

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

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BTV's 'Band show' brings together 13 bands



BTV is set to air a special Eid programme titled **Band Show**, featuring 13 popular bands over three consecutive days.

On Eid day at 7pm, bands Chirkutt, Ark, Different Touch, Obscure, Orbit, and Feedback will perform their hit songs. This episode is hosted by Salsabil Labonne and produced by Nasir Uddin.

On the second day of Eid at 7pm, legendary band Miles will take the stage, performing fan favourites like **Chand Tara, Nila**, and **Phiriye Dao**. The episode is produced by Shahriar Mohammad Hasan and hosted by Momrej Mahmood.

Eid day 3 will feature performances from Symphony, Shubhajatra, Rock and Melody, Natai, Pentagon, and Reshad and Q, with Abdullah Al Mamun producing and Sabronno Towhida hosting.



Producer reacts to casting rumours as 'Taandob' filming commences

Filming for Raihan Rafi's upcoming project, **Taandob**, officially commenced this week at BFDC. Actors Shakib Khan and Jaya Ahsan have already started working on the film.

Recently co-producer Shahriar Shakil finally addressed the ongoing speculation about Sabilia Nur starring opposite Shakib Khan.

He stated, "We haven't finalised the casting for the second female lead yet. We've initially listed five to six potential names, and Sabilia's inclusion in that list is not unusual—she's a talented artiste."

He emphasised that much of the circulating information is speculation.

The shooting schedule will continue through April, with a short Eid-ul-Fitr break.

Taandob, slated for release during the upcoming Eid-ul-Azha, revolves around a television station.

A whirlwind journey with 'Jongli'

SIAM AHMED

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

From romantic characters to socially charged ones, Siam Ahmed has steadily established himself as one of Dhallywood's most versatile and dependable stars. With acclaimed performances in films like **Poramon 2**, **Dohon**, and **Mridha Bonam Mridha**, among others, he has become a familiar name to cinephiles. As Eid draws near, the actor returns to the silver screen with **Jongli**—a film he considers to be among his most deeply personal endeavours.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Siam shared, "I'm going through a very hectic schedule as all hands are on deck to promote our upcoming Eid release. I went to bed after *sehri* just the other night. We had a late-night shoot at a TV channel, followed by several promotional video shoots. It's been a whirlwind and **Jongli** has kept me on my toes."

This Eid-ul-Fitr, major film releases include **Jongli**, **Daaagi**, **Borbaad**, **Chokkor 302**, and **Jinn 3**. When asked about feeling competitive, Siam responded, "I don't see any of the films as competition. As fellow artistes and collaborators, we're all in this together."

"I'll myself be watching all the Eid releases," he added. "I'll go to the theatres with my entire team to watch the other films."

Opening up about the demanding aspect of **Jongli**, the actor remarked, "I love acting. I don't see it as a struggle—it's my work and passion. That's what defines me. I admit **Jongli** demanded a lot of



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

effort from me, but I did it all happily."

Siam further revealed, "I was involved with the film right from the scripting phase. Usually, lead actors come on board after the script is finalised—but in this case, I was part of it from the beginning."

"I've dedicated much time to **Jongli**, made with great care by our team. My co-artistes gave their best, and everyone worked with mutual respect. This film means a lot to me, and I truly hope the audience connects with it."

Speaking about the story, the actor shared, "**Jongli** has a powerful storyline. Audiences will find it relatable as it tells a story of our country, of the things that happen around us."

Looking ahead to the film's reception, the **Shaan** star remarked, "It is the love of the audiences that has made me who I am today. They have showered my previous films with love. I hope **Jongli** rises above those. If it does, I'll know that all our hard work paid off."

Zendaya to star in Barry Jenkins' A24 biopic 'Be My Baby'

Oscar-winning director Barry Jenkins is set to helm **Be My Baby**, a biopic on '60s music icon Ronnie Spector, with Zendaya in the lead role. The A24 film is adapted from Spector's 1990 memoir and will explore her turbulent marriage to producer Phil Spector. Before her death in 2022, Spector personally chose Zendaya to portray her and served as an executive producer. Dave Kajganich will write the screenplay. The film will be produced by A24, Marc Platt, Zendaya, and Jenkins' production team Pastel. Spector rose to fame as the lead singer of the Ronettes, with hits like **Be My Baby** and **Baby I Love You**. The project's timeline is yet to be confirmed as Jenkins and Zendaya juggle other commitments.

Netflix to revive 'Scooby-Doo' in new live-action series

Netflix is set to bring back **Scooby-Doo** in a new eight-episode live action series, reimagining the iconic mystery-solving gang for a new generation.

