

WHAT'S THE HAPS?

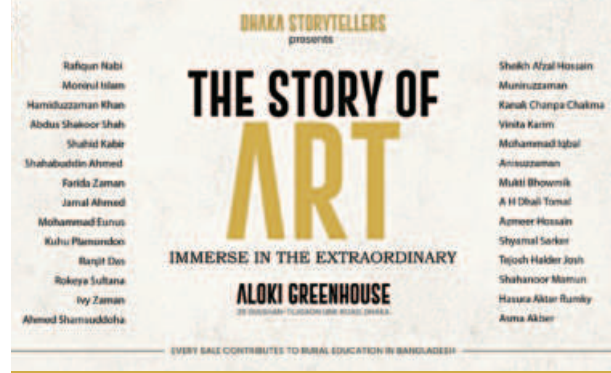
The Story of Art

Dhaka Storytellers presents *The Story of Art*, a major group exhibition showcasing diverse paintings, sculptures, and mixed-media works by Bangladesh's most celebrated visual artists. The event is set to feature art talks, offering insights into the artists' creative journeys and artistic styles — to create an inspiring experience for art lovers and collectors alike.

Date: Saturday–Thursday | February 8–13

Time: 11am–10pm

Venue: Aloki Convention Center, Tejgaon



A NEW NAYEEM on Feb 14

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

This Valentine's Day, FS Nayeem featurette *Jole Jwote Tara* is set to hit theatres. Directed by Arun Chowdhuri, the government-granted project also features Rafiath Rashid Mithila.

Nayeem shared his thoughts on the film and his role with The Daily Star.

"I play Hossain Majhi in this film, and this role is a blessing for me," he shared. "We filmed in a village by the riverbank and before the shoot, I stayed in a village to absorb the essence of my character. I moved there even before filming began and spent several days observing the villagers' lives up close, which helped me fully immerse myself in the role."

He also shared that during the 17 days of shoot, he wore a *lungi*, draped a *gamchha* over his shoulder, and walked along the village's uninhabited roads. "I put in a lot of effort to portray the character convincingly. This preparation made it easier for me to face the camera."

Regarding audience expectations, the *Mission HuntDown* famed actor shared, "I can assure you that the audience will see a different side of me—a fresh story and a new Nayeem."

Speaking about the film's songs, he said, "The songs are incredibly beautiful. One of them has been voiced by Kona and Imran, and I'm sure everyone will love it."

Nayeem made his silver-screen debut with *Jaago* which was released many years ago. *Jole Jwote Tara* is his second film. Two more films—*Shekor* and *Neel Jochhonar Golpo*—await release.

Talking about his co-star, the actor shared, "Mithila is a mature actress. She gained a lot of recognition for *Kajol Rekha* and received immense praise. Her performance in *Myself Allen Swapan* was also critically acclaimed. Right now, she is at the peak of her acting career. As a friend and co-actor, she is fantastic."

"Arun *da* is the kind of director whose projects turn actors into stars or feature those who are already stars," hailed Nayeem.



Pori Moni signs new film

Md Samsul Huda is set to direct a political thriller titled *Golaap*, which was officially announced late last month with its poster featuring lead actor Nirab Hossain. Yesterday, it was confirmed that Pori Moni will take on the role of the female lead.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Pori Moni confirmed her involvement in the project, stating, "I will be portraying the character of Rupa in this film. She will dance, fall in love, and even take part in action sequences."

The screenplay, dialogues, and story of *Golaap* have been penned by Anik Biswas. It is being produced under the banner of Golpowala Production.

The actress has been in the headlines in recent weeks, as she was not allowed to participate in a showroom opening ceremony due to protests from a local Islamist group. Later that week, she secured bail in a previous case that she was embroiled in.



Bapparaj to make OTT debut

The '90s heartthrob, renowned actor Bapparaj, has been away from the screens for eight years. Despite receiving offers, he did not take up any roles as they did not appeal to him. Now, he is ready to return to the screen, particularly marking his OTT debut with the web-series *Roktawrin*.



Yesterday, the actor shared a glimpse of the series on his social media account, much to the delight of his fans.

The actor informed local media that the project, directed by Mostofa Khan Shihan, is still in progress, and he has already participated in several shoots. "The work isn't finished yet. We are still filming. Once everything is in place, I will share more details about it," he said.

Disney+ Hotstar to stream the 2025 Grammy Awards live

The 67th Annual Grammy Awards will be streamed live on Disney+ Hotstar, airing today from 7:00am to 10:30am (Bangladesh Standard Time).

The event, which traditionally takes place at Crypto.com Arena in Los Angeles, will feature performances by artists like Brad Paisley, Janelle Monáe, Stevie Wonder, and Coldplay's Chris Martin. Beyoncé leads the nominations with 11, followed by Charli XCX, Billie Eilish, and



Kendrick Lamar with seven each.

Trevor Noah will return as host for the fifth consecutive year. Viewers can expect a special tribute to Quincy Jones and a segment highlighting wildfire relief efforts.

