Bangladesh is the seventh most populous country in the world with around 15 crore people. It has one of the highest population densities in the world excluding a handful of city-cites. The majority ethnic group of Bangladesh is the Bengali people, comprising 98 percent of the population. The remainder is mostly migrants and indigenous tribal groups. There are thirteen tribal groups located in the Chittagong Hill Tracts; the most populous of the tribes are the Chakmas. The largest tribal groups outside the Hill Tracts are Santhals and Garos. The official and most widely used language in Bangladesh, as in West Bengal, is Bangla or Bengali. English is used as second language among the middle and upper classes and in higher education. The literacy rate in Bangladesh is approximately 41 percent, 50 percent among men and 32 percent among women, according to a 2004 UNICEF estimate. Bangladesh was established with the partition of Bengal and India in 1947, when the region became the eastern wing of the newly formed Pakistan. Political and linguistic discrimination as well as economic neglect led to popular agitations against West Pakistan, which led to the war for independence in 1971 and after that nine months war, Bangladesh was born as an independent and sovereign country.

History of Cinema in Bangladesh

The first bioscope show in Dhaka was held on April 17, 1898 at Crown Theatre at Patuatuli of Dhaka Sadarghat area. The show was organised by the Bedford Bioscope Company. Short films shown included Queen Victoria's Jubilee Procession, the War between Greece and Turkey, the Coronation of the Russian Czar, sports in snowfall in Britain, roads and underground railway of France. The entrance fees varied between half a rupee and three rupees. Later, bioscope shows were organised in many places of Bengal such as Bogjuri village of Manikganj,
the Bungalow of the sub divisional officer of Bhola, the auditorium of Jaganath College of Dhaka, the palace of the Bhawal estate, Palong of Faridpur, and Victoria Park and Ahsan Manzil of Dhaka.\textsuperscript{4}

The Royal Bioscope Company was the first exhibition-production organization of the Bengalis established in 1898 by Hira Lal Sen, a landlord of Manikganj, near Dhaka. On April 4, 1898, he established ‘The Royal Bioscope Company’ in Calcutta along with his brother Matilal Sen, Deboki Lai Sen and nephew Bholanath Gupta.

It was also the first film exhibition and production company in the undivided Bengal.\textsuperscript{5}

Sen also shot the first film in the then East Bengal at Manikganj sub-district, near Dhaka, during 1900-1.\textsuperscript{6}

Hiralal Sen is credited with a number of firsts in the history of Bangladesh cinema. Between 1900-1901, he took shots of various scenes in Calcutta and Manikganj and with the help of Amarendra Nath Dutta, he also took shots of theatrical productions at the Classic Theatre, from Sita Ram, Ali Baba, Dol Lila, Bhramar, and Hariraj Budha and showed them in February 1901 at the Classic Theatre of Calcutta. He also produced documentary films, advertisement pictures and newsreels.\textsuperscript{7}

Regular bioscope shows began in a jute godown at Armanitola of Dhaka in 1913-14, following which a permanent theatre hall, the Picture House, later known as Shabistan was established at that place. This is the first cinema hall of Bangladesh.\textsuperscript{8}

The Architect of First Bengali Feature Film Priya Nath Ganguly was also the son of the manager of the Dhaka Nawab’s Estate. Under Ganguly’s supervision, Jyotish Banerjee made \textit{Bilwa Mangal}, the first silent Bengali feature film under the banner of Madan Theatres and was released on November, 8 1919.\textsuperscript{9}

Dhirendra Nath Ganguli, the deputy collector of Barisal, and a close relative of poet Rabindranath, established the first Bengali ownership film producing company named 'Indo British Film Co' in 1918. His first production \textit{Bilat Ferat} released in 1921. He himself acted in the film.\textsuperscript{10}

In 1923, Naresh Mitra of Jessore was the first director to make a film based on Rabindra Nath Tagore’s short story. The film was \textit{Maan Bhanjan}.\textsuperscript{11}

In 1927-28, a group of young men of the Nawab family of Dhaka took the initiative to produce films. They produced \textit{Sukumari}, a silent movie of four reels. Ambuj Prasanna Gupta, a
prominent theatre actor, directed the film. Khwaja Nasrullah played the role of the hero and Syed Abdus Sobhan acted as the heroine.\textsuperscript{12}

After the success of Sukumari, the young men of the Nawab family set up Dhaka East Bengal Cinematograph Company and produced a full-length silent movie titled \textit{The Last Kiss} directed by Ambuj Gupta. Khwaja Azad did the camera work.

This silent feature was released in Mukul Theatre in Dhaka in 1931. The shooting done in Dhaka, and the post-production work was done in Calcutta. It was made in three languages, with intertitles in Bengali, English and Urdu.\textsuperscript{13}

Khwaja Ajmal, Khwaja Adil, Khwaja Akmol, Khwaja Shahed, Khwaja Nasrullah and Shailen Roy alias Tona Babu acted in different roles in the film. The female actors Lolita, Charu Bala, and Deba Balawere selected from brothels.\textsuperscript{14}

The director himself composed the Bangla and English subtitles of the film and Andalib Shadani of the University of Dhaka composed the Urdu subtitles. In 1931, \textit{The Last Kiss} was released in Mukul (now Azad) cinema hall. Distinguished historian Dr Ramesh Chandra Majumdar, Professor of Dhaka University, inaugurated the film.\textsuperscript{15}

Kazi Nazrul Islam had a significant role in the history of films of undivided Bengal. In the year 1931, he joined the Madan Theaters of Calcutta as a music trainer for brushing up the voices of artistes for the talkies. Later, he worked as film director, music director, singer, music composer, actor and storywriter. In 1934, he produced a film \textit{Dhruba} jointly with Satyendranath Dey. He also acted and composed the music and wrote the lyrics for the film. He later formed BT Pictures, named after ‘Bengal Tiger’ Sheikh Fazlul Haque in 1941.\textsuperscript{16}

Later a number of important members of the Bangladesh civil society joined the Bangla film industry. They included Abbasuddin Ahmed, Obaid-ul-Huq, Fateh Lohani, Kazi Khaleque, Ismail Mohammad, Begam Anwara, Abdul Ahad and Nazir Ahmad.

