

# CURTAINS OPEN ON CANNES FILM FESTIVAL

## Cinematic brilliance, iconic returns, and surprise entries

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### ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

As the illustrious Cannes Film Festival unfurls its red carpet once again, the anticipation amongst cinephiles reaches a crescendo. Following the resounding success of last year's edition, which catapulted several films into the limelight of Oscar glory, the 77th Cannes Film Festival promises to be an event of unparalleled cinematic grandeur.

In retrospect, the echoes of last year's Cannes still resonate strongly. Films such as *Anatomy of a Fall*, *Killers of the Flower Moon*, and *The Zone of Interest* emerged as darlings of both Cannes and the subsequent Oscars, solidifying Cannes' stature as a harbinger of cinematic excellence.

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*The Godfather* director Francis Ford Coppola's return to Cannes after

half a century, with his magnum opus *Megalopolis*, is a momentous occasion that highlights the enduring allure of this cinematic mecca. The festival's opening, orchestrated by Quentin Dupieux's comedy *Le deuxième acte (The Second Act)*, sets the stage for a fortnight of cinematic splendour and intrigue.

At the heart of Cannes' allure lies its esteemed jury, tasked with discerning the crème de la crème of cinematic achievements. Four-time Oscar nominee Greta Gerwig will serve as president of the Feature Film Jury, making her the first female director from America to do so. The Jury also includes Oscar-nominated actress Lily Gladstone, along with actors Pierfrancesco Favino, Eva Green and Omar Sy, filmmakers Juan Antonio Bayona, Kore-eda Hirokazu and Nadine Labaki, and screenwriter and photographer Ebru Ceylan. Their choice for the Palme d'Or will be announced during the closing ceremony on May 24.

In a landmark achievement, the acclaimed Bangladeshi filmmaker Adnan Al Rajeev finds himself at the forefront of cinematic recognition



as his co-produced Filipino short film, *Radikals*, secures a coveted nomination for its world premiere at this year's Cannes. Collaborating with fellow Bangladeshi filmmaker Tanveer Hossain, Adnan brings his creative vision to life in this compelling project. Set to debut at the esteemed 63rd Semaine de la Critique of Cannes, *Radikals* is helmed by Filipino director Arvin Belarmino, who, in tandem with co-writer Kyla Romero, has crafted the narrative.

This year, eight Indian films will grace the festival's lineup, representing a diverse array of narratives and genres. The films are—*All We Imagine as Light*, *Santosh*, *In Retreat*, *The Shameless*, *Sister Midnight*, *Manthan: A Cinematic Gem Reborn*, *Sunflowers Were the First to Know*, *Kooki*. Bollywood actors Aishwarya Rai and Aditi Rao Hydari are all set to join the festival as ambassadors of L'Oréal Paris and are expected to highlight the growing influence of Indian cinema around the world. Additionally, the *Made in Heaven* famed actress Sobhita Dhulipala and musician King are also expected to walk the red carpet.

In this latest Cannes edition, a total

of 22 films will compete for the Palme d'Or, including *Anora*, directed by Sean Baker, *The Apprentice* by Ali Abbasi, *Bird* by Andrea Arnold, *Grand Tour* by Miguel Gomes, *Kinds of Kindness* by Yorgos Lanthimos, *Megalopolis* by Francis Ford Coppola, *Parthenope* by Paolo Sorrentino, *The Most Precious of Cargoes* by Michel Hazanavicius, and *The Seed of the*



*Sacred Fig* by Mohammad Rasoulof, amongst others.

Amidst the fervour of cinematic revelry, Cannes takes a moment to pay homage to legends of the industry. The festival will award three Honourary Palmes this year—the legendary actress and three-time Oscar winner Meryl Streep, to the iconic filmmaker

George Lucas, and to the acclaimed Japanese animation studio, Studio Ghibli.

However, this year's Cannes is not all about glitz and glamour, as there lies darker narratives over the proceedings.

France's film industry grapples with a belated MeToo reckoning, as accusations against prominent figures like Gerard Depardieu surface, hinting at further revelations on the horizon. Against this backdrop, actress Judith Godrèche unveils her poignant short film, *Moi Aussi (Me Too)*, shedding light on her own experiences and advocating for others to speak out.

Moreover, in a sobering twist, Iran's award-winning director Mohammad Rasoulof has just been jailed in his home country on security charges days before he was due to present *The Seed of the Sacred Fig*. Adding to the tumult, festival employees voice grievances, threatening a strike over pay and conditions, potentially disrupting the festival's proceedings.

The festival is scheduled to take place from May 14 to May 25 at the Palais des Festivals et des Congrès, the traditional home of the festival on the French Riviera.



