

## BILLIE EILISH wins big at American Music Awards

Billie Eilish emerged as the night's biggest winner at the 2024 American Music Awards, clinching all seven awards she was nominated for, including the coveted Artist of the Year. The Las Vegas ceremony saw her also take home the Album of the Year for *Hit Me Hard and Soft* and Favourite Touring Artist.

Accepting her awards via video call from Europe, Eilish said, "I feel speechless. I wish I could be there tonight." Gracie Abrams won New Artist of the Year, while SZA took home two R&B awards. Beyoncé earned her first AMA wins in the country category with Cowboy Carter, though she was absent.

Kendrick Lamar, despite leading with 10 nominations, won only one—Favourite Hip-Hop Song for *Not Like Us*. Janet Jackson received the Icon Award, and Rod Stewart, honoured with a Lifetime Achievement Award, performed *Forever Young* on stage. The ceremony opened with a medley by host Jennifer Lopez.



## ‘I’ve always believed in clean, honest storytelling’ Afsana Mimi on her big screen return

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Beloved actress and director Afsana Mimi returns to the silver screen this Eid-ul-Azha with *Utshob*, a heartfelt family drama directed by Tanim Noor. The film also reunites her with Zahid Hasan, signalling their first on-screen reunion in over 20 years.

With her signature poise and quiet intensity, Mimi doesn't just step back into the spotlight, she owns it. Once a defining presence in 1990s Bangladeshi television, she now brings that legacy full circle in a film that, she says, moved her deeply enough to say yes.

"I chose to be a part of *Utshob* because the story moved me," Mimi tells The Daily Star during a relaxed afternoon conversation. "When Tanim shared the plot with me, I immediately felt that it was warm, real, and beautifully written—I knew I had to be part of it."

*Utshob* is a family drama, packed with a stellar cast that includes Zahid Hasan, Jaya Ahsan, and Sadia Ayman, among others. But for Mimi, it's also personal—a return not just to acting, but to old friendships.

"I acted with Zahid after more than 20 years. Can you believe that?" she says, smiling. "We had so much fun. We were shooting while Sadia Islam Mou was abroad, so Zahid and I took a selfie and sent it to her. That felt like a full-circle moment."

Her chemistry with Zahid Hasan, once one of television's most iconic pairings, is central to *Utshob*. But Mimi insists the film doesn't belong to any one actor.

"This isn't a one-man show. We're all supporting each other's characters," she explains. "That's what real cinema is—shared, collective storytelling."

And what about the tagline on the film's posters—*not to be watched without family*?

Mimi laughs. "It's true! You need your family around for this one. *Utshob* is about home, about togetherness. It only makes sense that it should be watched that way."

Despite appearing on screen only occasionally in recent years, Mimi hasn't exactly been idle. She's directed several acclaimed television dramas and web projects, and appeared in films like *Jongli*, *Paap Punno*, and *Patalghor*.

"I'm consistently working—just not all the time," she says with a shrug. "I choose stories that speak to me. That's the only rule."

With *Utshob* releasing this Eid-ul-Azha, Afsana Mimi reclaims her space not as a star seeking a comeback, but as an artiste who never left—just someone who waited for the right story.

"I've always believed in clean, honest storytelling," she says. "And with *Utshob*, I think we've done just that."



PHOTO: COURTESY OF CHORKI

## WHAT'S THE HAPS?

### ‘Haate Gorom Shingara’

This Friday Studio 6/6 will present *Haate Gorom Shingara*, a cyanotype exhibition featuring works from its inaugural hands-on workshop. Participants have explored this historic photographic process to create textured, deep blue prints. The event will also include a curated screening of short films by emerging filmmakers, fostering a dialogue between image and motion.

DATE: FRIDAY | MAY 30

TIME: 3-9PM

VENUE: STUDIO 6/6, MOHAMMADPUR



## Bappa Mazumder set for US tour after nine years



Popular singer Bappa Mazumder is set to embark on a US tour this September–October, marking his first American performances since 2016. Organised by US-based entertainment company Iron Cloud, the tour will cover at least 10 major cities, including New York, Florida, California, Chicago, and Los Angeles.

Bappa, fresh from a successful tour in Canada, will be joined by his band Dalchhut, featuring Masum Wahidur Rahman (guitar), John Sharton (bass), Dano Sheikh (drums), Sohel Aziz (keyboard), and Shahan Kabondho (manager).

