

# WORD-OF-MOUTH plays crucial role among houseful cinemagoers

SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

"I personally compare every film release to the national elections," said Redoan Rony over the phone. "No matter what the hype machine churns out, the real test is on the day that the audience punches a ticket and has a say."

The director was referring to 'bot' attacks which attempt to skew perspectives of a film well before its release. His film *Domm* is also subject to such polarising opinions online. While alternative media—which in this case includes Facebook and Instagram film pages—now has loyal, growing fanbases, fringe elements that particularly target films have become a growing concern for new releases.

Amidst ongoing online debates, memes, and mockery, the five mainstream films that have been released have found their target audiences. *Prince*, *Domm*, *Bonolota*

*Express*, *Pressure Cooker*, and *Rakkhosh* have lured audiences to theatres.

Groups and pages on social media, while now crucial to Bangladesh's film ecosystem, can give rise to much tribalism among fans, providing a window of opportunity for vested interests online. Abu Hayat Mahmud, director of the Shakib Khan starrer *Prince*, feels strongly about this issue. "There was criticism regarding the trailer's VFX, which we were willing to work on. However, there were pages that edited screengrabs from the trailer and made a mockery of the situation. We all know that they are not done by 'neutral' fans. You will notice that there are no discussions regarding the plot, acting, or even direction—just the one thing that is perpetually making rounds online."

Despite that, largely due to the superstardom of Shakib Khan, *Prince* is the only film this season to make inroads in

single-screen halls. "Eighty percent of the halls that we are currently showcasing the film in are going houseful," claims Mahmud.

Raihan Rafi, who has proven his mainstream appeal with *Surongo*, *Toofan*, and *Taandob*, has taken a risk with his female-led film *Pressure Cooker*. The film, starring Shobnom Bubly and Nazifa Tushi, among others, is being lauded online for its courageous storytelling. "While the mainstream media has always given us support, there is obviously room for improvement, especially during Eid," said the director. He claims that much of the audience has called it his best work yet, but with little reflection of it in mainstream media post-release. "Honestly, word-of-mouth and online opinions are carrying this film in a sea of star-studded releases. I am very happy with the response."

Hall allocations arguably play a crucial

factor in Eid releases, especially when multiple star-studded projects are released. Siam Ahmed has successfully turned heads with his performance in the Mehedi Hasan Hridoy directed *Rakkhosh*. "We were given nine halls to start with by Star Cineplex, and it doubled after immense audience pressure. On the second day, we showcased the film in 22 halls." The actor, while happy with the audience's reception both in the theatre and online, insists that every film that releases should be given a chance to shine. "I can't complain, though. I am certain that if someone walks into the theatre to see this film, they will find something special in it."

*Rakkhosh* is set in the same universe as the director's previous hit, *Borbaad*. Tanim Noor's *Bonolota Express* is the most star-studded film to release this Eid. "My target audience is always the middle class and families," he said. "Irrespective of how many

halls a film manages to land, it is the people who have the power to share their opinions and write about their feelings—because at the end of the day, a cineplex is a business and they will decide what's best for them."

"My first film was a super-flop. I felt really bad when opinions ran rampant online, but I just took them as inspiration to improve myself and do better." The director's *Utshob* proved that there was still a place for entire families in cinema halls.

The biggest takeaway from this Eid's releases is that cinema, regardless of star power or mass appeal, can find its own audience after cutting through the noise from fringe elements. For the sake of the film industry, it matters that the people are in the halls, with a real choice of what they want to watch.

The author is Entertainment Editor at The Daily Star.



## Jungkook sparks collaboration buzz with Arijit Singh

Speculation of a musical collaboration between BTS member Jungkook and Indian singer Arijit Singh has taken social media by storm after Jungkook shared photos of the two together on Instagram.

The images show Jungkook and Arijit Singh spending time together, sharing a meal, playing music, and sitting in a studio, suggesting a possible collaboration.

In his post, Jungkook said that he had recently travelled to India quietly for music. He added that it was not for a show or cameras, but to spend time with Arijit Singh, where they talked, shared memories, and worked on something special.

The potential collaboration between Jungkook and Arijit Singh, if confirmed, would mark a significant cross-cultural musical moment between K-pop and Indian music industries.

## WHAT'S THE HAPS?



## 'Laal Jatra'

Prachyanat stages its annual street procession *Laal Jatra*, a living act of remembrance marking the genocide of March 25, 1971. Conceived by Rahul Ananda, the rally blends song, movement, and symbolism, inviting collective mourning, resistance, and reflection on histories that continue to shape the present.

Date: Wednesday | March 25, 2026

Time: 4 pm onwards

Venue: Shoparjito Shadhinota Chattar, TSC to Smriti Chirantan, Fuller Road

## Chanchal Chowdhury returns to Tollywood with 'Azadi'

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

While his presence dominates this year's Eid releases in Bangladesh, Chanchal Chowdhury is also expanding his work across regions, currently filming a new project in Kolkata that revisits one of the subcontinent's most significant historical periods.

His upcoming film is titled *Azadi*, directed by Suman Mukhopadhyay, who earned widespread acclaim for *Putulnacher Itikatha*.