Obaid-ul-Huq produced and directed \textit{Dukhey Jader Jiban Gada} in 1946 and Ismail Mohammad produced Manusher Bhagaban in 1947. Both of them were sent to prison for the 'revolutionary' content in their films.
About 80 cinema halls were established in Dhaka by 1947, exhibiting primarily Indian and Hollywood productions.\(^\text{17}\)

In 1947 Dhaka became the capital of the new province of East Bengal in East Pakistan. Nazir Ahmed, a radio broadcaster was assigned to make a newsreel on the visit of Mohammad Ali Jinnah in East Bengal in March 1948. Nazir Ahmed produced a newsreel \textit{In Our Midst} on the ten-day visit of Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the first Governor General of Pakistan with technical help from Calcutta. This was the first film of the newly created East Pakistan. The government then formed a Film Unit under the Public Relations Department for making publicity films headed by Nazir Ahmed. He also made a documentary \textit{Salamat} in 1948 on the life of a construction worker, who saw the changes of new capital city of Dhaka.\(^\text{18}\)

The language movement and the killing of some activists by the then East Pakistan police in February 1952 is an important landmark in the history of Bangladesh. A number of cultural nationalists also got together to provide a distinct identity to Bangaldesh films. In 1954, Shahidul Alam, Abdul Jabbar Khan, Kazi Nuruzzaman and others established Iqbal Films. Dr. Abdus Salek, Dalil Ahmad, Azizul Huq, Dudu Mia, Jasimuddin, Kazi Khaleque, Sarwar Hossain and others established Co-operative Film Makers Limited for production of films, the same year. Abdul Ahad scored the music for Salamat. The same year, Dr. Abdus Sadeq, Director of Bureau of Statistics of East Bengal also took initiative to produce films and formed East Bengal Film Cooperative Limited. They started a documentary \textit{Appayon}.\(^\text{19}\)

The election of 1954 led to the defeat of the Muslim League and the United Front government, more sympathetic to the Bengali linguistic cause was elected. The then Labour, Trade and Industry Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was instrumental in getting Abdul Jabbar Khan, Dr. Abdus Sadek, Nuruzzaman to explore the possibility of setting up a permanent film studio in Dhaka. Abdul Jabbar Khan and Abul Kalam Shamsuddin, then provincial Assistant Director (Public Relations) then submitted a proposal to the government. In 1955, an Italian film mission visited Dhaka and advised the provincial government about the establishment of a studio. A studio and laboratory went into operation in 1955 in Tejgaon.\(^\text{20}\)

In its early years, several documentaries and publicity films were produced and processed from the studio. Fateh Lohani directed productions such as \textit{Satya Katha Bolbo, The Wheel, The Gateway to East Pakistan} etc.
In 1956, the Pakistan government declared a five-year plan for the promotion of film industry in East Pakistan. In 1957, the federal government of Pakistan allocated one crore rupees for the establishment of an organization to promote the film industry of West Pakistan. Nazir Ahmad, the then head of the East Pakistan film department, urged for a similar fund for the East Pakistan film industry. Federal officials advised to found an organization for the development of the East Pakistan film industry.

Nazir Ahmad then forwarded the proposal to the Ministry of Trade. It was only two days to go before the end of the session of the provincial parliament. Nazir Ahmad quickly prepared the necessary papers for the historical Film Development Corporation Bill. On the morning of April 3, 1957, the last day of that session of the provincial parliament the bill of the ‘East Pakistan Film Development Corporation’ was introduced. 

The same year the East Pakistan Film Development Corporation (EPFDC) was established. With the establishment of the Film Development Corporation, the motion picture industry got its footings with facilities of shooting, dubbing, recording, printing and processing. Following the establishment of the FDC, some more studios like, Popular Studio (Pagla), Bari Studio (Tejtabi Bazar), and Bengal Studio (Tikatuli) were set up.

Legend has it that at a meeting of cultural activists in 1953, a West Pakistan producer F Dossani remarked remarked that the climate of Bangladesh was not suitable for making films. This worked up Abdul Jabbar Khan who vowed to make a movie on his own and prove that making a movie was possible in Bangladesh. 

*Mukh O Mukhosh* regarded as the first talkie made in Bangladesh was released on August 3, 1956. The story was on the evil versus good theme. Inam Ahmed, Purnima Sen, Nazma, Zaharat Ara, Ali Mansoor, Rafiq, Saifuddin and Aminul Haque acted in the film. Samar Das was the music director and legendary singer Abdul Alim sang for the movie. The designer of the posters was Subhash Dutta.

A number of film historians in Bangladesh credit the film as heralding the birth of the indigenous film industry in Bangladesh. Khan had no training or experience in filmmaking. He bought a second-hand camera, used a home tape recorder for sound recording and shot the film. 

His film was based on his own play *Dakaat*. The actors and most of the crewmembers had no experience in films, the shooting came to a standstill often due to floods. It took two years to complete the shooting. The negative was then taken to Lahore for editing and printing.
Jabbar himself recorded his travails in Lahore.

I was about to get on board the plane from Lahore when the customs told me I could not take the prints of the movie to East Pakistan. Disheartened, I returned the plane ticket and went to Karachi by train. I did not want to waste any time and met with the Home Minister of that time, Justice Abdus Sattar. I was assured that I could take the prints and the negative to Dhaka. One good thing out of the nuisance was that I was asked to screen Mukh O Mukhosh at the Azaadi movie-theatre for 200 Bangalee viewers living in Karachi. I was told that apart from some minor problems with the sound, the movie was commendable. I returned to Dhaka the next day.

At home he faced difficulties as well. Most distributors and movie-theatre owners were reluctant to screen the movie. The distributors panicked that the audience would damage the theatre seats upon seeing the devastating shortcomings of this maiden venture. Eventually Musharraf Hossain Chowdhury and the owner of the movie-theatre Roopmahal came to Jabbar's aid. In the midst of a devastating flood, Mukh O Mukhosh was released. ‘Bengal Tiger’ A K Fazlul Haque was the chief guest at the premier show of the film.

The film was advertised as the ‘first Bengali picture of Pakistan’, clearly denoting that it is a part of the Pakistan film industry alongside Urdu films. Interestingly in the early sixties Khan himself and Dosani made Urdu films in the Dhaka studios. Jabbar Khan also served as a leader of the all-Pakistan Film Producers' Association and attended international conferences as a member of the official Pakistan delegation.

Asiya (1960) was the first film shot and developed in the Film Development Corporation. Fateh Lohani directed it. The film was based on the life of a village girl. The legendary folk artiste Abbasuddin Ahmed composed the music for the film. Samar Das and Abdul Ahad composed the music after Abbasuddin's death during the making of the film). Featuring Sumita Devi, Qazi Khaleque and Shaheed, the film received the prestigious President Award of Pakistan in 1961 as the best Bengali picture.

Interesting the second film produced at the FDC was Jago Hua Saveraan Urdu film. It bagged an award at the Moscow Film Festival, The story of the film was based on a popular novel by Manik Bandopadhaya. The script was by poet Fayez Ahmed Fayez, while AJ Karder was the director.
The sixties were the years of consolidation for Bangla films. The dominant themes of style, presentation, subject and folklore were set during this period. Rajdhaniir Buke directed by Ehtesham was the hit film of 1960. It introduced the hit pair Rahman-Chitra. Salahuddin's Je Nadi Maru Pathewas also released in 1961. Harano Din directed by Mustafiz, made a record as the first Bangla movie to run for 25 weeks. The movie also presented the first popular on-screen couple in Bangla cinema, Rahman-Shabnam. Zahir Raihan's Kakhono Aseniwas also released in 1961. 33

In 1962 Salahuddin's Surjasnan was released. It was said to be in the same league as the social films of Bollywood. Chandadirected by Ehtesham is an important landmark since it was made in the Urdu Language and was commercially successful in West Pakistan as well. This film paved the way for making more Urdu films.

Zahir Raihan's Kancher Deyal released in 1963 was largely shot indoors. It movie revolved around an orphan who had to bear ill-treatment at her uncle’s house. Khan Ataur Rahman’s song Shyamol Boron Meyeti became one of the enduring classics.