Speaking to a local daily, Bappa confirmed final discussions are complete, with preparations in full swing. He expressed hopes that the tour would strengthen his connection with the Bangladeshi diaspora through his signature soulful performances.

# NEWS

## Govt struggling to ensure adequate care

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Prof Dr Ferdousi Begum Flora, former president of the Obstetrical and Gynaecological Society of Bangladesh, said, "Among every 10 women, at least three never come in for even one ANC visit. We've failed to bring them into the system."

She added that essential drugs are often out of stock where they are most needed. "Magnesium sulphate for treating preeclampsia is sometimes available in Non-Communicable Disease units, but not in maternity wards."

Training and supervision also fall short, with many medical colleges lacking qualified instructors and updated equipment.

Public awareness, she added, is worryingly low. "Pregnancy is as normal as eating rice. But it can be life-threatening too. That's what people need to understand... The government, the health system, the media, and the public, all need to act."

Her concerns are echoed by DGHS data showing over 1,000 maternal deaths reported in the past year, with nearly half in government facilities. More than 1.1 million complicated pregnancy

cases were admitted last year alone.

Irfana Lima's harrowing journey reveals how critical gaps can become deadly.

The 30-year-old from Gazipur suffered placenta previa, a condition where the placenta blocks the cervix. She lost her baby and had her uterus removed to save her life.

In her sixth month of pregnancy, she began bleeding heavily and collapsed. Hospitals in her upazila and district refused to admit her, directing her to Dhaka Medical College Hospital. "But DMCH is far, and beds are never guaranteed. I was almost dead," she said.

A private hospital in Uttara finally admitted her. "After 21 days, I returned home. But I was never able to hold my baby, who died before I regained consciousness."

Prof Dr Nasrin Akter of DMCH's Feto-Maternal Medicine Unit said patients frequently arrive with complications such as hypertension, diabetes, thyroid disorders, or placenta previa.

"At least two women per week are near-miss cases needing ICU care, but shortages of ICU beds, anaesthetists,

and night-time blood supply severely limit critical care."

She stressed the importance of early screening, stronger referral systems, and emergency transport, especially at the upazila level.

Teenage pregnancies, often due to early marriage, also worsen outcomes, with many young mothers arriving with anaemia or preterm labour.

Dr Raunak Jahan, assistant professor at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital, noted that preeclampsia, caused by high blood pressure, is now the second leading cause of maternal death after postpartum haemorrhage. "It's a multi-organ disorder. Once seizures begin, saving both mother and baby becomes very difficult."

Her unit manages up to 25 high-risk cases daily, yet often lacks access to life-saving drugs like labetalol and magnesium sulphate. "Sometimes we ask patients to buy them or use our own emergency stock."

With only two operation theatres, limited ICU beds, and unreliable blood supply, Dr Jahan said, "Overcrowded, under-resourced wards make respectful maternity care almost impossible."

## Army won't manage Eid waste

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some media reports and on social media platforms.

Mohammad Azaz then clarified that said DNCC itself will be responsible for managing the waste generated during the Eid, adding that the DNCC takes pride in the army's contributions in safeguarding the nation's sovereignty and public security.

The Bangladesh Army, its engineering corps, and different supporting institutions have played a significant role in the development of infrastructure in DNCC and across Bangladesh, Azaz's statement read.

It added that the DNCC will not be working with the army directly, but rather with a supporting institution of the army—Bangladesh Machine Tools Factory (BMTF)—a commercial enterprise operated by the Bangladesh Army.

The BMTF has already provided technical assistance in mosquito control programmes in the city corporations of Sylhet, Chattogram, and Narayanganj, the press statement added.

## Up to \$20b loan money laundered

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organisation can move quickly, but when four or five organisations are involved, it gets caught in a complex bureaucratic web. That's why we are also looking to make some legal changes—because without those, the blame game will just continue, and no real work will get done."

The existing law will be amended to bring the joint task force—formed with representatives from various agencies—under a legal framework. The task force would be incorporated into the Money Laundering Act, giving it official recognition as a government agency.

"Once that happens, the task force will be significantly empowered. It will then act as a coordinating body among all stakeholders, helping us overcome bureaucratic obstacles."

## Overhaul the power structures before polls

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to a betrayal of the Liberation War. "If we bypass these values, we forfeit the democratic future we seek."

Reflecting on the July uprising, he said the movement was led by ordinary people, workers, religious scholars, women, Hindus, and the rising middle class, united in their demand for a systemic change.

He criticised the politicisation of state institutions and warned that replacing one leader with another, without reform, would perpetuate authoritarianism.

