

## Allen Swapan arrives as a spin-off comic book character

The lead character from the Chorki original series *Myself Allen Swapan*, directed by Shihab Shaheen, has now appeared in a comic book. Titled *Chronicles of Allen Swapan*, the comic has been released at the Amar Ekushey Boi Mela and is available at stalls 949-950 of Dhaka Comics.

Although inspired by the web-series, the comic features five distinct and original stories. Among them is *Skondhokata*, written by Zahidul Haque Apu, while *Dome*, *Munsunk*, and *Faad* were penned by Sheikh Korashanee. The two writers collaborated on *Peyaju*.

The illustrations for these five stories were done by Mehedi Haque (*Dome*), Kazi Maruf (*Skondhokata*), Jabir Mahmud Ratin (*Munsunk*), Abdullah Al Zunayed (*Peyaju*), and Meherab Siddiqui Sabit (*Faad*).

The cover art of the book was designed by Asifur Rahman, with editing by Mehedi Haque and Sheikh Korashanee. The comic is rated 'M' (Mature) and is intended for adult readers.



## PUJA CHERY confirmed as 'Tagar's' leading lady

Yesterday, the first official look at the upcoming film *Tagar* was released to reveal Puja Chery as the heroine. Moreover, Ador Azad will star opposite Puja in this Aalok Hasan directorial.

The film is set to feature performances by Azad Abul Kalam, Rosey Siddiqui, Sumon Anwar, LR Khan Shimanto, and many others, and filming is scheduled to begin on February 25.

Puja spoke to The Daily Star about the project and stated, "I agreed to take on the role after finding out the film's story has a unique dimension to it."

*Tagar's* story and screenplay have been crafted by the AR Movie Network team, with dialogues penned by Mamunur Rashid Tanim. The production company has confirmed that the film is set for release during the upcoming Eid ul-Azha.



## Unreleased Kausar Ahmed Chaudhury song out now

In honour of Kausar Ahmed Chaudhury's third death anniversary, the official music video for *Shorone Ritwik*, a long-unreleased song written by him, was released yesterday. Written as a tribute to filmmaker Ritwik Ghatak, the song features vocals by Nafis Kamal, composition by Syed Kallol, and arrangement by Tushar Rahman. The video is now available on Prothom Alo and Nafis Kamal's YouTube channels.

The song has been reimaged with Syed Kallol's composition and Tushar Rahman's arrangement for the release. According to the song's production company, Cool Exposure, *Shorone Ritwik* was entrusted to Nafis Kamal by Kausar Ahmed Chaudhury, although the late artiste never heard the final version.



## First-ever Munier Chowdhury National Theatre Festival off to a strong start



The inaugural Munier Chowdhury National Theatre Festival began on Friday at the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy (BSA). Running until February 28, the festival will showcase 16 plays in eight categories, selected from a nationwide theatre workshop.

The opening ceremony, held at the National Theatre Hall, featured Md Wares Hossain as the chief guest. Asif Munier, son of Munier Chowdhury) attended as a special guest, and AFM Nurur Rahman presided over the programme.

Following the inauguration, Rangpur District Shilpakala Academy performed *Chhinomukut*, an adaptation of *Hirak Rajar Deshe*. Yesterday, they staged *Nona Kothon*. Tonight at 7:00pm, Thakurgaon District Shilpakala Academy will stage *Bhoot-Odbhut*, written by Habib Jakariya Ullas and directed by Biplob Sarkar.

WHAT'S THE HAPS?

### ‘Ek Jora Juta’

On February 21, Prachyanat marked its 29th anniversary and has scheduled a series of events throughout the month. As part of the celebrations, the joint production *Ek Jora Juta* (A Pair of Shoes), a collaboration between Toronto Theatre Focus, Canada, and Prachyanat, will be staged today at the Experimental Theatre Hall of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy.

The story follows a lost pair of shoes, whose absence creates a void across the land. Life feels empty, and everyone waits for their return to restore hope. Will finding the shoes promise a revival for the world?

**Date:** Sunday | February 23  
**Time:** 7pm onwards  
**Venue:** Experimental Theater Hall, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy



## ‘Kacher Manush Durey Thuiya’ now accessible to visually impaired individuals

To raise awareness about the language of the visually impaired and to honour all forms of communication during Language Month, mobile network provider Grameenphone and OTT platform Chorki launched a special campaign.

