

Nazrul Utsav opens today at Chhayanaut

The Bangladesh Nazrul Sangeet Sangstha has organised a two-day Nazrul Utsav. The inauguration event will take place today from 4:30pm to 9:30pm at the Chhayanaut Auditorium.

On the first day of the festival, 125 recorded songs featuring original compositions and lyrics will be made accessible to the public via the official website of the Bangladesh Nazrul Sangeet Sangstha. These recordings include performances by both established and emerging artists from Bangladesh and India.

Notable Indian artistes participating in this event include Shreeradha Bandyopadhyay, Manomay Bhattacharya, Pandit Tushar Dutta, Brajeswar Mukherjee, and Payel Kar. Among the distinguished Bangladeshi artistes lending their voices to this initiative are Yakub Ali Khan, Khairul Anam Shakil, Ferdous Ara, Nashid Kamal, and Yasmin Mushtari.



BUBLY launches her production house

After nearly a decade in the industry, Dhallywood actress Shobnom Bubly is set to embrace a new role as a producer. Recently, she has announced the launch of her own production company, Big Production.

The company will strive to produce films, dramas, short films, and music videos. Its journey will begin with a drama scheduled for release during the upcoming Eid-ul-Azha, while a film project is in the works for next year. Bubly announced the updates in a video message.

Besides her new role as a producer, Bubly is continuing to act actively. Several of her films are scheduled for release this Eid-ul-Fitr. Among them, *Pinik* and *Jongli* have already been officially announced.



Matribhashar Chalachitra Utsav to showcase films in indigenous languages

The two-day *Matribhashar Chalachitra Utsav* began yesterday in Dhaka to commemorate International Mother Language Day and honour language martyrs.

Organised by the Zahir Raihan Film Institute, the festival will showcase 15 films in languages including Bengali, Chakma, Marma, Mro, Bawm, Garo, Santal, and Khyang.

The inauguration took place at the Vintage Convention Hall, Dhanmondi yesterday with Supradip Chakma, Chittagong Hill Tracts adviser in attendance. Today the event will run from 10am to 9pm.

Films to be screened include *Raktokarobir Khoje Nandini*, *Klobong Mla*, *Bondhon*, *Preyoshi*, *Girikonnaya*, *Ghore Phera*, *Colors of Hope*, and *Potrik Bhita*, among others.



Shahiduzzaman Selim elected president of Director's Guild

Shahiduzzaman Selim has officially been elected president of the Directors' Guild for the 2025-27 term, securing 271 votes, while Faridul Hasan claimed the general secretary position with 222 votes. The newly elected leaders will oversee the organisation for the next two years.

The voting took place at the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy on Saturday. This year a total of 501 voters were eligible to participate in the election, with 446 exercising their right to vote.

Rasheda Akter Lajuk, Firoz Khan, and Shakal Ahmed were elected as vice presidents. Tuhin Hossain and Din Mohammad Montu were elected as joint general secretaries.

The executive committee positions saw Sagar Jahan elected with 284 votes, followed by Chayanika Chowdhury with 269, Mahmud Niaz Chandroip with 264, Gitai Hasan with 239, while Litu Korim and Shihab Shaheen each secured 228 votes, and Hasan Rezaul received 223 votes.



Bangladeshi artistes shine at UNESCO for Int'l Mother Language Day celebrations

Bangladeshi musicians captivated the audience at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, marking the 25th anniversary of International Mother Language Day on February 21.

A special performance was held, featuring Bangladesh's diverse cultural expressions. Professor Muhammad Yunus, chief adviser of the interim government, addressed the audience virtually, while cultural adviser Mostofa Sarwar Farooki attended in person on February 21. Farooki praised the performances, which included Shunno's *Shono Mohajon*, renditions of *Jaat Gelo*, and *Amar Bhaiyer Rokte Rangano* sung in four languages.

He thanked the artistes for



representing Bangladesh in a unique light. The event began with a video interview of the late communist leader Badruddin Umar,

adding historical significance. Farooki also expressed gratitude to the Ministry of Culture and the Bangladesh Embassy in Paris.

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EC preparing to announce

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is progressing fast, he said.

The EC is also working on drawing the boundaries of constituencies and registration of political parties.

Meanwhile, Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin while exchanging views with administration officials in Cox's Bazar yesterday said the EC wanted to hold a free and fair election.

When he was asked whether the local government polls or the national election would be held first, he said the political parties were arguing over the matter, and "the Election Commission does not want to get into that".