Speaking about *Azadi*, Chanchal said, "The film is essentially about the Partition. It's a powerful story—emotional and rooted in truth. This project is special to me. Suman Mukhopadhyay is a very talented and thoughtful director."

In the film, Chanchal portrays a Muslim police inspector named Selimullah. The narrative also explores a lesser-known aspect of the Partition era—how government employees from Kolkata could relocate to Dhaka for work, and vice versa.

"I've been shooting continuously, and we already shot one full night," he added. "The story of *Azadi* truly moved me. I believe it will turn out to be a remarkable film."

On the work front, three movies featuring Chanchal Chowdhury were released in theatres this Eid. Tanim Noor's

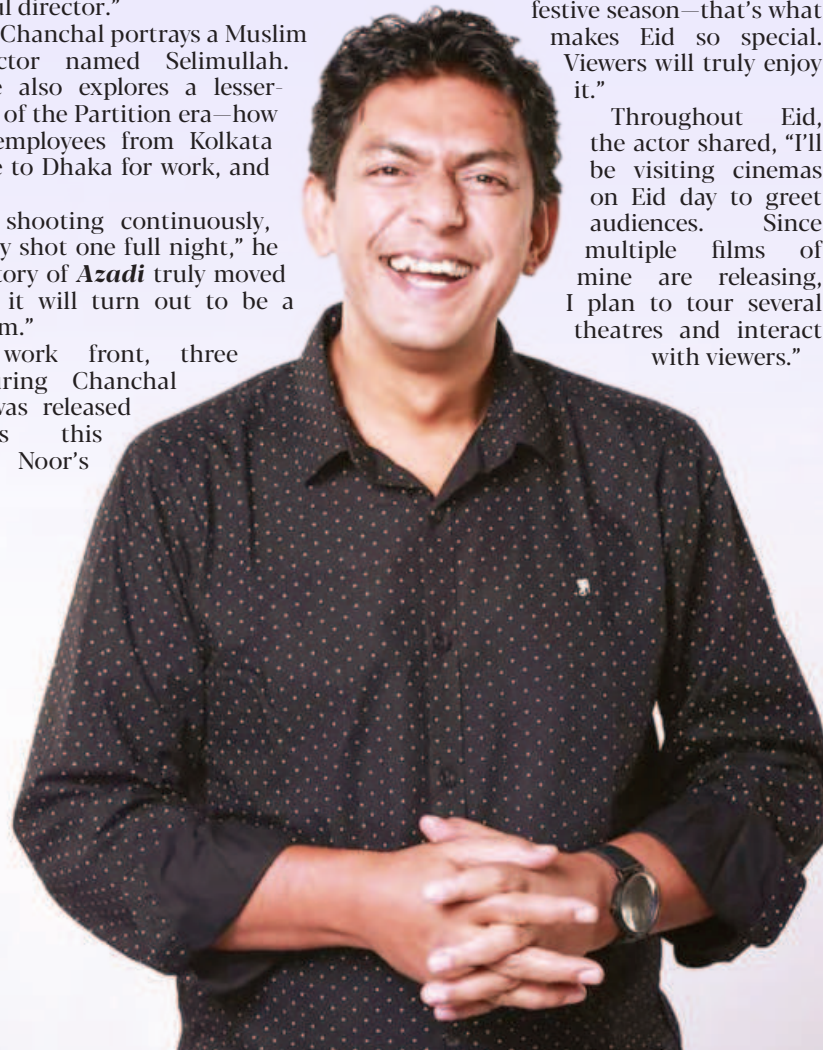
*Bonolota Express*, Redoan Rony's *Domm*, and Raihan Rafi's *Pressure Cooker*.

"Audiences are already familiar with *Bonolota Express*, as it is based on a novel by Humayun Ahmed," he said. "They also know quite a bit about *Domm*. As for *Pressure Cooker*, viewers will understand my work once they watch it."

Extending his wishes to fellow actors, Chowdhury said, "I wish all films releasing this Eid the very best. My best wishes to Shakib Khan for *Prince*, and to Siam Ahmed for *Rakkhosh*. Of course, my own films are there as well. I hope audiences watch and support all of them."

He added that this Eid promises to be a delightful one for audiences. "There are many good films releasing this festive season—that's what makes Eid so special. Viewers will truly enjoy it."

Throughout Eid, the actor shared, "I'll be visiting cinemas on Eid day to greet audiences. Since multiple films of mine are releasing, I plan to tour several theatres and interact with viewers."



## SI Tutul drops Eid songs, honours Ayub Bachchu

Bangladeshi singer SI Tutul has released two new songs this Eid from the United States, where he has been based in recent years. Titled *Bondhu Keu Noy* and *Tumi Krishok Bhalo Na*, the tracks were unveiled on his Facebook and YouTube platforms, with one released on the eve of Eid and the other on Eid day.

*Bondhu Keu Noy* has been dedicated to late rock icon Ayub Bachchu, founder of LRB, with Tutul describing him as a mentor. Written by Shahidul Haque Sohel, the song has been composed and arranged by Tutul himself.

A former member of LRB, Tutul continues to expand his solo career, adding fresh releases to this year's Eid music lineup while paying tribute to one of Bangladesh's most influential musicians.