

# Artistes have shown love, and I will reciprocate it: MISHA SAWDAGAR

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SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Renowned star Misha Sawdagar has been elected president of the Bangladesh Film Artistes' Association (BFAA) for the third consecutive term, officially defeating veteran actor Mahmud Koli. Alongside Misha, Monwar Hossain Dipjol has secured the position of general secretary.

On the occasion of their panel's victory, a pleased Misha Sawdagar shared his thoughts with The Daily Star, stating, "I am grateful to the Almighty. I express my gratitude to the film artistes of Bangladesh as they have shown love by voting for me and our panel. Our artistes have bestowed love upon us and as the elected president I will reciprocate that love."



Reflecting on defeating Mahmud Koli to become president, Misha Sawdagar remarked, "He is a much-respected artiste in our country. I have immense respect for him. I admire all artistes regardless of who ran against whom during the election period."

He further clarified, "This year's victory was met with numerous challenges, but we overcame them

successfully. I convey my eternal gratitude to the voters for their support and contribution to the win. This recognition the artistes have shown me will forever remain in my heart."

Speaking about the voting atmosphere, he mentioned, "This year's voting was indeed festive. The artistes were also afforded the opportunity to cast their votes for their preferred candidates, which aligned with their desires, for the process."

When asked about the first task he will undertake as president, Misha replied, "The Film Artistes' Association is a family. Firstly, we will gift everyone a beautiful cabinet. It is imperative to establish good relations with all film-related organisations and we will put emphasis on it. However, we will always prioritise the needs of the artistes."

Illustrating the overwhelming support for the association's election, he stated, "Artistes are beloved by most people, and us performers work because of the people. This is why there is so much support for the association's election."

Responding to being questioned about why he had felt confident about winning, he reassuringly asserted, "I said that based on my belief. I have been a leader of the association twice. I have also been by the side of our artistes in times of their happiness and sorrow. From that faith, I said they would vote, and we would win."

"As the new president of the Film Artistes' Association, I want to do this job better. I have been working for artistes before and I will continue doing so in the future," said Misha Sawdagar in conclusion.



PHOTO: SHAHREAR KABIR HEEMEL

## Tareen to make Tollywood debut this month



Renowned Bangladeshi actress Tareen is making her debut in Indian Bengali cinema with the film *Eta Amader Golpo*—set for release in Kolkata on April 26.

Under the direction of Manasi Sinha, Tareen portrayed a significant role in this film. The recently released trailer has garnered widespread acclaim, earning praise for her performance.

The movie's narrative revolves around the dynamics, including respect, between a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law.

Tareen expressed, "It's a beautifully crafted story in which the director paid meticulous attention to detail. The cast members also performed wholeheartedly."

## Record Store Day: Bringing back the vintage era



Music enthusiasts gathered at The Daily Star's Arts Gallery yesterday to celebrate Record Store Day, eagerly searching for their favourite music albums in their purest forms.

Record Store Day is an annual global celebration of independent record stores, typically observed on a Saturday in April. It features exclusive vinyl releases, special promotions, and events, all aimed at supporting these unique establishments.

The programme, starting at 10am, was inaugurated by esteemed singer Khurshid Alam and noted folk singer Farida Parvin. They emphasised the importance of vinyl and gramophones in preserving the authentic form of music.

Organised by the Bangladesh Audiophile Society, the event featured several stalls showcasing rare music albums by legendary artistes from around the world.

# NEWS

## Qatar emir arrives tomorrow

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Minister Sheikh Hasina will hold a meeting at the Prime Minister's Office.

The emir will then attend an official lunch to be hosted by President Shahabuddin at the Bangabhaban.

Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud will also pay a courtesy call on the emir.

Political analysts say the visit by the emir, 19 years after Qatari Emir Shaikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani's visit to Bangladesh in 2005, is significant given the changing global geopolitical shift, the Middle East crisis following the Iran-Israel conflict over Palestine, and the eagerness of both countries to boost trade.

"Qatar is a country rich in oil and gas. It is also diversifying its economy. On the other hand, Bangladesh is an emerging economy, which is a large market as well as an investment destination. Much of the discussion during the emir's visit will be on the

promotion of trade and investment," a foreign ministry official said.

