

## Tilda Swinton to receive Lifetime Achievement Award at Berlinale

Berlin International Film Festival, otherwise known globally as the Berlinale, will present Scottish actress Tilda Swinton with a Lifetime Achievement Award next year.

Berlinale director Tricia Tuttle stated that the Honorary Golden Bear will



be awarded to Swinton for her "breathtaking" range and status as "one of our modern filmmaking idols". The award will be presented at the festival's opening ceremony in the German capital on February 13.

Swinton said in the statement that "to be honoured in this way by this particular festival is deeply touching for me."

The Berlinale, running February 13-23, ranks along with Cannes and Venice among Europe's top film festivals.



## Blake Lively accuses 'It Ends With Us' costar Justin Baldoni of sexual harassment

Actress Blake Lively has filed a sexual harassment lawsuit against Justin Baldoni, her co-star, and director of *It Ends with Us*.

This surprising development comes several months after the film's April release and follows speculation about tensions between the two.

Last Saturday, TMZ revealed Blake Lively's lawsuit accusing sexual harassment, a deliberate smear campaign, and "severe emotional distress."

Justin Baldoni's lawyer, Bryan Freedman, called Blake Lively's allegations "shameful" and "categorically false" in a statement on the same day.

As per the outlet, tensions during *It Ends with Us* filming prompted separate meetings for the actors, one attended by Lively's husband, Ryan Reynolds.



## PUJA CHERY eager to stun as Miss Shayla

Puja Chery plays a glamorous role in the web-series *Black Money*, directed by Raihan Rafi. The show has finished filming and is expected to premiere on Bongo in the new year.

Recently, they released its first song *Premier Dokandarr*, where Puja Chery essays sultry moves. The item song has been voiced by Akassh and Dilshad Nahar Kona, while the lyrics have been penned by Priyo Chattopadhyaya.

Puja dons the role of Miss Shayla in the series. In an interview with The Daily Star, she shared, "I'm making my return to the screen after a long time through a project directed by Rafi. My character in this project is quite challenging to play, and I believe the audience will enjoy the series."

## Jared Leto to play Skeletor in 'Masters of the Universe' live-action film



Oscar winner Jared Leto has been roped into playing Skeletor, the skull-faced nemesis of He-Man, in the upcoming *Masters of the Universe* movie, according to Variety.

Starring Nicholas Galitzine, the film is based on Mattel's iconic toy line, which generated a hit animated series in 1983 and a 1987 movie featuring Dolph Lundgren as He-Man.

According to Variety, the film will be directed by *Bumblebee* famed director Travis Knight. Skeletor, known for commanding a group of loyal henchmen, will be joined by Trap Jaw, played by Sam C Wilson, Tri-Klops, portrayed by Kojo Attah, and Goat Man, played by *Game of Thrones* actor Hafthor Bjornsson.

### WHAT'S THE HAPS?

## Bangladesh Int'l Short and Independent Film Festival

The 17th Bangladesh International Short and Independent Film Festival, featuring 276 films from over 100 countries, will be organised this year by the Bangladesh Short Film Forum.

**Date: December 20-27**  
**Time and venue are referred to on the website for activities for each day.**



## RAHAT FATEH ALI KHAN to headline BPL Music fest for Tk 3.4cr

Renowned Pakistani singer Rahat Fateh Ali Khan will headline the BPL T20 Music Fest on December 23 at Mirpur's Sher-e-Bangla Stadium. While the fest will also be hosted in Chattogram and Sylhet, his performance is exclusive to the Mirpur event.



Despite waiving his fee for the *Echoes of Revolution* concert, the celebrated artiste will receive Tk 3.4 crore (approximately US \$286,000) for this show.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) approved this payment during a recent Board of Directors meeting.

# COUNTRYWIDE

## Good yield, better price delight Aman growers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

High yield of Aman paddy as well as good prices has brought big smiles to the faces of rice growers in different upazilas of five northern districts under Rangpur region.

Farmers said now each maund (40 kg) of Aman paddy is selling for Tk 1,300 to Tk 1,320 in the local markets, while it was sold between Tk 1,050 to Tk 1,100 at this time of the season.

