

## A look inside FAHMIDA NABI'S DIARY

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Renowned singer Fahmida Nabi, known for her illustrious musical career, has stepped into a new role at this year's Amar Ekushey Boi Mela (Ekushey Book Fair). The National Film Award-winning artist, born into a celebrated musical family, has embraced a fresh identity as a writer, with her book *Fahmida Nabir Diary*. Her debut book is now available at the fair—a milestone she finds both exciting and fulfilling.

Following the book's release, Fahmida Nabi has made two appearances at the fair. On the first day, she attended its unveiling ceremony, and later, she returned to interact with readers and sign autographs.

Talking to The Daily Star, the artist



couldn't help but exhibit excitement. "The reception has been phenomenal. My close ones are collecting copies, visiting the fair, and even asking for my autograph. Readers, too, are embracing the book with so much warmth—it has been an absolute delight."

Speaking about the day of the book launch, she shared, "The crowd that day was massive! Journalists, readers, writers, lyricists, well-wishers—everyone was there. It was a beautiful gathering."

On the publishing process, Fahmida expressed her gratitude, stating, "Sharifur Rahman, my publisher, put a lot of care into this book. From proofreading to the production process and the cover design—everything was handled with dedication. I'm truly thankful to Shabdoshilpo Publications."

She also shared a heartfelt moment, expressing, "A young woman who bought

my book remarked on Facebook that reading it felt like I was telling her my story. That really touched me. Some have even said I've portrayed a positive perspective on society. Honestly, I just wanted to share thoughts that we all can connect with."

The singer claims to be receiving an overwhelming response for her book, with readers purchasing it both from the fair and online. "Some people couldn't make it to the fair, but they are still purchasing the book online. Those who have been encouraging and inspiring me to write, all this time, are now actually reading it. That, of course, feels great," she conveyed.

Reflecting on her newfound identity as a writer, Fahmida expressed her excitement. "I am thoroughly enjoying everything about it. Whatever I do, I strive to do it well. Just like artists who dedicate themselves completely to their craft, I have approached writing with the same commitment," she exclaimed.

On experiencing the thrill of holding her own book for the first time at the book fair, she recalled, "I was silent for a moment. It felt different, an indescribable joy—definitely a happy feeling."

## Sharon Stone in talks for 'Euphoria' Season 3

Sharon Stone is in discussions to join the highly anticipated third season of HBO's *Euphoria*, as per official sources.



Known for iconic roles in *Basic Instinct*, *Casino*, and *Total Recall*, Stone would add depth to the series, joining Zendaya, Jacob Elordi, Sydney Sweeney, Alexa Demie, Hunter Schafer, and others.

While HBO has not confirmed her involvement, her addition would be a major boost to the show.

Production for the upcoming season has restarted after a break of almost three years, with new cast members confirmed—including Rosalia, Marshawn Lynch, Adewale Akinnuoye-Agbaje, and Toby Wallace.

*Euphoria* Season 3 is expected to include a time jump and is anticipated to premiere in 2026.

## WHAT'S THE HAPS?

### 'Fatima' and 'Deyaler Desh' screening

The 23rd edition of Amar Bhashar Chalachitra 1431, one of the country's largest Bengali film festivals, will feature special screenings of Chashi Nazrul Islam's *Devdas*, Abdul Ahad Tanvir's *Bataser Fena*, Dhruva Hasan's *Fatima*, and Mishuk Moni's *Deyaler Desh*. The festival, organised by the Dhaka University Film Society, honours Bengali cinema during the month of celebrating our language and culture.

Date: Tuesday | February 18

Time: 10am-9pm

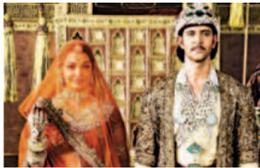
Venue: TSC, Dhaka University



## The Academy to mark 17 years of 'Jodhaa Akbar' with special screening

Ashutosh Gowariker's historical romance *Jodhaa Akbar* celebrated its 17th anniversary on February 15. The film portrays the epic love story between Mughal Emperor Akbar and Rajput princess Jodhabai, starring Hrithik Roshan and Aishwarya Rai. To commemorate this milestone, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences will host a special screening of the film in March 2025.