Qatar's exports to Bangladesh were \$2.74 billion during 2022, which was only \$4.5 million in 2000. On the other hand, Bangladesh's export to Qatar rose to \$89.43 million in 2022 from \$2.37 million in 2000.

Bangladesh already imports LNG from Qatar and now wants to bolster the energy cooperation, the official said.

"Qatar, like many of the Gulf countries, is an important destination for Bangladeshi workers. We're eager to see how more skilled Bangladeshis can find work there," he said.

Bangladesh will also present investment opportunities and look for way to export Bangladeshi products there, the official said.

Bangladesh in March last year signed an MoU with Qatar on defence cooperation, which is yet to be implemented. Likely, the issue of

defence cooperation may again come up for discussion during this visit.

Given the recent Middle East crisis, the two leaders are expected to discuss the Iran-Israel conflict over Palestine.

In recent years, Qatar has emerged as a mediator in various global crises, including between the US and the Taliban during the American troops' withdrawal.

Bangladesh, too, has been vocal in stopping the Israeli attacks on the Palestinians and genocide.

Contacted, Prof Delwar Hossain, of Dhaka University's international relations department, said both Bangladesh and Qatar have an opportunity to diversify their trade and investment portfolios.

"It would be a win-win situation for both countries if the bilateral trade and political relationships could be improved," he told The Daily Star.

## People withdrawing money in panic

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In June last year, deposits stood at Tk 15,935 crore at BASIC Bank. The amount has now come down to around Tk 12,000 crore, according to data from the bank.

In another letter sent to the finance ministry last week, the bank's management said it wanted the institution to merge with another state-run entity instead of a private one.

Contacted, Abu Md Mofazzal, acting managing director of BASIC Bank, said different government entities chose his bank to deposit money because it was a state-run institution.

The government bodies are now withdrawing their funds because the bank is merging with City Bank, which is private, he said.

Managers of BASIC Bank branches are receiving many phone calls from institutions that want to withdraw their money, Mofazzal said.

"This will ultimately be the government's loss," he said.

In 2014, a central bank investigation found BASIC Bank Chairman Sheikh Abdul Hye Bacchu's involvement in

embezzlement of Tk 4,500 crore. This ultimately diminished the bank's financial health from which it is yet to recover.

As of December last year, the bank's bad loans stood at Tk 8,204 crore, which is 64 percent of its total disbursed loans.

On April 16, the officials and employees of the bank submitted a memorandum to the Bangladesh Bank governor, saying that they were worried about their future after hearing about the merger proposal.

National Bank is also struggling to keep up with the horde of clients waiting to withdraw their money.

Amid reports of financial irregularities, Bangladesh Bank in December last year reconstituted National Bank's board of directors.

National Bank Managing Director Touthidul Alam Khan said the sudden rush for withdrawal was a tremendous pressure for the firm.

"We are visiting our branches to talk to depositors and request them not to withdraw their money," he said.

From January to September last year, the bank lost Tk 1,123 crore. In

2022, it lost Tk 357 crore.

The bank's bad loans stood at Tk 12,368 crore which was 28.92 percent of its total disbursed loans, shows BB data.

According to industry insiders, Bangladesh Bank's recent decision to merge different banks has sent a wave of fear among depositors, stakeholders, bankers, and directors.

Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of the Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh, said, "Both the weak and strong banks are likely to face the rush to withdraw deposits. But the central bank and the government must ensure that depositors do not lose their money."

However, Mashrur Arefin, managing director of the City Bank, said people often do not like changes.

There should not be much to worry about if the central bank and the government financially support writing off impaired assets and operating loss of the weak bank, he said.

He said that if the merger of the two balance sheets takes place after restructuring of the weak bank, then all fears are unnecessary.

## Narcos clashing over new heroin spot

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They added that Altaf's gang opposed Intiaz's idea as they are afraid their heroin sales will take a hit with "more spots opened up".

The selling of the illicit opioid in the camp began in 2022.

Sources further said Intiaz "stole" Altaf's gang members to sell heroin there.