The film got 11 awards. Mustafiz's Talash was the biggest hit of the year. Five films were released in the year 1963. 34

Among the 16 feature films released in Bangladesh in 1964, Zahir Raihan's Sangam was the first colour movie in the whole of Pakistan. Shutorang, directed by Subhash Dutta introduced one of the most popular leading actress of Bangla cinema, Kabori. It also earned him an award at the Asian Film Festival in Frankfurt in 1964. 35 Rahman's Milan was the biggest hit of the year.

In 1965, filmmaker Salahuddin made Roopban, based on a widely known folklore. Starring Sujata in the title role, the movie was commercially successful and started a genre of Bangla movies based on myths and folklores. Sadeq Khan, producer-political activist made Nadi-O-Naribased on the rural life of Bengal in 1965. Mustafiz’s Malabased on the life of a snake-charmer was another huge hit of 1965.

Urdu and folk films dominated the year of 1966. Out of 26 productions, the most important films were Subhas Dutta's Kagojer Nouka, Fazlul Haque's Son of Pakistan and Zahir Raihan's Behula, Kazi Zahir's Bhaiya (Brother). 13 No. Feku Ostagar Lanereleased in the same year is regarded as the first comedy made in Bangladesh. Bashir Hossain directed it. Razzaque and Sujata among others were the lead actors. 36
Nawab Siraj-ud-Daula released in 1967 was the first movie ever, based on the life of the last Nawab of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and the historical events of the Battle of Plassey was directed by Khan Ataur Rahman. Anwar Hossain played the role of the Nawab. Khan Ataur Rahman and Anowara played other major roles in the movie. Other important movies of the 23 films released in 1967 were Ehtesham's Chokori, Subhas Dutta’s Aina-0-Abashistha, Zahir Raihan's Anowara, Rahman’s Darshan and Kazi Zahir’s Nayan Tara. The next three years were transitional in the history of Bangladeshi cinema. Thirty-four films were released in the year 1968 and 33 in 1969. Most of the films either were Urdu films or based on the folklore of Bangladesh.

Subhash Dutta’s Abirbhab(1968), Mita’s Ato Tuku Asha, Kazi Zahir’s Moina Moti (1968), Nurul Haq Bachu’s Beder Meye (1969), Kamal Ahmed’s Abanchhito (1969) and Khan Ata’s Joar Bhata (1969), were significant films in the period, Subhas Dutta's Abirbhab got a special award from the Cambodian government.

Jibon Thekey Neya directed by Zahir Raihan and released in 1970 is one of the most important films in the history of Bangladesh. Featuring Khan Ataur Rahman, Rowshan Jamil, Anwar Hossain, Razzaque, and Suchanda the film made an unprecedented and bold step of narrating the contemporary political turmoil in the then East Pakistan. The mass upsurge of 1969 was narrated in the movie. The movie is also special for another reason: the National Anthem of Bangladesh, written by Rabindranath Tagore, Amar Shonar Bangla Ami Tomae Bhalobashi was used for the first time in a Bangla movie. Zahir Raihan predicted the liberation of Bangladesh in this film.

Forty-one feature films were released in 1970. Other significant films were Karigor’s Misar Kumari Rafiqual Chowdhury’s Tansen, Rebeka’s Bindu Theke Britta (Circle from dot) and Subhash Dutta’s Binimoy. 1971 was the year of the Bangladesh liberation war. Zahir Raihan made a documentary Stop Genocide. The exiled Bangladesh government in India formed a film unit under the headship of Abdul Jabbar Khan. Several documentary films were produced from the unit on the liberation war. On December 16, 1971 Bangladesh was liberated.

Post Independence movies in Bangladesh

Ora Egaro Jon was the first movie released in Bangladesh after their Independence. There was a significant shift to the lead roles being played by actors who fought against the Pakistani army. Directed by Chashi Nazrul Islam, the movie is considered to be one of the best feature films.
based on the Liberation War. Khasru, Sumita Devi, and Shabana portrayed the lead roles in the film.41

Twentynine feature films were released during this year. Subash Dutta made *Arunodoyer Agnishakhi*, (Witness to sunrising), and Momtaz Ali directed *Raktakta Bangla* (Bengal in bloodshed) on liberation war.

Other prominent directors too announced works on liberation war. Kazi Zahir made the super hit *Abuj Mon* (Tender Mind), Hasan Imam made Lalon Fakir into the life of great mystic poet philosopher Lalon. 42

Out of 30 films released in 1973, *Rangbaz* (The Romeo) was a huge hit. Directed by Zahirul Haque, the movie was a trendsetter for several reasons. Rangbaaz introduced the idea of an "anti-hero" in Bangladeshi cinema. The movie took actors Razzaque and Kabori to huge popularity. The song Shey Jey Kano Elona featured in the movie became an overnight phenomenon.43

Three films based on Bangladesh liberation war were also released during the year. The films were *Dhire Bohe Meghna* (Quiet flows the river Meghna), Alamgir Kurnkum's *Amar Janmabhumi* (My birth land), and Khan Ataur Rahman's *'Abar Tora Manush Ho'* (Be Humane again).

Rittwik Ghatak, the famous Bengali Indian director made 'Titats Ekti Nadir Nam' (Titats is the name of a river) based on a famous novel, was a landmark of the year. It was a moving tale on the lives and struggles of the community of anglers living by the river Titash. Featuring Kabori, Prabeer Mitra, and Rozy, the movie hugely popular in Bangladesh.Kabir Anowar's maiden venture, 'Slogan' was a major hit that year. 44

Severe flood and famine of 1974 engulfed the country and people. Thirty full length feature films were released during the year. Amongst these, Chashi Nazrul Islam's *'Sangram'* (The fight), Mita's *'Alor Michil'* (Procession of light), F. A. films unit's *'Shanibarer Chithi'* (Saturday's letter), Mohiuddin's *'Essa Khan'*', F. Fabir Chowdhury's *'Anek Din Agye'* (Many days ago) had notable box office success.45

In 1975, the Bangladesh government introduced the National Award Film Grant Fund. The films also got recognition as an industry, and the government declared an exemption of taxes on children and educational films. Cinematographer and director Baby Islam's (Characterless), Mohsin's *'Badi Thekey Begum'* (Queen from maid servant) and Mita's *'Lathial'* (The striker) were the best movies of the year of 1975. 'Lathial' got first National Award as the best film. In 1976, 46 films were released. Of them, Alamgir Kabir's *'Surja Kanya'* (Daughter of the Sun) was a
combination of make-believe and realism. Kabir Anowar's 'Suprabhat' (Good morning), Amjad Hossain's 'Nayan Moni' (Love of eye), Harunar Rashid's 'Megher Anek Rang' (The aftermath cloud) was brilliant presentation on the futility of war. The film was adjudged the best film of 1976.46

In 1977, 'Shimanapariye' (Across the fringe), directed by Alamgir Kabir created quite a rage. It narrated a poignant rich boy meets poor girl story, in the backdrop of the 1970 cyclone. Bulbul Ahmed and Jayasree Kabir were applauded for their performances in the film. Songs composed by Indian legend Bhupen Hazarika, like Bimoorto Ei Ratri Amar, became hugely popular.