The EC's first goal is to prepare an accurate voter list. "There are 16 lakh dead voters on the list. The names should be dropped," he said.

DISAGREEMENT OVER POLLS DATE
Some political parties, including the BNP, Jamaat and the Left Democratic Alliance met the EC separately over the last two weeks. The BNP and the LDA demanded a national election within

this year.

On the other hand, Jamaat demanded that the national election be held after reforming the institutions related to the electoral process.

The party also wants local government elections before the national election while the BNP wants the opposite.

The Jatiya Nagorik Committee supports national polls once the reforms recommended by the government-formed reform commissions are made.

LGRD Adviser Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuiain on February 18 told journalists that a decision regarding the local government elections would be made soon.

He added that he preferred local government elections before the national election because local government institutions could play a role in a national election.

"But my personal opinion would not determine which polls will be held first," he said.

Four DIGs sent on forced retirement

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the district during the 2014 election, while Abdul Quddus Amin was the SP of Gopalganj district in the year.

According to sources at the Police Headquarters, at least 40 top-ranking police officers between the rank of assistant superintendent of police and additional inspector general of police were sent into forced retirement in the last six months, citing "public interest".

The sources added that many of these officials were in command positions and used excessive force during the July uprising last year that toppled the Awami League government on August 5.

The latest move came just two days after the Youth and Sports Adviser, Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuiain, said the SPs who were in charge during the 2018 "night-time" elections will be made officers on special duty (OSD) or sent into forced retirement.

He made these remarks in a Facebook post on Friday.

Earlier on Thursday, the government sent 22 more officials into retirement, raising the number of disciplined bureaucrats to 67 for their questionable role as deputy commissioners in the

2014 and 2018 elections under the Awami League regime.

On Wednesday, the public administration ministry placed 33 officials on special duty. Previously, it did the same to 12 other former DCs.

Special duty in this context is considered a disciplinary measure. The ministry is currently reviewing the records of the officials on the list, and most of them are likely to face punishment, according to officials with knowledge of the development.

The last general election, held on January 7, 2024, was boycotted by the BNP and several other parties. In many places, AL leaders ran as independents to make the polls appear participatory.

In 2018, opposition parties alleged that ballot stuffing took place the night before the election.

International Bangladesh said ballot-stuffing took place in more than one centre in 33 of the 50 constituencies it had surveyed.

In the 2014 election, also boycotted by the BNP, 153 out of 300 lawmakers got "elected" without any vote as they were the only ones running for office in their constituencies.

\$29m spent

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rich. They'll be on the cover of a top business magazine -- for being great scammers," quipped the US president.

Trump's ire extended to India, too. At CPAC, he questioned an \$18 million USAID grant for elections there, asking, "Why the hell? Why don't we use paper ballots and let them help us with our elections? Voter ID—that'd be nice. We're giving money to India for elections. They don't need it. They slap 200% tariffs on us, and we're handing them cash!"

On February 16, Elon Musk-led US Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) announced that it has taken new measures to save US taxpayers money by cutting funding to 17 projects across the globe, including one in Bangladesh.

In Bangladesh, the Strengthening Political Landscape (SPL) programme -- backed by USAID and UK's DFID, and run by Democracy International from 2017 to 2024 -- aimed to boost political party capacity, strengthen party-constituent ties, and reduce violence.

Sudan's RSF, allies sign charter for rival govt

AFP, Nairobi

Sudan's paramilitary Rapid Support Forces and its allies have agreed to form a parallel government, they said yesterday, despite warnings such a move could further fragment the war-ravaged country.

"The charter has been signed," Najm al-Din Drisa, spokesman of the United Civil Forces, one of the signatories, told AFP.

The parties to the agreement, inked behind closed doors in Nairobi, said the charter establishes a "government of peace and unity" in rebel-controlled areas of the northeast African country.

The move comes nearly two years into a devastating war with the regular army that has uprooted more than 12 million people and caused what the United Nations calls the world's largest hunger and displacement crises.

Noab urges govt to cut tax, VAT

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industry has recently been going through a difficult time," said AK Azad, president of Noab, in a pre-budget meeting with the National Board of Revenue (NBR) at its office in the capital.

The NBR organised the discussion as part of its consultations with various trade bodies and other stakeholders before preparing tax proposals.

"The rapid expansion of digital platforms and the growing influence of other media have put the newspaper industry under significant strain. At the same time, high tariffs, VAT, and corporate taxes continue to hinder its growth," he said.

