

## 'Conclave' viewership soars in wake of Pope's death

Following Pope Francis's death on April 21, viewership of the 2024 Oscar-winning drama *Conclave* soared dramatically.

The film, which explores the secretive process of electing a new pope, saw a 283% rise in home streaming last Monday, jumping from 1.8 million to 6.9 million minutes viewed, according to Luminate, the US firm that monitors streaming activity.

*Conclave* portrays the intense political and spiritual deliberations within the Vatican following a fictional pope's death.

Interest also resurged in Netflix's 2019 film *The Two Popes*, with a 417% increase in viewership.

During Oscar season, the cast of *Conclave* was inquired about the Pope's health to which lead actress Isabella Rossellini responded with well wishes for him.

## CONCLAVE



## Miles embarks on month-long US tour

Legendary Bangladeshi band Miles has embarked on their *Legacy Tour USA 2025*, marking 30 years since their first US tour in 1996.

The month-long concert series

Organised by Ironclad Melody, the tour will span key US cities including Dallas, New Jersey, Los Angeles, New York, Denver, Austin, Michigan, and Buffalo.

Band frontman Hamin Ahmed



kicked off on April 11 at Houston's Stafford Centre Auditorium, followed by a landmark performance in Miami on April 12—attended by over 3,000 fans, making it the largest Bangladeshi music concert in the city to date.

noted the tour's historical importance, celebrating Miles' decades-long influence on Bangladeshi music. Organisers expressed hope that this tour will become another major milestone in the band's illustrious legacy.

## New deadline announced for government film grants

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has extended the deadline for government film grant submissions to April 27. Initially set for April 7, the extension was confirmed in a notice signed by Assistant Senior Secretary Sharmin Akhter.

Submissions are invited for full-length and short films under the 2024-25 fiscal year, with plans to fund up to 12 full-length and 20 short films. Eligible applicants include



producers, directors, writers, and related organisations.

Proposals must include the story, screenplay, production plan, and full cast and crew details—submitted in 12 copies. While the ministry sets a target number, past trends show discrepancies in actual grants awarded, with selections influenced by submission volume and other factors, according to a grant committee member.

## NEWS

### Tobacco use declines 13%

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He was presenting the findings at a workshop, organised by Public Health and Informatics Department of the BMU, on trends in tobacco use in Bangladesh (2009-2022) with projection to 2030.

He said tobacco use was 54 percent among people aged between 25 and 69 in 2009. It declined to 47 percent in 2022.

It indicates a 13 percent relative reduction in tobacco use in 13 years, he said.

During the period, smoking declined from 27 percent to 22 percent, a 19 percent relative reduction.

Smokeless tobacco use declined from 36 percent to 31 percent, a 14 percent relative reduction.

As per a 2009 survey, the age of initiation of smoking was 19.1 years while a 2022 survey showed it is 17.7 years.

"It means people are starting to smoke at a comparatively earlier age lately. We did not fare well here," Prof Mostafa said.

The use of e-cigarettes saw a serious

increase during the period.

In the 2017 survey, 3.6 percent people said they used e-cigarette. That number rose to 14.6 percent in a 2022 survey, he said.

"We have to do something in this regard."

The decline in tobacco use in men was a little prominent compared with women.

Although tobacco use decreased in both urban and rural areas, it dropped more prominently in urban areas, he said.

The use of Biri has decreased compared to cigarettes.

Zaman recommended strengthening the tobacco control programme to accelerate the current decline rate.

Special attention should be given to policies and laws to identify the reason for insufficient decline, he said, while calling for another round of survey soon.

Prof Shafium Nahin Shimul of the Institute of Health Economics at Dhaka University, however, said the data set is extremely limited, making

it difficult to draw firm conclusions from either the figures or the study's methodology.

While the analysis suggests tobacco consumption has fallen, the National Board of Revenue statistics indicate cigarette sales are on the rise.

"So, we need further detailed survey to get a better picture," he added.

