

INTERNATIONAL

‘End Gaza bombing’
Hollywood stars urge Biden to press for ceasefire

REUTERS

Dozens of Hollywood actors and artists, including comedian Jon Stewart and Oscar-winning actor Joaquin Phoenix, wrote on Friday to US President Joe Biden, urging him to press for a ceasefire in Israel and Gaza.

“We urge your administration, and all world leaders, to honor all of the lives in the Holy Land and call for and facilitate a ceasefire without delay – an end to the bombing of Gaza, and the safe release of hostages,” the celebrities wrote to Biden.

“We refuse to tell future generations the story of our silence, that we stood by and did nothing. As (UN) Emergency Relief Chief Martin Griffiths told UN News, “History is watching”, they said in the letter, citing Griffiths’ comment on Monday. The nearly 60 signatories included Susan Sarandon, Kristen Stewart, Quinta Brunson among others.



Injured Palestinian Mahmoud Al-Areer sits near the corpses of his children lying among other bodies, killed in an Israeli bombardment in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Russia interferes in elections worldwide
US alleges

AFP, Washington

Russia is using its spy network, state-run media and social media to undermine public trust in elections around the world, according to a US intelligence report released Friday that was shared with around 100 countries.

“Russia is focused on carrying out operations to degrade public confidence in election integrity,” the report said, citing findings from the US intelligence community.

“This is a global phenomenon. Our information indicates that senior Russian government officials, including in the Kremlin, see value in this type of influence operation and perceive it to be effective.”

AL pardons

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Zahangir was first expelled from the party in November 2021 after a video clip of him making derogatory remarks about Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and expressing doubts about the number of martyrs in the Liberation War went viral on social media.

Before his expulsion, Zahangir, who was elected Gazipur mayor in 2018 on an AL ticket, also became the general secretary of the party’s Gazipur city unit.

Seven days after his expulsion, the government suspended him as mayor amid allegations of graft, abuse of power, and violation of rules.

The AL later withdrew the expulsion order on January 21 this year.

In May this year, the AL Central Executive Committee again expelled him from the party for collecting nomination papers for the post of mayor in GCC polls disobeying the party’s decision.

Zahangir and his mother Zaida Khatun filed nomination forms as independents.

Ex-PM Sharif

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airport lounge he signed and filed appeals against the convictions he was jailed for before he left the country in 2019.

“The process to sign and verify legal documents have been completed,” close aide Ishaq Dar posted on X, formerly known as Twitter.

Rallies from various regions of the South Asian country were pouring into Lahore ahead of his arrival, a party spokesperson said. Heavy police contingents were deployed to guard the rally’s venue, said police officer Ali Nasir Rizvi.

Sharif had not set foot in Pakistan since leaving for London in 2019 to receive medical treatment while serving a 14-year prison sentence for corruption. His convictions remain in force, but a court on Thursday barred authorities from arresting him until Tuesday, when he is to appear in court.

While he cannot run for or hold public office because of his convictions, his legal team says he plans to appeal and his party says he aims to become prime minister for a fourth time.

Sharif’s biggest challenge will be to wrestle back his support base from his main rival, Khan, who despite being in jail remains popular following his ouster from the premiership in 2022.

Khan, too, is disqualified from the election because of his August graft conviction, which he has appealed.

Final JS session begins

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ongoing movement...”

With the BNP in the final phase of its movement, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, in her concluding speech in the final session of the JS, may come up with political directives for the nation, said sources in AL.

Hasina, also the AL president, is likely to give directives to the party MPs during the AL Parliamentary Party meeting scheduled for today at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

The meeting will begin at 6:00pm, said a release from the parliament secretariat.

The latest political situation, parliamentary polls, and election preparations are likely to be discussed, among other issues, in the meeting, said sources in the AL.

The current parliament spent just 16.7 percent of its work hours debating and formulating laws, one of its most vital functions, according to a study by Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB).

