UNAPOLOGETICALLY BOLD

The story of Priyontee Urbee



PHOTO: REBOOT

SHARMIN JOYA

Whether she is posing sharp, cheeky questions on a glittering red carpet, dissecting complex scripts, or navigating a boat-only village in the Netherlands, Priyontee Urbee moves through life with unfiltered charm and captivating energy. A dynamic host, actress, and avid globe-trotter, she has earned a reputation for being refreshingly direct—a trait that defines both her screen presence and her personal philosophy.

For Urbee, hosting is not about exchanging polite pleasantries; it is about injecting life and laughter into the room. During her recent second stint hosting the red carpet of the Blender's Choice-The Daily Star OTT & Digital Content Awards, she threw away standard scripts in favour of tailored, witty inquiries for every director and artiste. From asking direct questions to teasing actors in playful "Kill, date, or marry" games, her spontaneous approach broke the ice.

"The first time, I was hesitant and couldn't ask everyone everything," she reflects on her hosting evolution. "The second time, I broke all shyness. Everyone took the questions so spontaneously and had so much fun". Achieving that effortless rapport required intense preparation. Alongside her co-host Prantar Dastider, she spent three days rehearsing until 4:00am, filling notebooks with custom questions.

The red carpet remains her ultimate medium. "The main stage requires maintaining formal norms, but the red carpet is informal and full of funny questions—that's much more like me," she notes, citing Cannes as her ultimate red-carpet inspiration since childhood.

In her acting career, Urbee shows a distinct blend of passion and selectivity. While gearing up for upcoming Eid projects—including a new pairing with Musfiq Farhan—she remains cautious about jumping onto the silver screen. "Unless it's a very strong character, I don't want to step into movies just yet," she asserts. When choosing directors, she holds immense respect for visionaries like Mejbaur Rahman Sumon, Robiul Alam Robi, and Jahid Preetom. She shares a special creative chemistry with Preetom, particularly after their acclaimed collaboration ***Emon Dine Tare Bola Jay***. "Preetom bhai's dialogues carry immense depth and complexity," she explains. "He knows I can deliver those heavy, complex lines, which makes working with him so rewarding".

Beyond the studio lights, Urbee's true escape lies in wandering across continents. Having recently travelled across seven European nations—including the Netherlands, Switzerland, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Luxembourg, and France—she discovered a reality quite different from standard tourist stereotypes. Expecting late-night partying, she instead found a disciplined, hard-working culture where people wake up at 6:00am and walk everywhere. Switzerland captivated her completely. "When I close my eyes and think of Europe, Switzerland comes to mind first—it literally feels like heaven". She was equally enchanted by a serene, car-free Dutch village navigated entirely by boat. Yet, true to her candid nature, she doesn't hesitate to share hot takes, deeming France overrated due to safety anxieties and clutter. "If I have to clutch my bag tightly in fear, why go there?" she quips with characteristic honesty.

Looking ahead, Urbee's wanderlust is far from satisfied, with Portugal, Argentina, and Italy topping her future travel bucket list. Whether stepping in front of a camera or exploring unfamiliar streets across the globe, Urbee continues to live on her own terms—vibrant, fearless, and endlessly curious.



Tahsan, Mehazabien to appear as guest judges on 'Marks Allrounder'

Singer-actor Tahsan Khan and actress Mehazabien Chowdhury are reuniting as guest judges for the studio round of ***Marks Allrounder***, the child and teenage talent competition currently airing on NTV.

The duo was scheduled to judge the contestants during the shoot on Monday, November 2, for the multi-discipline contest, which features nearly three lakh participants competing in singing, dancing, acting, drawing, recitation, storytelling, and impromptu speaking.

The nationwide competition will crown three top all-rounders with educational scholarships worth Tk 15 lakh each, alongside Tk 1 crore in total awards.

Tahsan recently shifted his focus to hosting following a break from music and acting, while Mehazabien has pivoted toward films and OTT projects.

EVENTS

'Soul of Qawwali Returns'

An evening dedicated to the devotional and spiritual traditions of Sufi music, ***Soul of Qawwali Returns*** celebrates South Asian musical heritage with live Qawwali performances alongside artisanal perfume and antique showcases.

DATE: Thursday | November 12, 2026
TIME: 5:30pm–10:00pm
VENUE: Tajine Banquet Hall, Dhanmondi



NEWS

Trump, Adani, Google, Meta

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last year.

The list divides those named into five categories: political, security, legal, economic and social.

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Nicaragua's Daniel Ortega were also placed in the political category.

The security category includes the Israeli armed forces, the Chinese Communist Party, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and Mexican drug cartels.

RSF accused the Israeli military and Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government of pursuing repressive policies against journalists in Gaza, the West Bank and Lebanon.

It described China as the world's largest prison for journalists. It also said organised crime had killed nearly one journalist a month in Mexico since the beginning of the year.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Kazakhstan's President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev and India's Adani Group were named in the legal category over alleged misuse of legal proceedings against journalists and media outlets.