# NEWS

## Solitary confinement

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sentence, considering it inhuman and cruel.

In the verdict, the bench gave the example of the Indian High Court allowing a prisoner sentenced to death to marry and have a child for his aftermath formalities, and the Supreme Court of India has not interfered in that HC order.

The HC judges said prisoners, who have been sentenced to death by the trial courts, cannot be kept in condemned cells until their appeals, review petitions and mercy petitions are finally disposed of by the HC, and Appellate Division of the Supreme Court and the president of the republic respectively.

Considering exceptional circumstances, any particular prisoner under the death sentence may be kept in solitary confinement if he or she has a contagious disease or mental health issues, only in the interest of security of themselves or other prisoners. However, they must be given the opportunity to give their statements to the jail authorities before they are moved to condemned cells, the HC said.

Such prisoners may be kept in isolation for a limited period of three months as provided under Section-73 of the Penal Code and, in that case, they should be given relevant facilities, it said, adding that prisoners sentenced to death must be treated like other ordinary prisoners.

The HC bench said the prisoners should be allowed to file bail applications like other prisoners to seek bail from this court.

The court, in appropriate cases, should grant them bail under section 426 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, it said.

According to figures from November 1, 2022, submitted to the HC by the office of the inspector general of prisons, 2,162 convicts were kept in solitary confinement, among whom 2,099 were men and 63 women.

The number of the condemned cells was 2,657 at that time—2,512 for men and 145 for women. The HC passed this ruling yesterday based on a petition filed on August 31, 2021, by three convicts given death sentences.

The first petitioner is Zillur Rahman, who has been incarcerated in a condemned cell in Chattogram

Central Jail since December 13, 2020, when he was sentenced to death by a Speedy Trial Court in Chattogram for murder.

The second is Abdul Basir from Sylhet Central Jail, who was sentenced to death for murder on March 16, 2020, by a sessions court in Sunamganj. He too has been kept in the condemned cell.

The third is Shah Alam from Cumilla Central Jail, who was sentenced to death by a tribunal in Khagrachhari on January 22, 2020, for a dowry-related killing.

During the hearing of the rule, the writ petitioners' lawyer Mohammad Shishir Manir told the HC that condemned cells are inhumane and therefore unconstitutional.

Attorney General AM Amin Uddin, Deputy Attorney General Amit Talukder and Assistant Attorney General Golam Sarwar Payel represented the state during the hearing.

AG Amin Uddin told this correspondent that he will make a decision about challenging the rule after a discussion with the government.

## Hospital blames

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take the lift to a floor manually. It took around 10-15 minutes to complete the process, the letter added.

Mumtaz, who was suffering from heart diseases, was immediately taken to the emergency department where doctors declared her dead, the letter said.

A five-member committee was formed to find the cause of the incident, the letter said. "The hospital authorities' claim is not true. We were stuck for around 45 minutes," said Shahadat Hossain Salim, a relative of Mumtaz, who was also in the lift.

Asked about banging on the door, he said, "There were 16 to 18 people in the lift. It was chaos inside after the lift got struck."

Seeking anonymity, another person, who was in the lift, said, "A liftman came after around 10 to 15 minutes after we got stuck. But he went back quickly. Then, we tried to communicate with others over phone. We were pulled out around 30 minutes after the liftman left."

## MV Abdullah's turbulent passage ends

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The ship transported 56,000 tonnes of limestone from the UAE.

A portion of the cargo would be unloaded to smaller lighter vessels at Kutubdia and then the vessel would go to the outer anchorage of Chattogram port, sources said.

In a text message sent to this correspondent yesterday afternoon, Tanveer Ahmad, the fourth engineer at the ship, said he is very happy to have come home.

Josna Begum, mother of the young mariner, said she could not express how happy she was. She plans to prepare her son's favourite dishes,

## Govt yet to drop the word

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of Investigation (PBI), wrote a letter to the law secretary on February 4, requesting the law ministry to drop the word "kumari" from the Kabin Nama in line with the HC directive.

"In many cases, divorced women filled up the Kabin Nama stating their marital status as 'kumari'. They sometimes did it willingly while on other occasions this was done upon mutual consensus among the brides and grooms when they remarry," the letter read.

But whenever there is a dispute between a husband and wife, the groom's side files a criminal case on charges of fraudulence and breaching trust over stating "kumari" in the Kabin Nama despite being a divorcee or widow, it added.

Husbands also often use it as an excuse for not giving alimony to their wives, said PBI officials.

In the letter, the PBI chief also requested the law ministry to add an additional query under clause 21 of the Kabin Nama.

