



Anam Biswas

Robiul Alam Robi

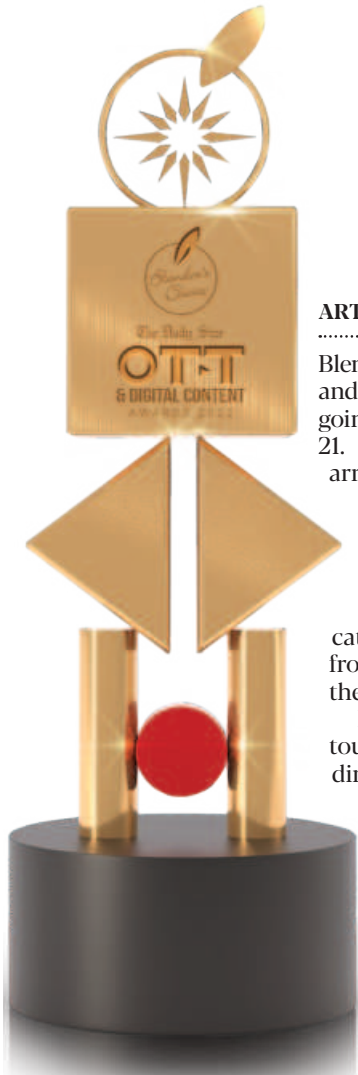
Vicky Zahed

Nuhash Humayun

Mohammad Touqir Islam

Tanim Noor

Shihab Shaheen



WHO WILL TAKE HOME the Best Director awards?

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Blender's Choice-The Daily Star OTT and Digital Content Awards 2022 is going to hold its grand gala on October 21. The second instalment of the arrangement will recognise the best of OTT and digital contents created and released in the year 2022.

The nominations for Best Director (film and series) were revealed and the voting for the category was graced with much love from the fans and audience, closing the lines on September 14.

In the series category, there were a tough competition amongst the finest directors we have in the OTT industry. Let us have a look at the projects and directors of 2022.

Syed Ahmed Shawki's directorial series **Karagar** created yet another landmark in the OTT arena, earning him the nomination for the Best Director (series). The first season of the series created a stir amongst the audience. The effort from the entire crew was highly visible on the screen, apart from the brilliant performances by Chanchal Chowdhury, Intekhab Dinar and Tasnia Farin.



Sanjoy Somadder



Syed Ahmed Shawki



Raihan Rafi

Chorki's original web-series **Syndicate**, directed by Shihab Shaheen, won the hearts of the audience. The plot, cast and its entire presentation was done effortlessly by the captain of the ship, earning him a nomination.

Nuhash Humayun surprised everyone with his debut web-series **Pett Kata Shaw**. The horror genre show did not just earn appreciation nationally, but around the world as well.

Afran Nisho's performance in Tanim Noor's Hoichoi original web-series

Kaiser wowed the audience, making the titular character one of the much-loved roles he has donned so far. Other than that, the characters Amlan (played by Mustafizur Noor Imran) and Barrister (played by Intiaz Barshon) were some of the roles that caught the attention of the audience. Tanim Noor definitely deserves the inclusion in this list.

Narratives of remote localities in Rajshahi were brilliantly portrayed by Mohammad Touqir Islam in his Chorki original web-series, **Shaaticup**. The

series was critically acclaimed and as his debut series, is a dark horse in the race for supremacy.

The nominations in the film category will also see tight competition.

Robiul Alam Robi's **Café Desire** explores the complicated human relationships, and the differences of dynamics between a bustling metro and small towns. Robi's execution in creating a coherent anthology film, complete with a star-studded cast, was brilliant.

Vicky Zahed is a storyteller who never fails to surprise the audience with his unconventional twists. **Redrum** is no different. Afran Nisho, Mehazabien Chowdhury, and Sallha Khanam Nadia played key roles in the film. Vicky's plot twist made the murder-mystery a must-watch.

An interesting story revolving around time travel, **Dui Diner Duniya** earned Anam Biswas the nomination for Best Director (Film). It was an experimental project for the OTT audience, which was received well.