Based on the classic Hanna-Barbera animation, the show will explore the eerie origins of Scooby, Shaggy, Daphne, Velma, and Fred during their last summer at camp.

The plot kicks off with a lost Great Dane puppy who may have witnessed a supernatural murder. Josh Appelbaum and Scott Rosenberg will write and serve as showrunners, with Greg Berlanti among the executive producers.

Described by Netflix as a "groovy adventure for a new era," the series aims to honour the franchise's legacy while offering a darker, modern twist. The project was first announced in April 2024.



NEWS

Yunus urges China to reduce interest rates

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They also urged the bank to reduce its commitment fees, which raise project costs.

Chen said his bank would look into the proposals, but also urged Bangladesh to consider taking on more concessionary loans in renminbi, the Chinese currency.

Bangladesh had made similar requests when Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain held a bilateral meeting with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in Beijing in January.

During that visit, Beijing had agreed in principle to extend the repayment period for Chinese loans and assured of looking into the request to lower the interest rate.

Asked if China has taken action towards this end, Foreign Secretary Jashim Uddin said on Tuesday said that there might be an announcement on the matter after Yunus's bilateral meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping on Friday.

China is Bangladesh's fourth-largest lender after Japan, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, with total loans disbursed since 1975 coming to \$7.5 billion.

During yesterday's meeting with Chinese Executive Vice-Premier Ding Xuexiang, Yunus sought Chinese support in an array of development and livelihood projects while offering a site for possible relocation of Chinese manufacturing industries.

He reiterated Bangladesh's firm commitment to the One-China policy and said Dhaka takes pride in being the first South Asian country to join China's Belt and Road Initiative.

The two leaders agreed to deepen the bilateral relationship between Bangladesh and China, with Beijing saying it would extend full support to the interim government of Bangladesh.

They also agreed to boost investment, trade and cultural ties and people-to-people exchanges as they mark 50 years since the establishment of their diplomatic relationships.

"President Xi Jinping attaches tremendous importance to your visit," Ding said, adding that China hopes Bangladesh would prosper and grow under the leadership of Yunus.

He said Beijing will extend duty-free and quota-free access to

Bangladeshi goods to China until 2028, two years after Bangladesh graduates from the least-developed country bracket to a middle-income economy. Beijing is also keen to start free trade negotiations with Dhaka, he said.

China last year signed a protocol to import mango from Bangladesh. The mango export would begin this summer. Beijing would also import jackfruit, guava and other aquatic products from Bangladesh in its attempt to minimise trade imbalance, he said.

Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain; Energy, Rail and Road Transport Adviser Fouzul Kabir Khan; High Representative of the Chief Adviser Khalilur Rahman; and BIDA Executive Chairman Ahsik Chowdhury were present during the meeting.

Yunus also held meetings with former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon; Wu Xiaoling, former vice president of the Central Bank of China; and Alexei Overchuk, deputy prime minister of Russia.

He sought support and advice from Ban Ki-moon for a smooth transition to democracy in Bangladesh.

Ban Ki-moon said Bangladesh progressed a lot but should have done better politically and democratically.

Yunus said Bangladesh recently settled a long pending land issue with the Korean EPZ in Chattogram, hoping that it would encourage more Korean business people to invest in Bangladesh.

BIDA Chairman Ahsik Chowdhury informed the meeting that Kihak Sung would lead a 26-member strong business delegation from Korea in the upcoming Investment Summit in Dhaka.

He also met China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation President Chen Sichang and discussed a potential second Chinese economic zone in Mongla of Bagerhat and potential collaboration to employ Bangladeshi workers across the globe in CCECC-run projects.

During his meeting with FAO Director-General Qu Dongyu, Yunus urged him to act as a matchmaker between Chinese importers and Bangladeshi farm and fruit producers.

"We need support in fruit processing and vegetable preservation, storage and packaging. You can connect China with our farmers and exporters," Yunus said.

In response, Qu said FAO would take up a new project to export Bangladeshi farm products to China.

Target was the jeweller's

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Bin Mosharraf, 33, Yesin Hasan, 22, Mobasher Ahmed, 23, Wakeel Mahmud, 26, Abdullah, 32, and Sumon, 29.

The first four were held at the spot and the rest in the Hazaribagh area early yesterday.

DC Masud added that a lot of gold jewellery were stolen from the shop in August last year, and a case was lodged with Tejgaon Police Station in this connection.

Investigators said they would also look into whether there were any links between the robbery and the theft or any shop employee was involved.

Shah Mostafa Tariquzzaman, assistant commissioner (Dharmundi zone) of DMP, told The Daily Star that they primarily suspect that four to five of the robbers were the masterminds.

