

## Academy debunks Oscars cancellations rumours amid wildfires

The Academy has dismissed baseless rumours about the cancellation of the 97th Academy Awards, scheduled for March 2, amid the ongoing Los Angeles wildfires.

The speculation originated from a report by The Sun, falsely claiming that a "secret contingency plan" was in place, involving Hollywood figures like Tom Hanks and Meryl Streep. However, Academy officials confirmed that no such advisory committee exists and no plans to cancel the event are under consideration.

While some adjustments, such as extended nomination voting and postponed events, have been made, the Oscars will proceed as planned. The ceremony, employing over 1,000 locals, aims to uphold its tradition while supporting wildfire relief efforts.



## PORI MONI'S Tollywood debut today

Bangladeshi actress Pori Moni makes her Kolkata debut today with the release of **Felu Bakshi**, directed by Debraj Sinha. She stars as Labonya in this thriller alongside Soham Chakraborty and Madhumita Sarcar. Due to visa issues, Pori Moni could not join the film's promotions in India.

In a statement, Pori Moni expressed her confidence in the role: "I felt I could portray the character well. How well I portrayed the character is for the audience to decide."

The film follows Soham Chakraborty's character, **Felu Bakshi**, a tech-savvy Bengali detective with a passion for food and mystery-solving, as he navigates a case centred around Labonya.

## BFDC cuts rental fees to attract filmmakers

In a bid to revive the Bangladesh Film Development Corporation (BFDC) and encourage filmmakers to return, rental costs for studio floors and equipment have been slashed. The new rates, effective for six months, aim to lower production expenses and boost activity at the largely idle facility.

Under the revised scheme, rental rates for floors 1 and 6 have been reduced from Tk 2,550 and Tk 6,500 to Tk 2,000 and Tk 5,000, respectively. Floor 2 rates without air conditioning have dropped from Tk 5,100 and Tk 13,000 to Tk 4,000 and Tk 9,000, while air-conditioned rates now stand at Tk 4,000 and Tk 11,500, down from Tk 5,100 and Tk 18,540.

A Red Dragon camera now costs Tk 3,000, down from Tk 6,120, with similar reductions for Sony cameras and editing machines.

Several conditions apply to the new pricing structure, including pre-approval for external equipment and electricity charges based on usage.



Bangladesh Film Development Corporation (BFDC)

### WHAT'S THE HAPS?

#### 138th WFMP: 'The British Comedy Show'

The Dhaka University Film Society, in collaboration with the British Council, presents the 138th edition of the World Film Manifestation Program (WFMP), titled **The British Comedy Show**. This event offers audiences a tribute to British comedy with screenings of six classic films over two days at the British Council Bangladesh.

DATE: SUNDAY-MONDAY | JANUARY

19-20

TIME: 11 AM-7 PM

VENUE: BRITISH COUNCIL, BANGLADESH



## Saif Ali Khan stabbed multiple times, under observation in ICU



Indian actor Saif Ali Khan is recovering in Mumbai's Lilavati Hospital after being stabbed at his West Bandra residence on Thursday morning. Unidentified assailants broke into his home, stabbing him multiple times, causing serious injuries to his neck and spine.

Khan underwent surgery and is now in stable condition, though he remains under close observation in the ICU. Police have launched an investigation, with officials confirming the intruder remains unidentified. Saif's PR team confirmed that his surgery was successful, and doctors are optimistic about his recovery. The actor's family, who were present during the attack, are safe, according to police reports.

# NEWS

## 30 children

FROM PAGE 2  
and actions will be taken as per their instructions."

Inspector Shovon said the refugees are from different parts of Myanmar.

Earlier on January 5, Border Guard Bangladesh detained 36 Rohingya refugees, including women and children, while they were trying to enter Bangladesh via a trawler at Sabrang Mundardail in Teknaf. They were later sent back to Myanmar.

Teknaf Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Sheikh Ehsan Uddin said efforts are underway to gather more information about the rescued Rohingya refugees.

He added that law enforcement agencies have been directed to work together to prevent the illegal entry of Rohingya refugees into Bangladesh.

## HMPV-infected

FROM PAGE 12  
Rahman, special assistant at the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, said based on scientific research so far, deaths caused by the HMPV are extremely rare.

He said the deceased patient was initially affected by Klebsiella pneumonia and subsequently suffered multi-organ failure, which led to her death. She had underlying conditions, obesity and thyroid dysfunction.

He further emphasized that this virus typically does not cause death. Individuals suffering from the flu should avoid public gatherings and wear masks.

