BLENDER'S CHOICE –THE DAILY STAR OTT & DIGITAL CONTENT AWARDS 2025

Beyond the Award

Mehazabien Chowdhury's winning journey

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PHOTOS: STAR AND COLLECTED

For Mehazabien Chowdhury, Orpa was more than just another character; she was a dive into the darker corners of human nature and society. Her haunting portrayal in Vicky Zahed's ***Neel Shukh*** earned her the Best Actress (Popular) award at the Blender's Choice–The Daily Star OTT & Digital Content Awards 2025, her second win in the category after ***Redrum*** in 2022.

Beyond the trophy, this year brought another first for the actress: a dance performance at the awards ceremony. In an interview with The Daily Star, Mehazabien opened up about the emotional depths of Orpa, the thrill of taking the stage, and her enduring on-screen chemistry with Afran Nisho.

"People often say that whenever I play a popular character, the audience loves me so much. But I believe that kind of response depends on the quality of the work," she said.

While the Popular category reflects audience appreciation, she pointed out that a project's reach does not necessarily determine its quality. "Unfortunately, many excellent projects never reach a wide audience," she added.

This year also saw Mehazabien take the stage at the ceremony for the first time. Although she had discussed performing in previous years, shooting schedules and limited rehearsal time had repeatedly stood in the way.

"This time, however, I had the time, and I thought, I have performed at so many places, so why not here?" she said.

Reflecting on the response to her dance performance, Mehazabien noted that social media comments do not always represent genuine audience reactions. "When someone says something to me personally or recalls a particular moment from a performance, I feel that they have watched it with genuine interest. I may not be a professional dancer, but I gave it my best," she said.

Her look for the evening was planned with the performance in mind. Wearing a black outfit by Maison Amali on the red carpet and performance attire by Celebrity's Choice, she kept her styling within a black-and-silver palette so the same makeup would complement both appearances.

Away from the spotlight, Mehazabien's husband, filmmaker Adnan Al Rajeev, remained part of her celebration. During her acceptance speech, she acknowledged his support, revealing that sending him a photograph while holding an award had become a ritual.

The evening also renewed interest in Mehazabien's much-loved on-screen pairing with Afran Nisho. Their matching black outfits caught fans' attention, although she said the coincidence was entirely unplanned. The two have not worked together since ***Punorjonmo 4*** in 2023, but the actress hopes they will collaborate again.

Yet, it was Orpa who remained at the heart of Mehazabien's latest achievement. The actress described the role as one of the most complex of her career, recalling that she and Vicky Zahed had discussed the project for years before it finally materialised.

Still, she had reservations about how audiences would respond to ***Neel Shukh***, especially its dark ending. She wondered whether viewers would accept a woman committing acts of violence for someone she loved as readily as they often accepted similar behaviour from male characters.

One scene that stayed with her features Orpa asking her aunt to place a matrimonial advertisement in the newspaper. She describes herself as a 27-year-old unmarried woman with few demands but insists that the advertisement mention her limp.

"While delivering those lines, I kept wondering how someone in that situation could find the strength to carry on in real life," she recalled.

The ending left an equally lasting impression. As Orpa rests Maruf's head on her shoulder and sings ***Phule Phule Dhole Dhole***, blood begins to pour from his mouth. The tenderness of the moment, set against its disturbing reality, made it particularly emotional for the actress.

For Mehazabien, taking on Orpa meant venturing beyond familiar territory. Her second Popular category win may have brought the recognition, but the character's emotional complexity is what made the journey memorable.



Three Dhallywood films set for Durga Puja release

Three Dhallywood films, ***Sneher Bondhon***, ***Cut-Piece*** and ***Chirkut***, are gearing up for theatrical release during Durga Puja, offering audiences stories of family relationships, power struggles and campus life.

Directed by Kamruzzaman, ***Sneher Bondhon*** stars Joy Chowdhury and Mou Khan and is scheduled for release on October 16.

Iffat Jahan Momo's ***Cut-Piece*** explores money, power and conflict surrounding the garment industry's fabric waste business, alongside family relationships.

Meanwhile, Muntasir Akib's ***Chirkut*** revisits Rajshahi University in the 1990s, exploring friendship, romance and nostalgia. Starring Shamol Mawla and Quazi Nawshaba Ahmed, the film also releases on October 16 exclusively at cineplexes and multiplexes.