Affection, addiction and a harrowing incident are centerpieces in Raihan Rafi's web film, **Taan**. The film witnessed the web debut of Dhallywood actress Shobnam Bubly, who mesmerised everyone with her completely new avatar as Aboni.

Breaking conventional plotlines, Sanjoy Somadder brought an emotional story on OTT, through his film **Daag**. The director deserves the nomination for choosing a to tell a heart-wrenching story in a completely different way.

While anticipations are building up regarding the crown of Best Director (Film) and Best Director (Series) for the Blender's Choice-The Daily Star OTT & Digital Content Awards, a nomination in this competitive category alone is testament to the quality of each project.

COUNTRYWIDE

Dragon fruit farming gaining popularity

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

Commercial farming of dragon fruit has been gaining popularity day by day in Jhenidah for the last couple of years.

Farmers said they are opting for dragon fruit farming as successful yield of the delicious fruit brings substantial amount of profit to them.

As a result, many growers in the district are now showing interest in cultivating dragon fruit for commercial purposes.

Meanwhile, considering the farmers' interest some local youths set up a wholesale dragon fruit market at Gourinathpur in Moheshpur upazila.

Farmers claimed that the market, which started in July this year, is the country's first wholesale dragon fruit market.

While visiting the wholesale market recently, this correspondent saw there are at least 30 vendors at the market, where many jobless youths are earning their livelihood.

According to Jhenidah Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE), a total of 842 hectares of land in all the six upazilas of the district have been brought under dragon fruit cultivation this year.

Mentionable, dragon was cultivated in only 203 hectares of land in 2022, compared to 151 hectares the previous year.

Farmers and traders said dragon are selling for Tk 180 to Tk 200, depending on its quality, at Moheshpur wholesale market.

Dragon fruits worth nearly Tk 1 crore are being sold at the wholesale market every day, traders claimed.

Farmer Ashadul Islam said earlier he used to cultivate different seasonal crops on two to three bighas land, but now he is cultivating dragon fruits on five to six bighas as it is much profitable compared to other crops.

Another grower Mohiuddin Mondol said he is cultivating dragon fruits on eight to ten bighas for the last couple of years and earning a profit of Tk 10 to Tk 12 lakh every year.

Shahinur Rahman, one of the vendors at Moheshpur market, said farmers from all the six upazilas in Jhenidah and adjoining areas of Jashore bring their produces at the wholesale market for sale. Another trader Dablu Hossain said he purchase about a hundred maunds of dragon fruits every day and send those to different districts across the country.



Buyers and sellers pass busy time at Gourinathpur wholesale market in Jhenidah's Moheshpur upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

Govt to buy 261 SUVs in times of austerity

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presided by Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal, yesterday approved the Tk 381-crore procurement under Direct Procurement Method (DPM), a highly placed source at the Cabinet Division told The Daily Star.

Traditionally, the finance ministry holds a press conference where an additional secretary of the cabinet division briefs reporters about any decision. There was no press conference in this case.

On Tuesday, finance ministry officials announced in their official

Facebook messenger group that they would brief reporters. But yesterday, they informed that the briefing was cancelled due to "unavoidable" circumstances.

"It is not clear why members of the public who will ultimately pay for this in hard currency are not being clearly informed what considerations have justified the decision at this critical time of depleting reserves," Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman told The Daily Star.

As part of an austerity measure, the finance

ministry issued a circular in July, saying all types of vehicle purchase would remain suspended at government offices under the operation and development allocations in fiscal year 2023-24.

Each of the vehicles -- Mitsubishi Pajero Sport QX -- would cost Tk 1,45,84,500, taking the total spending to Tk 381 crore.

Of the 261 vehicles, 61 will be bought for the deputy commissioners. The rest 200 will be purchased for the UNOs.

DCs and UNOs play vital executive roles during elections. Usually, DCs

function as returning officers while the UNOs assist them as assistant returning officers.

Justifying the procurement, an official of the public administration ministry said the new vehicles are necessary to conduct mobile courts, maintain law and order and ensure uninterrupted movement of officials involved in election duties, which is vital for holding a fair election.