On the other hand, the parliamentary standing committees, which are responsible for holding the ministers concerned accountable, did

not hold meetings regularly.

According to the parliamentary rules of business, the JS watchdogs should sit every month, but none of the 50 committees did so, according to the TIB’s Parliament Watch report unveiled recently.

The graft watchdog prepared the report based on the 11th parliament’s 22 sessions between January 2019 and April 2023. During this period, 744.13 hours were spent on parliamentary proceedings.

Of that time, a little more than 124 hours (16.7 percent) were spent discussing legislation.

A total of 96 bills were passed by the House till its 22nd session.

The ruling party MPs spent 19.8 percent of their time praising the prime minister and their own party, and 19.4 percent of their time on various achievements of the government.

A total of 54.38 hours, or 14 minutes per working day, were lost due to quorum crisis. In the process, Tk 89.28 crore were lost for nothing, TIB said.

This parliament has also witnessed the deaths of a record 31 MPs, with another AL MP, Shahjahan Mia, from Patuakhali-1 dying yesterday.

Bangladesh, EU

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sustainable or beneficial.”

The EU offers an alternative vision where the loans and grants for infrastructure and connectivity projects are underpinned by the ideas of sustainability, ecological friendliness and commercial viability.

To flag off the initiative, a loan agreement for 350 million euros will be signed to aid in the transition to green energy in Bangladesh. This will be the first loan to Bangladesh from the European Investment Bank, said an official of the Bangladesh embassy in Brussels.

Asked if there would be stringent conditions for loans, he said: “Good governance, environmental sustainability and innovation are some of the basic principles that the EU will consider when providing funds.”

During the PM’s Brussels tour from October 24 to 27, negotiations for the Partnership Cooperation Agreement (PCA) will begin, according to foreign ministry officials.

PCA is a legally binding agreement through which the EU works to support the democratic and economic development of a country. But a few years of negotiations are needed to strike an agreement on the PCA, they added.

Meanwhile, Hasina is likely to visit Saudi Arabia to attend the International Conference on Women in

Islam on November 6-8, reports UNB.

Saudi Arabia and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation are organising the conference, which aims to clarify women’s rights and responsibilities in Islam, especially with regards to education and work, with broad participation from scholars of the Islamic Ummah.

‘Drop in the ocean’

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Some said the aid arriving on Saturday was too little to make a difference.

“This is a drop in the ocean. You are trying to show the world that you are bringing aid. This is throwing dust in the eyes,” said Nabil El-Dhaba, a resident of the Shejaia district in Gaza City who has been displaced to Deir Al Balah in the southern Gaza Strip.

Israel’s “total siege” of Gaza, launched after the Oct. 7 cross-border attack on southern Israel by militants of the Islamist movement Hamas, has left the enclave’s 2.3 million people running out of food, water, medicines, and fuel.

UN officials say at least 100 trucks daily are needed and that any aid operation must be sustainable at scale – a tall order with Israel carrying out bombardments day and night that have wrecked entire populated districts.

Before the outbreak of conflict, an average of about 450 aid trucks were arriving daily in Gaza.

CRACKDOWN ON CANADIAN DIPLOMATS

India making life hard for millions

Says Trudeau; US, UK back Ottawa

REUTERS, Ottawa, Washington

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on Friday the Indian government’s crackdown on Canadian diplomats was making normal life difficult for millions of people in both countries.

Trudeau spoke a day after Canada said it had withdrawn 41 diplomats following an Indian threat to unilaterally revoke their status.

New Delhi is angry that Trudeau last month suggested Indian agents might have been involved in the June murder of a Sikh separatist leader in Canada. India

denies the allegation.

“The Indian government is making it unbelievably difficult for life as usual to continue for millions of people in India and in Canada. And they’re doing it by contravening a very basic principle of diplomacy,” Trudeau said.

“It’s something that has me very concerned for the wellbeing and happiness of millions of Canadians who trace their origins to the Indian subcontinent,” he told reporters at a televised press conference in Brampton, Ontario.

