

Folk and classical music fests postponed amid security concerns



In an unexpected move, two major festivals slated for Dhaka's Army Stadium have been postponed due to security concerns and the sudden cancellation of venue bookings. The highly anticipated **International Folk Music Festival** and Bengal Foundation's **Classical Music Festival** have both been put on hold, leaving event organisers and attendees in uncertainty. Following a five year hiatus, the **International Folk Music Festival** was scheduled to return on January 23, 2025, at the Army Stadium. However, on Wednesday, event organisers announced the festival's postponement after security concerns led to the venue's booking being suspended. Bengal Foundation had also been making preparations for their prestigious classical music fest at the Army Stadium. However, their venue booking request was similarly cancelled under the blanket suspension of all events in January and February.

### Badhan joins Women Filmmaker Jury at DIFF 2025

Acclaimed actress Azmeri Haque Badhan, renowned for her roles in *Rehana Maryam Noor* and *Guti*, will serve on the jury for the Women Filmmaker Section at the 23rd Dhaka International Film Festival (DIFF). The festival, running from January 11-19, 2025, in Dhaka, highlights female creativity in filmmaking. Badhan joins a distinguished panel with Chinese producer Mei Po Rainbow

Fong, Bangladeshi filmmaker Leesa Gazi, and Iranian actress Hoda Moghaddam Manesh. The Women Filmmaker Section will feature feature-length films, shorts, and documentaries by female directors. Screenings, open to the public, will be held at venues like Shilpakala Academy and Alliance Française, offering awards for Best Director and Best Film.

### Mosharraf Karim stars in JU's 'Mohashunnye Cycle'

Renowned actor Mosharraf Karim plays the lead role in *Mohashunnye Cycle*, a short film adaptation of Shahaduzzaman's acclaimed story. Directed by Tahua Labib Tura, a student of Jahangirnagar University's Drama and Dramatics Department, the film marks an academic project for fourth-year students. Scenes were shot on December 16 at Jahangirnagar University. Karim expressed excitement about collaborating with young creatives, saying, "It's been a long time since I've felt this satisfied." The cast includes Sayma Siraji and Rahat, with cinematography by Mazaharul Razu. Director Tura shared her experience of working with the actor, stating, "He is, without a doubt, one of the finest actors of our time."

### BTS' V Charts 3 Songs on Billboard Hot 100

BTS member V (Kim Taehyung) has made history as the first K-pop idol to chart three songs on the Billboard Hot 100 in 2024. His latest release, *White Christmas*, a reimaged duet with Bing Crosby, debuted at No 93 on December 17. This marks V's sixth solo Hot 100 entry, following *Christmas Tree* (No 79), *Love Me Again* (No 96), *Slow Dancing* (No 51), *FRI(END)S* (No 65), and *Winter Ahead* (No 99). The *White Christmas* music video features an animated Bing Crosby and V's late dog, Yeotan, as a heartfelt tribute.

### WHAT'S THE HAPS?

### Chhottrish

Pathshala South Asian Media Institute marks 26 years with the exhibition **Chhottrish**, curated by its students. The showcase presents powerful images, installations, and stories, celebrating the resilience and courage of protesters who championed democracy and led the July Uprising against an autocratic regime.

**Date: December 20-28**  
**Time: 4pm-8pm**  
**Venue: DrikPath Bhaban**

### Christopher Nolan, Emma Thomas Knighted by King Charles III

Renowned filmmaker Christopher Nolan and producer Emma Thomas were honoured with a Knighthood and Damehood, respectively, by King Charles III at Buckingham Palace last Wednesday. The couple, known for iconic films like *The Dark Knight* trilogy and *Oppenheimer*, received recognition for their exceptional contributions to cinema. Nolan shared that the King had watched *Oppenheimer* and praised the film, expressing hope for continued creative work. Married since 1997, Nolan and Thomas co-founded a production company delivering box-office hits for over two decades. Thomas also holds the distinction of being the first British producer to win an Oscar for Best Picture.