The two companies decided to create an audio description of the Chorki original *Kacher Manush Dure Thuiya*, a project under the *Ministry of Love* series. This version of the film is available for free on the MyGP app from February 21 to 23. Today is the last day for Grameenphone users to catch the audio version.

# NEWS

## Back resolution on Ukraine

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prompting an attack from Trump who called Zelensky a "dictator without elections."

He also falsely blamed Ukraine for starting the war.

But Trump on Friday appeared to shift away from his criticisms and said that Zelensky and Russia's Vladimir Putin will have to "get together" to bring an end to the conflict.

"President Putin and President Zelensky are going to have to get together... We want to stop killing millions of people," Trump told reporters in the Oval Office.

He added Kyiv would "hopefully in the next fairly short period of time" sign a deal handing Washington preferential access to Ukraine's mineral deposits.

The minerals deal has become a major sticking point in the increasingly fraught relations between Washington and Kyiv.

Trump wants Ukraine to give US companies access to its vast natural resources as compensation for the tens of billions of dollars of aid delivered under his predecessor Joe Biden.

"They're very brave, in every way you can imagine. But we are spending our

treasure on some country that's very, very far away," Trump said of Ukraine.

In return, Ukraine is seeking security guarantees from the United States for signing away the precious rights.

Zelensky -- who had rejected the agreement -- said Friday he hoped for a "fair result."

Earlier Friday, Trump described Ukraine as at a disadvantage in the negotiations -- further alarming allies who think he will offer concessions to Putin.

"I've had very good talks with Putin, and I've had not such good talks with Ukraine. They don't have any cards," Trump said at the White House.

He also said during a Fox News interview on the same day that it was not "very important" for Zelensky to be involved in US-Russia talks.

The US president -- who has repeatedly expressed admiration for Putin -- again declined to blame Moscow for the February 2022 invasion, saying that the Russian leader "attacked but they shouldn't have let him attack."

Trump also said that Putin faced no pressure to make a deal.

"He doesn't have to make a deal,

because if he wanted, he'd get the whole country," Trump said.

French President Emmanuel Macron and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer -- who are both due at the White House next week for potentially tricky discussions -- have been accused by Trump of doing nothing to end the war.

Macron said Friday he will tell Trump that "you can't be weak with President Putin."

On the ground, both sides in the war are trying to improve their position on the battlefield amid Trump's push for a ceasefire.

Russia's army on Friday said it had captured two more villages in eastern Ukraine.

With Europe shaken by the new US stance on the conflict, Ukraine got renewed support from German Chancellor Olaf Scholz.

"We won't leave Ukraine alone and decide things over their heads," he said Friday at his last major campaign event before weekend elections.

After speaking to Scholz and other regional leaders, Zelensky said in his televised evening address that "Europe must and can do much more to ensure that peace is actually achieved" in Ukraine.

## Pentagon says will cut civilian workforce by at least 5%

AFP, Washington

The US Defense Department will cut its civilian workforce by at least five percent starting next week, the Pentagon said Friday, as President Donald Trump continues slashing the government payroll.

Trump's administration has already begun firing thousands of other federal workers who are on probationary status, and the cuts at the Defense Department -- the largest employer in the United States -- will also focus on recently hired employees.

"We anticipate reducing the department's civilian workforce by

5.8 percent to produce efficiencies and refocus the department on the president's priorities and restoring readiness in the force," Darin Selnick, who is performing the duties of under secretary of defense for personnel and readiness, said in a statement.

"We expect approximately 5,400 probationary workers will be released beginning next week as part of this initial effort, after which we will implement a hiring freeze while we conduct a further analysis of our personnel needs," Selnick said.

The Defense Department employs more than 900,000 civilians, meaning that cuts of five percent would affect a

total of more than 45,000 jobs.

A day before the announcement, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said in a video message that "it is simply not in the public interest to retain individuals whose contributions are not mission critical."

"Common sense would tell us where we should start, right -- we start with poor performers amongst our probationary employees," Hegseth said.

- Promoting 'best and brightest' -

"When you look at head count, we're going to be thoughtful, but we're also going to be aggressive, up and down the chain, to find the places where we can ensure the best and brightest are promoted based on merit."

