

## DINA ZAMAN A humane contemporary artist

AISHWARYA RAIHAN

Dina Zaman is a US-based artist, who recently conducted a workshop with emerging Bangladeshi artists and the underprivileged and socially ostracized children of Shishupolli. The Daily Star got in touch with the Bangladeshi-American interdisciplinary artist for an exclusive interview.

**Please tell us about your art and the inspiration behind your artistic practices.**

My art is an organic, unpredictable flow shaped by my experiences as a daughter, wife, mother, and woman. I transform public spaces into narratives of resilience and Bangladeshi heritage—one mural and one sisterhood at a time. Trained at the University of Dhaka's Faculty of Fine Arts, my practice spans figurative painting, mixed media, and performance art. I merge traditional Bangladeshi techniques with contemporary concepts, often portraying women with muscular physiques to symbolize their internal strength. My public art is not merely decorative; it is declarative, asserting presence and history.

**Share journey of becoming an artist.**

I grew up in the buzzing, densely populated streets of Dhaka. Moving to the relatively "empty" landscape of



Indiana, USA, was a profound shift. For 20 years, the challenges of migration and adjustment silenced my creative pursuits. Eventually, my mind reached out to my



PHOTOS: COURTESY

soul to "bring back what once was mine." When paintbrushes initially felt foreign, I dipped my fingers directly into the pigment, letting my imagination flow onto the canvas. Since then, I have exhibited internationally and served as a cultural bridge-builder, with my work featured on PBS/WOSU and in various global media outlets.

**Could you tell us about one favorite work amongst your own?**

My most recent work on body-shaming is particularly special. It resonates with many women, including myself, who have been judged for being "too skinny" or "too chubby." These critiques ignore the natural cycles of aging, childbirth, and hormonal shifts. Through this piece, I assert that a person's character remains constant regardless of their physical changes.

**Could you tell us about your work in the US?**

I have completed three large-scale public art projects funded by the City of Columbus, each blending Bangladeshi folk art with themes of womanhood.

These installations make South Asian heritage visible in American spaces while honouring collective memory.

In 2025, I joined the Board of Directors at Boardman Arts Park in Delaware, Ohio, where I have a permanent sculpture made from recycled tires. I also serve as a navigator, curator, and grant reviewer for the Greater Columbus Arts Council (GCAC). Additionally, I co-founded Lumina Arts Space to uplift marginalized women and Bangladeshi artists. My work also extends to art therapy, where I help refugees and survivors of trauma in Columbus find healing through self-expression.

**Please share your recent and upcoming artistic ventures.**

Recently, my work was exhibited at the Rome International Art Fair at Medina Gallery and the Tobian Art Gallery in Florence. In Bangladesh, my paintings were showcased at Bhumi Gallery and Edge Gallery.

Currently, I am holding a solo exhibition at the FCV Art Gallery in Upper Arlington, Ohio. My next major solo exhibition is scheduled for September 2026 at the Priscilla R Tyson Cultural Arts Center in Ohio.

## 'Bonolota Express' releases in Australia

Since Eid day, **Bonolota Express** has been captivating audiences in cinemas across the country. The film continues to run houseful in almost every show at multiplexes, and has now been released in Australia as well.

The film is directed by Tanim Noor. It has now been released in Australia from March 27 through BongOz Films. The film is showing in 19 theatres across cities like Bankstown, Campbelltown, and Carousel. It will also release in the UK in April.

The ensemble cast includes Mosharraf Karim, Chanchal Chowdhury, Sariful Razz, Sabila Nur, Shamol Mawla, Azmeri Haque Badhan, Zakia Bari Mamo, among others.



## 'Rockstar' Shakib Khan goes viral with new look



Megastar Shakib Khan is once again wowing audiences with a bold new look on the big screen. As a special treat for his fans, the actor unveiled the first look of himself in **Rockstar**, directed by Azman Rusho.

The poster presents him in a gritty street-rocker avatar, featuring a sleeveless vest, long beaded necklace, tied-back dreadlocks, tattoos, and bold styling—marking a clear shift from his traditional hero persona.

Sun Motion Picture Ltd is producing the film, with Azman Rusho also handling the story and direction. The screenplay has been penned by Nusrat Maati, while dialogues are written by Ayman Asib Shadhin and Samiul B Huiyan.