Iftekharuzzaman said, "There would be perhaps no reason to question the justifiability of this purchase decision if it was not in a context where

austerity and frugality are the key words in public expenditure. To say the least, it represents a failure to practice what is being preached.

"Whether it is intended to upscale the degree of appeasement of the relevant officials against the backdrop of national election or whether it is part of routine administrative cost, what needs to be borne in mind is that in any case it is going to add to the burden of ordinary taxpayers who are already overwhelmed by impacts of the financial crisis that has led to the austerity call."

ADB to provide \$3b each year till 2026

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told reporters yesterday after a meeting with Planning Minister MA Mannan at the latter's office in Dhaka.

For this year, ADB has planned to approve \$2 billion in concessional loans, including financing for vaccine manufacturing. It will also approve close to \$1.5 billion in soft-term loans, Ginting added.

"This is ADB's indicative plan -- if the government can utilise the funds, ADB is willing to provide more financing," said a planning ministry official informed with the proceedings.

ADB has already approved budget support of \$800 million as policy-based loans this year and in November it is likely to approve another \$400 million in budget support, he said.

Discussion for the \$400 million budget support is ongoing, the official added. The meeting with

Mannan was to discuss Bangladesh's vaccine manufacturing project.

ADB intends to provide \$338 million for the project, with 50 percent of the amount being concessional loans and the rest non-concessional loan, Ginting said, adding that the interest rate for the concessional loan will be 2 percent.

"I think, this project will support Bangladesh in producing vaccines here in the country. During the pandemic, Bangladesh had to import vaccine and it was not always available. So, hopefully, with Bangladesh's manufacturing capacity, when there will be a disaster in future, the country can produce vaccines very quickly."

When Bangladesh graduates from the LDC bracket in 2026, internationally available vaccines will be at the market price, said Ginting, who has been ADB's country director in Bangladesh

since October 2021.

"The country has the capacity to produce vaccine locally."

Beyond this, ADB's support to Bangladesh in the vaccine project also aims to make the country capable of exporting vaccines in the future considering its reputed pharmaceutical sector, Ginting added.

Mannan told reporters that once the vaccine project is implemented, the country will be able to produce different types of vaccines.

The project's theoretical aspects will be overseen by the World Health Organisation as its guidance and standard is "very important". ADB will finance it and Bangladesh will produce the vaccines.

If Bangladesh does not sign the relevant documents by the end of this year, the country might miss the opportunity to get a concessional loan for the project, Mannan added.

Police 'storm'

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said police were respectful towards Annie, adding, however, that Annie had misbehaved with the officers.

The OC admitted that police broke a door lock to enter the flat because Annie did not open the door.

Annie is accused of assaulting policemen and blasting crude bombs in front of Dhaka City College on May 23, he said, adding that two arrest warrants were recently issued for him in Lakshmipur.

At the court, Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Rashidul Alam placed Annie on four-day remand in the case filed with Dhanmondi Police Station after Sub-inspector Shahidee Hasan appealed for seven-day remand.

Annie's lawyer Taherul Islam Tawhid in his application for bail said his client was falsely accused.

Upon hearing both the sides, the magistrate turned down the plea for bail and placed Annie on remand.

Meanwhile, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir condemned the arrest.

"The manner in which he was arrested is proof that this government is on its way to hold a one-sided election by arresting active BNP leaders and accusing them in false cases," he told reporters.

Don't worry

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on an AL rally on August 21, 2004, in which 22 people were killed, the premier said party leaders and activists had formed a human shield to save her at the cost of their own lives.

"This is the great thing that I have got the chance to serve the people," she said.

Hasina reached Tungipara on Tuesday afternoon after opening the Dhaka-Bhanga rail link at Mawa and addressing a grand rally at Dr Kazi Abu Yusuf Stadium in Faridpur's Bhanga upazila.

Soon after the PM along with her younger sister Sheikh Rehana reached Tungipara, she paid homage to Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman by placing a wreath at his mausoleum and offered prayers.