

Farida Parveen recovers, returns home after 13 days

Esteemed Lalon singer Farida Parveen has returned home after recovering from severe health complications. She was hospitalised on February 1 due to respiratory distress, diabetes, high blood pressure, and thyroid issues.

After spending 13 days in the ICU, she improved and was discharged under medical supervision.

Her doctor informed local media, "Her condition was critical initially, but she recovered well. At one point, there was a possibility that she might have needed dialysis, but fortunately, it was not required."

Farida Parveen began her musical journey in 1968 and gained fame for Lalon Sangeet in the 1970s. She received the Ekushey Padak (1987), National Film Award (1993), and Fukuoka Asian Culture Prize (2008).



'Bridgerton' stars hint at Benedict's love story in season four

Fans of the popular Netflix series *Bridgerton* were given a sneak peek of season four last Friday. The released photos feature a romance between Benedict, the second son of the noble family, and a servant.



The Regency-era series, based on Julia Quinn's books of the same name, shifted focus in Season 3 from Benedict to Colin and Penelope. Benedict's story will take centre stage in the upcoming season.

The ensemble cast of the upcoming season, including leading actors Luke Thompson and Yerin Ha, alongside showrunner Jess Brownell, shared a sneak peek video during an event in London. All released teasers hint at the developing relationship between the characters, Benedict Bridgerton and the maid Sophie Baek.

Season 4, currently in production, will focus on Benedict, who, once reluctant to commit to marriage, becomes entranced by a mysterious "lady in silver" at his mother's masquerade ball.

NEWS

Khulna becomes city of rallies

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Though it was chaired by Muslim League leader Abdul Hamid, the speakers at the meeting voiced their support for Bangla as the state language.



Khulna Central Shaheed Minar

the recognition of Bangla as the state language.

From that afternoon, police began arresting activists, including student leader Anwar Hossain. He was later transferred to the Rajshahi prison.

In 1950, Anwar Hossain was martyred during the Khapra Ward massacre.

After Khwaja Nazimuddin's announcement of Urdu as the state language on January 27, 1952, the students and locals of Khulna took to the streets.

On the night of February 18, students met at the Azad Library and decided to launch a campaign, making February 21 the movement's main day.

On February 21, a full scale hartal was observed, while leaders and activists marched throughout the city. Students at several educational institutions also observed strikes and boycotted classes and a student rally was organised at Daulatpur College.

The same day, Khulna received

news of police killing students in Dhaka. Within moments, protesters swarmed the streets. Slogans such as "Rashtrabhasha Bangla chai" (We want Bangla as the state language) and "Nurul Amin er kolla chai" (We want the head of Nurul Amin) reverberated.

From February 22 onwards, Khulna city effectively became a city of rallies.

That day, students from various educational institutions were joined by people from all walks of life for a mass procession.

When the girls of Khulna's Coronation School decided to wear black badges for their procession, they could not find any fabric to make them with. However, a student, Laily, came to school wearing a black saree. She changed into a different one and allowed the students to cut pieces of cloths from her saree to make the badges so that the mourning procession could be held in a befitting manner.

On February 23, a hartal was observed, while the slogans were still chanted by students and locals on the streets. Female students in large numbers joined in. Some of the women leaders included Majeda Ali, Anwara Khatun and Rokeya Khatun Shiri, among others.

In the afternoon, a public meeting, chaired by student leader MA Gofur, was held at the Municipal Park. Speakers included Abu Mohammad Ferdous, Altaf Khan and others.

Negotiations on a second phase of the ceasefire, meant to lay out steps towards a more permanent end to the war, are expected to begin next week.

Charged with intentionally causing death and being a member of an illegal organisation, according to Israel's justice ministry records, Abu Radaha had spent almost 32 years in jail.

Israel confirmed it had released a total of 369 prisoners.

Hazem Qassem, a spokesman for Hamas, said in a statement after Saturday's hostage release that the United States "must compel" Israel to adhere to the truce deal "if it truly cares about the prisoners' (hostages) lives".

Israel's military chief, Lieutenant General Herzi Halevi, said that even though efforts continue to bring home the remaining captives, the military is "simultaneously preparing offensive plans".

An Israeli campaign group, the Hostages and Missing Families Forum, warned in a statement against the deal's "collapse".

Images broadcast on Israeli media showed Palestinian prisoners ahead of their release wearing sweatshirts featuring the prison service logo, a Star of David, and the slogan: "We will not forget and we will not forgive."

Hamas, Israel complete

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on January 19, came after Hamas had threatened to pause hostage releases over alleged Israeli violations, while Israel had threatened to resume the war if it did.

