

STEVEN SPIELBERG speaks out against AI in filmmaking

Steven Spielberg, known for his 2001 film *AI Artificial Intelligence*, has voiced strong opposition to using artificial intelligence in creative aspects of filmmaking.

Speaking to Reuters during a ceremony at Universal Studios, he said, "I don't want AI making any creative decisions that I can't make myself." While he acknowledged AI's potential in fields like medicine, he warned its use on film sets could threaten human creativity and jobs.

Recalling how CGI in *Jurassic Park* replaced stop-motion animation, Spielberg noted that it made certain careers obsolete. Though open to AI for behind-the-scenes tasks like budgeting, the director made it clear he does not support its use in front of the camera— "not quite yet."



RAINDROPS & RABINDRA SANGEET HSBC's monsoon soiree

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Every year, monsoon rolls in with its familiar grace, cloud-sealed skies, the smell of petrichor, and a quiet pull towards the poetic. A season that makes hearts feel a little softer, and time stand still amidst the urban chaos.

To welcome the onset of this season, HSBC Bangladesh hosted an intimate soiree *Abar Eshchhe Ashar* last Friday evening with timeless songs of Rabindranath Tagore, the maestro whose verses have etched the beauty of Bangla's monsoon into the hearts of millions.

The event took place in a warm indoor setting at Hotel Sheraton, Dhaka, bringing together over 600 clients, stakeholders, and guests. After a short video setting the mood of monsoon, Chief Executive Officer Md Mahbub ur Rahman of HSBC Bangladesh, took to the stage to welcome the guests.

The programme started off with prominent artiste Adity Mohsin's charming renditions of Tagore's classics. As the first strains of the classic *Abar Eshchhe Ashar* filled the air, the ballroom turned into a sanctuary of silent emotions. Behind the vocals, a skilled ensemble brought



PHOTO: COURTESY

mellow magic to the space.

Adding more to the charm, renowned artiste Jayanta Chattopadhyay mesmerised the audience with soulful recitations of Tagore's poems in between the ballad of songs. With each verse, his voice traversed the essence of monsoon's glory throughout the room.

The evening's performances mirrored the shifting moods that define Tagore's artistry, moving from whispered prayers, quiet yearning, to dreamy narratives; delicate, immersive and filled with memories.

One after the next, soft verses of

Badol Diner Prothom Kodom Ful, Oi Malatilata Dole, Bajra Manik Diye Gantha, Amar Nishitho Rater Badol Dhara, Aji Jhoro Jhoro Mukhoro Badolo Dine, and more of Tagore's masterworks floated through the room, creating a kaleidoscope of nostalgic tunes. Each song steeped in monsoon's romanticism became a moment of shared language and feelings.

As the final note faded into applause, the evening slipped into its closing chapter filling the room with gentle conversations and ending the quiet celebration of drizzles and melodies.

Cate Blanchett's surprise cameo ends 'Squid Game' finale

Cate Blanchett makes a surprise appearance in the *Squid Game* series finale, fuelling speculation about a possible US spinoff. In the final scene, the camera cuts to Los Angeles, where Blanchett appears as a mysterious recruiter, hinting at an American version of the deadly game.

Her cameo adds major star power to the franchise, already Netflix's most-watched series. All six episodes



of the third and final season were released globally on Friday, June 27.

The season concludes Gi Hun's (Lee Jung-jae) journey and heightens the show's anti-capitalist themes, including a shocking twist involving a newborn contestant. Blanchett's arrival signals a global expansion, with Netflix expected to reveal more about the future of *Squid Game* in the coming weeks.

'Kaanta Laga' fame Shefali Jariwala dies at 42



Shefali Jariwala, best known for her iconic appearance in the music video *Kaanta Laga*, has passed away at the age of 42, reportedly due to cardiac arrest. She was brought to Bellevue Hospital in Mumbai on Wednesday, June 25, but was declared dead on arrival.

Her husband, actor Parag Tyagi, and others were present. The news was first confirmed by journalist Vickey Lalwani. Her body has been sent to Cooper Hospital for a post-mortem.