EVENTS

'Khawabnama'

Prachyanat presents its 37th production, a grand theatrical adaptation of Akhteruzzaman Elias's seminal epic novel ***Khawabnama***. Directed by Kazi Toufikul Islam Emon, this powerful performance weaves history, myth, class struggle, Partition, and the Tebhaga movement—offering a profound, visually evocative journey into Bengal's socio-political psyche and collective dreams.

Date: Today | October 12, 2026
Time: 7:00pm onwards
Venue: National Theatre Hall, BSA



NEWS

Protests against polls chief

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The national president of the left-wing All India Students' Association was among more than 2,000 activists detained on Saturday. Most of them were released late on Saturday night, police said.

Opposition parties and critics of Modi's government criticised what they said was the high-handed use of force against the protesters, while a UN body called on authorities to ensure that the right to peaceful assembly was respected and fulfilled.

India's foreign ministry said the UN's statement constituted "an unwarranted interference in the internal affairs of India."

At an unusually packed hearing yesterday, the Supreme Court recorded the government's assurance that lawyers and journalists would not be impeded while performing their duties.

Lawyers protesting outside the top court were detained briefly on Saturday, as were several reporters including a Reuters journalist.

Abhita Ruheja, a protester who was detained yesterday, said the authorities had turned Delhi into a fortress. "Is this how a democracy works? They have been scrapping rights after rights and this is turning into a dictatorship," she said.

Beware of 'coverts'

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Tarique has already met district leaders division by division to discuss candidate selection.

MPs said Tarique had voiced concern about a possible future alignment between the "fascist" and "covert" forces, by which he meant Awami League and Jamaat-e-Islami.

To deal with such an alignment, the party chairman urged leaders to spend more time in their constituencies, reconnect with activists, and arrange programmes suited to local needs rather than rely solely on BNP HQ's directives, MPs said.

The attack, vandalism, and attempted takeover of the Radda MCH-FP Centre in Mirpur-1 also came up at the meeting. Tarique cited the incident as a warning against misconduct. BNP reserved-seat MP Ferdousy Ahmed had to resign amid allegations of having links with the incident.

"There is no place for extortionists and land grabbers in the BNP. The prime minister is very serious about this. No one will get away with extortion or wrongdoing," Chief Whip Nurul Islam Moni said.

Tarique also instructed lawmakers to take a tough stance against violence against women.

Lawmakers were asked to meet constituents, prevent abuse of power, and monitor the fair distribution of social safety-net benefits.

Tarique urged lawmakers to ensure peaceful Durga Puja celebrations by coordinating with local administrations, police, and Puja committees, supporting Hindu worshippers and reporting incidents to law enforcement instead of taking the law into their own hands.

"There was an old belief that Hindus always voted for the Awami League. But this time, they voted for the BNP. That is why the meeting instructed us to extend all kinds of support to them during their festival," one lawmaker said.

Tarique also advised lawmakers to observe National Revolution and Solidarity Day on November 7, taking local circumstances into consideration.

Lawmakers complained of poor coordination with deputy commissioners and upazila nirbahi officers, alleging that officials sometimes ignored their views.

Some also said proposed lists of fertiliser dealers had been changed to include different names.

One MP said he continued to face court appearances over politically motivated cases filed during the previous government.

Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed said instructions had been issued regarding political cases filed since 2007 and advised lawmakers to contact the relevant authorities, noting that some might be unaware of the measures.

Several MPs raised concerns over drug trafficking and suspects securing bail soon after arrest, saying this undermined local efforts to control drug abuse.

Tarique acknowledged that law and order had not improved as expected despite government efforts.

Citing various challenges, including the "mobilisation of mobs against the government on social media", he urged lawmakers to remain prepared.

Power and Energy Minister Iqbal Hasan Mahmud Tuku discussed improvements in electricity supply and gas exploration and drilling.

MPs were also urged to counter misleading claims and rumours about the economy and energy sector.

The meeting, attended by 194 MPs, covered the wider political situation and the challenge of keeping the party active while running the government.

Around 20 MPs and 10 ministers spoke, some submitting written statements, during an open discussion on national and local issues.

Tarique said he wanted more direct communication with lawmakers and to hear about their concerns.

Pakistan imposes emergency in KP

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war against terrorism".

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is a stronghold of Khan's PTI party, and the PTI-led government there will be sidelined under yesterday's extraordinary constitutional measures.