As a result, farmers are quite happy to get fair prices of their produced paddy this season.

Currently, Aman harvesting season is going on in five northern districts — Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Gaibandha, Rangpur and Nilphamari — under Rangpur region.

Alongside famers, many agricultural workers are passing busy time in either harvesting or threshing the paddy.

According to the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) officials, this year Aman has been cultivated on a total of 6,20,306 hectares of land in five districts under Rangpur region, with a target to produce 19,17,672 tonnes of rice.

Farmer Mansur Ali of Hatia village in Kurigram's Ulipur upazila said farmers in his locality have a good yield of Aman paddy due to favourable weather

condition.

About 13 to 15 maunds of paddy have been produced from each bigha of land, while growers had to spend Tk 10,000 to Tk 11,000 as production cost that includes seeds, fertilizer and labourer wages, Mansur said, adding that apart from paddy, farmers also get paddy straws worth around Tk 4,000 from each bigha.

Altaf Hossain, another farmer from Doljor area in Lalmonirhat's Aditmari upazila, said production of paddy has increased a bit as there was no fungal attacks in their paddy fields this year.

This year not only prices, but the cost of paddy production has also increased, compared to the previous years, due to high cost of seeds and fertilizers, he said, adding that after harvesting paddy he will go for potato and mustard cultivation.

Noor Alam, a wholesaler at Hatia paddy market in Kurigram's Ulipur upazila, said they were buying each maund of paddy from farmers at Tk 1,300 to Tk 1,320.

Kurigram DAE Deputy Director Abdullah Al Mamun said the good yield and better prices of Aman paddy this year will surely encourage farmers to bring more land under paddy cultivation next year.



PHOTO: STAR

Farmers process Aman paddy at Sindurmati village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila.

## BNP's demand for polls irks some people

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"The main point is that I should be able to cast my vote. Peace should prevail in the country. Prices of essentials must be affordable. There should be no violence or robbery."

Referring to BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's Vision Bangladesh 2030 unveiled in 2016, and acting chairman Tarique Rahman's 31-point reform agenda announced in 2022, Fakhru highlighted his party's commitment to reforms.

"... Together, we will rebuild this country in a democratic way. We will

ensure voting rights for all. Over the last 15 years, no one has been able to cast their votes."

Fakhru urged the nation to stay united and avoid division. "We are all united. We are all Bangladeshis. We all want the country's progress."

Addressing government officials, police, army, and BGB personnel, the BNP secretary general called for collective efforts to reconstruct the nation.

"Let's use this opportunity [the situation after August 5] and use it properly. Let us forget divisions and work together to rebuild and

develop the country. Let's stay vigilant so that no one can exploit us."

About the Liberation War, the BNP leader said, "We must dream of a better future. It has been 53 years since our independence. Some may say to forget 1971, but we cannot. Our independent nation was born in 1971, and that's when I discovered my identity."

Fakhru alleged that Sheikh Hasina is plotting against the country while staying abroad.

"Sheikh Hasina has fled and is conspiring against the country, spreading propaganda... But we, the

people of Bangladesh, always live together peacefully — Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and Christians."

The BNP leader said the public never wanted Hasina to be in power, but she, telling lies to people, stayed in power through three elections.

"She thought she would never lose her power. Look, within a few months, Hasina had to flee the country with her family."

Regarding the condition of local Awami League leaders, he said that no one is to look after them because their leaders fled.

## Summit Group

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The CIC's review of financial statements from FY2018 to FY2024 revealed that Summit Power did not deduct Tk 318.34 crore in taxes on dividends paid to Summit Corporation. With penalties included, the total amount of unpaid taxes has increased to Tk 465.07 crore.

The investigation also found similar non-compliance when Summit Corporation paid dividends to Summit Power International.

The agency alleged that Summit Corporation failed to deduct Tk 437.65 crore in taxes when distributing dividends to its main shareholder, Summit International, which owns a 99.99 percent stake in Summit Corporation. With penalties included, the total unpaid taxes amount to Tk 647.73 crore.

Consequently, the two entities' total unpaid taxes amounted to Tk 1,112.8 crore, according to the NBR.

