

## WHAT'S THE HAPS?

## Chhayanaut's 'Rabindra Utsab'

Chhayanaut will commemorate the 164th birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore with a two-day Rabindra Festival on May 8 and 9.

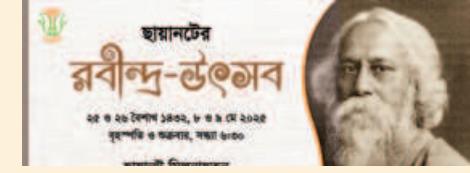
Featuring performances by Chhayanaut's eminent artistes, the festival will celebrate

Tagore's contributions to Bengali literature, music, and arts through poetry recitations, musical renditions, and dance dramas. The event is open to all.

Date: Thursday- Friday | May 8-9

Time: 6:30pm onwards

Venue: Chhayanaut Shongshkriti Bhabon



## Star-studded releases on the horizon again

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

The joyous atmosphere of Eid tends to bring with it the excitement of big-screen blockbusters, and this Eid-ul-Azha is no exception. As theatres continue screening films from Eid-ul-Fitr, producers and directors are shifting focus toward the next festive release window. Several high-profile titles are preparing to hit cinemas during Eid-ul-Azha, with some already generating significant buzz through posters, social media promotions, and star-studded casts.

As has been tradition for years, Eid releases are incomplete without a Shakib Khan starrer. This year, audiences will see the superstar next in Raihan Rafi's

**Taandob.** The film, which is currently in production, stars Sabila Nur opposite Shakib and also features Jaya Ahsan in a special role. Promising action and suspense, **Taandob** is expected to be one of the upcoming Eid's main draws.

Another film generating anticipation is **Insaaf**, starring Mosharrif Karim, Sariful Razz, and Tasnia Farin, adding to the ensemble cast's appeal. This Sanjoy Somadder directorial revealed its first look last week in a poster showcasing a fresh avatar of Karim leaving fans intrigued. The actor himself teased, "We want to keep the film's narrative surprises alive so I won't share much. However, the audience will see me in a new light."

Veteran actor Zahid Hasan is set to return to the silver screen after a long hiatus with the film **Utsob**, directed by Tanim Noor. "It's a unique story," Hasan said about the project. "We have been hoping to release it during a major festival like Eid."

Meanwhile, Arifin Shuvoo is also set to make a comeback to the big screen with the thriller **NeelChokro**, co-starring rising star Mondera Chakraborty. Directed by Mithu Khan, the film is being regarded as a family-friendly Eid thriller. "It's the kind of story audiences can enjoy together," Mondera said.

Also in the lineup is **Esha Murder**, led by **Rehana Maryam Noor** actress Azmeri Haque Badhan, who plays a police

officer in this crime thriller directed by Sunny Sanwar. Though unconfirmed, it's likely to hit cinemas this Eid.

Other potential upcoming releases include **Tagar**, directed by Aalok Hasan and starring Ador Azad alongside Puja Chery; and **Panic**, helmed by Zahid Jewel, with Shobnoma Bubly and Ador Azad in lead roles. In **Panic**, Bubly steps into an uncommon antagonist role, showcasing a different facet of her acting range.

While the full Eid release slate is yet to be finalised, the list is shaping up to be both diverse and promising. More titles may be added in the coming weeks, but it's clear that Eid ul-Azha 2025 is poised for a cinematic celebration.

## 'Helen Keller' takes the spotlight at Shilpkala for Rabindra Jayanti



Swapnadal will present its acclaimed production **Helen Keller** today at 7pm at the Studio Theatre Hall of Bangladesh Shilpkala Academy, marking Rabindranath Tagore's 164th birth anniversary.

Directed by Zahid Repon and written by Apurba Kumar Kundu, the monodrama stars Juana Sobnom in a riveting solo performance. Beyond Keller's remarkable

story, the play explores her profound intellectual connection with Tagore, highlighting how his ideals of dignity and universalism shaped her worldview.

Featuring minimalist staging, Sobnom portrays Keller's journey from isolation to international acclaim. **Helen Keller** has earned accolades at theatre festivals in Japan and India, resonating with global audiences.



## Ferdous Ara to receive Lifetime Achievement Award



Renowned Nazrul Sangeet artiste Ferdous Ara has been confirmed as the recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award at this year's Channel i Music Awards. The ceremony is scheduled to take place on May 19 at a five-star hotel in Dhaka.