While an official date is yet to be confirmed, speculation suggests it will take place around



the 97th Academy Awards, scheduled for March 3, in the same city.

Gowariker expressed his heartfelt gratitude to fans for keeping the film alive 17 years after its release.

## Aurthohin to host a cyberpunk-themed solo concert at Aloki

Aurthohin is set to deliver a solo concert that aligns with the technology-driven future of the world. The concert titled *Aurthohin 2077: A Cyberpunk Odyssey* promises an innovative experience inspired by the popular video game *Cyberpunk 2077*.

*Aurthohin 2077: A Cyberpunk Odyssey* will be a solo show by the band, spanning four hours, and is scheduled to take place on February 28 at Aloki Auditorium in Tejgaon, Dhaka. The event is being jointly organised by Get Set Rock and Assen Buzz.



The concert will commence at 6pm with gates opening to concertgoers at 4pm. However, the ticket prices have not been announced yet, but advance ticket sales will soon be available on the Get Set Rock website.

## Kate Winslet to make directorial debut

Kate Winslet is currently preparing for her feature directorial debut, *Goodbye June*, which is scheduled to be filmed in the UK for Netflix in collaboration with Working Title Films.



The screenplay for *Goodbye June* was written by Winslet's son, Joe Anders. The movie is slated to feature Toni Collette, Johnny Flynn, Andrea Riseborough, Timothy Spall, Winslet herself, and Helen Mirren in key roles.

Alongside producing the film with Kate Solomon, Winslet is creatively collaborating with Working Title Films on the project.

*Goodbye June* explores a contemporary fictional narrative about a group of estranged siblings who are forced to reunite in the face of unexpected and challenging events.

# NEWS

## Dinajpur stands up to tough resistance

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The movement, however, gained momentum in Dinajpur as the students resisted the Biharis and Muslim League's opposition to Bangla as a state language. The protests resulted in an all-out strike on March 3, 1948. Students from various educational institutions actively participated in protests and demonstrations.

According to Mozammel Biswas's book *Dinajpore Bhasha Andolan*, the students of Surendranath College campaigned for another demonstration slated for March 11, as part of the programmes announced centrally from Dhaka. They distributed leaflets and made announcements by using loudhailers.

To suppress the movement, police arrested several student leaders, including Nurul Huda mirza, MR Akhter Mukul and Dabirul Islam. The authorities also imposed Section 144, limiting public gathering in the town. On March 11, a general strike was observed. The students of Surendranath College, joined by the public, brought out a protest procession and marched on the main roads. A massive clash broke out when the police baton-charged the protesters and made more arrests.

In 1952, when the government declared Urdu as the state language of Pakistan on January 27, the streets of Dinajpur were filled with protesters.

According to Ahmed Rafiq's book *Bhasha Andolan: Teknaf Theke*

Tetulia, a Sarbodojio Rashtrabhasha Sangram Parishad (All-Party State Language Movement Council) was formed in Dinajpur on February 4 under the leadership of Haji Mohammad Danesh, a peasant leader and politician. The other leaders of the council included Mohammad Ali, Amjad Hossain, Gurudas Talukder and Anil Roy.

As the protesters launched a campaign ahead of February 21, the main event of the movement, the local administration imposed Section 144 in the town on February 20.

Mozammel wrote in his *Dinajpore Bhasha Andolan* that students marched on the main streets of the town during the general strike throughout the day on February 21. They brought out another procession in the evening, followed by a rally at Dinajpur Zila School ground. A protest procession and a rally were also held in Dinajpur's Parbatipur.

