



PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

The return of the original OTT & Digital Content Awards

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

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Blender's Choice – The Daily Star OTT & Digital Content Awards is back, ready to honour the talents of Bangladesh's dynamic digital entertainment landscape. Presented by Ispaniani and The Daily Star, this year's edition features an expanded and more inclusive lineup of 29 categories, reflecting the growing diversity of content across OTT and digital platforms. Nominations opened yesterday and will remain open until July 20.

A press conference announcing the event was held on Tuesday (June 24). Omar Hannan, General Manager, Ispaniani Tea Ltd; Ajoy Kumar Kundu, CEO, Mediacom Ltd; and Imran Kadir, Head of Marketing, The Daily Star, spearheaded the event. Adding to the excitement, TikTok returns as the Entertainment Partner.

Celebrities, including Azmeri Haque Badhan, Rafaith Rashid Mithila, Yash Rohan, Sharif Siraj, Aditi Rahman Dola, Sarika Sabah, Partho Sheikh, Jahid Nirob, Parsha Mahjabeen Purnee, Masha Islam, Rizvi Rizu, and Saad Salmi Naovi were present at the event.

The award categories include: 9 Popular Choice Awards in Film, Drama, and Series; 4 music categories recognizing originality and impact; 12 jury-selected awards for critical and industry acclaim; 3 content creator awards; and 1 People's Choice Award, voted entirely by the audience.



(From left) Omar Hannan, Ajoy Kumar Kundu and Imran Kadir.

Tajdin Hassan, Chief Business Officer at The Daily Star, stated: "These awards celebrate the bold and brilliant minds reshaping Bangladeshi entertainment. We're not just awarding talent — we're championing a movement."

Echoing this, Omar Hannan of Ispaniani added: "We're proud to support platforms that drive the cultural narrative of Bangladesh forward."

Umais Naveed from TikTok noted: "This partnership reflects our commitment to spotlighting Bangladesh's most innovative digital voices and amplifying their reach."

"OTT has made a significant impact on our entertainment industry. Many actors, especially character artists, struggled to find work in television due to low budgets," shared Azmeri Haque. "OTT platforms have

opened up opportunities for a wider range of roles and given visibility to talented actors who were previously sidelined. As an actor, I see this as a positive shift. Directors now have more creative freedom to explore diverse stories, which has brought a refreshing change to our industry."

Rafath Rashid Mithila also weighed in: "Traditionally, most stories have been told from a male perspective, and women's participation in directing has remained limited. But OTT has started to change that. We're seeing more female-centric characters and narratives told from a woman's point of view, which is crucial," she maintained. "Genres like thrillers and dramas are now exploring these stories in more depth. In *Myself Allen Swapan*, while the plot centers around Allen Swapan, the character Shaita plays a vital role in driving the narrative."

Popular musician Jahid Nirob expressed his excitement about the awards' inclusion of music categories: "This is a really exciting time for musicians in Bangladesh. The introduction of a category for digital music releases in The Blender's Choice – The Daily Star OTT & Digital Content Awards is a big encouragement. It gives recognition to artists like us who work behind the scenes—whether it's composing background scores or releasing fewer songs. Last year, I received several nominations, and this year I'm hopeful again (laughs). It's truly inspiring."

Blackpink to reunite with new track after three-year break

Global K-pop sensation Blackpink will debut a new song during their concert in Goyang on July 5 (KST), launching their *Deadline World Tour*.

YG Entertainment, the group's label, confirmed the track's release, stating, "There were many discussions about how to release this new song. We decided to debut it first at the Goyang concert, which holds significance as the starting point of the *Deadline* tour."

This marks the group's first release since their 2022 hit *Shut Down*. Members Lisa, Jennie, Rosé, and Jisoo have since focused on solo careers.

Recently, Rosé made history by becoming the first female solo artiste to win Bonsang at the Seoul Music Awards and received the World Best Artist Award for her album *Rosé*.



Tom Cruise and Brad Pitt reunite at 'F1' premiere after decades



Tom Cruise and Brad Pitt reunited on the red carpet at the London premiere of *F1*, marking their first public appearance together in 31 years since *Interview with the Vampire* (1994).

Directed by *Top Gun: Maverick's* Joseph Kosinski, *F1* is Pitt's latest racing drama. Kosinski revealed he once pitched a *Ford v Ferrari* film starring both actors, but it was shelved due to budget constraints. Pitt joked he's open to working with Cruise again— "as long as it's on the ground."

Meanwhile, Cruise's *Mission: Impossible – The Final Reckoning* has grossed over \$540 million worldwide ahead of *F1*'s June 27 release.

NEWS

Court orders seizure of S Alam couple's foreign assets

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residential building in Cyprus, shares of 19 companies in the British Virgin Islands, and shares of six companies in the Jersey Islands.

Of the 19 companies in the British Virgin Islands, Hazel International PTE Limited is owned by S Alam and his wife Farzana, and its market value stands at \$5,95,000.

They also have another company named Peacock Property Holdings Limited, whose market price is not mentioned.

Besides, the couple owns six other companies in the Jersey Islands, whose market value is not mentioned in the ACC applications. Jersey is a self-governing dependency of the

British Crown.

Judge Md Zakir Hossain of Dhaka Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court passed the order after ACC Deputy Director Tahasin Monabil Had, who leads the inquiry team, submitted three applications in this regard.

In the applications, the ACC official said during the inquiry of money laundering by the ACC, credible evidence has emerged indicating that the couple have acquired several moveable and immovable assets (shares in companies) through proceeds of crime, especially utilising funds obtained by illegal means.

"The ACC official came to know from credible sources that the couple was trying to transfer their properties

elsewhere. So, an order is needed to prevent them from doing so," said the ACC in the applications.

The court ordered the authorities to send the copies of the order to the relevant authorities in those countries for the next course of action.

On June 17, the same court ordered the anti graft body to confiscate 200.26 acres of immovable properties owned by S Alam, his family members, and their beneficiaries over corruption allegations.

The market price of the properties is Tk 180.61 crore.

On April 23, the same court ordered the ACC to confiscate 9,646.04 kathas of immovable properties of S Alam, his family members, and their

beneficiaries over graft allegations. The market value of the properties stands at Tk 407.21 crore.

On April 17, the same court directed the graft watchdog to freeze 1,360 bank accounts of them over graft allegations. The accounts have Tk 2,619 crore deposited in them.

It also asked the ACC to confiscate 7,919.52 kathas of immovable properties of S Alam, his family members, and their beneficiaries over April 9.

Besides, on January 30, the court ordered the ACC to confiscate 58 acres of immovable properties belonging to S Alam and his family members in connection with corruption allegations.

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