Out of 251 hostages seized, 70 remain in Gaza, including 35 the Israeli military says are dead.

The latest release led to tears of joy among friends and family members.

"Finally, Sasha can be surrounded by his loved ones and begin a new path," Trupanov's family said in a statement.

Dekel-Chen's wife, Avital, said in a call to her sister aired by Israel's Kan public broadcaster: "My breath has returned. He looks so handsome."

Dekel-Chen finally learned the name of his youngest daughter, born two months after his capture.

Later in the day, hundreds of Palestinians freed by Israel reached Khan Yunis, southern Gaza, where they made victory signs and waved to a jubilant crowd.

In the West Bank, one freed inmate, Amit Abu Radaha, said: "I've returned to my family and I've returned anew, born again."

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Israel confirmed it had released a total of 369 prisoners.

According to the Palestinian Prisoners' Club advocacy group, those to be freed included 36 serving life sentences, 24 of whom were due for deportation under the terms of the truce deal.

The deportees, with shaven heads, later arrived by bus on the Egyptian side of the border, an AFP correspondent said.

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

DECENTRALISING FILMMAKING 'Monsoon Revolution Film Production Workshop' hosts Dhaka event



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSVED

MAISHA TASnim SRESHTA

With the vision of decentralising the filmmaking industry and nurturing new talent from across the country, the 'Monsoon Revolution Film Production Workshop' has been launched under the initiative of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs. The workshop aims to create opportunities for aspiring filmmakers beyond Dhaka, empowering them with hands on training in storytelling, cinematography, production, editing, and the application of technology in filmmaking.

Dhaka division's session commenced yesterday (February 15), with notable figures in attendance, including Cultural Adviser Mostofa Sarwar Farooki, Professor Dr Sumon Rahman, filmmaker Tanim Noor and prodigal filmmaker Nuhash Humayun at the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, marking the beginning of a five day intensive programme.

Speaking about the workshop's significance, Nuhash Humayun shared, "Through film, we can bring change. A nation's culture, its films, and OTT web series alike are its creative superpowers. The stronger the storytelling, the more impactful the message. Film allows us to present our perspectives without restrictions."

As part of the project, eight selected filmmakers will produce eight medium-length films in collaboration with novice and trained film workers. A search committee, formed last December, selected these filmmakers to conduct workshops and create films in 2025.

The selected directors are - Anam Biswas, Humaira Bilquis, Nuhash Humayun, Shankha Dasgupta, Shaheen Dill Riaz, Robiul Alam Robi, Tasmin Afreen Mou, and Mohammad Touqir Islam.

The event was graced by Mostofa Sarwar Farooki, Adviser to the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, who highlighted the overwhelming response from aspiring filmmakers. "In this innovative workshop led by Nuhash Humayun, over 500 participants have submitted their writings, which is a promising sign that we are heading in the right direction," he stated.

As part of a nationwide initiative, the "Monsoon Revolution Film Production Workshop" will be conducted across all eight divisions of Bangladesh, each facilitated by accomplished young filmmakers. By decentralising access to filmmaking education and mentorship, this initiative is expected to encourage a new generation of storytellers.

Parambrata and Piya expecting first child



Parambrata Chattopadhyay and Piya Chakraborty took to social media to share their excitement about expecting their first child. The couple expressed their joy over expanding their family, which

already includes their beloved

pets, Nina the cat and Bagha the dog.

In an interview with Anandabazar Online, Piya revealed that she is currently five months pregnant. She shared that the doctors have confirmed that, if everything goes smoothly, they expect to welcome their baby by June.

In the midst of the joyous news, Parambrata's latest film, *Ei Raat Tomar Amar*, which he both directed and starred in, was recently released.

While promoting the film, Parambrata has also been dedicating time and attention to the soon-to-be mother, as Piya lovingly shared.

Apurba-Tasnina Farin starrer 'How Sweet' to release this Eid



Filmmaker Kajal Arefin Ome, known for popular productions like *Bachelor Point* and OTT projects *Hotel Relax*, *Oshomoy*, and *Female 4*, has announced his new web film *How Sweet*, starring Ziaul Faruq Apurba and Tasnia Farin.

Initially, the web-film was supposed to premiere on the OTT platform Bongo for Valentine's Day. However, the director recently revealed that *How Sweet* will instead be released during Eid-ul-Fitr.

Ome shared the update on Facebook, saying, "We are releasing *How Sweet* this Eid-ul-Fitr to provide everyone with an amazing web-film to enjoy. The post-production process is taking longer than expected as we haven't been able to finish it yet."