## 3 arrested, duty officer suspended

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active members of an interdistrict robbery gang. Among them, Muhit is accused in five cases, including two for bus robbery, filed with different police stations, according to Mizanur.

The suspects confessed to their crimes during preliminary interrogation by police, the SP said.

The robbery took place on an Amri

Travels bus under the Unique Road Royals service, which was on its way to Rajshahi from Dhaka's Gabtoli at 11:00pm on Monday. According to the passengers, the robbery continued for three hours on the bus.

Initially, the bus supervisor, driver, and assistant were detained in connection with the robbery and alleged sexual assault, but they were

granted bail by the court later. A case was filed with Mirzapur Police Station on Friday over the incident.

Complainant Omar Ali from Baraigram of Natore said the robbers beat passengers and stole cash, mobile phones and jewellery. They also sexually assaulted two to three women aboard the bus, according to the case statement.

## Records tumble

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and Mark Wood removed Steve Smith with an 150-kph rocket.

Short and Marnus Labuschagne (47) propped up Australia before England struck back with their spin duo of Adil Rashid and Liam Livingstone.

Inglis raised 146 runs with Carey, who was dropped on 49 by Archer, as Australia reclaimed control of the see-saw contest and never let it go.

Brydon Carse removed Carey in the 42nd over but Inglis raced to a 77-ball hundred reaching the mark with a six off Archer.

Glenn Maxwell produced an unbeaten cameo of 32 off 15 balls to ease any pressure on Inglis, who sealed Australia's victory with his sixth six.

Australia had arrived with a second-string pace attack and their missing frontline quicks included skipper Pat Cummins.

Stand-in skipper Smith elected to

field and they did not have to wait long for a breakthrough thanks to Carey's spectacular athleticism at mid-on.

Phil Salt had flicked a Ben Dwarshuis (3-66) delivery and Carey moved to his right, leapt and plucked a one-handed stunner on the edge of the 30-yard circle.

The bowler-fielder duo combined again to remove Jamie Smith, whose promotion to number three did not pay off.

Duckett combined in a stand of 158 with Joe Root (68) to lay the foundation for England's big total.

Adam Zampa dismissed Root and Jos Buttler fell for 23 but Duckett went on to eclipse New Zealander Nathan Astle's record for the highest individual score in the Champions Trophy.

Duckett struck 17 fours and three sixes before falling lbw to Labuschagne after a 143-ball knock.

## Iran says Russian FM Lavrov will visit Tehran in coming days

AFP, Tehran

Iran's foreign ministry said Saturday that Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov will visit Tehran in the coming days to meet his Iranian counterpart and discuss "regional and international developments".

"The visit ... will be carried out within the framework of ongoing consultations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Russian Federation on bilateral relations and regional and international developments," Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said, according to a statement by the ministry.

The statement added that Lavrov will also meet with some other Iranian officials.

## Unity crucial to save Bangladesh

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collapsed state structure to rebuild the country.

"Many people are talking about reforms now, but in the past, they were nowhere to be seen on the streets. Only BNP has faced the bloodshed of dictatorship, discussed reforms, and announced a 31-point plan," he said.

The BNP leader also said if the party returned to power with the people's mandate, its top priority would be to rebuild the country.

He said action had already been taken against BNP leaders and activists involved in unlawful activities. "So, the people of the country cannot be misled by the carrying out propaganda against BNP."

He accused Sheikh Hasina of resorting to killings and enforced disappearances to stay in power.

Arif Al Khabir, 38, and Md Abbas, 24, in connection with the incident later that night.

The next day, Jagadish Chakma, president of Pahari Chhatra Parishad's Dhaka Metropolitan unit, filed a case against 16 named and 200-300 unidentified attackers with

He observed that those who now make "big statements" were absent when the BNP and some other political parties protested on the streets, enduring repression and suppression during Hasina's rule, Tarique said.

He emphasised the importance of holding a credible and transparent national election as soon as possible to rebuild the country in line with the people's hopes and aspirations.

Motijheel Police Station.

Another suspect, Habibur Rahman, was apprehended on January 29 while detectives arrested Shahadat Farazi Sakib, 35, who was expelled by the Jatiya Nagorik Committee after the attack, on February 12. He was named as an accused in the case.