



Actress Léa Seydoux shines bright amidst her co-stars at Cannes 2024.



Chris Hemsworth, Anya Taylor-Joy and "Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga" cast members grace Cannes red carpet.



Meryl Streep along with most of the jury members at the 77th edition of Cannes Film Festival.

PHOTOS: COLLECTED

## CANNES UNFOLDS

# Highlights from the 77th opening

## ARTS &amp; ENTERTAINMENT DESK

In the face of the persistent rainy skies of France, the Cannes Film Festival began as per schedule on May 14, with the awarding of an honorary Palme d'Or to Meryl Streep and the introduction of Greta Gerwig's jury—heralding the start of the 77th edition of this renowned event on the French Riviera.

Almost as prestigious as winning the Palme d'Or, the top prize at the Cannes, is serving on the jury that selects the winner. Renowned artistes from various fields worldwide are chosen to be part of the jury, with one member appointed as the jury president.

The nine members of the jury for the 77th edition of the festival are—jury president Greta Gerwig, who delivered massive success last year with *Barbie*; Golden Globe winner actress Lea Seydoux, also the first Native American woman to be nominated for an Oscar; Turkish photographer, actor and screenwriter Ebru Ceylan; French actress Eva Green; Spanish director Juan Antonio Bayona, the 12-time winner of Spain's prestigious Goya Awards; Golden Globe, Bafta and Oscar nominated, Lebanese director and screenwriter Nadine Labaki; Italy's most famous actor with a parallel Hollywood career, Pierfrancesco Favino; Japanese director Hirokazu Koreeda, who returns as a main competition jury

member after winning best screenplay last year for *Monster*; Cannes veteran, Cesar award-winner and French actor Omar Sy.

Before the ceremony, French singer Zahra de Sagazan performed David Bowie's *Modern Love* in the theatre aisles to pay tribute to Gerwig's black-and-white dance scene in *Frances Ha*. Gerwig sang along and appeared visibly moved by the performance as de Sagazan later joined her on stage to kiss her hand.

When Streep took the stage in a simple white gown and black-frame glasses, welcomed by French actress Juliette Binoche to be awarded the honorary Palme d'Or, the audience erupted into a two-minute-long standing ovation.

In her speech, Streep reminisced about a time when she thought her career was winding down at the age of 40. She playfully expressed, "I'm just so grateful that you haven't gotten tired of seeing my face and you haven't jumped off the train. My mother, who is usually right about everything, said to me, 'Meryl, my darling, you'll see. It all goes by so fast. So fast.' And it has, and it does. Except for my speech, which is too long."

Another guest on the red carpet who made heads turn and photos flood online was Messi the dog—the four-legged scene-stealer from last year's Palme d'Or winning film *Anatomy of a Fall*.



Meryl Streep with the honorary Palme d'Or.



Messi the Dog from last year's Palme d'Or winning film "Anatomy of a Fall".



Director Adnan Al Rajeev.



Actress Ashna Habib Bhabna.

Then again, much of this year's behind-the-scenes Cannes drama made most of the headlines. Earlier this year, French actor Judith Godrèche accused two film directors of sexually abusing and raping her during her teenage years. These allegations have brought the French film industry to a pivotal #MeToo moment.

On May 14, Godrèche debuted her short film *Moi Aussi*. When questioned about the #MeToo

movement's expansion to France, Gerwig told reporters in Cannes that it signifies progress.

Godrèche's courageous stand against abuse in the film industry adds depth to the festival's narrative. Her passionate call for change resonates as Cannes grapples with misconduct allegations and rumours of a secret list of abusers in the French film community.

As the 77th edition of the Cannes began, excitement for

cinematic excellence was mixed with geopolitical tension. For instance, the abrupt departure of acclaimed Iranian filmmaker Mohammad Rasoulof from his home country cast a shadow over the event's allure.

The director fled his homeland shortly after receiving an eight-year prison sentence on security charges.

"I'm grateful to my friends, acquaintances, and people who kindly, selflessly, and sometimes by risking their lives, helped me get out of the border and reach a safe place on the difficult and long path of this journey," conveyed Rasoulof on Instagram, whose current location remains unknown.

Rasoulof whose passport was seized in September 2017, criticised Iranian authorities' repression and urged the global cinema community to support filmmakers facing censorship and uphold freedom of speech.

His escape fuelled speculation that he might attend the Cannes premiere of his film *The Seed of the Sacred Fig* on Friday (May 17), potentially leading to a confrontation with the Islamic Republic, which had pressured him to withdraw the film.

Global tensions loom over the festival as the conflicts in Gaza and Ukraine and the #MeToo movement in France prompt scrutiny of sexual abuse and misconduct in the film industry.

On Wednesday night, The film *Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga*, starring

Chris Hemsworth and Anya Taylor-Joy, premiered at the festival and received an enthusiastic standing ovation lasting seven minutes.

From Bangladesh, actress Ashna Habib Bhabna is attending the Cannes Film Festival for the first time in her career.

She discussed her journey to the festival and her plans until its conclusion in an interview with The Daily Star, over the phone, stating, "I am happy to be here as a South Asian artiste. I came here on my own; I applied, and they sent me the accreditation letter after finding me eligible for the festival. It feels like a dream come true. For me, nothing makes me any more prouder than coming here as an actor."

Acclaimed Bangladeshi filmmaker Adnan Al Rajeev achieves a significant milestone as his co-produced Filipino short film, *Radikals*, earns a coveted nomination for its world premiere at Cannes this year. Collaborating with fellow Bangladeshi filmmaker Tamveer Hossain, Adnan realises his creative vision in this compelling project. Scheduled to debut at the esteemed 63rd Semaine de la Critique of Cannes, the film is directed by Filipino filmmaker Arvin Belarmino, who, alongside co-writer Kyla Romero, has crafted the narrative.

