



PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

The return of the original OTT & Digital Content Awards



This award celebrates the bold and brilliant minds reshaping Bangladeshi entertainment. We're not just awarding talent — we're championing a movement.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

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 Ispahani 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, Ispahani 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, Rafiath 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 Ispahani 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 artistes, 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."

Rafiath 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 Shaila 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 a Bonsang at the Seoul Music Awards and received the World Best Artist Award for her album **Rosie**.



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.



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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 Haq, 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 on 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.

Hearing on charge framing

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and Asaduzzaman, who are currently on the run.

Hasina has been in India since August 5. Police had earlier informed the tribunal, citing newspaper reports, that Asaduzzaman is also believed to be there.

Meanwhile, Mamun's family has appointed Jaia Bin Amjad as his defence lawyer.

Jaia began his legal career as an intern under Mohammad Shishir Manir, a former member of the defence team for top Jamaat-e-Islami leaders executed for crimes against humanity during the Liberation War. When Mamun was produced before the tribunal yesterday, his lawyer was present.

The ICT prosecution pressed formal charges against the three on June 1. The tribunal took cognisance of the charges the same day.

They face five counts of crimes against humanity:

The first charge relates to murder, torture, and inhumane acts for allegedly aiding, abetting, and failing to prevent violent attacks by law enforcers and Awami League cadres on unarmed student protesters.

The second accuses them of ordering the use of lethal weapons, including those used from helicopters and drones, to subdue protesters. The prosecution says the trio are guilty by way of superior command responsibility, complicity, facilitation, and conspiracy.

Aedes larvae found

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However, government establishments were out of the study preview.

Arifur Rahman, who works in a voluntary organisation that conducts cleaning and sanitation activities in Barguna town, said, "We think the cleaning and sanitation works have not been done properly since the political changeover on August 5 last year. That is why the dengue situation has worsened here."

Chittaranjan Shil, president of Barguna Citizens' Committee, a civil society body, blamed the lack of a proper sewerage system, poor hygiene, and inadequate sanitation for the surge of Aedes.

"This is not just fuelling the spread of dengue but also other infectious diseases. We call for urgent and extensive sanitation measures by the authorities," he said.

In the absence of elected government representatives, the Local Government Division's Deputy Director Animesh Biswas is currently overseeing the cleaning operations of Barguna municipality.

"We have already cleaned 30 canals and ponds. Every day, mosquito control and sanitation teams are working," he told The Daily Star.

facilitation, and conspiracy.

The third charge concerns the July 16 murder of protester Abu Sayed, where the three allegedly issued orders, incited, abetted, facilitated, conspired, and were complicit in the killing.

The fourth involves orchestrating the murder of six unarmed protesters in Dhaka's Chankharpul area on August 5 through direct orders, incitement, abetment, facilitation, complicity, and conspiracy.

The fifth charge accuses them of shooting dead five protesters and injuring one. The prosecution also alleges the trio were involved by way of complicity, facilitation, and instigation in burning five dead bodies and burning another protester alive.

Meanwhile, the tribunal extended by two months the deadline for submitting the probe report against Hasina and 10 others, including forcibly retired Maj Gen Ziaul Ahsan, in a separate enforced disappearance case.

Also yesterday, the prosecution informed told the tribunal that the ICT's investigation agency on June 19 submitted a probe report in the case filed over the burning of five dead bodies and setting another protester on fire in Ashulia.

The report named 16 individuals, including several police officials, as accused. Eight have been arrested so far. Seven of them were produced before the tribunal during yesterday's hearing.

He also blamed the public apathy for the deteriorating dengue situation in the town.

"Most of the people here store rainwater in earthen pots for cooking. These pots have turned into the breeding spots of Aedes mosquitoes," said Animesh.

Meanwhile, the dengue situation may very well be even worse at the union level, as the IEDCR study also found Aedes mosquito larvae in over 75 percent of the samples collected from 46 houses visited in one "high endemic union" of Barguna Sadar upazila.