Adding to these woes, the rising exchange rate of the US dollar and the ongoing global economic downturn have exacerbated financial constraints, making survival increasingly difficult

Hasina told Nitor docs

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did not even make post-mortem reports.

The lack of such reports itself is evidence of a crime against humanity, he said.

Prosecutors went to the National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation (Nitor) and interviewed doctors, he said.

The doctors told prosecutors that Sheikh Hasina went there in July and ordered them not to treat the protesters, Tajul said at the court.

People injured during the uprising also said this, he added. "We have evidence of this information," he said.

The tribunal asked prosecutors to submit the probe report on April 22 in a case filed over crimes against humanity

for many print media outlets, he added.

Although the import duty is 5 percent, the landed cost reaches 30 percent when adding 15 percent VAT, advance income tax, transportation insurance, and other expenses, said Noab.

Matiur Rahman, editor and publisher of Bangla daily Prothom Alo, said that the newspaper industry is going through a severe crisis.

"The number of readers is declining, and the circulation of printed newspapers is decreasing. It is now essential to survive through digital platforms, which requires investment," he said.

He further stated that advertisements come from both private and government sectors for newspapers, but private sector investment is sluggish.

"For the last 16 years, newspapers

have not received any support or cooperation from the government. Decisions have been made unilaterally. The press has faced various forms of attacks, lawsuits, and intimidation," he said.

Matiur also urged the reduction of the corporate tax.

At the meeting, NBR Chairman Abdur Rahman Khan hinted at a possible reduction in advance income tax (AIT) on imported newsprint in the upcoming budget.

"We will consider the issue of advance income tax reduction," he said.

Currently, the AIT on newspaper imports is 5 percent.

Shamsul Huq Zahid, editor of Financial Express also spoke at the event, among others, chaired by NBR Chairman Md Abdur Rahman Khan.

Members of 8 bodies

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Affairs Secretary Kaiser Kamal, Jatiyatabadi Krishak Dal General Secretary Shahidul Islam, Jubo Dal General Secretary Nurul Islam Nayan, Swachchhasebak Dal General Secretary Rajib Ahsan, and Chhatra Dal General Secretary Nasir Uddin Nasir.

Besides, eight delegation members from other parties include Nagorik Oikya President Mahmudur Rahman Manna, Bangladesh Revolutionary Workers' Party's General Secretary Saiful Haque, Ganosamhati Andolon's Executive Coordinator Abul Hasan Rubel, National People's Party Chairman AZM Fariduzzaman, Nationalist Democratic Movement's Chairman Bobby Hajaj, Gono Odhikar Parishad's General Secretary Muhammad Rashed Khan, Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis's Joint Secretary General Maulana Atullah Amin, and Jatiya Dal Chairman Syed Ehsanul Huda.

Nahian Sajjad Khan, a researcher at the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies, and Lailular Yasmin, a professor of international relations at Dhaka University, are also part of the delegation.

Three members from the Jatiya Nagorik Committee—Ali Ahsan Zonae, Rafe Salman Rifat, and Md Reaz Hossain—and a coordinator of Students Against Discrimination, Mitu Akter, are also in the delegation.

Two journalists are also going on this trip: Arifuzzaman, diplomatic correspondent of Dainik Amader Somoy, and Abdur Rahman Jahangir, special correspondent of UNB.

Earlier, on November 7, a four-member BNP delegation had visited China at the invitation of the Communist Party of China.

Country risks civil war

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"When they are asked something, the action becomes visible six months later. To those with rhinoceros-like skin, we say: please make your skin a little thinner. If you remain silent on the issue of holding the Awami League accountable [for July atrocities], the people will be forced to take to the streets again," said the Nagorik Committee leader.

Nasir said that the people of Bangladesh have placed them in the government with great hopes and aspirations.

"But you are wrong if you think the Secretariat or your offices are like luxury suites or hotel rooms. The people are still on the streets. They are still active in various places. They are in touch with us. In many cases, we are

holding them back," he said.

He alleged that Law Adviser Asif Nazrul used to talk a lot at the university, but not much since he became an adviser.

Nasir said that the first task of the interim government is to try the Awami League.

"If the trial process of the Awami League does not begin, there will be no election. First, the Awami League must be tried, and only then can elections be held," he said.

He said that efforts have been made to curb instances of mob justice across the country.

"While some incidents persist, effective measures are being taken regularly to ensure that no one in Bangladesh falls victim to a culture of impunity through mob trials ...," he added.