

Suchona Shely releases new folk song 'Obishasher Jontrona'

A new folk-based song titled *Obishasher Jontrona* by singer Suchona Shely has been released under the G Series label, blending themes of heartbreak and emotional struggle.

The song's lyrics and composition are by Shahazadi, with music arrangement by Jimmy Shah. Pial handled mixing and mastering, while the music video was directed by Rahat Noli with cinematography by Kabir Mahmud.

Known for her folk repertoire and wider recognition through Coke Studio Bangla, Shely has been steadily building her presence in playback and contemporary music. Her recent tracks include *Vallage Na Kene*, *Boidyaraj* and *Rup Sagore*.

Obishasher Jontrona is now available on G Series' official YouTube channel and streaming platforms.



SHAMOL MAWLA considers 'Bonolota Express' a personal victory

SHARMIN JOYA

Following the remarkable success of *Bonolota Express*, actor Shamol Mawla finds himself reflecting on a journey that has been both smooth and deeply fulfilling. The film, based on a story by the legendary Humayun Ahmed and directed by Tanim Noor, has resonated with audiences at home and across North America—an achievement Mawla describes as "very special."

"It's been a wonderful experience from the very beginning," he says. "As soon as I came on board for *Bonolota Express*, I was excited. I knew I'd be working alongside some incredibly talented actors, so I had to be even more serious about my performance."

Having previously collaborated with Tanim Noor in *Money Honey* and *Contract*, Shamol was already comfortable with the team. "It's a unit I really like. Everything from the shoot to the release was handled so smoothly. There was no pressure at any stage, which is rare. The audience has already witnessed that on the screens."

For Shamol, the film's success carries personal significance. "I've never had a film released during Eid before, so to have one that became such a hit—it means a lot. It was also my daughter's first Eid, so everything combined made it incredibly special."

He speaks particularly fondly of his role. "It was a fantastic character, and I feel lucky to have been given the opportunity. There was a lot to explore within it. Of course, how much I've managed to achieve is for the audience to decide—but the response so far has been very encouraging."

Despite praise from critics—particularly regarding his expressive screen presence—the actor remains grounded. When asked whether he feels his full potential is being utilised, he offers a measured response. "I don't really think in those terms. Everyone sees things differently. I'm easily content, and I just want to focus on doing good work."

Shamol is currently working on *Suraiya*, a psychological drama



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

directed by one of his favourite filmmakers, Robiul Alam Robi. Previously, they have collaborated in *Sincerely Yours*, *Dhaka* and *Café Desire*. "Honestly speaking, Giasuddin Selim, Sumon Anwar and Robi are my most favourite directors I have worked with in my career. Each director has a different approach, and that's what keeps things interesting. This story of *Suraiya* is quite layered, but for now, I can't reveal much about it just yet."

He also speaks warmly of his co-actors and collaborators. "It's always exciting to work with new people while continuing relationships with directors I admire. This will be my first collaboration with Nazifa Tushi, and she is a fantastic artiste. I have watched her in *Pressure Cooker*, and she's brilliant in her craft!"

Off-screen, life has taken on a new dimension. Now a father to a nine-month-old daughter, Shamol admits he is still adjusting. "It's a process. I'm discovering things as I go along."



Baishakhi concert brings Bangladeshi stars to Oklahoma

A Baishakhi Mela concert will be held in Oklahoma for the first time, bringing together the Bangladeshi diaspora to celebrate the Bengali New Year. Scheduled for May 9, the event is being organised by the Desi Youth Association of Oklahoma.

Renowned singer Samina Chowdhury and actor Zayed Khan will headline the concert, alongside performers Parvez Sazzad and Bindu Kona. The programme will feature a mix of music, entertainment, and cultural showcases aimed at creating a festive atmosphere.

Speaking about the event, Zayed Khan said celebrating Bangladeshi culture abroad is a matter of pride and expressed his excitement about engaging with expatriate audiences. Organisers expect the concert to draw strong participation from the local Bangladeshi community.

WHAT'S THE HAPS?

'Buddha of Bengal: Our Sacred Community'

A contemplative showcase of Bengali Buddhist artistic heritage unfolds at *Buddha of Bengal: Our Sacred Community* brings together 91 works spanning sculpture, miniature, and contemporary expression, tracing a living tradition shaped by artists, students, and institutions across Bangladesh in a shared space of reflection and craft.



DATE: APRIL 28 – MAY 6, 2026
TIME: 2 PM – 8 PM
VENUE: ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE DE DHAKA, DHANMONDI

NEWS

2 unregulated toxic chemicals

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with hormonal balance and are linked to reproductive disorders, developmental abnormalities and cancer, the report said.

The report recommends urgent policy action, including restricting the high-risk additives in consumer products, developing chemical-specific regulations, and introducing mandatory labelling and disclosure systems.

"It would be very dangerous if we ignore the issue of highly toxic additives," said Siddika Sultana, executive director of the Environment and Social Development Organisation (ESDO).

They pose serious risks, particularly for children and women of reproductive age, but existing laws do not address this, she said.