## 'Harry Potter' trailer becomes HBO's most-watched with 277 million views



The first trailer for **Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone**, a new television adaptation of Harry Potter, has broken records. The trailer crossed 277 million organic views within 48 hours of its release on March 26, making it the most-watched trailer in the history of HBO and HBO Max.

The series is based on the first novel by JK Rowling. Each season is expected to follow one book from the seven-part series. The first season

will adapt **Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone**.

The cast includes John Lithgow as Albus Dumbledore and Janet McTeer as Minerva McGonagall. Paapa Essiedu plays Severus Snape. Other cast members include Rory Wilmot as Neville Longbottom and Lox Pratt as Draco Malfoy.

It is set to premiere during Christmas 2026 on HBO and HBO Max.

# NEWS

## MPs rebuke transport boss for loose talk

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a large number of people dead, which is very unexpected, they said, while urging the concerned ministry to be more active.

At least 274 people were killed and over 1,500 injured across the country during the 10-day Eid-ul-Fitr travel period, according to the Road Safety Foundation.

Instructions were also given to place progress reports before the prime minister today on three key ministries: the power, energy and mineral resources ministry; road transport and bridges ministry and the foreign ministry.

The move is aimed at allowing the government to closely monitor the performance of ministries that are now facing public attention and policy pressure.

The meeting also decided that ministers and lawmakers should take advance preparation for the upcoming parliamentary session, where the opposition may raise questions or criticism over the work of these three ministries.

Preparations would include reviewing recent steps taken by the ministries, identifying weak points and preparing clear responses so that the government can explain its position in parliament in a more organised way.

At the meeting, 45 lawmakers were selected to take part in discussions on these matters in parliament.

The government wants to ensure that ministers are better prepared, facts are presented clearly and debate on key issues remains constructive during the next session.

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman

## Dhaka seeks EU help

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assess Bangladesh's request to defer its LDC graduation, currently slated for later this year, to 2029. If not resolved through discussion, the plea will be put to a vote at the UN General Assembly.

The minister also urged the EU trade commissioner to begin negotiations on a free trade agreement, following a proposal Bangladesh submitted to the EU several months ago.

According to Mukhtar, the EU commissioner raised questions about labour conditions, to which the minister replied that Bangladesh had already amended its labour law in line with International Labour Organisation

also announced that cabinet members will brief the members of parliament about their activities.

Monthly briefings will be arranged for MPs to discuss government performance and plans so they can speak in the parliament and take measures in their constituencies.

Tarique also directed the authorities to take stern action against those responsible for creating an artificial fuel crisis and to prevent fuel smuggling.

The leader of the House also urged the members of the parliament to remain vigilant and work closely with local administrations to ensure that fuel prices do not surge and people do not suffer from sudden price hikes.

"There is a risk of smuggling taking place," Chief Whip Nurul Islam Moni told reporters after the meeting.

To stop smuggling, he instructed the home minister to take strict measures, after which tougher actions will follow. At the same time, raids will be carried out against those engaged in hoarding, stockpiling fuel or attempting to create an artificial fuel crisis, he quoted the PM as saying.

Due to the ongoing war in the Middle East, the global economy is unstable and fuel prices have risen worldwide. Yet in Bangladesh, the government is making every effort to keep prices steady, even providing subsidies of nearly Tk 200 crore per month, Moni said.

Tarique informed the MPs of this situation, urging them to remain vigilant so that people do not suffer from sudden price hikes. He directed the MPs to coordinate with district commissioners and local

administrations to ensure necessary measures are taken without disruption.

He also mentioned that the energy minister will brief the parliament following Section 300 of Rules of Procedure of the parliament.

Moni said that it was clarified that fuel supply is sufficient: a ship carrying 200,000 tonnes of fuel has already docked and another of equal capacity is loaded and on its way.

"Thus, there is no shortage of supply; the crisis is being artificially created by certain media outlets, opportunists and smugglers. Decisions were taken today to prevent this."

Although fuel prices have risen in neighbouring countries and many parts of the world, keeping the prices stable in Bangladesh can be considered a success of the government. This was achieved through prior planning, said Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed.

"To ensure that farmers do not face difficulties during the Boro season, the government is supplying fuel with subsidies. The issue of fuel smuggling has come to the government's attention and strict measures will be taken to stop it," he told reporters.