Subhas Dutta's 'Basundhara' (The mother earth) reached out to both the classes and the masses. The movie introduced actor Iliyas Kanchan in the character of the protagonist. Bobita played the female lead.47

Shareng Bou (The wife of a sailor) directed by Abdullah Al Mamun and adapted from a novel by noted writer Shahidullah Kaiser was based on the lives of people living in our costal areas. It was hugely popular and made quite significant political statements. Kabori and Faruk portrayed the lead characters. A song from the film, O Rey Neel Doriya, became one of the most cherished tunes in Bangladesh.48

Golapi Akhon Train-e (The endless trail) released in 1978 was made by Amjad Hossain based on his own novel. It was based on the lives of the poor of rural Bangladesh and gender rights. It enjoyed a phenomenal success. The movie showcasing talented actors Rowshan Jamil, Bobita, and Anowara.

Subhas Dutta's Dhumurer Phool (The unseen flower) from a short story by Ashraf Siddiqui was exhibited at the Moscow Film Festival. Shibli Sadique’s Nolok (The rose ring) based on superstitions among village poor was also a profitable venture. Overall, 38 films were released in 1978. The Bangladesh Film Institute and the film archive too were founded in the same year.

In 1979 Shurjodighal Bari (The ominous house) jointly directed by Mashihuddin Shaker and Sheikh Niamat Ali, was the first film financed by the Bangladesh government. Set in the post World War II, the movie depicted the unending struggles of the exploited poor in Bangladesh. Rowshan Jamil, Dolly Anwar, Keramat Moula, and Elora Gohar played the major characters in the movie, which received several National Awards. It also got five international awards including Mennheim Film Festival, Portugal Film Society etc. During the year, 51 films were released. The other remarkable movies of the year were Abdus Samad's Surya Sangram (The
Action films and thrillers dominated the eighties in Bangladesh film. Syed Salahuddin Zaki and Badal Rahman, trained from Film and Television Institute of India became directors in 1980. Ghuddi (The Kite) directed by Syed Salahuddin Zaki, Guddi focused on the contemporary issues, frustrations and inspirations of the urban youth. Known faces of the small screen, Raisul Islam Asad and Subarna Mustafa played the lead characters in the film. Abar Elo Je Shondhya, a song composed by Happy Akhand for the film became a major hit.

Chhutir Ghonta (The final bell) directed by Azizur Rahman based on a true newspaper report narrates the tragic end of child who gets locked in his school-toilet., became the talk of the nation for the sincere performance by child artiste Shumon in a lead role.

Badal Rahman's Emiler Goenda Bahini (Emil and his team) was a popular children film. Abdullah Al Mamun's Sakhi Tumi Kar (Lady to whom you belong) and Amjad Hussain's Koshai (The butcher) were well received in 1980.

In 1981, Shahidul Huq Khan's Kalmilata, Amjad Hossain's Janmo Theke Jalchi (Pained since birth) and Syed Hasan Imam's Lal Sabujer Pala (The Saga of colors) were well received by the audience and the critics.

The filmjournalist-director Alamgir Kabir’s Mohana (The river mouth) in 1982 too was quite popular. Chasi Nazrul Islam adapted the classic Devdas written by Sarat Chandra for Bangla audeinces. This was first film in Bangladesh based on the timeless classic by Saratchandra Chatyopadhyay. The film featured Bulbul Ahmed and Kabori in the central roles. Through this movie, a trend of adapting literary works by the masters began. It is noteworthy the film has been remade in Bollywood too quite a few times. Amiad Hossain's Dui poishar Aalta' was another popular movie of the year.

Boro Bhalo Lok Chhilo (He was a good man), released in 1982 was about a modern son of a cleric in a rural locality. After the cleric's death, the locals decide that his son should be their spiritual leader and the movie depicts the educated, rational youth's dilemmas. Hairey Manush Rongin Phanush, a song from the movie was extremely popular. Razzaque and Anju were in the lead roles.

A new generation of filmmakers like Murshedul Islam, Tarik Masud, Tanvir Mukammel, Enayet Karim Babul, Mustafa Kamal, Ismail Hussain, Habibur Rahman Habib, Dilder Hussain appeared
on the scene under the leadership of Alamgir Kabir. They started the short film movement. In 1984, Akhtaruzzaman made Princess Tina Khan based on the life of an opera girl, Rafiqul Bari directed ‘Pension’ and Amjad Hussain made Bhat Dey (Hungry). In 1985, Dahan (Affliction) by Shaikh Niamat got an award at the Kadovyvary International Film Festival. Ramer Sumati (The kindness of Ram) based in Sharat Chandrs's novel directed by Shahidul Amin was another important movie of the year.

Shubhodareleased in 1986 received the highest number of National Awards till date. Shubhoda, is a screen adaptation of Saratchandra's novel depicted the conservative Hindu society in the early 20th century. Directed by Chashi Nazrul Islam, the movie starred Razzaque, Anowara, and Zeenat.

Beder Meye Jyotsna(The snake charmer’s daughter) released in 1989 is the biggest commercial hit in Bangladesh till date. It revived a profound interest in folklore among filmmakers and audiences. Starring Iliyas Kanchan and Anju, the movie was so popular that West Bengal too made a successful version of it.

The nineties introduced new stars, and the love-song drama dominated the Bangladesh screen. Veteran director Ehtesham's Chandni (The moon ray) hit the box office with a new hit duo Nayeem-Shabnaz in 1991. They soon became the heartthrobs of the nation. This started the trend for more newcomers in the industry.

The same year Shohnur Rahman Sohan's Keyamat Theke Keymat (From doomsday to doomsday), a copyright film based on Indian superstar Amir Khan’s superhit film Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak created box office history in Bangladesh.

In 1993, Padma Nadir Majhee (The boatman of the Padma river) directed by Indian director Gautam Ghosh was well received in Dhaka as well. Based on the popular novel by Indian writer Manik Bandyopadhyay, Padma Nadir Majhi was a tale of the lives of the anglers and their families, living by the river Padma. The film had noted actors of Bangladesh and West Bengal, including Utpal Dutt, Robi Ghosh, Abul Khayer, Raisul Islam Asad, Champa, and Rupa Ganguli. It received international honours as well. In 1993 the government announced the re-introduction of Film Grant Fund.

Aguner Poroshmonireleased in 1994 was celebrated author Humayun Ahmed's directorial debut. It is regarded as one of the most poignant narratives of Bangladesh’s Liberation War. The cast consisting of seasoned TV actors, Abul Hayat, Dolly Zahur, Asaduzzaman Noor, and
Bipasha Hayat made the tale of a middle-class family sheltering a Freedom Fighter in war-torn Dhaka, riveting and convincing. Dipu Number 2 released in 1996, directed by Morshedul Islam, continued the trend of good children films. It was based on a widely popular book for children written by Muhammad Zafar Iqbal. Starring Arun Saha, Bobita and Bulbul Ahmed, the movie about an adolescent's adventures was well received by the youngsters as well as adults.