Notable nominations include Beyoncé's *Texas Hold 'Em* for Record of the Year and Taylor Swift's surprise album *The Tortured Poets Department* for Album of the Year.

NEWS

The second Shaheed Minar

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was formed in Jashore town, with Alamgir Siddiqui and Ranjit Mitra as its joint conveners.

This council became the driving force behind the movement in the town.

On March 2, a meeting took place at Michael Madhusudan College, bringing together student leaders like Sudhir Roy, Hamida Rahman, and Alamgir Siddiqui. It was here that the call for a full-scale strike and procession on March 11 was issued. The students, determined to amplify their voices, held meetings on March 7 and organised separate processions and rallies on March 8 and 9.

The authorities, sensing the growing unrest, attempted to quell the movement by imposing Section 144 in Jashore town on March 10. However, this repressive measure only fuelled the students' resolve. They held an emergency meeting and decided to violate Section 144.

On March 11, students took to the streets as planned, their procession echoing with the powerful slogans "We want Bangla as the state language".

The peaceful protest was met with brute force as police arrested 50 student leaders. This act of repression, however, did not break the students' spirit.

According to Badruddin Umar's book "Purbo Banglar Bhasha Andolon O Totkaleen Rajniti [Part II]", the strike on March 11 was successful, shutting down virtually every school and college in town. Processions poured out from various educational institutions. At a meeting of the Sangram Parishad that day, it was decided to continue the strike indefinitely.

The most eventful day of the 1948 movement in Jashore was on March 13.

A massive procession, joined by people from all walks of life, including government employees, marched in



The present Central Shaheed Minar that stands in Jashore town's Bakultala area was inaugurated in 2018.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

support of the arrested students who were being produced in court.

As the procession neared the Collectorate building, the demonstration turned violent after the police intervened.

The baton charge by the police was met with resistance from the crowd, turning the area near Dartana intersection into a battlefield. The police then opened fire, and Alamgir Siddiqui was shot in the leg.

The events of March 13 reached East Bengal Chief Minister Khwaja Nazimuddin, prompting him to assure an investigation into the police excesses. The movement in Jashore continued beyond March 18.

SPIRIT REKINDLED

The spirit of resistance was rekindled in 1952. News of the student killings in Dhaka on February 21 once again ignited protests in Jashore, with Michael Madhusudan College becoming the epicentre of the renewed movement.

According to Ahmed Rafiq's book

"Bhasha Andolon: Teknaf to Tetulia", a meeting was held at the Jashore Town Hall, where a decision was taken to erect a Shaheed Minar.

Students started building the memorial that very night and the work was completed early morning on February 22. This makes it the second Shaheed Minar after the one in Rajshahi. Afterwards, students placed floral wreaths there as a silent tribute to the fallen heroes.

On February 28, Jashore observed a symbolic Martyr's Day. The town reverberated with processions and rallies demanding Bangla as the state language.

From the initial sparks of 1948 to the renewed fervour of 1952, the people of Jashore played a crucial role in the fight for linguistic and cultural rights, leaving an indelible mark on the history of the Language Movement.

Translated and edited by Subrata Roy.

Ex-MP Rana, nine others acquitted

FROM PAGE 12
League Saniyat Khan Bappa — and Masudur Rahman, Farid Hossain, Nasir Uddin Nuru, Alamgir Hossain Chan, Sanowar Hossain and Babu.

The court also fined the convicts Tk 5 lakh each, in default of which they have to serve one year more in jail.

Mukti, Babu, and Nuru were in the court during the verdict.

Mohammad Saidur Rahman Swapan, the state counsel, told journalists that they would file an appeal against the verdict.

Contacted after the verdict, Ahmed Majid Sumon, son of Faruk, stated that the accused tried to obstruct the judicial process at multiple stages,

including filing the case and gathering witness statements.

On January 18, 2013, the bullet-ridden body of Faruk Ahmed, a member of the district unit of AL, was recovered near his house in Collegepara area in the town.

Three days later, his wife Nahar Ahmed filed a murder case against unknown accused with the Tangail Sadar Police Station.

In August 2014, detectives arrested two people — Anisul Islam and Mohammad Ali — suspecting their involvement in the murder.

During remand, they admitted their crimes in court.

On February 3, 2016, the then officer-

in charge of DB, Golam Mahfizur Rahman, submitted a charge sheet against 14 people including Amanur Rahman Khan Rana and his three brothers.

On September 6, 2017, the trial of the case began with the framing of charges against the accused.

During the trial, two of the accused — Anishur Rahman Raja and Mohammad Samir — died in prison.

The court heard a total of 27 witnesses during the trial.

On January 26, after the concluding arguments of the plaintiff and the defendants' counsels, the judge set today for announcing the verdict.

Saraswati Puja today

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the blessings of Goddess Saraswati in their pursuit of knowledge, art, music, and culture.

In most temples, houses and educational institutions, the puja will begin in the morning to be followed by "Anjali" or divine offering. Then the children will be imparted "Hatekhor" and later prasad (food offering to the goddess) will be distributed among devotees.

According to the Hindu faith, the goddess Saraswati represents power, creativity, and inspiration and presents herself when the weather is pleasant and nature is in its full grandeur.