Meanwhile, The US and UK on Friday urged New Delhi not to insist Canada

reduce its diplomatic presence in India and expressed concern after Ottawa pulled out 41 diplomats.

“We are concerned by the departure of Canadian diplomats from India, in response to the Indian government’s demand of Canada to significantly reduce its diplomatic presence in India,” US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said.

“We do not agree with the decisions taken by the Indian government that have resulted in a number of Canadian diplomats departing India,” a spokesperson for Britain’s Foreign Office said.

CREWED SPACE MISSION
India completes crucial test

REUTERS, Mumbai

India yesterday completed a key test in its ambitious crewed space mission Gaganyaan, hours after halting the planned lift-off, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) said. “Reason for the launch hold is identified and corrected,” ISRO posted on X, the platform formerly called Twitter. “Crew Escape System performed as intended. Mission Gaganyaan gets off on a successful note.” The agency did not specify the cause of the delay. The launch had been set for 8 a.m. (0230 GMT) but could not initially be completed. It was successfully completed at 10 a.m., ISRO said. The Gaganyaan mission is aimed at developing a human-habitable space capsule that will carry a three-member crew into an orbit of 400 km (250 miles) for three days, before splashing down in the Indian Ocean. ISRO has said it would explore ways to achieve a sustained human presence in space once Gaganyaan is completed. About 90 billion Indian rupees (\$1 billion) has been allocated for the mission, which follows the historic landing of its Chandrayaan-3 craft on the lunar south pole. The Gaganyaan mission has been expected to launch from the country’s main spaceport in Sriharikota before 2024.

GAG ORDER VIOLATION

Trump fined \$5,000

AFP, New York



The New York judge presiding over Donald Trump’s civil fraud trial fined the former US president USD5,000 on Friday for not complying with a partial gag order and threatened him with possible jail time for future violations. Judge Arthur Engoron ordered the 77-year-old Trump to pay the fine within the next 10 days to the New York Lawyers’ Fund for Client Protection. “Make no mistake: future violations, whether intentional or unintentional, will subject the violator to far more severe sanctions,” Engoron said in a court filing. “(These) may include, but are not limited to, steeper financial penalties, holding Donald Trump in contempt of court, and possibly imprisoning him pursuant to New York Judiciary Law,” the judge added.

Laurels for OTT highfliers

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This was followed by a welcome speech by Omar Hannan, general manager of Ispahani Tea Limited.

He said the future of entertainment will be ruled by the OTT and digital content.

“We are really glad to recognise the talents of this emerging media and we hope that our small efforts will encourage more artistes and creators to contribute to this industry.”

He thanked all the artistes; creators and the event partner – The Daily Star – for their contributions to turn this programme into a reality.

This year, Blender’s Choice-The Daily Star OTT and Digital Content Awards 2022 were given under 28 categories, out of which 14 are for film/ drama/ story, four for music, four critics award and six for content creators.

Besides actors, content creators and directors, the often-overlooked artistes – cinematographers, scriptwriters, editors, lyricists, singers, composers – of OTT and digital media were also recognised and awarded for their equally important and artistic contributions.

As hosts Naziba Basher and Amin Hannan took to the stage for the Digital Content segment, popular digital content creators – Samina Sraboni (kids), Enayet Chowdhury (education), Rafsan the Chhoto Bhai (food and recipe), Rnar (comedy), Neyon (sports), Nadir on The Go (travel) – took the titles home.

That was followed by a performance by dynamic duo Khayam Sanu

Sandhi, who was a nominee for both best lyrics and singer for his work in Chorki web series “Syndicate”, and Masha Islam, who later in the show bagged the best singer award for her sensational work in the song “Teka Pakhi” from Chorki Web Series “Dui Diner Duniya”.