If the marriage registration form is amended in line with the PBI request, a groom already married will have to state under clause 21 how many wives he has.

The PBI chief said news of people having several wives breaching the Shariah law often goes viral on social media. Such incidents are also widely reported by the print and electronic media.

including beef curry, on his arrival.

On March 12, the Somali pirates hijacked the ship when it was carrying 55,000 tonnes of coal from the Mputo port of Mozambique to Al Hamriyah port in the UAE.

The pirates freed the vessel on April 14 after reportedly receiving ransom.

Getting released, the ship went to Al Hamriyah port on April 22 and unloaded the cargo. After that, it went to another UAE port Mina Saqr for loading cargo for Bangladesh.

The vessel left the port on April 30 and then went to a nearby port to refuel before heading for Chattogram.

A law ministry official, who is aware of the PBI chief's letter, said the ministry has already taken an initiative to amend the marriage registration form. He, however, refused to go into detail as he was not entitled to talk on the issue.

Giving an example of how the word "kumari" is being misused, the PBI chief said a male and a female, both celebrities and divorced, got married on February 27, 2020.

As a dispute arose among the couple—Zahid and Sumona (not their real names)—a few months later, Zahid filed a case with a Dhaka court on August 10 that year accusing Sumona and her parents of fraudulence and breaching trust.

In the case statement, he said though Sumona was a divorcee, she in connivance with her parents stated in the Kabin Nama that she was a "virgin".

Upon a court order, the PBI investigated the case and found that Sumona mentioned herself as "virgin" in the Kabin Nama at the insistence of Zahid. The PBI submitted a report to the court, clearing Sumona and her parents of the charges and the court subsequently dismissed the case.

Zahid divorced Sumona later that year. "Such cases are being filed nowadays and women are being subjected to disgrace," Banaj Kumar told The Daily Star recently.

## How to wean Bangladesh

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He said that in many process industries, machinery can suffer damage if the power supply experiences fluctuations or interruptions during operation.

"The government or regulatory body should make compulsory use of technologies like combined heat and power (CHP) which can reuse the produced heat and increase efficiency," he said.

Bangladesh began importing LNG from the international market in 2018. In just five years, the country saw a seven-fold increase in imports, reaching 238.72 BCF of gas by 2023.

Over the past six years, rapidly rising imports in a volatile global market exposed Bangladesh's energy sector's weak financial health earlier than anticipated, the study said.

The high dependence on gas is raising import bills and subsequently increasing tariffs for consumers. Bangladesh must urgently re-evaluate its energy strategy and take steps to improve energy efficiency to contain the growing demand for gas, it added.

Shafiqul Alam, the lead analyst at IEEFA Bangladesh and author of the recent study, said an insatiable appetite for gas could lock Bangladesh into a vicious cycle of spiralling prices and supply issues,

## Donald Lu due today

FROM PAGE 2  
Though Washington termed the January 7 polls not free and fair, it promised to work with Bangladesh in the areas of economic development, promoting democracy, human rights, climate change, Rohingya, and security.

According to Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen, the scope and thrust of Donald Lu's visit are likely to differ greatly from before the general election in Bangladesh.

He said all issues relating to mutual relations—political, economic, and even security will be discussed.

"We have many mechanisms, platforms, and dialogues with them [US]. It will be looked into how all these can be reactivated and what are the mechanisms we can take forward," said the foreign secretary in

and eventually, it may threaten its economic transformation.

"The plan to import sufficient energy for development was not designed to cope with the high level of volatility in the international fuel market, depreciation of the local currency, and weak fiscal conditions," he said.

As the era of cheap energy comes to an end, improving energy efficiency will be more financially rewarding as the government is likely to make energy pricing more competitive soon, he added.

According to the study, any complacency in undertaking energy-saving measures will likely erode the competitiveness of industries in the international market.

Insufficient investment in local gas exploration has left Bangladesh with a hefty shortfall between demand and supply, the study said, adding that the country is at a fundamental disadvantage as it does not produce enough energy apart from gas.

"Full energy independence may be a utopian dream, but the country must find ways to rein in its import dependence," it wrote.

The study noted that local gas production was reduced to 2,201 Million cubic feet per day (mmcf/d) from 2,663 mmcf/d in 2016.

Dhaka last week. In recent months, the US has been emphasising the importance of labour rights and promoting civil society groups.

Diplomatic sources said the Rohingya crisis, the conflict in Myanmar, and economic and security cooperation will be some of the important issues that will be discussed during Donald Lu's visit.

Lu may reiterate the call for signing the US Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) on logistics and the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) to advance enduring security and defence relationships.

Washington wants Bangladesh to be a net security provider in the region, a US official recently told media in Dhaka.