Nasiruddin also called for accountability for alleged rights violations committed by law enforcement agencies over the past 15 years. "If justice cannot be ensured institutionally, then the people's court will try them."

He demanded the "separation of the military from the politics".

NCP Member Secretary Akhter Hossain said the existing constitutional framework grants the prime minister absolute power. "The legal structure must be rewritten to prevent authoritarianism."

He said goodwill alone cannot ensure democracy if institutions are built to enable unchecked executive control.

Akhter added that autocratic leaders could still be constrained if the constitution included strong checks and decentralisation.

The government is receiving considerable support from foreign counterparts, said Mansur, also a former economist of the International Monetary Fund.

Already, the assets of one individual have been seized abroad.

"Our goal is to put pressure on the money launderers so that the funds can be recovered through out-of-court settlements. Our intention is not to harass anyone by putting them in jail. We do not aim to shut down anyone's business. We haven't shut down anyone's business—those whose businesses have closed, it happened for other reasons."

The process of recovering the laundered money would take three to five years, Mansur added.

Assistance is being taken from the World Bank's StAR

(Stolen Asset Recovery Initiative), the US Department of Justice, the International Stolen Asset Coordination Committee and the International Centre for Asset Recovery for this end, said BFIU head AFM Shahinul Islam.

Steps have even been initiated to appoint foreign legal firms to aid in asset recovery.

"However, since the process is long-term and complex, it will take time," he added.

Since July last year, the workload of the anti-money laundering agency has increased severalfold, said BFIU Director Mohammad Anisur Rahman.

Suspicious transactions and suspicious activity from banks increased 23 percent to 17,345 last fiscal year.

## Dhaka expects \$750 million

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a briefing yesterday at the Foreign Service Academy.

He is expected to participate in the 30th Nikkei Forum Future of Asia on May 29 and hold bilateral talks with Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba on May 30.

Bangladesh has sought \$1 billion in budget support from Japan, and an announcement is likely during the bilateral meeting, said CA's press secretary.

During the visit, the two countries will sign seven memoranda of understanding (MoUs) in the areas of human resources development, recruitment, infrastructure development, railways, energy, etc.

Shafiqul Alam said the chief adviser is giving much emphasis on sending skilled manpower to Japan.

"We have a target to send 1,00,000 skilled manpower," he said, adding that the government is working to send them very quickly with adequate training, especially on language skills.

During his visit, he is scheduled to hold meetings with Japan Bangladesh Parliamentary Friendship League President Taro Aso, Nippon Foundation President Yohei Sasakawa, JICA president Dr Tanaka Akihiko, JETRO

President Kimura Fukunari.

Prof Yunus will also attend three seminars: one on human resource development and the recruitment of skilled Bangladeshi workers to Japan; one on trade and investment; and one with the heads of Japanese companies and Japanese youth.

He is also scheduled to address an audience at the Soka University of Japan, which is set to confer on him an honorary doctorate.

In the inaugural plenary session, the chief adviser will deliver a keynote speech, calling on Asia and the wider world to work together and build a better future on the theme 'Asia's Challenge in a Turbulent World'.

Dr Tanaka Akihiko, President of JICA, is also expected to make a courtesy call to the CA.

Besides, he will attend a community event at the Bangladesh embassy in Japan. During the meeting, JICA's future cooperation with Bangladesh and the progress of various ongoing projects funded by JICA will be discussed.

Some major Japanese media, including Nikkei Media, Asahi TV, Nippon TV, Asahi Shimbun and NHK will interview the chief adviser.

Sanskar Andolon also spoke at the event, organised by the NCP's Reform Coordination Committee.

Earlier in the programme, Javed Rasin, a member of the Reform Coordination Committee, presented the party's core proposals, including formation of an independent EC, ensuring judicial independence, introducing a non-partisan caretaker government during polls, and launching administrative reforms.

## Muggers shoot money changer

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reviewing CCTV footage to identify the suspects, said Mizanur Rahman, assistant commissioner of police of Mirpur Zone.

This incident is the latest in a series of killings and muggings in the capital over the past few weeks, raising fresh concerns over Dhaka's law and order.

On Sunday night, two masked assailants shot dead Kamrul Anshad Shadhon, 52, joint convener of BNP's Gulshan Thana unit, in Badda's Gudaraghat area.

A day earlier, a group of three muggers attacked a man beneath the Pallabi metro station around 11:30pm, stabbing him and fleeing with his phone.