"We have yet to receive any information from NBR or any tax authorities. Summit has never evaded any tax. Upon receipt of any letter from NBR or tax authorities, we will do whatever is required to be done as per the laws of Bangladesh. We always did and shall always abide by the laws," Summit said in a statement.

The statement says the NBR provided "wrong clarification" to Summit in 2023. "We acted on NBR clarification as such the question of 'evasion' does not arise," Summit said.

The case has been handed over to Tax Zone-2 for further action. "We have shared our findings with the relevant tax zone, which has already sent letters to Summit Group," said the CIC official.

## Dense fog hampers road, river transport

FROM PAGE 12

car one after another, causing a pileup, he said, quoting witnesses.

According to the fire service, at least 10 vehicles were involved in the accident.

"Some 15 people were rescued. We took them to the local health complex. One of them was in critical condition," said Dewan Azad Hossain, station officer at Sreenagar Fire Service and Civil Defence.

Camellia Sarker, a physician at the Sreenagar Upazila Health Complex, said, "A person was brought

dead to the hospital. The injured were given first aid."

In Chandpur, at least 10 people were injured when two launches on the Dhaka-Barisal route collided head-on in the Meghna River in the early hours.

The collision took place between MV Kirtankhola-10 and MV Prince Awlad-10 around 2:30am at Hiran point of the river, said passengers and river port officials.

There were more than 1,200 passengers in the two launches, said Mohammad Abdur Razzak, deputy

director and river port officer of BIWTA in Barisal.

Meanwhile, ferry services on the Aricha-Kazirhat and Paturia-Daulatdia routes were halted for around three hours from 5:30am to dense fog.

Three ferries were stranded in the middle of the river due to poor visibility, said BIWTC officials.

Aricha and Paturia are located in Manikganj district, while Daulatdia is at Rajbari and Kazirhat is at Pabna.

A mild cold wave is sweeping over Thakurgaon

and Panchagarh and it may continue till Wednesday.

The country's lowest temperature was recorded at 9.4°C in Panchagarh's Tetulia yesterday morning, said Jitendra Nath, assistant officer at the Tetulia Weather Observatory Centre.

Temperatures between 8-10°C are considered mild cold waves, 6-8°C moderate cold waves, and less than 6°C severe cold waves.

[Our correspondents from Munshiganj, Barisal and Thakurgaon contributed to the report.]

## Man found near Indian border

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"The Indian police of Gopalnagar (a village in Bongaon subdivision) apprehended him," Karim said.

Md Khairul Bashar, officer-in-charge of Gomastapur Police Station, yesterday said upon reaching the police station, Rahmatullah told them that Indian law enforcers put him and 13 others on a boat on Friday night.

The boatman was asked to drop all of them off on the other side of the river, the OC said quoting Rahmatullah.

The OC believes that the river Rahmatullah was referring to is the Mahananda.

Khairul said locals found

him wandering in their area. He was asking them which place it was.

Rahmatullah was eventually helped to get to the Rohanpur police outpost from which he was taken to the Gomastapur Police Station.

During the family's press conference on February 12, his mother Momtaz Begum described how allegedly Rab picked up Rahmatullah around midnight.

"My neighbours told me that armed men in black uniforms surrounded our house. They dragged my son out and put him in a microbus. A black Rab vehicle stood by," she said.

Rahmatullah's sister

Razia had claimed that "Rab-4" was written on the vehicle.

In February, then Rab-4 commander denied the force's involvement in the incident.

**INQUIRY COMMISSION**

The Inquiry Commission on Enforced Disappearances has found adequate evidence to suggest that India collaborated with Bangladeshi security agencies to assist in forcibly disappearing people.

In its preliminary report submitted to the Chief Adviser's Office, the commission stated that interviews with soldiers in Rab intelligence yielded information about the regular practice of

exchanging captives between the two countries.

"On one occasion, two captives were received and subsequently killed by the side of the road after the exchange," said the report.

On another occasion, a captive was handed over alive to another agency. In return, Rab intelligence handed over two captives from Bangladesh to India, read the report.

The report noted, "Whilst the soldier was unable to furnish us with the names of the captives, this level of official security service coordination underscores the systemic and transnational nature of enforced disappearances."