no action is taken because of links between criminals and people within the administration. Those in the administration who are connected to criminals must also be brought under the law. Otherwise, this initiative, like many in the past, will fail,” he added.

Though the extortionists use some political identities to complete their illegal tasks, they do not belong to any political party, said Belal Hossain, joint secretary of Kawran Bazar Traders’ Association.

“We want action against these extortionists.”