Technology giants Alphabet and Meta feature in the economic category, while billionaire Elon Musk, Argentine President Javier Milei and Indian website OpIndia were placed in the social category.

RSF said the individuals and organisations used different methods to suppress independent journalism, including violence, imprisonment, legal harassment, financial pressure and online attacks.

RSF Director-General Thibaut Bruttin said the list was subjective but sought to identify those responsible for attacks on press freedom.

He said naming those responsible and documenting their actions could help prevent such attacks from becoming normalised.

No individual or organisation from Bangladesh appears on the list.

Bangladesh ranked 152nd in RSF's 2026 World Press Freedom Index, slipping three places from last year. Its press freedom situation remained in the "very serious" category.

Govt clueless on toxic lead-based paint imports

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The findings were presented at a roundtable organised by the Environment and Social Development Organization (ESDO) in collaboration with the Department of Environment (DoE) and the International Pollutants Elimination Network (IPEN) at the DoE office in Dhaka.

Lead chromate is widely used to produce bright yellow, orange and red colours in paints, coatings, plastics and other products. Exposure to lead can damage the brain and nervous system, particularly in children, and may cause learning difficulties and behavioural problems.

The study found that India supplied between 89.9 percent and 93 percent of imports under the broader customs category by weight during 2022-2025, with China as the second-largest source.

Researchers said some lead chromate may also enter Bangladesh through finished paints and pigment pastes imported under other customs codes.

The report identified paint as the primary use of imported lead chromate in Bangladesh and found no evidence of domestic production of the pigment. It noted that small paint manufacturers often purchase pigments through chemical traders, making supply chains difficult to trace.

Bangladesh introduced a mandatory lead limit of 90 parts per million (ppm) for decorative paints in 2018. Similar standards have since been drafted for seven categories of industrial paints, coatings and related materials, but those standards are yet to be approved by the Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI) and published in the official gazette.

Speaking at the roundtable, Md Saidur Rahman, additional secretary at the environment ministry, called for a detailed economic assessment of industries using lead chromate to minimise disruptions as they transition to safer alternatives.

Md Shahriar Hossain, founder and secretary general of ESDO, proposed exploring green taxation to encourage industries to adopt lead-free materials, while ASM Obaidullah Mahmud, chief research and development officer at Berger Paints Bangladesh, said stronger research and development efforts would help accelerate the transition.

The study recommended improved customs identification, routine laboratory testing and market inspections, along with technical support for small and medium-sized paint manufacturers seeking safer alternatives.

A separate ESDO assessment conducted in 2025 with support from Instiglio and the Lead Exposure Elimination Project found that 68 of 161 decorative paint samples collected in Dhaka and Chattogram, or 42.2 percent, exceeded the legal lead limit.

The cabinet in August approved a draft National Strategy and Multi-Year Action Plan for a Lead-Free Bangladesh (2026-2035), which calls for coordinated action across government agencies.

"Lead chromate is just one of the sources of lead exposure, and addressing it must be part of a broader, comprehensive effort to eliminate lead pollution," said Siddika Sultana, ESDO's executive director.

Materials distributed at the event cited toys, cookware, cosmetics and battery recycling among other potential sources of lead exposure.

Razinara Begum, director of waste and chemicals management at the DoE, said chemical management rules were being drafted and stressed the need to protect workers who are exposed to lead without adequate safety equipment.

Bank directors

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below Tk 2,000 crore from paying cash dividends.

At the meeting, Mostaqur urged banks to expand lending and speed up disbursement of stimulus loans to create jobs amid the economic slowdown. He also indicated that rules could be eased slightly, if necessary, to ensure faster disbursement.

The push comes as private sector credit growth has hit a historic low, falling to 4.17 percent in September from 4.75 percent in August, according to provisional BB data.

Bankers cited procedural hurdles in disbursing stimulus loans and weak business conditions that have dragged credit demand to its lowest level. The governor, however, insisted that lending under the package be stepped up, according to a source present at the meeting.

Bangladesh Bank announced the Tk 60,000 crore stimulus package in May to revive the struggling private sector, reopen closed factories, and boost investment and employment amid slowing growth and persistent inflation concerns.

But disbursement remains sluggish. Banks had released only around Tk 12,000 crore, or one-fifth of the package, by mid-October. Several targeted groups, including unemployed youths, are yet to receive any loans.

The meeting also decided that BB would hold joint meetings with the BAB and ABB every three months.

Chairmen of Bank Asia, Pubali Bank, One Bank and IFIC Bank, among others, attended from the BAB side. The ABB delegation included managing directors of Mutual Trust Bank, Eastern Bank, One Bank and Pubali Bank, among others. Deputy governors and other central bank officials were also present.

Medical colleges, univs mull relief for HSC retakers

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admissions, he said.

Several universities are scheduled to close applications or finish admission tests before the retake results are out.