Channel i Music Awards producer Iftekhar Munim confirmed the news and commended Ara for her valuable contributions to the music industry. In response, Ara expressed her gratitude, "Receiving recognition while still actively working serves to reinforce an artiste's path and motivates them to continue creating."

The revered singer lauded Channel i's role in promoting diverse musical traditions. Ara also reflected on the scarcity of dedicated music events in Bangladesh.

Following her Ekushey Padak win earlier this year, Ara emphasised the importance of timely recognition for artistes to truly honour and empower their ongoing contributions to society.

# NEWS

## EC to start redrawing soon

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reform commission's recommendations, Akhtar said, "If there is any development on this matter, we will proceed accordingly."

According to the Delimitation of Constituencies Act 2021, the boundaries of Jatiya Sangsad constituencies are based on the population distribution as per the latest census.

The EC publishes a list of constituencies whose boundaries will be redrawn, and voters have the opportunity to file appeals against the decisions. The EC finalises the demarcation after resolving these appeals.

Asked about whether the current EC would follow this process and set a deadline, Akhtar said, "We have to begin the task. Regarding the timeline, I can say it will be decided by our commission. It is too early to comment on the timeline."

The previous EC, led by Kazi Habibur Awal, demarcated 10 constituencies ahead of the 12th national election; before that, the KM Nurul Huda-led commission demarcated 25 in 2018; the Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmed-led commission demarcated 87 in 2013; and the ATM Shamsul Huda-led commission demarcated 133 in 2008.

Transparency International

Bangladesh, in a report published in May 2024, stated that controversies, lawsuits, and legal complications resulted from the demarcation of 198 constituencies in recent national elections.

After the fall of the Sheikh Hasina-led government, the EC received complaints regarding demarcation processes between 2008 and 2024.

In another development, the EC suspended NID verification authority of Ansar and BRAC Bank and launched an investigation after finding evidence that data was being leaked from the two institutions, said ASM Humayun Kabir, director general of the NID wing.

Meanwhile, Mushfiqur Rahman, chairperson of SME Foundation, stressed the importance of training and workshops to improve the financial literacy of female migrant workers.

He also called for policy support to resolve the issues confronting them.

The crisis surrounding female migration is preventable if the country adopts gender-responsive migration policies, said Sheeba Hafiza, chairperson of Migration, Inclusion & Justice Activist.

Shaeen urged policymakers, civil society and international partners to collaborate in addressing the structural vulnerabilities faced by Bangladeshi women throughout the migration process.

"Why do we send unskilled female

workers who have no capacity to bargain? We need policies to ensure that no unskilled migrant workers are sent abroad."

She also called for a national strategy to provide psychosocial support, skill development and community reintegration for returnee female migrants.

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"When we seek an order to freeze the overseas assets of an individual or institution, whether that order is enforceable depends on the laws of that particular country. This is because an act considered a crime in our jurisdiction may not be regarded as such there," said the official, seeking anonymity.

Citing an example, the official added, "Illicit money transfer from Bangladesh to Singapore is a crime under our money laundering laws. But in Singapore, it may not be considered a crime because they view that money as an investment."

Besides, S Alam surrendered his Bangladeshi citizenship in 2020, and holds a Singaporean passport.

A RICH DOMESTIC HELP

The ACC also sought a court order to freeze 262 bank accounts linked to

## S Alam, associates laundered

FROM PAGE 1

to transfer or hand over the properties are underway, and that it was necessary to seize the properties for the sake of the investigation and the subsequent recovery of the assets.

The court directed the deputy commissioners and land registrars of Chattogram and Gazipur to take actions in this regard.

"S Alam Group Chairman Mohammed Saiful Alam, other entities related to him and his associates linked to those entities illegally took anonymous loans from various banks and embezzled the money, and acquired vast wealth in his and his family's name at home and abroad," the ACC filing says.

Alam and his wife Farzana Parveen own movable and immovable properties in Singapore, Cyprus, the British Virgin Islands, and other places, according to a case filed by the ACC on March 25 this year. This case is unrelated to the April 8 submission.

An investigator told The Daily Star that the ACC is yet to apply for the seizure of S Alam and his family's reported wealth abroad due to some legal complications.

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individuals and entities related to S Alam Group.

Investigators found that at least 29 of these bank accounts are held by Marzina Akter, who was once a domestic help at S Alam's residence. These accounts had a deposit of over Tk 1.09 crore during the investigation. Another 10 accounts are held by Saddam Hussein, Marzina's husband. The couple were later employed at Islami Bank, which was taken over by S Alam in 2017, allegedly at gunpoint.