Hothat Brishti (A sudden downpour) released in 1999 continued the trend of West Bengal-Bangladesh joint productions. Directed by celebrated Indian director Basu Chatterjee, the film introduced Ferdaus as a film actor. The movie was premiered on Bangladesh TV, starting a trend of releasing movies in theatres and holding their TV premieres simultaneously.

Srabon Megher Din released in 2000 was the second movie directed by Humayun Ahmed. It centred around a folk singer, his love interest and the local feudal lord’s involvement. The song Amar Gaye Joto Dukkhho Shoy by Bari Siddiqui became a major hit as well. Golam Mustafa, Zahid Hasan, Mahfuz, Mukti and Shaon played the main characters in the film.

Kittankhola released in 2000 and directed by Abu Sayeed, the film was adapted from a stage play by Selim Al Deen. Featuring Raisul Islam Asad and Naila Azad Nupur, the film brought to light the lives of theatre artistes and their struggles to make a living off the dying performing art.

Meghla Akash (The cloudy sky) released in 2002 was one of the first feature films made in the subcontinent that dealt with the issue of HIV/AIDS. Nargis Akhter directed the movie. Moushumi and Ayyub Khan along with Shabana Azmi played the lead roles in the film.

Matir Moina (The Clay Bird) released in 2002 and directed by the internationally acclaimed Tareque Masud, initially banned from public screening by the Bangladesh Censor Board, which thought it, was too religiously sensitive. The film is about the social and political turmoil during the 1960s. It portrays a tale of religious extremism and superstitions through the eyes of a young madrasa student. It became the first feature film from Bangladesh to be selected for the Cannes Film Festival where it was honoured as the opening film of the Directors' Fortnight section. It also won the International Critics’ Prize for best film. Jayanto Chatyopadhyay, Rokeya Prachee, child artistes Nurul Islam Bablu and Russell Farazi delivered creditable performances in the film.

Lalshalu directed by Tanvir Mokammel and released in 2002 was based on innocent villagers who are exploited by quacks posing as religious leaders. Raisul Islam Asad and newcomer Chandni
delivered stellar performances. The movie participated in several international film festivals and was well received by critics and movie aficionados. Bachelor released in 2004 was one of the first multiplex urban oriented films released in Bangladesh. Directed by Mostafa Sarwar Farooki, the film was a realistic portrayal of the urban youth and their problems and dilemmas. The film attracted the educated urban youth to the movie theatres. Popular actors Ferdaus, Shabnoor, and Aupi Karim played the central characters of the film. Songs in the film, composed by Ayub Bachchu, Sk Tutul, and Bappa Majumdar added to the charm of the movie.

*Jaijatra*(The victory march) released in 2004 was another film on the Liberation War. Actor Tauquir Ahmed made his directorial debut with the film. The film recounted an incredible tale of human endurance and budding relationships between people of different classes and creed during the war. Bipasha Hayat, Abul Hayat, Humayun Faridee, Tariq Anam Khan, Azizul Hakim, and Mahfuz came up with credible performances in the film. The film was acclaimed nationally and internationally.

**Crisis in the Bangladesh Film Industry**
Apart from problems of poor production quality of Bangladesh films, lack of formal finance opportunities and even technical know, the Bangladesh film industry faces opposition from religious fundamentalists who regard cinema to be unIslamic.

At least 15 people were killed and more than 200 injured in a series of bomb blasts in northern Bangladesh in December 2002.

The explosions took place almost simultaneously at four cinemas in the densely populated town of Mymensingh, 110 kilometres from the capital, Dhaka. Officials say the death toll is likely to rise. In September, the same year at least two people died and 200 were hurt in bomb blasts at a cinema hall and circus in Satkhira, a district town nearly 180 km (112 miles) south of Dhaka. The cinemas were packed with about 2,000 people who had gone to see Bengali films following the Eid al-Fitr holiday.

The first explosion came at the end of a show at the Ajanta theatre and killed two people instantly. The others came at five-to-10-minute intervals as shows were still going on.
Those attacks came amid controversy over claims that the Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters were behind the attacks. The then Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, accused radical Muslim groups for the attacks.\textsuperscript{68}

According to many who were interviewed, the Bangladesh film industry resembles its oldest cinema hall, the Picture House, later known as Shabistan, which was established in Armanitola of Old Dhaka in 1913. The place where the cinema hall had once stood with pride and dignity for over 90 years is now forlorn with certain nondescript buildings, with an ailing passage that fades after a few yards. The historic hall has been converted into a school.\textsuperscript{69}

The tale of Shabistan is the same as hundreds of other cinema halls around the country, over one thousand cinema hall were shut throughout the country as it was no longer profitable. Hall owners blame declining audience for the losses, which led a number of cinema halls to pull down the shutters in the past few years.

“Around 10 years ago, we received around 600 to 800 people per show. But now, one show attracts only 200 viewers,” says Paresh Chandra Ghosh, an accountant of Purabi Cinema Hall in Mirpur.

According to observers, a growing trend toward obscenity has seen thousands of filmgoers desert domestically produced movies in favor of Hollywood. For some cinema owners, only the growing popularity of Hollywood films -- especially among women -- helps them break even.\textsuperscript{70}

The number of Hollywood films shown in Bangladesh has been steadily rising over the past few years with dramas and action movies -- especially those with good special effects -- proving most popular.

No overall figures are available but a majority of those interviewed said up to 20 percent of the films they show are made in Hollywood.

"We are showing films like 'The Matrix' and 'Bend it Like Beckham' because the quality of Bengali films is so bad that we can't make money from them," said Mozammel Hoque, who owns a Dhaka cinema hall. The language factor and the foreign sensibilities however prevent the mainstream audience to watch Hollywood movies.

Women have over the years avoided going to the theatres to watch the vulgar movies. “Bengali films have all become the same -- bulky actresses doing wild dances in skimpy clothes with stories of sibling rivalry, nasty politics or vendettas against hated rivals. It's depressing,” said Shameem Mahmud, a researcher.
"A lot of the films produced in the 1990s were poor quality copies of Western or Bollywood films with a lot of vulgarity so men couldn't take their families to seem them," said Sajjad Zahir, chief editor at the state-owned Bangladesh Film Development Corporation.

"So when satellite television came in the mid-1990s people started to watch the original Hollywood films. They could watch them in their market or community centre with their friends and family which they found was a much better environment than the cinema halls."

Zahir estimates only about 10 percent of Dhaliwood's output could be described as good quality. Veteran film producer and distributor Iftekharul Alam argues the only way to revive Dhaliwood is to allow more competition, particularly from Bollywood. There are no restrictions on importing English language films but a government ban applies to Hindi films from Bollywood and also Urdu films -- to protect the local industry."There has been no competition and creativity has been stifled," said Alam."Producers have basically known that whatever rubbish they produce the people would have to watch and that is why we have the situation we have today."