The meeting, which was adjourned and will resume tomorrow at 1:30pm, also expressed deep shock and grief at the death of Dilara Hafiz, wife of Speaker of the Jatiya Sangsad Hafiz Uddin Ahmed.

## 'Cuba is next'

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military, I said, "You'll never have to use it," but sometimes you have to use it," Trump said.

"And Cuba is next, by the way. But pretend I didn't say that."

Trump did not specify what he planned to do with Cuba, telling the media to "disregard that statement" before repeating "Cuba's next" to laughter from the audience.

In his Friday speech, the Republican president also made a teasing comment dubbing the Strait of Hormuz the "Strait of Trump."

Cuba's leader Miguel Diaz Canel said last week that any external aggressor would face "unbreakable resistance," even as the country was hit with two nationwide blackouts in a week.

## CID brings back \$3.62m sent abroad

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"We have already submitted the required documents. Hopefully, the money will be credited to the CID account on Sunday morning," the official added.

CID officials described the recovery as a major milestone in tackling cross-border financial crime, marking the country's first successful repatriation of funds held overseas after such a scam.

MTFE, short for Metaverse Foreign Exchange, is a platform that expanded rapidly in Bangladesh using a multi-level marketing (MLM) model that lured investors with promises of high returns from cryptocurrency and forex trading, according to CID.

The platform began operating in Bangladesh around June 2022 and grew quickly in early 2023. Users were given virtual trading accounts where deposits appeared as digital dollars.

Investigators later found the system had been manipulated to fabricate profits and losses, creating an illusion of legitimate trading activity. Payouts were made early to build trust among investors.

By mid-2023, however, withdrawals were abruptly blocked and the platform vanished.

According to CID estimates and media reports, around Tk 11,000 crore was siphoned off — mostly from Bangladeshi investors. Thousands

of people across Dhaka, Barishal, Rajshahi, Cumilla, Naogaon, Kushtia, Brahmanbaria and Satkhira are believed to have been affected.

One such victim, Maruf Rahaman Mahim, filed a case with Khilgaon Police Station on August 28, 2023, under the Digital Security Act, accusing MTFE's founding chairman, Mohammad Masud Alam, MTFE agent Mobashirul Ebad, and 50-60 unnamed individuals. The case was later transferred to CID.

During the probe, investigators found the virtual currency shown in users' accounts was entirely fictitious. Funds were funnelled into MTFE-linked wallets before being transferred to central accounts and dispersed across multiple cryptocurrency wallets, including those on the exchange OKX.

CID later learned that Sri Lankan authorities had recovered MTFE-linked funds from the same platform. Acting on this lead, it contacted the exchange, which requested formal documentation.

With support from the US Embassy in Dhaka, the US Secret Service, the FBI, and the US Department of Justice's ICITAP programme, investigators traced and seized cryptocurrency assets worth around Tk 45 crore from MTFE-linked wallets.

To facilitate repatriation, CID

signed an agreement with Asset Reality Limited in November last year. Under the deal, the firm was tasked with receiving the seized crypto assets, liquidating them, and transferring the proceeds to Bangladesh, charging a 2.5 percent service fee.

A dedicated account at Sonali Bank's Malibagh branch was opened to receive the funds, with three CID officials as signatories.

"The seized cryptocurrency in an OKX wallet was first transferred to Asset Reality, which then converted it into US dollars and remitted the funds to us," a senior CID official told The Daily Star.

According to CID sources, the recovered money will be distributed among victims through a court-supervised process after verification of claims and supporting documents.

Individuals will not be able to claim funds directly. Officials said the judicial route was chosen to ensure transparency and accountability.

"The victims will be listed, and Bangladesh Bank along with the court will decide how the money will be distributed," said Mohammad Bashir Uddin.

CID chief Mosleh Uddin Ahmed could not be reached for comment despite repeated attempts over the phone.

## Nepal ensues

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His popularity did not last, and he was beaten by Shah in his home constituency in an election this month, his second defeat since the restoration of multi-party democracy in 1990. Anger over the deaths in September's protests helped Shah's Rastriya Swatantra Party win the election by a landslide.

The panel investigating last September's violence held Oli and Lekhak responsible for not taking any action to stop hours of firing on the protesters by police.

Police spokesperson Om Adhikari said Oli and Lekhak would be brought to court today.

Oli, 74, who has had two kidney transplants, has been transferred to a hospital from the police office where he was first taken, witnesses said.