According to data from the Barishal Divisional Health Office, 3,962 dengue cases were recorded in the division between January and June 24 this year.

Alarmingly, 60 percent of those cases were reported in Barguna alone. Of the nine dengue-related deaths reported in the division so far, six were from Barguna.

Gazi Zahid Hossain, convener of the Barishal Citizens' Awareness Committee, said, "Healthcare facilities must be strengthened in this region. Hospitals must be equipped to conduct dengue testing, perform platelet transfusions, and provide adequate intensive care support."

46 pushed in thru Sylhet, Lalmonirhat borders

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six men, eight women, and six children, were pushed into Bangladeshi territory through the Noakot border in Chhatak upazila of Sunamganj.

Of the 39 people, 38 are residents of Kurigram and one is from Pabna, said the BGB official.

BGB reported that these individuals are Bangladeshi nationals who had entered India illegally at different times in the past and had been residing in various parts of the country before being apprehended and pushed back by the Indian border force.

Lt Col Nazmul further said that the process of handing them over to the respective local police stations

for necessary legal proceedings is currently underway.

In Lalmonirhat, Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) detained seven individuals, including three children, from the Hosnabad border area in Patgram upazila early yesterday after India's Border Security Force (BSF) allegedly pushed them into Bangladeshi territory.

Without any prior coordination with Bangladeshi authorities, seven people from two families were pushed back by BSF personnel through sub-pillar no. 2 of main pillar no. 882 around 5:30am, according to BGB.

BGB personnel later detained them and handed them over to the Patgram

Police Station for verification. Police identified the returnees as Bangladeshi nationals from Khalishpur in Khulna's Daulatpur upazila.

The returnees are Kawsar Ali, 70, and his brother Khurshid Alam, 50; Kawsar's wife, Munni Khatun, 59; Khurshid's wife, Tara Khatun, 45, and their three daughters, Rezia Akhter, 12, Saniya Khatun, 10, and Amena Khatun, 7.

Speaking to journalists, Khurshid Alam said, "We had been living and working as labourers in Delhi for nearly 20 years. All three of our daughters were born in India."

"Recently, Indian police detained us and handed us over to BSF, who later forcibly pushed us across the

Jamaat gets registration with EC, polls symbol back

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in national elections.

On June 1 of this year, the Appellate Division cleared the way for the Jamaat to get back its party registration and asked the Election Commission to decide on the next steps.

Three days later, the EC announced that it would restore Jamaat's registration and reinstate the "balance scale" as its official electoral symbol.

In December 2016, the Supreme Court decided that the "balance scale" symbol would be reserved

exclusively for the judiciary as a symbol of justice.

This led the EC to drop the symbol from the official list through a gazette issued in March 2017.

Jamaat lost the right to contest parliamentary elections after the HC declared its registration with the EC illegal on August 1, 2013, following a writ petition.

Maulana Syed Rezaul Haque Chandpuri, secretary general of the Bangladesh Tariqat Federation, along with 24 others, filed the petition on January 25, 2009, seeking a court order declaring the party's

registration illegal.

The EC subsequently scrapped Jamaat's registration in October 2018 ahead of the 11th national election.

Jamaat later filed an appeal with the Appellate Division, challenging the HC verdict. The Appellate Division began hearing the appeal on December 3 last year.

On August 1 last year, four days before its ouster, the Awami League government banned Jamaat and its student wing, Islami Chhatra Shibir, and others through an executive order. The organisations were prohibited under the Anti-Terrorism

Act, 2009.

The interim government on August 28 last year lifted the ban on Jamaat, Shibir, and all of Jamaat's affiliated organisations.

Jamaat was first banned in the newly independent Bangladesh in 1972 over their anti-liberation role under a new constitutional provision that banned politics based on religion.

In 1976, the then-military regime repealed the restriction by issuing a martial law proclamation, allowing the formation and functioning of organisations based on religion.