Cinemagoers in Bangladesh are keeping away from theatres, with pirated video CDs of Indian movies flooding the market. According to the National Board of Revenue in Dhaka, the annual investment of two billion taka ($34 million) has crashed to one-fourth in 10 years and the government revenue from movie theatres has halved.71

According to Ashrafuddin Ahmed Ujjal, general secretary of Bangladesh Film Producers and Distributors Association said the lack of technological advancement and professionalism to take on the new technology-based entertainment facilities and a backward-looking policy had pushed the film industry into this condition. Sex appeal doesn't mean nudity or vulgarism... It's there everywhere in show business... It becomes vulgar as it is mishandled by the people without proper education and training."

The last decade has seen the closing down of about 300 cinema houses, out of 1,200, across the country according to the Bangladesh Motion Pictures Exhibitors Association.

In Dhaka, nine of the 43 cinemas have closed down in the past two years. The exhibitors' association said that the number of cinema-goers in the capital had declined to 250,000 a week currently from the 900,000 five years ago.72

The Balaka theatre near the New Market in Dhaka recently could sell tickets worth only taka 150,000 against about taka 700,000 a week it sold two years ago. In Dhaka's Eastern Plaza
market video CDs of Hindi movies are available at less than 50 cents (taka 30) from vendors. At the big supermarkets, the same CDs cost about one US dollar. But cinema critic Dr Gitiara Nasreen has a different view. “It would have been a blessing for us if a cinema produced in Dhaka had been so popular that it was worth being pirated,” she said. Nasreen also rejected the view that an availability of satellite channels has largely reduced the appeal for cinemas. Nasreen, who teaches in the department of Mass Communication and Journalism at Dhaka University, said, “Nowadays every sports match is aired on television, but still people battle to buy tickets to watch the match at the stadium.”

Filmmaker Tareq Masud said: “Bangladeshi cinemas were at its peak in the 1960s, when it competed with films made in Bombay, Hollywood and in Urdu. Viewer turnout was also impressive then.” In the 1960s, the film industry was among the top industries, boasting huge revenue generation,” said Masud. He urged the government to provide loans for high quality film production, which is followed in many countries, including India.

If a conservative country like Iran could receive global acclaim through the film industry, why not Bangladesh,” questioned Masud, urging a bold government policy.

Abdur Razzak one of the post popular actors of Bangladesh, known for his romantic roles in the 1960s and his supporting roles in the 1990s has this to say about the state of the Bangladesh film industry: “From 1960 till today there has been a 95 percent decline in the quality of Bengali films. This is sad because in most other countries, film industries improved and prospered. I would say, the quality of everything, starting from theatre, music, dance to television has declined. This is not only appalling, but it saddens me to see such a state. In my time, films were very good; we depicted life as it was; we had social values; cinema had a social role to play. Today, most movies are unrealistic, pretentious and melodramatic. They have no touch with the real world; of what happens here. I don't know how we have allowed ourselves to come this low” he said.

He blames lack of training among film actors for the poor quality: “Since I was in Calcutta, I had the opportunity to work in theatre groups. I worked with Ranga Shabha and Bahurupi. I learnt a lot from there. That was way back in 1964, just before I came to Dhaka. Years later, people here don't get that much,” he said.

He feels that the 'elite' audience is to blame for giving a short shrift to the Bengali movies. They have tagged Bengali movies as bad and they are adamant in their belief.
"Not all Bengali films are bad. I would say my films like Baba keno Chakor, Shantan jokhon Shatru have powerful messages to convey. And they did well. Yet, the 'elite' do not know about this," he said to support his views.

“The other day, my grandson was telling me about a Shahrukh Khan starrer that would be shown on TV. ‘They'll show Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge,’ he told me excitedly. When I queried about one of my movies that would be shown, he simply replied, 'I'll see yours if I get the time!'” Razzak has his own production unit called Rajlakshmi Productions, which has quite a number of films to its credit. He makes movies that can entertain the whole family. He presents his messages in such a way that it works indirectly on the people, thus making them more acceptable to the people. "People don't like to be imposed upon. They like to think on their own. I think my movies can make people think, even if for a little while." 76

He feels that it is his duty to make some good films for the industry. It is his duty to try his best in upgrading the present depraved status of the film industry. With Rajlakshmi Productions, he aims to do just that.

One of Bangladesh’s foremost newspapers wrote this editorial: “Bangladesh’s film industry is perhaps now in its last throes before eventually dropping dead. That may sound too pessimistic a reaction, but it is the facts, which speak for themselves. In the last three years, as many as 300 cinema houses have closed down throughout the country. There remain 800, of which 500 are surely not in a state of good health. The obvious conclusion to be drawn from the poor state of health of cinema in Bangladesh is that people across the social spectrum have swiftly been losing interest in the fare that they have been offered by the movie industry. Another aspect of the problem relates to the new culture, which has dawned through the entry of satellite television channels, VCDs, DVDs and the like. The continuing problems of plagiarism and vulgarity are yet there. Overall, the effect has been one of a slide where people largely have decided to stay away from cinema houses. The Bangladesh Motion Pictures Exhibitors Association gives the figures: 200,000 jobs have already been lost in the industry and 10,000 more are set to go the same way. If that is the way the industry keeps moving, it will be quite a fair guess to suggest that sooner rather than later Bangladesh’s movies will go into extinction.” 77

There are problems of infrastructure as well. A five-storey building at 1/1 Bangabandhu Avenue that housed 21 film-making and distributing offices caught fire on November 22, 2004 which destroyed around 300 films which included more than a hundred landmark creations of the
golden period of Bangla films including two acclaimed films on the Liberation War made in more recent times—Danga and Sipahi. All these films, are lost forever as there are no more copies of the negatives of these films.  

This disaster has brought into focus the necessity of preserving films in the Bangladesh Film Archive (BFA). Although the film producers are bound to submit to the archive a print of each released film according to the Copyright Act 2000, in Bangladesh no producer is interested in preserving their films in the BFA due to a dispute over who would bear the cost of the prints. KMR Manzur, chairman of Bangladesh Film Producers' and Distributors' Association, said, “If the authorities are willing to share the cost of the print the producers are willing to submit a copy of their films.”

Attempts to Revive the Bangladesh Film Industry

There have been a number of attempts in recent years to get the stakeholders together to get the Dhallywood industry back to its erstwhile pre-eminence. The Dainik Prothom Alo Roundtable was organized on July 29, 2004. Moderated by the editor of the Dainik Prothom Alo, Matiur Rahman, the roundtable was attended by Information Minister M Shamsul Islam, eminent and popular film personalities, theatre activists, journalists and government officials. 

Entitled 'What to do to revive the glory of our film industry', the roundtable generated a number of suggestions. Renowned filmmaker Tanvir Mokammel asked for the initiation of grading for films in the country, which, he said, 'will help a person decide regarding watching a film.' Eminent actor-director Amzad Hossain accused the Censor Board and the condition of cinema halls in the country where bhadralok cannot go to the theatres. 

The Bangladesh Film Censor Board banned one in four films in 2009 as they contained excessive fighting scenes, dirty dancing and irrelevant script. The board banned on fourth of all films made by its ‘Dhaliwood’ movie industry in the past year to stamp out ‘immoral’ cinema in the Muslim-majority nation.

