



PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

The premiere OTT and Digital Content Award returns

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

The country is currently undergoing significant reforms, and the entertainment industry is striving to keep pace with equal enthusiasm. Last year saw a surge in web series, films, and OTT projects that reshaped the landscape of the industry.

Blender's Choice-The Daily Star OTT & Digital Content Awards has announced its third edition, set to take place later this year. Presented by Ispahani and The Daily Star, a press conference was held yesterday, led by Omar Hannan, general manager of Ispahani Tea Limited; Ajoy Kumar Kundu, CEO of Mediacom Limited; and Imran Kadir, head of Marketing & Sales at The Daily Star.

Hosted by Aisha Khan, the event brought together talented filmmakers and artistes excelling in the OTT space. Notable attendees included Shihab Shaheen, Shahnaz Sumi, Priyontee Urbee, Syed Ahmed Shawki, Shankha Dasgupta, Raka Noshin Nower, Pulak Aneel, Elita Karim, Mofassal Hossen Alif, and Chorki Content Head Anindo Banerjee.

This year, **Blender's Choice-The Daily Star OTT & Digital Content Awards** is expanding its categories to a total of 30. These

include 9 popular choice awards for Film and Drama, 3 for Music, 12 critics' choice awards, and 5 for content creators.

Omar Hannan, general manager of Ispahani Tea Limited, commented, "Following the overwhelming success of the past two events, we've decided to proceed with the third edition. Our main goal has always been to inspire innovative and uplifting content, encouraging creators to push their boundaries and develop exceptional projects. Our slogan for Blender's Choice—'Let's blend with new'—reflects this vision. While OTT is still a relatively new concept for audiences, I'm confident that, over time, more people will embrace it alongside mainstream media."

Ajoy Kumar Kundu, CEO of Mediacom Limited, shared research showing that OTT content is growing at an annual rate of 10.8%. "Projections for 2029 indicate that the growth and popularity of OTT content in the country will double. I'm confident in the bright future ahead and proud to be associated with Blender's Choice and The Daily Star, as we continue to inspire and recognise deserving talent."

Renowned director Shihab Shaheen praised

the **Blender's Choice-The Daily Star OTT & Digital Content Awards** for their excellence over the past two years. "I believe you've done an outstanding job, ensuring that the most deserving talents are rightfully recognised. I look forward to continuing to create bold and captivating content that will engage audiences," he said.

This year, The Daily Star has expanded its award categories to include roles such as set designers and costume designers. **Guti** director Shankha Dasgupta applauded this inclusivity, stating, "I appreciate The Daily Star for consistently recognising those behind the scenes, like art directors, costume designers, and makeup artists. I trust the jury will ensure that the most deserving talents are celebrated."

Talented actress and dancer Shahnaz Sumi emphasised the importance of realistic performances to engage audiences. "Whether it's a skit or a dance, it must be portrayed with authenticity and sincerity to truly connect with viewers," she said.

Syed Ahmed Shawki, a recipient of multiple awards from this platform, remarked, "Directors eagerly anticipate the **Blender's Choice-The Daily Star OTT & Digital Content Awards**. As OTT has flourished in our country, this platform has become a fitting tribute to the tireless efforts behind the scenes. Besides the National Film Award, this is the only platform that honours both on-screen and off-screen talent. This recognition is a great source of inspiration, and people always look forward to it."

Submissions for nominations opened on September 8 and will continue until October 8.

Deepika Padukone and Ranveer Singh welcome baby girl

Bollywood stars Deepika Padukone and Ranveer Singh joyfully announced the arrival of their baby girl yesterday (September 8), as per their Instagram posts. The couple's first child was born at Mumbai's Reliance Foundation Hospital, where Deepika was admitted the previous evening, accompanied by her mother, Ujjala Padukone. The news of their baby's arrival quickly spread, following viral images and videos of Deepika arriving at the hospital.

Just days before the birth, the couple visited Mumbai's Siddhivinayak Temple to seek blessings for their newborn. Dressed in a traditional green saree, Deepika was spotted with a visible baby bump as she and Ranveer, along with their families, attended the temple barefoot.



The announcement of Deepika's pregnancy came in February this year through a joint social media post featuring charming motifs of baby clothes, shoes, and balloons, with the caption "September 2024." The couple's maternity photoshoot, showcasing Deepika proudly displaying her baby bump, further highlighted their excitement.