The festival will conclude on May 25 with a final honorary award presented to *Star Wars* creator George Lucas.

## NEWS

## Govt goes for a slim ADP to fight inflation

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In the new ADP, the government fund will be Tk 1,65,000 crore, down by 2.37 percent, while the foreign fund allocation will rise by 6.38 percent or Tk 6,000 crore.

At the NEC meeting, the prime minister gave directives to make additional efforts while utilising foreign loans in the ADP, said the senior secretary.

He also directed the ministries concerned and the Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division to submit reports every three months to the NEC on the utilisation of foreign loans.

The country's inflation has been above nine percent since March last year despite various government efforts to tame it.

Moreover, despite several steps from the government and Bangladesh Bank, forex reserves have been

declining over the past two years.

BB's latest statistics show the country's gross international reserves as per the IMF method came down to \$18.43 billion on May 15.

At a post-meeting briefing, Planning Minister Abdus Salam said a key decision regarding undertaking new projects has been made.

He said that from now on, the government will not undertake any upazila based small project and will take district-wise projects instead.

Salam added that members of parliament would be engaged in framing the district-wise five-year participatory master plan for the districts, and even the upazila chairmen will be involved in the process.

The minister also said more development operations would be conducted in the areas of rural infrastructure, health, education, and

communication.

He added that filtering in project selection is much stronger now with no unnecessary or meaningless project being taken up.

State Minister for Planning Shahiduzzaman Sarker said the government's project implementations often face problems regarding land acquisition and they have been working to solve such problems.

Senior Secretary Satyajit said the PM has also directed the officials to establish a pool for the project directors and they will be included in the pool after necessary training. She said even if a physician wants to be a project director, they must undergo training.

Besides, she also directed that if any organisation wants to conduct feasibility studies for a project, they have to be registered, he said.

In the ADP, the transportation and communication sectors will get the highest allocation -- Tk 70,687 crore (26.67 percent) -- followed by the power and energy sector -- Tk 40,751 crore (15.38 percent).

Education will get Tk 31,528 crore (11.36 percent); housing and community facilities Tk 24,868 crore (9.38 percent); health Tk 20,682 crore (7.80 percent); and local government and rural development Tk 17,986 crore (6.79 percent).

Besides, the agriculture sector will get Tk 13,219 crore (4.99 percent); environment Tk 11,089 crore (4.18 percent); industry and economic service Tk 6,492 crore (2.45 percent); and science and information technology Tk 4,786 crore (1.25 percent).

Yesterday's meeting also approved a Tk 13,288 crore development budget for state-owned enterprises.

## Harassment writ large

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Mahfuzur Rahman, filed the final report on August 8, 2023. He mentioned in the report that no evidence or witnesses were found against the arrestee to substantiate the charges.

Rab-4 Inspector Anowar, also the complainant of the case, mentioned in the FIR that Munshi Iqbal Ahmed, 62, was also arrested at Savar's Rajashan in the case.

He claimed that Iqbal has been involved with Ansar Al Islam for a long time.

The Daily Star was not able to contact Iqbal but the ATU investigator submitted the final report, clearing all suspects including Iqbal.

Jakir Hossain, 50, was also accused in the case but he was not arrested.

Tawohidul Haque, associate professor of the Institute of Social Welfare and Research of Dhaka University, told The Daily Star, "Law enforcers have the legal authority to interrogate any individuals suspected of having involvement in any crime. But there are incidents in which a section of law enforcers have been found to use this authority for personal benefits, or financial gains, and their numbers are not small."

"Who will take the responsibility of the individuals, especially the four who were framed in a militant case...?" he said.

Tawohidul added that such steps by law enforcers to deal with military cases would erode people's support and

The Daily Star, "is the Rab team, who arrested the accused and handed him over to us. I did not even investigate the case for long as it was handed over to the Anti-Terrorism Unit."

**FINGERS POINTED TOWARD SENIORS** Inspector Anowar, who is still with Rab-4, told The Daily Star that they did not frame the four in a false case. He said the FIR filed mentioned that evidence they found what they were instructed to do by senior officers.

Anowar, however, did not disclose the "senior officers" name or designation even though he was asked several times.

"I have no personal enmity with the arrestees. I just did what I was told to do," he said.

## LOOKING FOR ANSWERS

Talking to this newspaper, Mosharraf said the call records and digital footprints did not substantiate that the arrestees were holding secret meetings. The evidence also contradicted the Rab claim about the arrestees' locations, the report said.

"We suffered financially and mentally due to the case. Moreover, my children were distressed when we were in jail," said Mosharraf.

He said he did not even know the accused Iqbal and had met him for the first time in jail.

Asked why he thought he was framed, Mosharraf speculated, "I have some business rivals. It might be a reason but I want the answer...I want justice."

A Meta spokesperson defended the company's efforts to protect young users.

The EU yesterday opened a formal investigation into Facebook and Instagram on suspicion the platforms owned by Meta are causing addictive behaviour in children.

The probe is under a mammoth law known as the Digital Services Act (DSA) that forces the world's largest tech firms to do more to protect European users online and clamp down on illegal content.

It is the second investigation into Meta. An earlier one was launched by the European Union last month over fears Facebook and Instagram are failing to counter disinformation.

"We are not convinced that it has done enough to comply with the DSA obligations to mitigate the risks of negative effects to the physical and mental health of young Europeans," the EU's internal market commissioner, Thierry Breton, said.

"We are sparing no effort to protect our children," he added.

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