‘The industry based in Dhaka made 86 films in the year, said vice-chairman of the censor board Kamrun Nahar. But a quarter was banned because of excessive fight scenes and dirty dancing that had no discernable plot, Nahar said. ‘These films are not healthy and they hardly reflect the country’s culture and tradition. They were full with obscene materials and don’t have any
coherent storyline’, she said. The banned films include ‘Rebel Girl’, ‘Tough Girl’, ‘Massacre’ and ‘The Muscleman’, she said. An Islamist-allied government began the campaign against ‘obscene’ films in 2004. It amended the film censorship act last year before leaving office to include a three-year jail term for producers whose movies are regarded as contrarian to Bangladeshi cultural values.  

Chashi Nazrul Islam, another eminent filmmaker and President of Film Directors’ Association, made a different point. He ascribed the uncontrolled commercialisation of the satellite TV channels, especially those of the subcontinent, as one of the reasons for the decline in the film quality of our country. He demanded that Indian films be banned on television as well. President of Film Producers' Association, KMR Manjur, also demanded an end to the import of Hong Kong-based English films.  

The Bangladesh Federation of Film Societies organized the first ever National Film Conference from November 28 to 30, 2004 with the theme ‘Let the darkness of obscenity be eliminated by the touch of our own culture.’ Renowned film society activists and filmmakers Sadeq Khan, Badal Rahman, Morshedul Islam, Ahmed Muztaba Zamal, Sabbir Chowdhury and Zahidul Islam Kochi were present at the event. Veteran journalist and the first Muslim filmmaker of the subcontinent, Obaid Ul Haque, inaugurated the National Film Conference. Papers on ‘Importance of National Film Principles’ by Aminul Islam Khokon, ‘Government Sanction and Patronisation in Filmmaking’ by Badal Rahman, ‘National Film Institute in Spreading Film Culture’ by Tanvir Mokammel and ‘Role of Television and Newspaper in Creating Artistic Films’ by Faridur Reza Sagor, ‘Study of Cinema at University Level and Importance of Film Institute' by Zakir Hossain Raju, 'Problems of Filmmaking and Film Screening as a Medium of Art and Entertainment' by Tareq Masud and 'Ways to Stop Obscenity and Violence in Entertainment Cinema and Role of Censor Board' by Morshedul Islam were presented at the conference.  

*Chokher Bali*, directed by Rituparno Ghosh based on Rabindranath Tagore’s novel of the same name became the first film ever to being premiered at the 2004 Bangladesh International Film Festival. New Delhi decided to send the film, after checking out the popularity of lead actress Aishwarya Rai in Bangladeshi circuits.
Farhan Akhtar’s Dil Chahta Hai was also be screened at the festival. The guest list of the Indian contingent at the festival include actors Sharmila Tagore, Riya Sen and Rituparno Ghosh.

The festival organized by the Bangladesh Federation of Film Societies (BFFS) with the assistance of Bangladesh Producers and Distributors Association, Bangladesh Film Exhibitors Association, Bangladesh Chalachitra Grahak Sangstha and International Federation of Film Societies had the theme ‘Film for everyone.’ Over 115 films from 41 countries were screened during the festival.

The films were shown in the Central Public Library Auditorium, National Museum Auditorium, Russian Cultural Centre and Star Cineplex of Basundhara City.86

It was almost symbolic that Amrao Pari (Even we can do), a documentary film made by unknown Bangladeshi teenagers, won the 32nd Emmy Awards given jointly by the International Academy of Television Arts and Sciences and the UNICEF. The documentary was adjudged the best among 100 films from 30 countries. This continued the trend of a new generation of filmmakers, who won laurels with films like 'Matir Moina' and 'Chaka.' Amrao Pari is the story of a little boy who prevents a huge train disaster.87

**Multiplex in Bangladesh**

A major issue that has kept people away from theatres in Bangladesh is their inability to keep pace with moving times. ‘Most of our cinema halls are analogue. If you look at the cinema halls around the country, you will realise that their dilapidated state and backward technology is a major reason for the loss of public interest. It is very important that we develop the hall atmosphere and upgrade them to digital technology. Unfortunately, the BFDC themselves are still primarily dominated by analogue technologies.’88

The Show Motion Limited along with Bashundhara Group started Bangladesh’s first multiplex cinema theatre, Star Cineplex, at the Bashundhara City Project on October 9, 2004. Hollywood blockbuster Spiderman 2 was the inaugural film at the multiplex.

Mirka Rahman, Managing Director of Show Motion Limited said: ‘This venture seeks to bring back the movie lovers of the country to the fold. Because of the dismal condition of the cinema halls, many of them had unfortunately drifted away. Moreover, by showing latest international
blockbusters, we can change the piracy scenario of the country. Also, we hope to boost up the ailing film industry by promoting promising Bangla films at this multiplex.\(^{89}\)

The three theatres at the multiplex had infrastructure to provide quality audio-visual to viewers. Each hall has sitting arrangements for 262 viewers. The digital Christie Projection System brought from California made the multiplex the best in Asia.\(^{90}\)

The multiplex also secured rights to all films released by Fox, Universal, Columbia and Warner Brothers. Hindi films however could not be screened since the ban continued. The multiplex also promised to screen good Bangla movies like Duratta, Bachelor and Padma Nodir Majhi. The ticket price were however much higher than the single theatre halls. For English movies it varied from Tk 150 to Tk 225 and for Bangla movies from Tk 90 to Tk 125.\(^{91}\)

One month later, only two screens out of the three were in operation. ‘Only a few people were seen sitting in the posh lounge, waiting for the show of Bangla feature film Duratta. However, as time went by, trendily attired people from five to 60 years old, joined a long queue for the tickets of Spiderman 2.’\(^{92}\)

Despite the official ban on Bollywood Bollywood is all-pervasive in Bangladesh. “Some years ago I could boast never having seen a Hindi movie, but now I cannot. I have to travel by bus from Sylhet to Dhaka, and they show these movies in the busses where you are a captive audience,” writes columnist Zafar Iqbal.\(^{93}\)

He added: “Bollywood movies appeal to our cheap sentiments. They aim to give us instant gratification. They require no thought, reflection or spiritual involvement from us. Instead of raising our spirit and intellect higher, they bring them lower. Hindi movies are like an overdose of chocolate that give us constipation the next day. They cheapen us, debase us as human beings. It is extremely important to remember that the people who create Hindi movies are very hard-working, creative people. The irony is that their creation forces us to see the world as a dumbed-down, hero-zero place, stifling our own creativity.”\(^{94}\)

### The Debate on Ban on Indian Films in Bangladesh

In 1999, Ekushey Television was the lone territorial private television channel. Bollywood superstar Shahrukh Khan’s movie ‘Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge’ was a huge hit across the world. Ekushey television brought the exclusive right to broadcast the movie for the Bangladeshi audience. But due to the massive protests by some intellectuals the ETV could not air it.\(^{95}\)
Bangladesh lifted a four-decade ban on Indian films in a bid to boost attendances at cinemas, on April 24, 2010, drawing loud complaints from local actors and directors. Films from India have been banned from cinemas in Bangladesh since the country's independence in 1972 in a bid to protect the local movie industry. “The new order scraps the ban and allows screening of Indian and other South Asian films in local cinemas provided they have English sub-titles,” the government's Film Censor Board chief Surat Kumar Sarker said.

