

UDIT NARAYAN survives building fire

A fire broke out late Monday (January 6) night on the 11th floor of the 13-story Sky Pan building in Andheri's Oberoi Complex, a residential tower known to house singer Udit Narayan. The fire broke out around 10 pm in the B wing of the high-rise, while Narayan's residence is located in the adjacent A wing.

Firefighters successfully brought the fire under control after nearly four hours. Recalling the harrowing experience, Narayan admitted it had taken a psychological toll on him. "This incident has left a deep impact on me and will take some time to overcome. Hearing about such tragedies is one thing, but living through them makes you truly understand the fear and distress they bring," he shared.

During the fire incident, a senior citizen lost his life, and another individual was hospitalised due to severe smoke inhalation, officials confirmed.



ASIF AKBAR kicks off the year with two new songs

Popular singer Asif Akbar has kicked off the new year on a high note with the release of two brand-new tracks, **Mon Jane** and **Aay Phire Aay**. According to the singer, both songs have been well-received amongst the audiences.

Aay Phire Aay, released on Tuesday (January 7), showcases

Asif in a new light. The music video features him performing with a band setup, blending rock and metal elements. The song was composed by Rajib Mona, with lyrics by Joy Chakraborty. The track is available on Splendid Audio's YouTube channel.

Meanwhile, Asif's other new release, **Mon Jane**, came out on

January 5 on Dhruba Music Station's YouTube channel. This song was composed and arranged by musician and singer Imran Mahmudul, with lyrics by Snahashis Ghosh. A story-driven music video accompanies the song, directed by Saikat Reza and starring models Sajib, Mahtaram, and Jim.



Jennifer Lopez and Ben Affleck finalise divorce

Ben Affleck and Jennifer Lopez have finalised their divorce through a quiet settlement in September, a month after Lopez filed, citing "irreconcilable differences."

The couple used mediation to resolve the split, with no spousal support involved, and Lopez also dropped Affleck's surname legally.

Their relationship, which rekindled in 2021 after nearly two decades, led to two weddings—one in Las Vegas and another in Georgia.

The couple has no children together, but they have continued to spend time with each other's respective children in the months since they split.



WHAT'S THE HAPS?

July Revolution in Posters

The Arts and Production Department of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy launched a live and interactive AR-VR (Augmented Virtual Reality) exhibition titled July Revolution on Posters, featuring Debashish Chakrabarty's artworks on the July Uprising. Chakrabarty's impactful posters have ignited socio-political dialogue, marking a milestone in Bangladeshi art history. Audiences can explore the context and meaning interactively through a VR controller, along with related structures, documentaries, audio, and video content.

Date: January 7 - 19

Time: 11am - 8pm

Venue: Shilpakala Academy



Disney+ greenlights pilot for 'Holes' series

Disney+ has greenlit a pilot for a **Holes** television adaptation, Variety reports. Based on Louis Sachar's 1998 novel, the series follows a teen girl at a detention camp, where digging holes for a harsh Warden hides a secret purpose.

Sachar's novel follows Stanley Yelnats, a boy sent to Camp Green Lake, where he uncovers links between his family's past and

the camp's secrets. A bestseller, **Holes** earned the Newbery Medal and National Book Award.

Executive Producer Drew Goddard, whose mother introduced him to the book, shared, "Bringing this project to life feels like the perfect way to honour her." The 2003 film, featuring Shia LaBeouf and Sigourney Weaver, was a critical and commercial success.



'Squid Game' Season 2 breaks Netflix viewership record in 11 days

The second season of **Squid Game** has smashed Netflix records, accumulating 126.2 million views in just 11 days.

After an explosive start with 68 million views in four days, it gained another 58.2 million views in its first full week, becoming the fastest Netflix series to reach such a milestone.

The season jumped from No. 7 to No. 2 on Netflix's most popular non-English-language shows, behind only its very first season. The first season additionally saw a resurgence with 13.6 million views. On the film side, the Taron Egerton starrer **Carry-On** has been holding the top spot for the fourth consecutive week with 17.4 million views.



COUNTRYWIDE

BORO CULTIVATION IN BAGERHAT

Rising production costs worry farmers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

Boro cultivation is going on in full swing in Bagerhat's Kachua upazila, the largest paddy-producing zone of the district.

Local farmers are busy planting seedlings of Boro paddy despite the biting cold.

Growers said they are a bit worried this season because they will have to spend more than they did last season for cultivation as prices of almost everything have gone up.

Growers say they had to procure paddy seeds, fuel fertilisers and other essentials at high prices. Wages of farm labourers have also been increased, adding to their woes.

This year price of each kilogramme of hybrid variety seeds leaped to Tk 380 to Tk 450 from Tk 350 to Tk 400 last year, while a farm worker's wage rose to Tk 700 to Tk 800, compared to Tk 500 to Tk 600 last season, they said.

Each kilogram of hybrid seeds can cover only 15 decimals of land, making the additional cost a further burden for many cultivators.

However, farmers are quite optimistic about getting a good yield, if the weather

remains favourable during the peak cultivation period.

Farmers said Boro cultivation started around three weeks ago and will continue for a few weeks more.

While visiting Kachua, Maghia, Charkathi, Sangdia and Afra areas recently, this correspondent saw farmers busy either preparing their lands or sowing Boro seedlings.

Farmer Lalu Bali of Afra village said, "I've been continuing paddy plantation work with only two labourers as I have to pay at least Tk 700 to each."

If we get adequate irrigation water on time, I am hopeful of getting a good harvest this season, Lalu said.

Sources at the upazila agriculture office said so far about 20 to 25 percent of sowing have been completed.