Form separate body for constituency

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controversy regarding the demarcation process, there is also the risk of political interference. We're proposing a system that would protect the Election Commission from such interference.... The best solution would be for a separate commission to handle this task, ensuring that the EC doesn't bear unnecessary responsibilities or face unfloundered accusations."

According to the Delimitation of Constituencies Law, the boundaries of Jatiya Sangsads constituencies should be redrawn based on the population distribution from the latest census, while keeping administrative units intact for convenience.

The EC publishes a preliminary list of redrawn constituencies, and voters are given the chance to file appeals against the proposed boundaries. The EC may finalise the demarcation only after resolving these objections.

EC officials emphasised that the demarcation of parliamentary seats is a complex and technical task, often leading to controversy.

During the process, some constituencies become larger, while others shrink. This results in some parliamentary candidates needing to appeal to new voters, while others lose voters.

The last EC, led by Kazi Habibul Awal, re-demarcated 10 constituencies ahead of the 12th national elections. Prior to that, the KM Nurul Huda led commission altered the boundaries of 25 constituencies in 2018. The commission under Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmad redrew the boundaries of 87 constituencies in 2013, ahead of the 10th general election, while the ATM Shamsul Huda led commission

made significant changes to 133 constituencies in 2008.

However, following the fall of the Sheikh Hasina-led government, the EC has received objections regarding the 2008 and 2024 demarcation processes. An EC official revealed that while no official initiative has been taken, 240 objections have already been filed against 40 constituencies.

Transparency International Bangladesh, in a report published last May, stated that 198 constituencies had been re-demarcated in recent national elections, which caused political controversy, lawsuits, and legal complications from local residents.

Internationally recognised guidelines suggest that electoral boundaries should be demarcated with an average population difference of no more than five percent.

However, in Bangladesh, the population deviation ranges between 26 and 88 percent. As a result, some constituencies have MPs representing large populations (over 800,000), while others, even in the same district, represent smaller populations (around 300,000), according to the TIB report.

The report also noted that this population gap creates complications in electoral expenditure and other activities on a constituency-by-constituency basis.

The reform commission's draft law proposes that a committee, led by the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) or another EC official, demarcate constituencies. Other members of the committee should include geographers, statisticians, demographers, urban planners, and EC officials.

During the demarcation, the

boundaries of a union parishad or a ward in a city corporation should remain intact.

Abdul Alim further explained that internationally recognised bodies, such as the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Venice Commission, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, and others, follow widely accepted guidelines.

The reform commission's report highlighted "impartiality" as a key principle, meaning the delimitation process should be managed by an independent and impartial professional body with the relevant expertise.

It also emphasised "representativeness," which ensures that electoral boundaries are drawn to allow constituents to elect candidates who truly represent them.

Furthermore, "equality of voting strength" is another fundamental principle, ensuring that populations in constituencies are as equal as possible, providing voters with an equal voting strength.

The report also mentioned that countries such as India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, Australia, and New Zealand have separate authorities responsible for demarcating constituencies.

In the UK, with the exception of a few constituencies, each seat has a voter count ranging from 73,000 to 74,000, resulting in a voter deviation of no more than five percent. On average, each constituency in the UK covers approximately 13,000 square kilometres.

Alim noted that India follows a ±10 percent population variation rule when delimiting constituencies.

Time for new European army

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on issues that threaten it," Zelensky said.

"I really believe that time has come. The Armed Forces of Europe must be created."

The push for a joint continental force has been mooted for years without gaining traction and Zelensky's intervention seems unlikely to shift the balance.

In the short-term, the priority for Kyiv remains ensuring its voice is heard at any peace talks involving Russia and that it doesn't get a bad deal.

Ukraine will never accept deals made behind our backs without our

involvement," Zelensky said in a speech.

"No decisions about Ukraine without Ukraine. No decisions about Europe without Europe."

Zelensky cautioned Putin would seek to use Trump as a "prop in his own performance," possibly by trying to get him to Moscow for Russia's WWII victory parade in May.

Zelensky is pushing for "security guarantees" from both the United States and Europe to ensure that any peace deal does not allow Moscow just to restart the war later.

"Putin cannot offer real security guarantees, not just because he is a liar

but because Russia in its current state needs war to hold power together," he said.

The Ukrainian leader said forceful sanctions on Russia and building up Ukraine's military could help secure peace, and said he was "open" to eventually having European peacekeepers.

European leaders backed up Zelensky's call to action and for their continent to play a key role.

"There will only be peace if Ukraine's sovereignty is secured," German Chancellor Olaf Scholz told the Munich Security Conference.