At least 24 bank accounts belonging to S Alam's associate Almas Ali and others had deposits worth Tk 1,374 crore at the time of investigation, the ACC filing shows.

According to documents obtained during the ACC investigation, large sums were misappropriated through fake loans and investments in the names of S Alam's relatives and associates.

These funds were then deposited in various accounts at home and abroad, violating money laundering laws and resulting in the accumulation of wealth beyond known sources income.

"Based on credible intelligence, the Anti-Corruption Commission believes that S Alam and his family members recently attempted to relocate or transfer funds from specific bank accounts, raising concerns that the assets could vanish before the investigation concludes," the ACC submission reads.

The court ordered the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU) and the relevant banks to freeze the accounts.

Since the fall of the Hasina government in August 2024, ACC has so far filed two cases against S Alam and his wife over possession of "illegal wealth" worth Tk 1,539.85 crore.

The anti-graft body also sued two of their sons – Ahsanul Alam and Ashraful Alam -- for alleged embezzlement of nearly Tk 2,200 crore from Islami Bank.

## ACC summons Hasina

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A senior ACC official, requesting anonymity, said failure to appear before the commission may cost Hasina the opportunity to defend herself.

Summons were also sent to the known addresses of Mahbub Ali and Mokammel Hossain in Dhaka and their respective hometowns. Mahbub Ali is behind bars while Mokammel is absconding, law enforcement sources said.

On January 27 this year, the anti-graft body filed four cases against 19 individuals, including Hasina's former military adviser Tarique Ahmed Siddique, over alleged misappropriation of Tk 812 crore from various airport development projects in Dhaka, Chattogram, and Sylhet.

Other accused in the cases include Mohibul Haque, former civil aviation senior secretary, who is in jail, and M Mofidur Rahman, ex-chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh.

## Tagore's 164th birth anniv today

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such as Gora, Chokher Bali, and Shesher Kobita, and plays including Raktakarabi and Dak Ghar.

As a composer, Tagore created over 2,000 songs—collectively known as Rabindra Sangeet—which continue to shape Bengali cultural and musical identity.

Tagore's contributions extend beyond literature, he composed the national anthems of both India and Bangladesh and founded Visva-Bharati University.

## 5,500 new govt jobs likely

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and finalising recruitment rules. Any matter requiring cabinet-level approval is forwarded by the committee after preliminary scrutiny.

Officials said that the agenda for today's meeting has already been distributed to the relevant ministries and divisions.

In addition to proposals for new posts, the committee is expected to consider an amendment to the Bangladesh Civil Service (Age, Qualification and Examination for Direct Recruitment) Rules, 2014. The proposed change follows a meeting of the Advisory Committee on Public Administration held on April 20, which decided to recruit candidates through a special BCS examination.

A senior public administration

### Freeze shares

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During investigation, information on shares and BO accounts in the names of Salman, his family members, and other close associates was discovered, it said.

"Salman and others were attempting to transfer the shares and other assets elsewhere. So, an order is needed to prevent them from doing so," said the ACC in the application.

On March 10, the same court ordered the ACC to take steps to confiscate immovable properties owned by Ahmed Shayan Fazlur Rahman in London.

It also directed the authorities concerned to freeze two accounts of Fazlur Rahman and Shahrir Rahman at Barclays Bank PLC in the UK and shares in a company, RR Global Trading, located in the United Arab Emirates.

On February 24, the same court ordered the anti-graft body to freeze 358 bank accounts belonging to Salman, his family members, and associates.

### Cardinals enter

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Only one ballot was scheduled for yesterday. Thereafter, there can be as many as four votes a day.

The cardinals walked slowly into the chapel, taking part in a solemn Latin chant called the litany of the saints.

They beseeced nearly 100 men and women believed to reside in heaven to pray for them as they prepare to make what arguably will be the most

momentous decision of their lives.

After the cardinals have pronounced their oath, Archbishop Diego Ravelli, the Vatican's master of ceremonies, will pronounce the Latin command "Extra omnes!" (Everyone out!), telling all those not involved in the gathering to leave. The chapel's heavy wooden doors will then slam shut.

The only expected signal from the cardinals during the conclave will come in the form of smoke from a chimney atop the chapel, as the clerics burn their ballots. Black smoke will mark an inconclusive vote; white smoke and the pealing of bells will signal that the 1.4-billion-member Church has a new leader.

At a Mass in St. Peter's Basilica yesterday before