Amendment to the Tobacco Products (Control) Act is in the works with the view to controlling tobacco use, said Sheikh Momena Moni, an additional secretary to the health services division.

People from all over the country need to get engaged in efforts to reduce tobacco use.

Farmers need to be discouraged from cultivating tobacco, she said.

"We have to do much more. Otherwise, it would be difficult to achieve the target," she said.

Manamur Rashid, joint secretary of the division, Prof Atiqul Islam, chairman of DPHI, and Prof Mujibur Rahman Hawlader, pro vice chancellor of BMU, among others, also spoke at the event.

### One candidate per constituency

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Otherwise, the election will not be free and fair."

He said the five parties also agreed that the next election should be conducted under a proportional representation system – an electoral system in which the distribution of seats corresponds with the proportion of total votes cast for each party. For example, if a party receives 40 percent of the total votes, the PR system would allow it to obtain 40 percent of the seats in parliament.

"Let's not paint the IMF as a villain. These reforms are not being forced – they are necessary and driven by our own needs for resilience," he said.

The Bangladesh delegation also met with officials from the US Treasury Department to discuss a range of issues, including tariffs imposed by US President Donald Trump and complications surrounding repayments for the Rooppur nuclear power plant project.

Due to international sanctions on Russia following its invasion of Ukraine, around \$900 million owed to Moscow has accumulated in an escrow account held by Bangladesh Bank. Officials indicated that the matter would require further discussion.

The delegation is scheduled to continue meetings in Washington through next Saturday.

They further demanded that the Women's Reform Commission formed by the interim government be abolished.

### 12 key AL leaders

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Magistrate Md Mahbubur Rahman's court.

After receiving the court's permission, Palak said, "It is being claimed that I was involved in the murder incident in Badda on August 5. I would like to inform you [court] of one thing. On August 5 last year, at 11:00am, I was present in the parliament... At one stage, I, along with 11 persons, including the speaker, the deputy speaker, were forced to take shelter in a special room. At 2:30am, the army rescued us from there."

Palak further said, "Since I was in the parliament the entire day, I have no connection with any murder that took place on August 5... If interrogation is necessary, then permission should be granted to question me at the jail gate."

However, state lawyer Omar Faruqi opposed his claim of innocence.

He told the court, "We had heard the speaker and others were hiding in parliament on August 5. Palak confirmed it today, yet Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury has not been held accountable."

"We have repeatedly said those who directly shot and killed the anti-discrimination student protesters deserve punishment, and those conspired to commit these murders deserve the same punishment. Zunaid Ahmed Palak is involved in the conspiracy behind these killings," he added.

After hearing both sides, the court placed Palak on a two-day remand.

Tureen Afroz Weeps in Court

Meanwhile, at another court, former ICT senior prosecutor Tureen Afroz broke down in tears during a hearing over her arrest in an anti-terrorism

case. She was escorted to court in a helmet and bulletproof vest.

In the dock, she was consoled by Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President Hasanul Haq Inu and former IGP AKM Shahidul Hoque, among others.

During the hearing, her lawyer requested that she be allowed to speak, citing alleged torture.

With the judge's permission, Tureen said, "I respect the law. I seek justice. I've never held any political post. I only did my job. I'm unwell, I can't walk."

State lawyer Faruqi denied her claims, saying, "She is lying to mislead the court."

Tureen then showed her leg and told the court, "I was tortured."

She was earlier placed on a four-day remand on April 8 in an attempted murder case filed with the Uttara West Police Station.

Chaos in Court over Shahjahan Khan's Statement

Meanwhile, chaos ensued at the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court during former shipping minister Shahjahan Khan's remarks in a murder case filed with Jatrabari Police Station.

State lawyer Faruqi said, "Both lawyers and accused must maintain decorum. The accused shouldn't disrupt proceedings."

Even while the public prosecutor was speaking, a group of pro-BNP lawyers continued to cause commotion and made derogatory remarks toward Shahjahan Khan.