According to the existing timeline, Dhaka University will accept applications from November 11 to 25 and hold its five admission tests between December 5 and 26.

Its rules require candidates to have passed the HSC or equivalent examinations in 2026 and meet the minimum GPA requirements for their chosen units. DU does not allow applicants from previous HSC batches.

Jagannath University will receive applications from November 15 to December 10, with admission tests beginning on January 1.

Rajshahi University's proposed preliminary application period runs from November 12 to 27, although its tests are planned for January.

Chittagong University and Comilla University have set December 10 as their application deadline, with admission tests planned for later dates.

For universities holding tests in January, the application deadline rather than the test date is often the immediate obstacle for supplementary candidates.

Khulna University has scheduled tests for December 17 and 18, while the Military Institute of Science and Technology has fixed December 18 and 19.

The medical and dental admission tests have tentatively been planned for December 4.

The nine-university agricultural cluster has scheduled its combined admission test for January 2, while Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University, which is coordinating the process, has yet to announce detailed application arrangements.

There may be more room for adjustment in the 20-university General, Science and Technology (GST) cluster. Its tests are scheduled for March 19, 20 and 27, but application dates have not been announced.

BUET has fixed January 16 for its admission test and KUET January 8, while RUET and CUET have proposed January 14 and 23 respectively. Their application deadlines will determine whether supplementary candidates can compete.

On Monday, Syed Akhtaruzzaman, chairman of the Dhaka Education Board and head of the Inter-Education Board Coordination Committee, told The Daily Star that the boards would need the entire month of December to hold the examinations, evaluate scripts and publish results.

"We have informed the authorities that bringing these students into the regular admission process will be difficult in practice," he said, adding that there is little scope to shorten the examination schedule further.

The uncertainty comes despite an undergraduate intake capacity far exceeding the number of students who passed this year's HSC and equivalent examinations.

The country has 14,92,288 undergraduate places for the 2026-27 session, compared with 6,46,685 successful HSC candidates, according to the UGC.

But only 63,656 places are on public university main campuses. Another 10,18,632 are in affiliated colleges and institutions, including 9,46,095 under National University, while private universities account for 4,10,000.

AL leader dies

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This correspondent repeatedly tried to reach several on-duty medical officers at the hospital by phone, but none answered. Hospital Superintendent AM Aktaruzzaman said he was in Dhaka. The number he provided for another medical officer was switched off.

Zakir's 21-year-old son, Zobaid Al Fahad, told The Daily Star that his father had high blood pressure and high cholesterol and that the jail authorities did not provide proper medical care.

"Even when we supplied medicines, the jail authorities did not let my father take them," he said.

He said his father had told the family that the jail food made him feel sick. The family last spoke to Zakir over the phone on Friday, and he was completely healthy then, Fahad said.

"How could things change so drastically?" he asked, alleging that Zakir had suffered mental torture in prison.

The jail superintendent denied all these allegations, saying there was no reason to withhold prescribed medicine and no torture was inflicted on Zakir. She also said that no complaint about illness from jail food had come to the authorities' attention during his nearly one year there.

Zakir was also a former additional public prosecutor of the Bogura District Judge's Court.

In his political career, he served as general secretary of the Bogura District Swechchhasebak League, president of the Bogura District Chhatra League, and office secretary of the Bogura District Awami League.

BINANCE HACK

N Korea blasts FBI allegations as it test-fires missiles

AFP, *Seoul*

Pyongyang blasted on Monday the FBI's allegations it was behind the theft of $6 billion from cryptocurrency platform Binance, as it test-fired strategic cruise missiles in a new display of its weapons capabilities.

The missile launch came on the heels of a public rebuttal from Kim Yo Jong, the powerful sister of leader Kim Jong Un, who slammed the FBI's allegations as a "grave political provocation".

On Saturday, the FBI said a North Korea-affiliated hacking group called TraderTraitor had been behind the hack.

Experts see the incident as potentially the largest cryptocurrency theft in history, with a haul equalling "nearly a quarter of the DPRK's estimated annual GDP," Michael Bosack, founding director of the Parley Policy Institute and a former UN Command official, told AFP.

Kim Yo Jong said the FBI's claim was "absurd rhetoric and nothing new," given prior US allegations that Pyongyang was behind last year's major hack of Bybit.

HC asks Rumi

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Quran International Madrasa at Tongi, assaulting a teacher, vandalising the office and looting Tk 17 lakh.

Rumi filed an application with the High Court on October 26 seeking anticipatory bail.

On October 25, a Gazipur court turned down the bail petition filed by Moslem Ahmed, the vice-principal of the madrasa, in a case filed by Rumi accusing the teacher of sexually abusing his daughter.

According to the family, the alleged incident took place on the ground-floor staircase of the madrasa on October 19.

The girl reportedly refused to attend the madrasa after the incident and later disclosed what had happened to her parents when they asked her about it.