PTI chairman Gohar Ali Khan called the move "an extremely alarming and grave political mistake and an undemocratic measure".

"The people will never accept such actions against their rights," he posted on X.

PTI politician Junaid Akbar said on X that Sohail Afridi, the chief minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, was arrested along with the party's president in the province.

Hasan 'let the ball do its job'

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overturning the on-field decision on review.

The hattrick was the first by a Bangladeshi pacer and only the third by a Bangladesh bowler in Test cricket. Hasan was quick to acknowledge his teammates' support, particularly over the crucial review.

"Credit goes to the captain and Liton Das. They discussed it and corrected me, saying it was going to hit and that I could take the review. It feels amazing to get that kind of feedback from your teammates," he said.

Hasan later dismissed Yamin Ahmadzai to complete his five-wicket haul, reaching 50 Test wickets in the process.

The pacer also credited his partnership with Ebadot for helping Bangladesh wrap up Afghanistan's innings in the first session.

"Ebadot bhai gave us a good start, and then I bowled from the other end. We managed to bowl them out in the first session, which was a big plus for us," he said.

Bangladesh, who scored 346 in their first innings, ended the third day on 223 for six in their second innings, extending their overall lead to 329 and strengthening their grip on the match.

Hasan believes the job is not finished yet, with Bangladesh looking to add more runs and set Afghanistan a challenging target.

"Inshallah, tomorrow (Monday) we will try to score as many more runs as possible and set them a big target," he concluded.

Iran executes man for killing police officer

AFP, *Tehran*

Iranian authorities have executed a man for killing a police officer who was run over by a vehicle during clashes four years ago, the judiciary said yesterday.

The country has ramped up executions since the outbreak of the Middle East war in February and since anti-government protests erupted late last year.

"The death sentence for the killer of Reza Ehterami, a police officer serving in Iran's police emergency unit, has been carried out," the judiciary's Mizan Online website cited local prosecutor Aref Akbari as saying.

The execution went ahead after an investigation and trial, with the Supreme Court upholding the verdict, Akbari said.

The defendant, known in court as "Danial", was convicted of intentionally killing Ehterami, a third lieutenant serving with law enforcement in the southern city of Bandar Abbas.

Ehterami was killed in 2022 during clashes between police and fuel smugglers. He was run over by a vehicle driven by the defendant, according to previous reports from state media.

Iran executes more people every year than any country except China, according to rights groups including Amnesty International.

It imposes capital punishment for a range of offences, including murder.

Fuel prices in oil-rich Iran remain among the lowest in the world, encouraging widespread smuggling to neighbouring countries.

Last Ceuta migrant camp removed ahead of Spanish king's visit

AFP, *Ceuta*

Police yesterday cleared the last major migrant encampment in Ceuta, two days before a visit by Spain's king and queen, AFP reporters at the scene and the interior ministry said.

The camp sprang up after a mass influx of more than 70,000 people into the Spanish territory from neighbouring Morocco on July 30 and 31.

Although most returned to Morocco within days, thousands remained in Ceuta, sleeping rough in the streets or on beaches and straining the small city's resources.

The sudden influx, during which scores of people died, sparked alarm across the European Union and triggered a political crisis in Madrid.

Traumatised Panamanians begin quake recovery

AFP, *Chitré*

Residents near the epicenter of a major earthquake in southern Panama began cleaning up on Saturday, traumatized by the previous day's strong shaking that left widespread damage but so far no reported deaths.

"This is something we've never seen before. We weren't prepared for this kind of event," said Aldulfo Quintero as he cleared debris from a store in Chitre, about 250 kilometers (155 miles) southwest of Panama City.

Four placed on remand

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accused went to the spot. Accused Rimi smeared black ink over the mural depicting Nobel laureate poet Rabindranath. She also attempted to incite religious hatred in connection with the upcoming Durga Puja, thereby creating discord and undermining communal harmony."

On October 5, the DSCC cleared the footpath in Segunbagicha of encroachments. Subsequently, portraits of 10 prominent figures who made significant contributions to the country's art, literature, and culture were painted on the adjacent wall.

The figures include Rabindranath, National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam, artist Zainul Abedin, and filmmaker Satyajit Ray.



Demonstrators march as they take part in a protest in Manhattan in response to a recent Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) shooting in the Bronx, in New York City, US on Saturday. PHOTO: REUTERS