The ESDO prepared the report as part of a global initiative led by the International Pollutants Elimination Network, which was presented by its assistant programme officer Sadmeen Sadaf Jahan at an event yesterday.

Currently, Bangladesh produces more than 3 million tonnes of plastic annually, with a domestic market valued at more than \$3 billion and an annual growth rate of approximately 20 percent.

Public and policy discussions have largely focused on visible plastic pollution.

The chemical composition of plastics, particularly the use of hazardous additives such as phthalates and bisphenols as plasticisers, remains a critical but underexplored issue.

Besides, the industry is heavily reliant on imported raw materials and chemical additives, she said, adding that around 15 shipments of Bisphenol A (BPA) were imported in 2025.

The chemicals are widely used across multiple sectors, including food packaging and plastic containers, children's toys and school supplies, thermal paper receipts, flexible PVC products and adhesives, coatings and printing inks.

Children are vulnerable to chemical exposure due to frequent contact with toys and school supplies.

Retail workers are also exposed to continuous handling of BPA-containing receipts, while communities in industrial areas are exposed through polluted water, air and food.

Citing a 2023 study by Jahangirnagar University students and teachers, she said industrial areas such as Savar and Tongi found significant concentrations of phthalates, posing ecological and carcinogenic risks.

In 2022, an ESDO study found 30

out of 47 erasers used by schoolchildren contained phthalates, she said.

A joint study by ESDO and the Wonjin Institute in 2022 analysed 39 thermal paper receipts collected from various retail outlets in Dhaka and found BPA in 67.5 of samples.

ESDO Secretary General Shahriar Hossain said the plastics sector is growing rapidly, but chemical safety governance has not kept pace.

Without urgent action, hazardous additives will continue to threaten public health, workers and the environment, he said.

People's consumption of foods exposed to different chemicals is one of the reasons behind the rise in non-communicable diseases in the country, said Tahmina Shirin, director of the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research.

Referring to the study, she said the evidence generated in the study should be incorporated into the government's policy.

The report should serve as a wake-up call for policymakers, said ESDO Chairman Margub Morshed.

Bangladesh now has an opportunity to build a modern regulatory framework that safeguards health while supporting responsible industrial development, he added.

'Don't exploit July uprising'

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Calling the 13th National Parliament "a historical exception," Zahir Uddin said politics was largely confined to a two-party structure in the past, but this time, the voting statistics and the composition of parliament reflect a different reality.

"For the first time, if we look at the voting data and the composition of this parliament, we cannot say where the supporters of fascism who once fled have cast their votes. The magical numbers of this election deserve research," he said.

He noted that Jamaat's independent vote share never exceeded five percent, but this time the statistics have changed.

Referring to Jamaat's past role, he added, "As the leading party of the 11 Party Alliance, Jamaat and its colleagues must remember that they opposed the great Liberation War of 1971. Even now, many of their speeches declare they want to establish Sharia law."

On the roots of political behaviour, he said, "When someone uses religion for politics, when someone tries to trade on the spirit of independence, then such parties and leaders inevitably face problems in their conduct."

Highlighting BNP's repeated leadership during national crises, Swapon said the BNP relied only on political, democratic, constitutional processes and reasoning. Appealing to the opposition, he urged, "Just as all have participated unitedly in committees, please try to remain constructive in other behaviours too."

Law Minister Md Asaduzzaman said the Jamaat did not, in effect, oppose the passage of the Jatiya Muktiyoddha Council bill that had established who had opposed Bangladesh's independence war in 1971.

He explained that the definition of "Bir Muktiyoddha" (valiant freedom fighter) in the 2026 bill includes those who fought against the Pakistani occupation forces and their local collaborators, namely the then Muslim League, Jamaat-e-Islami, Nezame Islami, and the auxiliary forces Al-Badr, Al-Shams, and Razakars. The law was passed in parliament with written endorsement from the National Council Party (NCP), a member of the Jamaat-led alliance.

"As a matter of law and interpretation, it is now established who opposed the 1971 war of independence, who were

involved in killings, disappearances, rapes, and in taking countless lives of Bangladeshis," Asaduzzaman said.

He also said that out of the four referendum questions, the BNP had no objection to three and a half of them. "The remaining half question," he quipped, "was half love, half deception."

He added, "During the election campaign, I heard with my own ears that someone was selling tickets to heaven."

Health Minister Sardar Md Sakhawat Husain said the July mass uprising did not happen suddenly; it was the result of years of accumulated anger, movements, and resistance.

"A volcanic eruption does not occur in a single day, so the July uprising too was not born overnight," he said.

Addressing the opposition, Sakhawat said the government was showing tolerance in the interest of the country, but needless provocation was unacceptable.

He cautioned that while unity should be emphasised in parliament, statements that deepen division should not be made.

State Minister for Energy Aninda Islam Amit said the body language of opposition members sometimes frightens him.

US may tighten Iran blockade

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and gas shipments from the Gulf — since the US and Israel launched the war two months ago, sending shockwaves through the global economy. But its own economy is also suffering.