At least three of the arrestees claim to be students of private universities, a claim that investigators are verifying.

Arrestee Wakeel told investigators that he and another suspect went to

Dhanmondi for having *sehri* at a restaurant when an acquaintance asked them to join a raid as student representatives.

The AC said police were verifying their claims.

According to the officer, the gang initially planned to loot a large amount of gold and money from the building. When they failed to get as much gold as they expected, they vandalised the offices of SM Sourcing, a buying house, and took Tk 35 lakh.

As the amount was not sufficient for them, they then planned to abduct Hannan.

"They planned to demand a ransom by kidnapping Hannan. However, as locals and police came to the spot, their efforts failed," he said.

At that time, six people, including security guards from a nearby under-construction building, assisted the police in detaining four suspects.

The DMP has rewarded the six Tk 5,000 each and decided to appoint them to its auxiliary force.

1,42,000 displaced in Gaza in one week

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dangerously low."

The UN's World Food Programme (WFP) warned yesterday it had only two weeks' worth of food left in Gaza.

In northern Gaza, Hamas spokesperson Abdel-Latif Al-Qanoua has been killed in an Israeli airstrike, Hamas affiliated media said early yesterday, the latest group figure to be killed since Israel resumed its operations in the enclave.

Al-Qanoua was killed when his tent was targeted in Jabalia, the Hamas run Al-Aqsa television said. The same strike wounded several people, while separate attacks killed at least six in Gaza City and one in southern Gaza's Khan Younis, medical sources said.

At least 855 people, over half of them children and women, have been killed since Israel resumed major military strikes in Gaza on March 18, according to Gaza's health ministry.

that these investigations are ignored in the USCIRF report only raises questions about the thoroughness and fairness of their research.

"The report mentions the proliferation of false claims through traditional and social media following the violent protests." Sources of the media, often driven by political agendas, have spread misinformation aimed at discrediting the interim government, says the statement.

If USCIRF truly operates as an independent, bipartisan organisation, it is disappointing that it did not carry out its own investigations into these events, it says.

"Instead, it appears to have relied on unfounded claims and one-sided narratives, which serve only to taint Bangladesh's reputation unfairly. Had the USCIRF done its due diligence, it would have recognised that the situation in Bangladesh is not as dire as the report suggests, particularly regarding religious violence."

"The political unrest in Bangladesh, including protests and clashes between political factions, has sometimes been misrepresented as religious violence. While there may have been tensions involving religious groups, it is essential to understand that these incidents were primarily linked to political affiliation rather than religious persecution. This distinction is critical in understanding the situation accurately and avoiding the oversimplification of complex political events as religious conflicts."

CA press wing rebuts

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USCIRF REPORT

According to the USCIRF report, the attacks on minority communities included vandalism and mob violence. "Simultaneously, traditional and social media proliferated false or unsupported claims of violence to discredit the interim caretaker government ... Hundreds of Hindus were reportedly killed in the violence following Prime Minister Hasina's departure, though reporting suggests the killings were likely related to political affiliation rather than religion."

Ahmadia Muslim communities also reported physical attacks and vandalism to their property. In response to these and other incidents, the caretaker government expressed its intention to protect minority communities.

Despite the pledges of the interim government, systematic pressure on religious minorities continued to generally worsen, reads the report.

"Prior to the July protests, two judges of the Bangladesh High Court expressed support for harsher punishments for blasphemy, including capital punishment. Prime Minister Hasina further issued controversial statements suggesting that Christians in the country were plotting to carve out a 'Christian state' from parts of Bangladesh and Myanmar."

The USCIRF is an independent, bipartisan US government advisory body that monitors and reports on religious freedom in other countries

and makes policy recommendations to the president, secretary of state, and Congress, says the report.

CA PRESS WING'S REACTION

"The claim that hundreds of Hindus were killed due to religious violence following Prime Minister Hasina's departure is simply false. Since Hasina's removal, almost no Hindus—or any other religious communities—have been killed in attacks driven by communal violence. This type of violence, which the report mentions, has not been substantiated by any reliable evidence. In fact, Bangladesh has witnessed a period of relative calm for religious minorities, contrary to the narrative suggested in the USCIRF report," reads the statement.

The assertion that the violence occurred following the removal of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is misleading and lacks solid evidence, says the statement.

"There is no credible evidence supporting the claim that the Interim government, led by Professor Muhammad Yunus, is responsible for violence targeting religious minorities."

"The Bangladesh Police have investigated the claims made by religious minority groups, such as the Bangladesh Hindu Buddha Christian Unity Council, and found only a handful of organised, communal violence or hate crimes against religious groups. The nature of the deaths cited in the report was due to personal or familial reasons, not religious animus. The fact