The news of the killing of students in police firing in Dhaka reached Dinajpur on February 22. Immediately, students and people brought out processions from different parts of the town. The marchers chanted the slogan "Rashtrabhasha Bangla Chai". At the end of the processions, Haji Danesh and other political leaders delivered speeches at a rally in the town.

More processions were brought out on February 23, prompting the police to start arresting protest leaders. The movement, however, spread to the rural areas.

## US cuts 17 more projects worldwide

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'voter turnout in India', \$47 million for improving learning outcomes in Asia and \$39 million for "fiscal federalism" and "biodiversity conservation" in Nepal.

This is part of DOGE's continued effort to outline significant changes in government spending over the last few weeks.

Projects for other countries including Mozambique, Cambodia,

Serbia, Liberia, Mali, Kosovo, Roma, Ashkali, and Egypt also got cancelled.

US President Donald Trump has assigned Elon Musk's DOGE for cost-cutting across different departments and agencies. Musk's department has swept through federal agencies in recent weeks searching for spending cuts as part of Trump's goal to overhaul and shrink the US government.

## 31-point BNP charter will rebuild nation

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He said, "Nearly two and a half years ago, we presented our 31-point plan before the people. This plan outlines how we will move forward from the damage caused by the Awami League government."

Tarique, who joined the event virtually from London yesterday, said that as the party is being reorganised, the nation must be rebuilt. "... The people of Bangladesh have seen that whenever possible the BNP has worked for their welfare. Even if we could not achieve everything we intended, we did our best. BNP is the party that has always stood by the people."

He urged party leaders and activists to prepare for a national reconstruction effort, emphasising the need to reform the education, economy, agriculture, industry, and healthcare sectors.

"We must ensure a strong foundation for future generations, rebuild the economy, support farmers, strengthen industries, and improve the healthcare system so that marginalised people get medical services."

Tarique alleged that various quarters are spreading propaganda at home and abroad to defame the BNP, saying, "We'll face them politically."

Describing the BNP councillors present at the council as soldiers of Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman and Khaleda Zia, Tarique said, "You represent two leaders whose priority was always Bangladesh and its people. The nation is looking at BNP for leadership, hoping that, as in the past, this party will guide the country forward."

Aman Ullah Aman, adviser of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, inaugurated the council at Narail Government High School ground at 11:00am.

Later, the second session of the event was held at Shilpakala Academy Auditorium, where voting took place for the posts of district BNP president, general secretary, and organising secretary.

[Our Bagerhat correspondent contributed to this report.]

## Bangladesh needs to look for new sources

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businesses, he said, adding that COAST Foundation itself is also mostly reliant on its microfinance activities.

"We need to go for sustainable approaches, instead of depending on foreign funds. Sometimes, depending on foreign aid is humiliating."

A major share of foreign aid is used for consultants and foreign nationals of the respective donor countries, according to Chowdhury.

The UN agencies too have high overhead costs when they operate projects with foreign funds, he said.

"We have long been raising our voice

for improving aid effectiveness, but it is not working."

One cannot deny the role of foreign funding in Bangladesh's development, but often times the foreign aid-based projects are on an ad-hoc basis and do not help sustainable development, said Mohammad Abu Eusuf, a professor at Dhaka University's department of development studies.

As the aid is declining, it is high time that the government focuses on some fundamentals. These include promoting entrepreneurship on a massive scale and training youths for employable jobs.

"Let's have a comprehensive market of our workforce both at home and abroad. Then, we train them accordingly and support their employment. This will radically change our economy," Eusuf added.

An alternative to foreign funding for NGOs could be the funds allocated by the corporates as corporate social responsibilities (CSR).

Corporates often use CSR funds for their own foundations or trusts as there is no clear policy on the use of CSR funds, Jashim Uddin said, suggesting a robust policy on CSR funds for its best use.

## BRTA revokes 'ill-planned' directive

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The drivers blocked key roads, including College Gate, Mirpur, and Pallabi, in protest against the government's decision. Some even besieged the BRTA headquarters in Banani.