# COUNTRYWIDE

RANGPUR REGION

## Potato cultivation sees big boost

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Farmers in greater Rangpur region are passing busy time in potato cultivation with the hope of getting good prices as they earned a good profit by selling the vegetable last season. After harvesting of Aman paddy, farmers in five districts – Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Rangpur, Nilphamari and

of potato seeds, pesticides, fertilisers as well as high wages of workers, they will have to spend additional Tk 100 to Tk 150 to produce potato on each decimal of land. Last year, it cost them Tk 1,000 to Tk 1,100 to produce potatoes on same amount of land, farmers said, adding that they got 90kg to 105kg of potatoes from each decimal of land and sold the



Farm workers seen busy sowing seed potatoes at a field in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila. PHOTO: STAR

Gaibandha – under Rangpur region have now turned to potato cultivation and hoping to make a good profit as they did in the previous year. According to Rangpur Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) officials, a total of 1,05,176 hectares of land in five district under Rangpur region have been brought under potato cultivation this year, with a target to produce 27,35,576 tonnes of potato. Last year, DAE brought about 1,00,602 hectares of land under potato cultivation. Mentionable, about 26 tonnes of potato is produced in each hectare of land that cost Tk 2.8 lakh. While talking to this correspondent a number of farmers said they have been making profits from potato cultivation for the last four years or so. This year farmers brought more land under potato cultivation as they made profits beyond their expectation last year. However, due to the increased prices

vegetable item at Tk16 to Tk 18 per kg. Farmer Mansur Ali of Mandolerhat village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila said last year he cultivated potato on six bighas of land, but this year he sowed seed potatoes on eight bighas. Last year, it cost them Tk 1 lakh from his six bighas of land and hoped to make more profit this year, Mansur said. Dhiren Chandra Barman, a farmer from Nabadiganj village in Rangpur Sadar upazila, said this year he brought 20 bighas of land under potato cultivation, which was 15 bighas last year. Currently, there is a huge demand of potato in local markets and if the weather remain favourable like this he hopes to get a bumper yield this year as well, Dhiren further said. Kurigram DAE Deputy Director Abdullah Al Mamun said the trend of cultivating potato has increased among farmers and the department is providing all sorts of technical support to farmers.

Hamza

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Hamza also posted the announcement on his social media handle at 7:00pm Bangladesh time on Thursday after having posted a teaser a few hours earlier, keeping his legions of fans guessing about the announcement. The Leicester City midfielder, who was born to a Bangladeshi-origin mother and a Grenadian father in Leicestershire, had expressed his willingness to play for Bangladesh during an interview with a Bangla daily Prothom Alo in May this year. Hamza, who had represented England in seven under-21 matches and also played in Under-21 Euros for England in 2019, received his Bangladeshi passport in August. He received an NOC from English FA in September before finally getting the clearance from FIFA's Players' Status Committee yesterday. FIFA's decision was corroborated by the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF). "FIFA cleared Hamza to play for Bangladesh," BFF's general secretary Emran Hossain Tushar told The Daily Star. Hamza is expected to feature in Bangladesh's next international match on March 25, 2025, the first match of the Asian Cup Qualifiers against India, in Kolkata. The news of Hamza getting the final clearance was greeted warmly by the Bangladeshi footballers. National team captain Jamal Bhuiyan, who was the first overseas-born player to represent Bangladesh, told The Daily Star: "I've been waiting for more than one-and-a-half years for this news to come. He will definitely be a great addition and a big boost for the team."

