



Blender's Choice- Star OTT Awards today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The "Blender's Choice- The Daily Star OTT & Digital Content Awards 2021" will be held in the capital today to honour artistes and content creators for their contribution to the country's entertainment industry.

The event, jointly organised by Ispahani Tea Limited and The Daily Star, will start at 6:00pm at the Hall of Fame of Bangabandhu International Conference Centre (BICC).

Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi will grace the occasion as the chief

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A local helps a man pull his rickshaw van through red-coloured water in Kadamtali area of the capital's Shyampur. The water from a nearby dyeing factory overflowed into the street as many of the drains in the area are clogged. The DSCC is working to repair the drains and roads there, but it will be months before the works are complete.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Gang steals TSP fertiliser on way to govt depot

Sacks of adulterated TSP loaded into trucks to hide the crime

MOSTAFA SHABUIJ, BOGURA

A syndicate has stolen around 126 tonnes of TSP fertiliser during transportation of the goods from Chattogram to Bogura.

Thirteen were arrested on Thursday night for their involvement in the incident, Touhidul Mobin Khan, company commander of Rab-12 in Bogura, told a press conference yesterday.

The arrestees are drivers and helpers of trucks carrying the fertiliser to Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation's buffer warehouse in Bogura town.

He said 18 trucks loaded with triple super phosphate (TSP) fertiliser left TSP Complex Ltd in Chattogram's Patenga on August 27 and reached the warehouse on August 29.

When the truckers broke the journey in Savar's Hemayetpur, the syndicate took away sacks of original TSP from some trucks and loaded the vehicles with sacks of adulterated fertiliser, he added.

Meanwhile, Mazharul Islam, manager (admin) of TSP Complex Ltd, yesterday filed a case against Moazzem Hossain, owner of MHR corporation, a goods transport agency, and the 13 detainees with Bogura Sadar Police Station, said Selim Reza, officer-in-charge of the station.

He added that the 13 arrestees would be produced before a court today.

Rab official Touhidul said an intelligence agency was tracking the syndicate and their activities when the trucks left Chattogram. The agency provided them with some video footage and information.

Rab then informed the Bogura DC of the matter. Later, authorities of the Bogura buffer warehouse did not accept the TSP and collected samples, he said.

Mostafa Kamal, in-charge of the Bogura buffer warehouse, also wrote to TSP Complex Ltd, which formed

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Aman planting behind target this season

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Planting of Aman seedlings has suffered a setback this season as it is so far 14 percent less than the target set by the government.

Farmers planted 2.30 lakh less seedlings this season compared to the same three-month period last year, raising fears among the experts that this may impact negatively on the production of Aman rice.

Experts said the time for planting seedlings expired in mid-August and farmers were now plating seedlings of late varieties which would not give them expected yield.

They said increased fuel costs for irrigation and poor rainfall have already impacted Aman farming.

Besides, the delayed planting of seedlings would ultimately hamper the production.

"Usually, Aman planting is completed by mid-July and the late variety by August. So, the planting of the late variety seedlings is also very late. That's why the production will definitely be hampered," Mohammad Jahangir Alam, agribusiness and marketing professor at Bangladesh Agricultural University, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The government has set a target to produce 1.63 crore tonnes of Aman paddy this year to offset the losses of Boro and Aus crops caused by floods.

According to the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE), the government last year set a target of cultivating Aman on 51.18 lakh hectares of land and seedlings were planted on 51.20 lakh hectares till August 1.

But this year, farmers have planted seedlings on 48.90 lakh hectares against the targeted 56.20 lakh

hectares, said Habibur Rahaman Chowdhury, director of the field services wing of the DAE.

He said planting was delayed as farmers waited for rain and also feared flooding.

"Farmers can plant Aman seedlings till September 15 and the target for planting will be achieved by that time," Habibur told The Daily Star yesterday.

However, AMM Shawkat Ali, former food adviser to a caretaker government, has a different view.

"Time of planting Aman seedlings has expired much earlier. As farmers prepared seedbeds, they are left without an option but to plant seedlings. Otherwise, their fields will be barren and they will lose their investment. So, whatever amount they get will be a bonus," he said.

Shawkat said the Aman yield will be less this year due to the delayed planting and shorter lifespan of the plants.

Officials and experts said scanty rains in the last three months may set back the production of Aman. During this period, the country witnessed an average 3.6, 57.6, and 39.6 percent less rain than the average normal rainfall, according to the Bangladesh Meteorological Department.

Aman, the second biggest crop after Boro, is a rain-fed paddy. It accounts for 39 percent of the total grains produced in Bangladesh. Its production heavily depends on monsoon rains as the time for preparing seedbeds for transplanting seedlings almost ends during the peak June-August rainy season, say officials and agriculturists.