The symptoms of this virus resemble those of seasonal flu, including cold, cough, body aches, and a runny nose. There is no significant difference between this virus and regular flu, he said.

First identified in the Netherlands in 2001, HMPV spreads through direct contact between people, or when someone touches a contaminated surface.

Infections are most common during late winter and spring, and symptoms range from mild cold-like illness to severe respiratory conditions, such as bronchiolitis or pneumonia, according to the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR).

There is currently no vaccine or specific antiviral treatment for HMPV. Management focuses on supportive care, including hydration, fever reduction, and in severe cases, oxygen therapy or mechanical ventilation. Most people recover on their own within seven to 10 days, according to the IEDCR.

## Complaint filed with ICT

FROM PAGE 12  
because the law-and-order situation was very poor at the time. We have found a video clip showing how Mugdho was killed by the police. Now we hope for justice."

"There was a debate about who fired at Mugdho. We have collected some evidence, including CCTV footage of the killing scene, and we are now certain that Mugdho was shot dead by the police," said Mugdho's another brother Snigdho.

Expressing frustration over the officer-in-charge of Uttara East Police Station fleeing, Dipto, said, "We know that a few days ago, the officer-in-charge of the East Police Station escaped. It was absurd. We can easily understand that he was allowed to go by someone."

On July 18, Mugdho, 25, was seen distributing water to protesters after law enforcement fired teargas to disperse them in Azampur, Uttara. In a video shared on social media by his twin brother, Snigdho, Mugdho was seen helping the demonstrators moments before his death.

Only 15 minutes later, he was shot. A bullet hit his forehead and

pierced through his right ear after law enforcement opened fire. He was already dead when his friends took him to Crescent Hospital. Mugdho was a master's student at the Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP).

**HASINA SUELED AT ICT**  
Another complaint was lodged with the ICT yesterday against 41 people, including former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, over the murder of Fayeze Ahmed, ex-nayeb-e-ameer of Lakshmiipur Jamaat-e-Islami, in 2013.

Hasanul Banna, the victim's son, filed the complaint with the office of the chief prosecutor of the tribunal.

The complaint accused Hasina, former home minister Muhiuddin Khan Alamgir, PM's defence adviser Tarique Ahmed Siddique, former additional director general of Rab Ziaul Ahsan, former CEO of Rab-II Tarek Sayeed Mohammad, and 36 others over the killing.

Speaking to journalists, Hasanul said, "On the night of December 13, 2013, around 12:30am, Fayeze Ahmed was taken to the rooftop of his house, assaulted, shot, and thrown off, leading to his death."

## Yunus to fly to Switzerland

FROM PAGE 12  
geopolitics and ways forward to improving peoples' lives.  
**TRUMP'S OATH-TAKING**  
Spokesperson Rafiqul said following the tradition, Bangladesh Ambassador to the US, Asad Alam Siam, will attend President-elect Donald Trump's inauguration on January 20.

"There is a tradition and as per the tradition, this time too, foreign mission heads in the US have been invited. We have a note verbal on it," he said.

In another development, Rafiqul said the government has sent the information sought by the UN Fact-Finding Mission to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

"We were waiting for the information from the home ministry. We have received the information and sent it to the UN."

Earlier, there was a report that the home ministry was delaying in providing information as required by the UN Fact-Finding Mission, which was probing the human rights

violations during the July uprising.

The spokesperson said he had no idea when the UN mission would complete the report and make it public.

Asked if the government would review the agreements or MoUs signed with India over the last 15 years, he said the ministries that inked the deals may do it if they need to.

Anyone could see those uploaded in the Indian external affairs ministry's website, he said while responding to a query about why the deals are not made public.

Asked why Bangladesh foreign ministry does not upload those, he said, "You may say it is for bureaucratic complexity."

Rafiqul said so far 13 people injured during the uprising have been sent abroad for better treatment and two of them returned home after receiving treatment.

He added that the government has no information on what status former prime minister Sheikh Hasina is staying in India.

## Babar

FROM PAGE 12  
On October 12, 2021, Special Judge's Court-7 in Dhaka sentenced Babar to eight years in jail in a case filed for amassing Tk 7.5 crore illegally.

On January 13, 2008, the Anti-Corruption Commission filed the case against him.

On August 6, 2014, Babar was indicted in a case filed against him for dodging Tk 2.65 crore income tax between the 1999-2000 and 2008-09 fiscal years. The case is now pending with the Special Judge's Court-5 of Dhaka.