## Come up with viable roadmap

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of whom came here in 2017 to flee a military crackdown. Yesterday, Touhid raised serious concerns over the ongoing armed conflicts along the border as well as transnational organized crimes, involving trafficking in persons, drugs and arms. Hossain urged ASEAN and other key regional actors to play a more proactive role in restoring peace, security and democracy in Myanmar. Foreign Adviser echoed the three-point proposals made by Bangladesh at the UN General Assembly in September, including establishment of a safe zone guaranteed by the UN in Rakhine State. He suggested further intelligence sharing and cooperation among the law enforcement and border protection agencies of the regional countries. The heads of Chinese and Indian delegations reaffirmed their support for a Myanmar-led and owned peace process for durable regional security and development. Thai Foreign Minister

Maris underscored the need for such informal consultations among the neighbouring countries in order to promote law and order across border areas. Earlier, Touhid had a bilateral meeting with Myanmar Foreign Minister U Than. They agreed to pursue cooperation in areas of shared interest, and to continue working together to resolve the Rohingya crisis in light of the arrangements agreed between the two parties earlier. Touhid also had bilateral

meetings with the Foreign Minister of Lao PDR and the Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs of China to exchange views on relevant bilateral and multilateral issues. Myanmar Foreign Minister U Than briefed the meeting about efforts being taken by his government to have dialogues with different ethnic armed organizations, create environment for holding elections in 2025, combat transnational organised crimes, and create environment for the return of Rohingya.

## US welcomes interim govt's election plan

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and the respect for democratic principles should a transition come to fruition. Earlier in 2023, the US had announced visa policy for those undermining democratic elections in Bangladesh amid allegations of massive irregularities in the national polls of 2018 and 2014 under the Awami League regime. "We would advocate for free and fair elections conducted in a peaceful manner [throughout the world]." Responding to a question, Patel told reporters the US was deeply troubled by the reports that hundreds of Bangladeshis were forcibly disappeared over the past two decades. "Enforced disappearance is an egregious human rights violation that inflicts the trauma of indeterminate detention or disappearance on its victims. "It also inflicts the trauma of uncertainty on the families. We welcome efforts by the interim government to investigate these crimes and encourage fair and transparent processes to provide justice for the victims and their family members." In December 2021, the US had imposed sanction against RAB and seven of its top officials for gross human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances. About the allegations of violence against minorities in Bangladesh and consequent protests by the Hindu community in

the US, the spokesperson said it was an area of vital importance to the US. "Anywhere around the country [the US], we want to first make sure that protests are taking place peacefully, that the basic human rights and that human dignities of all people are being respected." He added that the US will continue to stress on human rights and dignity with counterparts and partners around the world, including in Bangladesh's interim government.

## Settle issues of 1971 to take forward ties

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Bangladesh's relations with Pakistan deteriorated after the lower house National Assembly of Pakistan issued a statement condemning the execution of Jamaat-e-Islami leaders for crimes against humanity committed during the war. The executions were politically motivated, Pakistan claimed. The relations seemed to be improving after the ouster of the Awami League government following a mass uprising. The interim government led by Nobel laureate Prof Yunus took charge later. At the meeting in Cairo, Prof Yunus and Sharif agreed to strengthen relations through increased trade and commerce; exchange of sports and cultural delegations; and extended cooperation in new areas such as the sugar industry and dengue management. They also discussed issues of mutual interest, including the revival of the SAARC—a key feature of the foreign policy announced by the chief adviser after he took over as the head of the interim government. Sharif called for a

strategic relationship between Dhaka and Islamabad, and hailed Prof Yunus for his initiative to revive SAARC. He also praised Bangladesh for working on the possibility of holding a summit of the regional body. "I am a big fan of the idea of SAARC. I keep harping on the issue. I want a summit of SAARC leaders even if it is only for a photo session because that will carry a strong message," he said. The Pakistan prime minister offered technical support to better manage Bangladesh's state-run sugar mills. Noting Pakistan's success in fighting dengue in Punjab a decade ago, Sharif said they can send a delegation to Bangladesh to share their experience. Pakistan Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and Prof Yunus's Special Envoy Lutley Siddiqi were among others present on the occasion. Siddiqi invited Dar to visit Bangladesh in February on his way to a Malaysia tour, and he accepted the offer. Sharif also invited Prof Yunus to visit their country at his convenience.