The unfavourable weather conditions will make

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AFGHAN MOSQUE

18 killed in suicide blast

Pro-Taliban cleric among the dead; 23 injured

AFP, Kabul

A suicide bomber struck one of the biggest mosques in western Afghanistan yesterday, killing at least 18 people, including an influential imam who earlier this year called for those who commit "the smallest act" against the government to be beheaded.

Images posted on Twitter showed what appeared to be blood-stained bodies scattered around the compound of Gazargah Mosque in Herat.

Violence has largely declined since the Taliban returned to power last year, but several bomb blasts -- some targeting minority communities -- have rocked the country in recent months, many claimed by the jihadist Islamic State (IS) group.

At least 18 people, including prominent pro-Taliban cleric Mujib ur Rahman Ansari, were killed and 23 wounded in yesterday's suicide attack, said Hameedullah Motawakel, spokesman for the governor of Herat province.

"The bomber came near Ansari and then set off his explosives-laden vest," Motawakel told AFP.

Deputy Prime Minister Abdul Ghani Baradar, who had met Ansari just hours earlier in the day at a separate gathering in Herat, condemned the cleric's killing.

"A strong and brave religious scholar of the country was martyred while performing Friday prayers," Baradar said on Twitter.

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China grows rice in space using new zero-gravity laboratory

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Rice plants have been cultivated from seeds in space for the first ever time in an experiment that could have major implications for future long-term missions.

Chinese astronauts, known as taikonauts, carried out the experiment onboard the Wentian space laboratory, which was launched into orbit on July 24 and is docked with the core module of the Tiangong space station.

It marks the first time that scientists have attempted to produce the full life cycle of a rice plant in a zero-gravity environment, going from a seed to a mature plant capable of producing its own seeds.

The taikonauts are also experimenting with the plant Arabidopsis thaliana, a member of the mustard family that is often used to study mutations.

"The rice seedlings are growing very well," Professor Huiqiong Zheng, a researcher at the Centre for Excellence in Molecular Plant Sciences at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, told China Daily.

"We want to investigate how microgravity can affect the plant flowering time on the molecular level and whether it is possible to use the microgravity environment to control the related process."

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1 killed as smugglers clash with police

30 gold bars worth Tk 7.5cr seized

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

A suspected gold smuggler was killed during a "clash" between police and his accomplices in Jashore's Sharsha upazila yesterday.

Oli Makra, 34, of Jashore, was killed and two of his accomplices -- Robin Sarkar, 32, and Abul Kashem, 34, of Cumilla -- were detained, said police.

Thirty gold bars, worth Tk 7.5 crore, a car, and three motorcycles were seized from the accused, the law enforcers added.

Acting on a tip-off, the Detective Branch of police set up a checkpoint on

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World food prices fall for 5th straight month

REUTERS, PARIS

The United Nations food agency's world price index fell for a fifth month in a row in August, further from all-time highs hit earlier this year, as a resumption of grain exports from Ukrainian ports contributed to improved supply prospects.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) yesterday said that its price index, which tracks the most globally traded food commodities, averaged 138.0 points last month versus a revised 140.7 for July.

The July figure was previously put at 140.9.

The index has fallen from a record of 159.7 in March, hit after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The August reading was, however, 7.9 percent higher than a year earlier.

FAO's cereal price index fell 1.4 percent month-on-month in August, with the re-opening of Ukrainian Black Sea ports under a diplomatic deal as well as favourable wheat harvest prospects in North America and Russia weighing on prices, the agency said.

But the maize price index rose 1.5 percent last month as hot, dry weather reduced the outlook for production in Europe and the United States, it said.

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Pakistan's wicketkeeper-batter Mohammad Rizwan works one delicately past the Hong Kong keeper during their Asia Cup fixture at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium on Friday. Rizwan scored 78 not out as Pakistan posted 193 for two in 20 overs before getting Hong Kong bundled out for 38.

PHOTO: AFP

Pakistan crush HK to seal Super 4 spot

AFP, Sharjah

Mohammad Rizwan propelled Pakistan into the Asia Cup Super Four Stage after their bowlers skittled out minnows Hong Kong for a record low of 38 on Friday.

Pakistan scored 193-2 in a must-win Twenty20 international with Rizwan (78 not out) and Fakhar Zaman (53) putting on 116 after being invited to bat first on a slow and low Sharjah pitch.

Pakistan spinners Shadab Khan and Mohammad Nawaz then shared seven wickets to bundle out Hong Kong in 10.4 overs and win by 155 runs.

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