Depicted as a graceful woman with a crescent moon adorning her brow, she is shown riding a swan or a peacock, or is seated on a lotus flower.

The most gorgeous Saraswati Puja will be arranged on the premises of

Jagannath Hall of Dhaka University, where a huge number of devotees and crowds will throng to perform the religious rituals and visit the pandals circled on the playground of the university's largest dormitory.

According to hall authorities, students of as many as 72 departments are arranging 72 puja pandals this year, as the Fine Arts Faculty will erect a gigantic Saraswati idol made with styrofoam, bamboo, and other materials at the centre of a pond on the hall premises likewise every year, which attracts most of the devotees as well as the visitors. Puja will also be arranged at Dhakeshwari National Temple, Ram Krishna Mission, Jagannath University, Siddheshwari temple, Supreme Court premises, Farashganj, Shakhari Bazar, Tanti Bazar and different other places in old Dhaka, Banani, Dhaka College, Eden Girls' College, BUET, Ramna Kali

Mandir and Maa Anandamayi Ashram, Tejgaon College, Stamford University and different educational institutions in the city.

On Dhaka University campus, the puja is also organised at all female dormitories — Rokeya Hall, Samsun Nahar Hall, Bangladesh Kuwait Moitri Hall, Begum Fazilatunnesa Mujib Hall and Kabi Sufia Kamal Hall.

Jagannath Hall administration is organising the dormitory's central puja at the dormitory's place of prayer while employees of the hall have staged several pandals to worship Saraswati.

Apart from Dhaka, Saraswati puja is also celebrated at temples, educational institutions and residences across the country.

Chattogram city and Madaripur district town see the biggest celebration of Saraswati Puja every year.

US fund crunch hits dev projects

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The fund cuts against such a backdrop are likely to add insult to injury, said development experts.

AKM Jashim Uddin, director of the Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB), warned of widespread consequences if US funding is curtailed.

"We hope that the new US administration will make a positive decision after the review," he said.

According to the Economic Relations Division, the US disbursed \$450 million for 96 development projects last year.

Officials fear funding for projects focused on gender, LGBTQ rights, immunisation, health, and climate change could be discontinued as Trump withdrew from the World Health Organization and the Paris Climate Agreement.

An estimated 20,000 professionals work in US-funded projects across Bangladesh. Additionally, vendors, dealers, and several million beneficiaries could be affected by a prolonged aid freeze.

Already, icddr,b has sacked over 1,000 employees, mostly from a USAID-funded tuberculosis project. The US State Department also suspended funding for Asian University for Women's (AUW) Afghan students, jeopardising their education.

"There are about 550 Afghan students enrolled, with 330 more expected. We are in real trouble," AUW Vice-Chancellor Rubana Huq told The Daily Star. The university has made a public appeal for alternative funding to sustain education for the Afghan students.

SHRINKING DEV SECTOR

According to the NGO Affairs Bureau, aid for the NGOs has been on the decline for several years.

The foreign aid that was \$945 million in 2019 came down to \$741 million in 2023, it said.

NGO officials highlighted that most jobs in the development sector are contractual and project-based and have limited end-of-service benefits.

"The sector was already shrinking. If the US cuts funding, the impact will be severe," said an NGO official.

Over 50 percent of NGO funding in Bangladesh comes from the US government, the official added.

STRATEGIC SHIFT

The previous US administration under Joe Biden had been critical of Sheikh Hasina's government over human rights concerns and election irregularities. It had also welcomed the interim government led by Prof Muhammad Yunus, pledging support for the transition.

However, the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), a US based think tank, cautioned that Trump's decision to freeze aid could push Bangladesh closer to China.

In a January 29 article, CFR's senior fellow Joshua Kurlantzick noted that interim leader Prof Yunus is committed to reforms, and cutting aid now could set back a major success story.

Beyond development setbacks, the move could have geopolitical ramifications. Bangladesh, a strategic country, may turn to China for financial support if US aid remains suspended,

he wrote.

Kurlantzick said that before Hasina's ouster, Bangladesh had strong economic and strategic ties with China, while maintaining friendly relations with India. If the US disengages, Beijing is likely to step in with increased investments and loans.

China has already backed several Belt and Road projects in Bangladesh and extended support to the interim government. Following the US aid freeze, Dhaka has intensified efforts to strengthen bilateral relations with Beijing.

Kurlantzick warned that such a shift would undermine US regional influence. "If the US abandons Bangladesh, China will seize the opportunity, altering the balance of power in South Asia."

The next 90 days will be critical in determining the fate of US-funded projects and Bangladesh's broader geopolitical alignment.

Transparency International Bangladesh Executive Director Itekhazuzaman said Trump's abrupt and indiscriminate way of reviewing foreign aid is an "unprecedented disgrace" for the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness, especially the principle of mutual accountability for international development aid donors and recipients.

He said he hopes that good sense will prevail on Trump's review team to recognise that development assistance is as much a token of burden-sharing for global developmental injustice as it is a means of promotion of shared values and objectives.