Yesterday, the Iranian rial fell to historic lows against the dollar, while Tehran residents speaking to AFP journalists in Paris reported a sense of despair.

During a White House state dinner Tuesday, Trump told Britain's King Charles III and other guests that Iran has been "militarily defeated," and added: "Charles agrees with me even more than I do — we're never going to let that opponent have a nuclear weapon."

But an Iranian army spokesman told state TV on Tuesday that "we do not consider the war to be over," saying Tehran had "no trust in America."

"We have many cards that we have not yet used... new tools and methods of fighting based on the experiences of the past two wars, which will definitely

allow us to respond to the enemy more decisively" should the fighting resume, Amir Akraminia said in an interview.

Efforts to end the war have stalled in recent days. The latest Iranian proposal, passed along by Pakistan and studied by Trump administration officials in a meeting Monday, laid out red lines including on nuclear issues and Hormuz, according to Iran's Fars news agency.

The plan would reportedly see Tehran ease its chokehold on the strait and Washington lift its retaliatory blockade while broader negotiations continue, including over the nuclear programme.

Iranian defence ministry spokesman Reza Talei-Nik said Washington "must abandon its illegal and irrational demands".

"The United States is no longer in a position to dictate its policy to independent nations," he said, according to state TV.

Qatar — a US ally that was hit by Iranian strikes despite its role as a

mediator — warned of the possibility of a "frozen conflict" if a definitive resolution is not found.

Trump faces domestic pressure to find an off-ramp as prices rise for oil and other commodities, with midterm elections due in November and polls showing the war is unpopular among Americans.

Meanwhile, Hegseth sought to defend the Iran war in fiery remarks to Congress yesterday, saying it was not a quagmire and attacking Democratic lawmakers as "feckless" for criticising the unpopular conflict.

"You call it a quagmire, handing propaganda to our enemies? Shame on you for that statement," Hegseth said before the House Armed Services Committee, slamming "reckless, feckless, and defeatist" Congressional Democrats.

Brent is above the level it hit before the two sides announced a ceasefire in early April, sitting at around \$113, while West Texas Intermediate broke \$101.

42 candidates barred from SCBA polls

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polls were two candidates for president, seven for secretary, two for treasurer, 10 for assistant secretaries, and 21 for executive members.

SCBA Senior Vice-President and a member of its election sub-committee Md Humayun Kabir Manju confirmed the development to The Daily Star yesterday.

Manju, a pro-BNP lawyer currently serving as a deputy attorney general, said that scrutiny revealed their "direct

and indirect involvement" with Awami League activities.

With the cancellations, 48 candidates remain valid to contest the election scheduled for May 13-14.

Disqualified lawyers strongly protested the move, arguing they submitted nominations individually, not on behalf of any party.

Md Munsurul Hoque Chowdhury, a veteran lawyer and disqualified presidential candidate, called the

decision "illegal and condemnable".

"This unprecedented and farcical conduct by the ad hoc committee will remain a disgraceful chapter in the 77-year history of the Supreme Court Bar Association," he said.

Incumbent SCBA Secretary Md Mahfuzur Rahman Milon confirmed the decision of not allowing pro-Awami League lawyers to contest but declined to share the resolution, calling it an internal matter.

'They're family'

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He faces two counts of first-degree murder with a weapon, alongside other charges.

Prosecutors expect to present the case to a grand jury on May 7, with the possibility of capital punishment if convicted.

Abugharbieh, Limon's roommate and a former USF student, was charged last week with first-degree murder. Limon's remains were found on Friday, while the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office said it found additional remains over the weekend that it has not yet identified.

Limon and Bristy came to Tampa in 2024 and 2025, respectively, for higher studies at the University of South Florida. Bristy was studying chemical engineering, while Limon was studying geography, environmental science & policy.

The doctoral students disappeared on April 16. With their families still in Bangladesh, their classmates and friends stepped in to represent them during the case status hearing for the suspect.

"What you need to understand is that we Bangladeshi people live as a family here," said Abir al Hasib Shourav, a friend present in the courtroom.

"It is a lot to process. When we come here, 8,000 miles away from home, these people become our family or everything here, and we meet them at all events," another friend, Rifatul Islam, said.

"It is not acceptable. We are shocked that the place that should be our safe place — our home, our own rooms, our own kitchens — they were murdered there. I don't know what to say; there are no words for that," he added. State Attorney Suzy Lopez praised

the Bangladeshi students' presence. "It's wonderful to know their friends are embracing the two people they've lost and want to be part of this process to get justice."

Investigators said a third roommate told them that Abugharbieh used a cart to dispose of evidence, including Limon's belongings stained with blood.

Detectives later found blood traces in his bedroom and Bristy's ID cards in Limon's room. Court records also revealed Abugharbieh had asked ChatGPT about disposing of a human body days before the pair vanished.

Zamil's graduate advisor at the University of South Florida, in cooperation with the Bangladesh Student Association, has launched a GoFundMe to support the victims' families. Since the fundraiser's launch on Tuesday, over \$80K has been raised.