"Are we not allowed to speak? Do we not have the right to express ourselves?" Shahjahan Khan was heard saying to the court at that time.

### Kuet withdraws suspension

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Till filing of the report last night, 23 were continuing their hunger strike demanding the resignation of Vice-Chancellor Prof Muhammad Masud.

Another section of students brought out a procession on the campus around 6:30pm to press home their demand.

However, the teachers' association of Kuet said at a press conference yesterday that it would not accept the resignation of the VC solely on the demand of the protest students.

Meanwhile, students of Dhaka, Jahangirnagar, Rajshahi, and Khulna universities held different programmes in solidarity with the Kuet students.

In another development, the University Teachers' Network, a coalition of private and public university teachers, in a statement yesterday expressed solidarity with the Kuet students.

At Dhaka University, a group of 16 students from the Bangladesh Democratic Students Council has been continuing a hunger strike since Tuesday.

Early Wednesday, several leaders of the National Citizen Party, including Hasnat Abdullah, joined the protests and expressed solidarity with them.

According to the Kuet protesters, members of a student body and other outsiders attacked students on the campus on February 18.

Although a police case was filed, it lacked specific details, and no arrests have been made. Meanwhile, a counter complaint filed by an outsider named 22 students with specific information, including names, departments, and roll numbers.

The university had suspended the 37 students over the incident.

[Our correspondents from respective universities contributed to this report.]



## WHAT'S THE HAPS?

### Exhibition: 'Save the Environment'

Alliance Française de Dhaka presents *Save the Environment*, the 16th solo painting exhibition by acclaimed artist Md Abu Salim.

The exhibition, featuring 18 evocative works, highlights urgent environmental concerns through powerful visual storytelling, inviting art enthusiasts and environmental advocates to reflect on nature's fragility and the need for preservation.

Date: Friday-Tuesday | April 25-May 6

Time: 3-9pm

Venue: Alliance Française de Dhaka, Dhanmondi



## Tarua stages anti-war drama 'All Quiet on the Western Front' at Shilpakala

Dhaka-based troupe Tarua brought the harrowing realities of war to the stage with their latest production, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, at the National Theatre Hall of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy yesterday, at 7pm.

Directed by Bakar Bakul and adapted for the stage by Runa Kanchan, the play is based on Erich Maria Remarque's seminal anti-war novel. Subsequent performances are scheduled for today at 7pm and Friday at 4pm and 7pm.



### No permission needed to arrest FIR accused

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Sikder Mahmudur Razi issued the order and rule following a writ petition challenging the legality of the DMP commissioner's order.

Supreme Court lawyer Md Jasim Uddin filed the writ petition as a public interest litigation, seeking a stay on the order issued by the DMP commissioner's office on April 9.

The order said the officers in charge of the police stations must get prior permission from higher authorities by submitting documents to arrest accused named in FIRs or suspects in the cases related to the anti-discrimination student movement and the subsequent uprising.

Citing the petition, Jasim Uddin told The Daily Star that the DMP commissioner's office order was "illegal" both under the Code of Criminal Procedure and the constitution.

Barrister Ruhul Quddus Kazal appeared for the writ petitioner during the hearing of the petition.

## 4 indicted in Magura child rape case

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prosecutorial adviser to the home ministry, who was appointed to assist the prosecution, also participated in the proceedings.

Following the hearing, he told reporters, "The court has accepted the application to frame charges against the accused based on the charge sheet, the confessional statement of the prime accused under Section 164, and supporting documents."

According to court sources, Hitu Sheikh has been charged with causing death after rape, Sajib Sheikh and Ratul Sheikh with criminal intimidation, and Jaheda Begum with destroying evidence.

Ehsanul further informed reporters that the judge told the accused they may appoint legal counsel by applying under the provisions of the Prison Code.

When asked by the court whether they admitted to the charges, all four accused denied involvement in the crime.