Known for her roles in *Mujhse Shaadi Karogi*, *Big Boss 13*, and *Nach Baliye*, Shefali was also an advocate for mental health and women's empowerment. Tributes have poured in from celebrities, including Mika Singh and Aly Goni, mourning the loss of the beloved actor-model.

'Neelpodmo' wins Best Feature Film at Tokyo Lift-Off Film Festival



Towlfque Elahi's directorial film *Neelpodmo (The Blue Lotus)*, produced by Impress Telefilm and starring Runa Khan, has won the Best Feature Film award at the Tokyo Lift Off Film Festival 2025.

The director described the film as a research-based project and expressed surprise and joy at the recognition, calling it the film's first major honour. He credited the entire cast,

crew, and streaming platform iScreen for the achievement.

Featuring performances by Runa Khan, Rashed Mamun Apu, Rokeya Prachy, and others, *Neelpodmo* explores the lives and rights of sex workers in Daulatdia. The film had its world premiere at the Suchitra Sen International Bengali Film Festival in New York and was also screened at the Dhaka Int'l Film Festival.

NEWS

Left warns of tougher protests

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government move.

Mentioning that there is a war situation in the Rakhine state of Myanmar, Prince expressed concern that providing aid passage to the area would involve the country in the war trap of imperialist powers.

Socialist Party of Bangladesh (SPB) General Secretary Bazlur Rashid Firoze vowed to start tough street movements like hartals and blockades if the government proceeds with such decisions.

The interim government was supposed to conduct trials of mass killings committed during the July uprising last year, carry out some reforms and hold a free and fair national election for democratic transition of power, he said.

There is no visible progress of the desired trials of mass killing and no specific date has been declared for the election yet.

"Rather, the interim government

is keeping busy with some activities for which they are not mandated," he added.

Other left leaders demanded cancelling the agreement with Elon Musk's Starlink project and terminating all unequal treaties with imperialist powers.

Central Coordinator of Left Democratic Alliance as well as SPB (Marxist) Masud Rana, Bangladesher Samyabadi Andolon Convener Shubhrangshu Chakrabarty, Gono Mukti Union Central Coordinator Nasir Uddin Nasu, Bangladesher Biplobi Communist League General Secretary Iqbal Kabir Jahid, Gonoantrik Biplobi Party General Secretary Mosharefa Mishu and Bangladesher Socialist Party General Secretary Shahidul Islam spoke among others.

CPB Chattogram district unit President Ashok Saha chaired the rally moderated by SPB Chattogram In-charge Al Kadery Joy.

The road march kicked off on Friday morning with an inaugural rally in front of Jatiya Press Club in Dhaka. On the first day, several street rallies were held on the way to Comilla where the protest rally was held at Comilla Town Hall at night. The march later reached Feni.

The march resumed yesterday morning with a rally at Feni followed by street rallies and processions at Baroiyarhat in Mirsarai and Sitakunda.

Later, a huge procession of over 2,000 people marched toward the port area to end at the concluding rally.

As part of the demonstration, activists displayed placards with slogans such as "Go DP World, go Dubai", "Interim government is the gatekeeper of imperialism," "Ports and corridors are not for foreigners," "Scrap all anti-national unequal deals," and "Cancel the agreement with US company Starlink".

Bangladesh's digital sphere in freefall

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and citizens, threats, violence against women journalists, restrictions on freedom of assembly and the abuse of enforcement mechanisms.

The developments are not isolated incidents but part of a broader architecture of repression, it said.

A culture of impunity, ideological backlash, and selective enforcement of laws are enabling the steady erosion of rights that underpin a democratic society.

"If left unchecked, this climate will continue to marginalise critical voices, dismantle trust in institutions, and undermine the very ideals of justice, equity and inclusive governance that Bangladesh aspires to."

The report urged the government, policymakers and relevant stakeholders to enact laws consistent with international human rights treaties and standards, ensuring they do not curtail freedom of expression.

Ahmed Swapan Mahmud, executive director of VOICE, condemned recent government remarks labelling mobs as pressure groups, stating that organised groups are orchestrating mob attacks. He underscored the need to raise voices against such practices.

A culture of silence continues to prevail in society, where people often remain quiet unless a crisis directly affects them, said Rezaur Rahman Lenin, a researcher and human rights activist.