In the music department, Ruslan Rehman won the award for best background score for Karagar, best lyrics award was given to Khayam Sanu Sandhi, best composer award was given to Emon Chowdhury for Teka Pakhi, while Masha won the best singer award for the same production.

In the Critic’s Choice segment, renowned actor Chanchal Chowdhury was awarded the best actor male for his role in the Hoichoi web series “Karagar”.

Upon receiving the award, he said, “I would like to convey my gratitude to all my teammates, audiences and well-wishers.”

Tasnia Farin was awarded the best female actor (Critic’s Choice) for her role in the same web series.

An emotional Farin said, “I am extremely honoured to receive this award in front of such esteemed guests. I would like to take this opportunity to convey my gratitude to my family members and especially someone I could not thank before – my husband, who has been immensely supportive throughout my career.”

Then came the best director (Critic’s Choice) – Mohammad Toufir Islam for his riveting series “Shaaticup” on Chorki, while best

film/series/drama was bagged by the same series.

Artistic dance performances by Ridy Sheikh and Tasnia Farin and musical renditions by Shandhi and Masha kept the audience charmed throughout the first half of the event.

As the second set of hosts – Aisha Khan and Rafsan Sabab – came on, along came the Popular Choice segment, the most awaited.

Afran Nisho and Mehazabien Chowdhury took the cake home for their outstanding performances in Chorki content “Redrum”, while the film was recognised as best film. Nasir Uddin Khan was awarded the best actor in a negative role for Syndicate. Intekhab Dinar (Karagar) and Sallha Khanam Nadia (Redrum) each bagged an award for supporting roles, while Vicky Zahed won best director (film) for Redrum and Shawki Syed for Karagar (web series).

Atia Rahman Shetu was the first make-up artiste to receive an award for make-up in the OTTDC awards, while best scriptwriter Neamoth Ullah Masum (Karagar) dedicated his award to the victims in Palestine.

In the last hours of the event, famed singer Pritom Hasan enchanted the audience with his performance.

In the final segment, the People’s Choice Award for Popular Digital Drama under Special Recognition was the first Bangladesh horror digital drama on Chorki’s Pett Kata Shaw by Nuhash Humayun, which was received by his mother Gultekin Khan.

Bangladesh mourns for Palestinians

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Dr AK Abdul Momen addressed an open ended extraordinary meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation’s (OIC) Executive Committee, and, in his speech, urged the United Nations Security Council to hold Israel accountable for war crimes.

The foreign minister pointed out that the war is disproportionate and Israel’s counteroffensive in Gaza is “collective punishment of Palestinians”.

Prior to this, on October 12, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina called on the international community to stop the ongoing wars, including the one against Palestine, as the common people ultimately suffer from these conflicts and the arms race.

On October 8, Dhaka put out a statement calling for an immediate

ceasefire to save innocent lives from being sacrificed on both sides.

Dhaka iterated that it supported the two-state solution, with both Palestine and Israel existing as autonomous states, because as long as Israeli occupation exists, there will always be turmoil in the region.

Bangladesh has always maintained a firm stance on Palestine, demanding an end to the apartheid regime.

On September 22, before the recent flare-up in Israel and Palestine, Sheikh Hasina spoke at the 78th United Nations General Assembly and demanded that the rights of Palestinians be respected.

“This year also marks the 75th anniversary of Nakba – the catastrophe inflicted upon the people of Palestine. It is deeply troubling that the legitimate rights of Palestinians have

remained unmet. We will continue our efforts to realise the rights of the people of Palestine. Bangladesh will stand by Palestine,” she said.

Out of 193 United Nations members, only 138 countries officially recognise Palestine as a state. Bangladesh has extended this recognition since November 1988, when Palestine declared its independence.

The US embassy in Dhaka flew the US flag at half staff on the day to mourn every innocent life lost in Palestine.

In a statement, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said, “We mourn civilians of every faith and every nationality who have been killed in the conflict.”

It may be noted that the US does not officially recognise Palestine as an independent state.