As a result, thousands of commuters endured severe traffic congestion and a lack of available transport during office hours.

The Daily Star could not reach BRTA Chairman Mohammed Yasin, Road Transport and Highways Division Senior Secretary Ehsanul Hoque, or Road Transport and Bridges Adviser Muhammad Fouzul Kabir Khan for comments despite repeated attempts.

Between 2001 and 2004, the government allowed the registration of 13,000 environmentally friendly CNG-run auto-rickshaws as commercial vehicles, following the phasing out of 31,500 two-stroke three-wheelers in 2001.

The previous Awami League government later approved the registration of an additional 2,696 CNG-run three-wheelers for Dhaka, bringing the total to 15,696. However, many illegal CNG-run auto-rickshaws now operate on city roads.

In September 2015, the government fixed the fare for CNG-run auto-rickshaws, which came into effect on November 1 that year -- the last time the fare was revised.

At that time, the daily deposit -- a fee drivers must pay to vehicle owners -- was set at Tk 900.

However, CNG-run three-wheelers rarely adhere to the approved fare system, rendering the metered structure ineffective. Drivers often negotiate fares, frequently leading to disputes with passengers.

The drivers place the blame on vehicle owners, claiming they charge more than the fixed Tk 900 daily deposit, forcing them to ignore the metered fares.

In 2022, the BRTA initiated a revision of both the fare and deposit rates, considering the rise in gas prices and inflation. However, the effort failed as worker and owner representatives could not reach a consensus, a BRTA official said.

After the political changeover in August last year, the new leadership of CNG workers repeatedly urged the authorities, including the BRTA, to ensure that CNG owners adhered to the government-fixed deposit of Tk 900, according to BRTA and transport organisation sources.

On January 26, BRTA Director (Engineering) Sitangshu Shekhar Biswas wrote to the DMP Commissioner, urging legal action against any owner charging drivers above the fixed deposit rate.

According to Section 35(1) of the Road Transport Act 2018, an owner may face up to six months in jail or a fine of Tk 50,000 for not adhering to the fixed deposit amount, the letter stated.

A copy of the letter was forwarded to the Road Transport and Highways Division, the Home Ministry, police headquarters, and the Labour Directorate.

Following this, CNG owners pressured the BRTA, arguing that if drivers did not adhere to government-fixed fares, owners should not be expected to provide vehicles at a Tk 900 deposit, especially given inflation and rising gas prices.

The BRTA director subsequently wrote another letter to the DMP commissioner on February 10,

requesting legal action against CNG-run auto-rickshaw drivers for disregarding government-set metered fares.

According to Section 35(3) of the Road Transport Act 2018, a driver may face up to six months in jail or a fine of Tk 50,000 for overcharging, the letter stated. A copy of the letter was forwarded to the same offices.

Golam Faruk, General Secretary of the Bangladesh CNG-run Auto-Rickshaw Light Vehicles Transport Workers Federation, alleged that owners charge between Tk 1,200 and Tk 1,600 -- far above the set deposit rate. He added that the cost of living had significantly increased since the government last revised the fare rate nine years ago.

"We've been demanding that the government revises the fare rate, but the BRTA suddenly issued the directive without any consultation with us," he told this correspondent yesterday.

Barkat Ullah Bhulu, Convener of Dhaka Mohanagar CNG-run Auto Rickshaw Owners Oikya Parishad, said they had been demanding an increase in the deposit rate since 2018, as gas prices had risen sharply.

A sub-committee was formed in 2022 to review both the fare and deposit rates, he said, adding that the committee submitted its report, with all members except one workers' association representative agreeing to the proposal. However, the then government delayed taking action on the issue.

He claimed that the BRTA issued the January 26 directive targeting owners due to pressure from the workers' association.

"Now, the BRTA is set to withdraw the directive as well."