Kachua Upazila Agriculture Officer Akash Bairagi said a total of 7,609 hectares of land in the upazila have been brought under Boro and Ufshi paddy cultivation.

Of them, hybrid Boro paddy will be cultivated on 6,709 hectares land.

Agricultural officials play active roles in guiding farmers at every field, from preparing land to transplanting paddy seeds.



Farmers plant saplings of Boro paddy at a field. The photo was taken from Sangdia village in Bagerhat's Kachua upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

Freedom fighter

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the day of the incident. They stated that the only connection he has to the case is that the 135th accused's name is also Aiyub.

Contacted, Jakir Hossain, officer-in-charge of Sakhipur Police Station, told The Daily Star that police arrested Aiyub Khan from Nolia village of Sakhipur on Tuesday as an accused of the case following an investigation. However, his age has been mistakenly mentioned as 32 in the case statement.

Besides, police also arrested Al Amin Sarkar, 27, former joint general secretary of the Baheratoil unit of Chhatra League in the same case.

Mizanur Rahman, court inspector in Tangail, told The Daily Star that both accused were sent to jail

after they were produced before a court.

According to the case statement, the anti-discrimination protesters brought out a procession at Sakhipur upazila headquarters on August 3. The accused were already prepared with firearms and local lethal weapons there.

Later, when the procession reached the Taltala intersection, they attacked the protestors. Several students were injured in the attack and admitted to the local hospital for treatment.

On August 26, Morshedul Haque, convener of Sakhipur municipal unit of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, filed a case against 167 people, including former MP Anupom Shahjahan Joy, with Sakhipur Police Station in this regard.

Shakib fails bowling test

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submission is on January 12.

"We don't want to keep any suspense on the matter. The results were to come by January 5. Normally it takes 12 days but there was New Year and Christmas break so we are expecting anytime soon and the ECB will let us know," Shahriar Nafees, in charge of BCB cricket operations, told The Daily Star on Wednesday.

However, the current development significantly hampers Shakib's chances of getting into the Champions Trophy squad as he will have to play on as a batter unless he is able to clarify his bowling action through another test in the coming weeks.

Shakib will not be able to bowl in international cricket as per the regulations of the International Cricket

Council (ICC), which also states that when a national federation [ECB in this instance] suspends a player from bowling in its domestic competitions, the suspension is automatically recognised and enforced by the ICC in international cricket and by all national cricket federations.

BCB sources confirmed that all bowling tests Shakib had gone through before or will go through in the future, those tests will have to be done in affiliation with ECB. Even if Shakib undergoes a test individually at an ICC-accredited centre again, it will have to be done in coordination with ECB.

Bangladesh will start the Champions Trophy campaign against India on February 20 in Dubai before they take on New Zealand and Pakistan in their next two Group A matches in Rawalpindi.

ACC sues two sons of S Alam

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case statement.

In one instance, United Super Traders secured a loan of Tk 890 crore on December 15, 2021. However, no goods were bought or sold against the loan.

Fake documents facilitated the withdrawal, distribution and laundering of the funds.

The loan ceiling was later raised to Tk 1,000 crore through further irregularities. By December 5, 2023, Tk 995 crore had been withdrawn under 28 deals, violating banking policies and Islami Bank's Shariah principles.

In 2023, fake purchase and sale documents were

used to withdraw an additional Tk 181 crore through four new deals.

Between 2022 and 2023, 32 non-adjusted deals worth Tk 1,074.89 crore were issued in favour of United Super Traders from the branch, the case statement said.

Later, fake documents were prepared showing Tk 13.50 crore was paid in January and February last year.

As of October 2 last year, the misappropriated amount stood at Tk 993.70 crore in principal loans and Tk 120.23 crore in profits, totalling Tk 1,113.93 crore, the statement added.

Earlier in August last

year, Bangladesh Bank Governor Ahsan H Mansur said the central bank would take over all the shares of S Alam in Islami Bank against its liabilities as per law.

The Chattogram-based business giant, which was a big beneficiary of the Awami League regime, can get back the shares if it repays the amount it owes the Shariah-based bank.

Between 2017 and June last year, S Alam Group and its associates' companies took Tk 74,900 crore, which is 47 percent of Islami's total outstanding loans as of March, by violating banking rules and regulations, documents show.

Be careful with phones

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mugging are young, aged between 15 and 22, and they are getting involved in such crimes due to addiction.

The DMP chief said, "We have taken extensive measures to prevent mugging incidents by increasing patrol teams and engaging DB teams. As per this week's data, such incidents have decreased compared to last week. We are hopeful that we will be able to bring it under control."

The DMP boss also said it will require time to change the force's behaviour.

"It is not possible to suddenly change 40,000

members without proper training. Therefore, we have already started organising programmes. We will soon notice the change."

"The city dwellers have deeply realised the consequences of police inaction after August 5. You need the police. We have many shortcomings, but we are working to overcome them and provide you with better services."

The DMP chief admitted that mugging, looting, and robbery incidents have significantly increased after August 5, but they are able to contain the crimes to some extent in the last couple of months.

Bangladesh

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travel visa-free to 193 countries. Last year, the top spot was jointly held by France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Singapore, and Spain.

At the other end of the spectrum, Afghanistan remains at the bottom of the list, ranked 106th, with its passport granting visa-free access to just 26 destinations. Just above Afghanistan are Syria (105th), Iraq (104th), and Yemen (103rd).

The Henley & Partners Passport Index provides a key measure of global mobility and reflects broader trends in international travel freedom.

Delhi's response to the communication, Touhid Hossain told reporters: "We have not yet received any response to our letter."

On Monday, the Department of

Immigration and Passports cancelled the passports of 97 people, including Hasina, for their alleged involvement in enforced disappearances and killings during protests in July.