As they embark on this new chapter, reports suggest Deepika and Ranveer may soon relocate to a new residence. They are reportedly preparing to move into a luxurious apartment in Bandra, adjacent to Shah Rukh Khan's iconic bungalow, Mannat. The new home, occupying floors 16 to 19 of the building, will also feature a private terrace once completed.

Deepika and Ranveer's love story began in 2013 during the filming of **Goliyon Ki Rasleela Ram-Leela**. Their relationship remained private until their grand wedding at Lake Como, Italy, in December 2018, which seamlessly blended both their cultural traditions.

Deepika plans to return to work in 2025 after a maternity leave that will last until March of the upcoming year. She will resume acting with the sequel to **Kalki**, starring alongside Amitabh Bachchan, Kamal Haasan, and Prabhas. Additionally, Deepika will appear in Rohit Shetty's **Singham Again**, a cop drama featuring her husband Ranveer Singh as well.

Venice Film Festival 2024 winners announced

The 81st Venice Film Festival came to an end on September 7 with an award-giving ceremony. The festival marked the start of the awards season and highlighted major preferences for the Oscars, with eight of the past 12 Best Director Awards at the Oscars going to films that debuted in Venice.



The Venice jury this year was headed by French actress Isabelle Huppert.

Here is a list of all the main award winners:

GOLDEN LION for best picture: **The Room Next Door** by Pedro Almodovar (Spanish production)

SILVER LION runner-up prize: **Verniglio** by Maura Delpero (Italy, France, Belgium)

Best Director: Brady Corbet for **The Brutalist** (Britain)

Best Actress: Nicole Kidman for **Babygirl** (United States)

Best Actor: Vincent Lindon for **The Quiet Son** (France)

Best Screenplay: Murilo Hauser and Heitor Lorega for **I'm Still Here** (Brazil, France)

Special Jury Award: **April** by Dea Kulumbegashvili (France, Italy, Georgia)

Best Young Actor: Paul Kircher for **And Their Children After Them** (France)



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'JOURNEY OF COSMOS'

Masudur Rahman's profound exploration of existence

Masudur Rahman's solo art exhibition, titled *Journey of Cosmos*, is currently on display at Alliance Française de Dhaka in Dhanmondi. It is a profound contemplation of the interconnection between humanity, nature, and the universe. The artist's work delves into the vastness and emptiness of the human mind, revealing how these elements impart sophisticated depth to creation, love, and life.

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

The exploration begins with the concept of the void, which he perceives as the central state of being. Unlike the traditional view of emptiness as a mere blank space, Rahman envisions it as a potent entity filled with infinite potential—a space where both form and formlessness coexist. His artworks thus examine this duality, which he believes is fundamental to life itself.

Through his work, Rahman presents a blend of tangible forms and abstract concepts, reflecting the intricate balance between these two states. This philosophical approach is reminiscent of ancient Eastern traditions, where the void is seen as the origin of all creation and a space where everything exists in its purest form. His paintings embody this concept, offering a visual representation



of the dynamic interplay between existence and non-existence, form and emptiness.

Rahman's artistic style is characterised by a unique combination of figurative and abstract elements. He incorporates natural symbols such as rivers, trees, fields, and skies, grounding his work in a realistic domain while simultaneously evoking the intangible, mysterious, and cosmic. These natural elements are not

mere aesthetical choices but are imbued with deeper significance, symbolising the flow of life and the interconnectedness of all things. In his landscapes, nature is not just a backdrop but an integral part of his narrative. The green of the forests represents vitality and the life force, while the horizon symbolises the meeting point between the known and the unknown, the finite and the infinite. His portrayal of human figures within these vast natural landscapes highlights his theme of interconnectedness.

Rather than depicting humans as dominant figures, he often presents them as small and seemingly insignificant compared to the grandeur of nature and the cosmos. This approach communicates the idea that human life is part of a larger universe. The human figures often blend into their surroundings, further emphasising the

concept of unity and interconnectedness. This suggests that human identity is not separate from the natural world but intrinsically linked to it. The fusion of human and natural forms reflects the idea of the great self—a state of being where individual identity dissolves into universal consciousness, highlighting the unity of all existence.

In a world increasingly dominated by materialism and disconnection, it serves as a vital reminder of the interconnectedness of all things and the enduring presence of the cosmic in the mundane. The exploration of form, void, and the natural world reaffirms the power of art to inspire, provoke thought, and connect us to the larger, ever-expanding universe.

The *Journey of Cosmos* art exhibition is open to all from 3pm to 8pm till September 14.