On October 10, 2018, Babar was given the death penalty in the August 21 grenade attack cases filed in 2004.

On January 30, 2014, Babar was sentenced to death in connection with two cases filed over the 10-truck arms cases.

On October 4, 2007, the ACC filed a bribery case involving the murder of Bashundhara Group Director Humayun Kabir Sabbir, accusing six people, including Babar.

The case is now pending with the Special Judge's Court-3 in Dhaka.

Babar is also an accused in four cases filed for the murder of former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria and the murder attempt on former minister Suranjit Sen Gupta in Sylhet.

## Kremlin rejects Polish claim it planned airline attacks

AFP, Moscow

The Kremlin yesterday dismissed Warsaw's accusations that Moscow had planned acts of "air terror" against global airlines, a day after Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk made the claim.

Relations between Warsaw and Moscow are historically strained but have nosedived to new lows since Russia's 2022 attack on Ukraine, with Poland becoming one of Kyiv's main allies.

"This is nothing more than another completely unsubstantiated accusation against Russia," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

During Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelensky's visit to Warsaw a day earlier, Tusk said that "Russia had planned acts of air terror, and not only against Poland, but against airlines all over the world."

## Govt to retract VAT decisions

FROM PAGE 1  
The previous VAT and SD rates will be restored for many of the goods and services, The Daily Star has learnt from NBR officials involved with the proceedings.

As per the latest decision, the NBR may restore the SD on mobile phone usage to the previous rate of 20 percent from 23 percent, while the SD on broadband internet will be withdrawn effective from January 9 of this year. The NBR had slapped a 10 percent SD on broadband internet service.

Regarding the trade VAT on medicine, it is likely to be restored to the previous rate of 2.4 percent from 3 percent.

The VAT rate on restaurants is also expected to return to the previous 5 percent from 15 percent, Mohammad Belal Hossain Chowdhury, member (VAT policy, current charge) at the NBR, told The Daily Star.

Only 3- to 5-star hotels will remain under the 15 percent VAT rate as they claim the input tax credit.

"We will issue an order in this regard soon," he said.

The move follows mounting pressure from restaurant owners, who had threatened to strike indefinitely in response to the increased VAT.

As part of their protests, a group of people yesterday thronged in front of the NBR headquarters in Agargaon and demanded a rollback to the previous VAT rate.

The VAT on own-brand clothes will be brought down to 10 percent from the existing 15 percent. Earlier, the VAT on own-brand garment outlets was 7.5 percent.

Considering the high inflation, VAT on the garment sector has been reduced slightly, an NBR official said.

Meanwhile, the NBR is likely to reduce the VAT rate on sweet shops to 10 percent. It was earlier increased from 7.5 percent to 15 percent.

In addition, the VAT rate on non-AC hotels is likely to be reduced from 15 percent to 10 percent. It was 7.5 percent earlier.

The NBR yesterday exempted the VAT on e-books to lower costs for students, said Md Bodruzzaman Munshi, second secretary for VAT policy at the NBR.

The decision is expected to ease the financial burden on students

and promote access to educational resources, Munshi said.

Previously, students had to pay 15 percent VAT at the import stage and 5 percent at the local stage.

Meanwhile, Finance Advisor Salehuddin Ahmed yesterday defended the VAT price hike when accosted by reporters after a meeting of the advisory council committee on government procurement at the secretariat.

"We have increased the prices of a few items through VAT. How many phone sets and foreign fruit juices do people buy? Why should we reduce VAT on imported fruit juices?"

He said he does not think that the prices of goods will increase only because of the additional VAT.

"Today, we reviewed the impact of medicines, clothing and other daily necessities on the common people. You will know later. And the price impact in some places may have been due to VAT. It was also due to the supply system. There is manipulation."

Asked what happened at the governor's retreat of the Islamic Development Bank that Salehuddin attended in Saudi Arabia this week, he said: "The organisation gives us a huge amount of money, especially for gas and fuel oil. This time, we have requested money to pay for fertiliser as well and they have agreed to do so."

## UK Tory leader acknowledges party's 'mistakes'

AFP, London

UK opposition leader Kemi Badenoch yesterday vowed to rebuild public trust in her Conservative party following its historic general election defeat to Labour last year.

Britons booted the Tories from power in July after 14 consecutive years in government dominated by austerity, Brexit, a cost-of-living crisis and bitter factional infighting.

"I will acknowledge the Conservative Party made mistakes," the 45-year-old said in pre-released extracts of a speech, pledging to tell "the truth, even when it's difficult to hear".