Cinema hall owners were believed to have lobbied with the government to allow Indian films given the dwindling revenue of theatres. The number of cinemas has fallen from 1,600 a decade ago to 600 this year, a decline which cinema exhibitors attribute to poor-quality homegrown films failing to draw viewers. At the same time, Indian films are hugely popular in Bangladesh and locals can get their Bollywood fix on cable TV and through pirated copies which circulate widely in Bangladesh in the absence of them being shown in cinemas.

“Film enthusiasts can easily see good Indian films on cable television so why should we stop Indian films being screened in our cinemas?” Kazi Firoz Rashid, president of Bangladesh Cinema Halls Owners Association, said.

"By contrast, the standards, scripts and production of Bangladeshi films are so stale and poor they have trouble winning hearts or making enough money," he said.

Local film-makers and performers made their disappointment known almost immediately after the announcement, holding demonstrations and warning that the move could wipe out 25,000 jobs. Bangladesh Chalachchitra Oikya Parishad, a platform of the local film industry, organised the protest on the premises of the Film Development Corporation (FDC).

Popular actors including Razzak, Anwara and Mizu Ahmed took part. They said the government had taken this decision without any consultation with the industry insiders. They hoped the government would not take any decision that could destroy Bangladesh’s own film industry.

The Bangladesh Chalachitra Oikya Parisad, a combine of film related organisations, staged the demonstration protesting the government’s decision to lift ban on import of Indian films.

Eleven-film related organisations including Bangladesh Film Producers and Distributors Association, Bangladesh Film Directors’ Association, Film Artistes Association, Bangladesh Film Editors’ Guild, Bangladesh Cinematographers’ Association, Bangladesh Film Dancers Association, Cine-Directorial Associates of Bangladesh participated in the demonstration under the newly formed Chalachitra Oikya Parisad.
Actor Salahuddin Lavlo said: “This decision will create an unequal competition in the country's film industry as the budgets of Indian films are much bigger than that of ours.” He added: “The Indian film industry is so advanced that local films will not be able to compete with them.”

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had to step in to defuse the situation. Many feel since the ban on Indian film was imposed by her father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, she had sentimental reasons not to withdraw it.

Cinema hall owners, however, frustrated by the government’s reversal of the decision. Hearing the news of the possible permission of screening of Bollywood movies at the Bangladeshi theatre, Kazi Firoz Rashid, president of Bangladesh Cinema Halls Owners Association, said “The number of cinema theatres has slid to 600 in 2010 from 1,600 in 2000 in the country with Bangladeshi films and soft-porn English-language films shown in movie houses failing to draw viewers. Film enthusiasts can easily see good Indian films on cable television, so why should we stop Indian films being screened in our cinemas?” he asked.

In February 2010, 3rd International Children’s film festival was held in Dhaka. Bollywood’s blockbuster movie Aamir Khan starrer ‘Taare Zameen Par’ was screened at the theatre hall of the Russian Cultural Center. There was such a huge response of the audience that tickets were not available for days.

President of the Bangladesh Film Directors Association, Shawkat Jamil said: “I know there are a few people who want the embargo to go on Bollywood movies. I understand that the cinema hall owners and the distributors will be benefited if the ban on import of South Asian movies is lifted. But we also have to understand that the local film industry of Bangladesh is going through a crisis at the moment. We are fighting against video piracy and vulgar movies. We should not demand on lifting the ban on the import of Bollywood movies, rather we should take a concerted effort to stop video piracy and making of vulgar movies to save the Dhallywood industry. Moreover, we should stop broadcasting Indian channels in our country to protect our local TV channels.”

Author Humayun Ahmed, said: “I think our filmmakers do not understand the quintessential concept of ‘survival of the fittest.’ Now if we, all the writers demand to the government to ban the import of books written by the foreign writers, citing the reason that we can’t compete with them, will the government pay any heed to our demand?
The people are deprived of pure entertainment and on the other hand we are giving protection to these substandard local movies. A kind of monopoly business is going on in our film industry. Our religion prohibits monopoly business as well.\textsuperscript{104}

Many people in Bangladesh feel the band is counterproductive and is impossible in the age of new media.

“This is the age of Youtube and Facebook. Internet has made our life easier. Now it takes exactly 2:30 hours to watch a 2:30 hour long movie on Youtube, thanks to the faster internet speed provided by our local internet service providers. Piracy has established its vibrant presence worldwide and Bangladesh is no exception to it as well.

Now it sounds funny that the industry people are feeling that such restrictions on Bollywood movies could deprive us from watching the movies of our favorite Bollywood superstars. When the government put a temporary ban on Facebook, many people used proxy servers to use it in the alternative way, proving that you can not stop free flow of information by putting any restriction. So at this age of globalization, it is ridiculous to even think that we can protect our culture by imposing ban on Bollywood movies.”\textsuperscript{105}

The ban on Bollywood movies is only encouraging piracy to flourish further and many of the hall owners are contemplating to close down the cinema halls as they are in deep financial crisis. If a Hollywood flick ‘Avatar’ or ‘Spiderman’ are shown on our movie theatre, what’s wrong with a Bollywood flick ‘Prince’ or ‘Krrish’?\textsuperscript{106}

“Without bringing Indian films to the local market, there is no way to revitalise the industry. Actually there is no industry here," says young Bangladeshi director Rubaiyat Hossain.

To overcome the present crisis, Ms Hossain proposes more Indo-Bangla joint production. Her critically acclaimed film Meherjaan, included cast and crew from Bangladesh, India and Pakistan.

"I don't think I could have brought my film to the present technical level, if I hadn't worked with Indian technicians," says Ms Hossain."I have learnt a lot by working with them and we do not have those kind of post-production facilities here in Bangladesh," she adds.\textsuperscript{107}

Meanwhile some Bangladeshi stars are already working with the Indian film industry. Bangladeshi actress, Champa Khan acted for Buddhadeb Dasgupta in “Lal Dorja” and Gautam Ghose in “Abar Aranye”, Champa is looking for a bigger role in Indian cinema.
Her Indian film “Lal Dorja” was nominated for the Oscars. In Ghose's “Abar Aranye”, a continuation of well-known Bengali filmmaker Satyajit Ray's “Aranyer Din Ratri” (“Days and Night In The Forest”), she shared the screen space with Sharmila Tagore, Soumitra Chatterjee, Rupa Ganguly, Shomit Bhanja and Tabu. “It definitely was a proud moment being selected for the movies of such high standards when there were plenty of good Indian actors who could have done the roles,” Champa said.108

Bangladeshi rockstar James become the first-ever Bangladeshi rock singer to have sung in a Hindi film. The music for Mahesh Bhatt’s Gangster, had James’ song, scored by Pritam. James sang Goutam Chattopadhyay’s immortal Prithibi which was recreated in Hindi. James said, “It is an enormous honour for me to have been chosen to do Goutamda’s song in this film. 109

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