Meaningful change can take place if individuals view another person's crisis as their own and if the society collectively sees state issues as shared problems.

"If I cannot transform 'I' into 'we', then the cage of stagnation in which we live will remain unbroken, and we will not find a way out," he said.

Mahpara Alam, researcher fellow at One Future Network, South Asia, emphasised the need for partnerships with social media platforms such as

Facebook and TikTok to ensure the swift removal of harmful content.

She called for digital literacy campaigns in colleges, universities, and among young people, enabling them to understand which types of content may cause harm if shared and to identify misinformation.

While a well-structured wage board framework exists on paper, the key question remains whether it is being implemented and monitored effectively in practice, said Udisa Islam, city editor at Bangla Tribune.

She recommended establishing a clear monitoring mechanism to track whether the wage board framework is in place, which institutions are complying, and which are not.

"Journalists cannot be expected to fulfil their duties with only an ID card while being denied a dignified life and economic security. Such conditions are essential for independent journalism," she added.

Those backing proportional

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February next year. "All democratic people have not struggled for local government elections. We have fought for 17 years for a free, fair, and neutral national election. We have lost countless lives to establish our right to vote."

Salahuddin said the sacrifice made by martyrs during the student-led mass uprising reflects the desire for a truly democratic state in this country.

"We'll certainly be able to build that democratic state if a political government is established through a free and fair national election."

He said a consensus proposal has

been made through a joint statement to hold the national election in the week before Ramadan and in the first half of February 2026, following discussions in London between Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus and BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman.

"It'll only be effective when the chief adviser conveys the message and instructions to the Election Commission through the appropriate process in this regard... When the Chief Adviser's Office, the Election Commission, or both inform the nation together, only then will we be truly assured that the election will be held at that time."

Israeli strike on south Lebanon kills one: ministry

AFP, Beirut

An Israeli strike on southern Lebanon killed one person on Saturday, the Lebanese health ministry said, the latest attack despite a ceasefire between Israel and Iran-backed Hezbollah.

In a statement, the health ministry said that an "Israeli enemy" drone strike on a car in Kunin, south Lebanon, killed one man in a preliminary toll.

The Israeli military did not immediately comment on the incident.

The attack comes a day after Israel killed a woman and wounded 25 other people in strikes across the country's south.

Lebanon's state-run National News Agency reported that the woman was killed in an Israeli drone strike on an apartment in the city of Nabatiyeh.

Israeli military spokesman Avichay Adraee said on social media that the army "did not target any civilian building".

The Friday attacks included a "wave of successive heavy strikes" in the Nabatiyeh region which injured seven people, according to the NNA.

No money

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Hawlder lamented the minimal four percent allocation for research this year.

He said research should ideally receive 10 to 15 percent of the budget to meet public expectations in the health sector.

Asked why around 45 percent of last year's research funds remained unused, VC Shahinul attributed it to frequent administrative changes over the past

year, which stalled implementation. He added that the 2025-26 budget prioritises several areas, including increased funds for patient medicine, a dedicated allocation for infection prevention, and more resources for the library and journals.

BMU Pro-Vice Chancellor (Administration) Prof Md Abul Kalam Azad and Treasurer Prof Nahreen Akhtar also spoke at the press conference.

16-POINT DECLARATION

At the rally, IAB Spokesperson Gazi

Ataur Rahman read out its 16-point declaration.

Some key demands in the declaration included that elections to local government bodies be completed before the national election. In the future, a provision must be made for all local elections to be held under a non-partisan caretaker government before the national election.

To realise the aspirations of the July uprising and to build an oppression- and corruption-free Bangladesh, a "July Charter" must be declared within the month of July based on national consensus.

IAB also demanded making public all deals signed with neighbouring India, as well as scrapping of all "anti-state" deals.

The Islamist party also called for practicing Islamic ideology at all state levels to protect the country's sovereignty, ensure people's safety and communal harmony, establish peace and order, and achieve desired development and progress.

Suhrawardy Udayan and surrounding areas — stretching from Shahbagh to Paltan intersection, Kakrail Mosque, and Doel Chattar — were packed with hundreds of thousands of participants, including both party supporters and members of IAB.

The huge turnout caused significant traffic congestion in the nearby areas.