The Daily Star was not able to reach Altaf or Intiaz as both have been absconding since the case was filed.

Rowshanul Haque Saikat, additional deputy commissioner of Tejgaon Division Police, told this newspaper, "They [the drug gangs] clashed whenever they found no policemen in the camp."

"We have strong surveillance and

also conduct drives every day, but they manage to flee whenever they sense police presence."

Despite regular drives, both groups got locked in a clash again in the early hours of April 19. Locals said that during the conflict, which took place from around 2:00am to 6:30am, the gangs' members chased each other with sharp weapons, sticks and bricks.

The same day, police arrested two top drug traders of the camp. They were identified as Sayedpuria Babu and Sajjad, said ADC Saikat, adding that the two are listed narcotics dealers and were leading the clashes in the camp.

The latest fight took place around 4:45pm yesterday and it continued for half an hour. The situation returned to normal after police showed up on the

spot. Meanwhile, residents of the camps are living in fear, especially during the nights, due to the continuous infighting and consequent police drives.

According to camp sources, many innocent people were also hurt during the clash as bricks were also hurled at rooftops of homes.

Locals said at least 50 people have so far been injured due to the fights.

Md Shawkat Ali, president of the Stranded Pakistanis General Repatriation Committee, told this newspaper, "We cannot sleep at night. We are in fear due to this incessant infighting."

He urged the law enforcers to arrest the real culprits and bring relief to the camp residents.

## Iran, Israel 'pull back'

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central province of Isfahan.

Fars news agency reported "three explosions" close to Qahjavarestan, near Isfahan airport and the 8th Shekari army airbase.

"What happened last night was no attack," Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian told NBC News.

"It was the flight of two or three quadcopters, which are at the level of toys that our children use in Iran," he added.

"As long as there is no new adventure on behalf of the Israeli regime against Iran's interests, we will have no response."

Israeli officials have made no public comment on what — according to a senior US congressional source who spoke to AFP — were retaliatory Israeli strikes against Iran.

Sanam Vakil, director of the Middle East and North Africa programme at Britain's Chatham House think tank, said the reported Israeli strike had been "calibrated to avoid damage and further Iranian aggression".

Iranian political expert Hamid Gholamzadeh said the incident in Isfahan, while "insignificant", needs to be seen in the context of the "fight

for balance of power" between the two countries.

"The region is on fire and an all-out war can be ignited any moment," he said.

Meanwhile, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan urged Palestinians to unite amid Israel's war in Gaza following hours-long talks with Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh in Istanbul yesterday, his office said.

Erdogan said Palestinian unity was "vital" following the talks at the Dolmabahce palace on the banks of the Bosphorus strait, which Turkish media reports said lasted more than two and a half hours.

"The strongest response to Israel and the path to victory lie in unity and integrity," Erdogan said according to a Turkish hospital statement.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is under pressure over the rising civilian toll, needs "further escalation and another war to distract the world attention" away from suffering in Gaza, Iranian analyst Gholamzadeh said.

There have been particular fears about Israel's intention to send troops into the southernmost city of Rafah, where most of the population is now sheltering having fled violence elsewhere.

## Carriers' storing personal data illegal

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However, the mobile operators are showing reluctance to do that, sensing the sensitivity of the data ordered to be stored.

The Association of Mobile Telecom Operators of Bangladesh have sent multiple letters to the commission saying that the mobile operators are not authorised by any legislation to create a centralised database.

"If the BTRC does such a task that

violates the constitution, it has to face trials in future," Prince added.

Tanvir Hasan Zoha, a top cyber security specialist, said there is no precedent in any country in the world for personal information of citizens to be stored by the private sector.

This will risk the security of citizens' money, land, and resources, he added.

Supreme Court lawyer Ishrat Hasan said, "According to courts, the constitution, and international human

rights, there is no opportunity to hand over the personal data of citizens to the private sector."

Mohiuddin Ahmed, president of the Bangladesh Mobile Phone Users' Association, said, "We also discovered that a private organisation has filed a writ petition with the High Court to prevent the private sector from building citizen databases. We hope that the court will safeguard citizens' information."