

## Sabina Yasmin returns with patriotic anthem 'Praner Bangladesh'

Veteran singer Sabina Yasmin marks her return with a new patriotic song titled *Praner Bangladesh*, composed and written by Arif Hossain Babu, with musical arrangement by Rohan Raj.



Blending modern tones with national sentiment, the track will soon be released on Orin Multimedia's YouTube channel. The songstress, who recently recovered from a health setback after collapsing on stage in January, called the composition "modern, yet rooted".

Babu expressed fulfilment in having his song voiced by the National Award winning icon. Earlier, Yasmin's duet *Amar Potaka Lal-Shobuje Anka* with Asif Akbar received wide appreciation.

## Bappa Mazumder to star in intimate solo concert

Renowned musician Bappa Mazumder is set to perform a solo concert on July 22 as part of the *Yamaha on True Sound* series at the Yamaha Flagship Centre in Dhaka.

The evening will feature reimagined versions of his popular songs with fresh arrangements. "A solo show is pivotal for any artiste," said Bappa, emphasising the importance of such intimate performances.

Tickets are priced at Tk 2,000 and available via Get Set Rock, with the concert starting at 8pm and gates opening at 6pm.

This marks his first solo show since *Bappa Mazumder's Odyssey* in 2023. He is also preparing to release a new single, *Agamikal*, and planning a US tour for September–October.



SHARMIN JOYA

Elahi Towfique's film *Neelpodmo (The Blue Lotus)*, featuring Runa Khan in the lead role, was recently awarded Best Feature Film at this year's Tokyo Lift-Off Film Festival.

Elated by the success, the actress, who is currently on holiday with her family, spoke to The Daily Star from Istanbul, Turkey. "Our film first premiered at the 23rd Dhaka International Film

Festival and received acclaim from both critics and audiences. Now that it was recognised as the Best Feature Film in Japan, I'm definitely happy and honoured. I'm truly grateful to the entire team for believing in the project," she shared.

The film's director, Elahi Towfique, a university professor, conducted extensive research, studying the history of the Daulatdia brothel in depth, before making the film.

"To the best of my knowledge, it's one of the largest brothels in Asia. And *Neelpodmo* is a

documentation of the lives of the women living there."

"Bringing their stories to the screen is a significant achievement in my career. Interestingly, the story is woven in a way that the audience can relate to many untold and hidden narratives of those who reside in that place," explained the *Halda* actress.

She further noted that this project stands out because of its deep research, something rarely seen in the industry. "Stories like this aren't told very often. While I played the lead role, it was a great challenge for me as an artiste. I learned various new information about the lives of women and girls we know as sex workers."

She added, "From the outside, we only see their vibrant clothes and colourful



PHOTO: COLLECTED

makeup, but we rarely consider what goes on in their minds—lives marked by trauma and betrayal. Very few dare to explore that side of their existence."

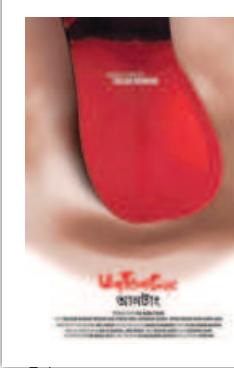
Runa pointed out that many of these women once had 'normal' lives but were forced into sex work. "Only a few choose this path willingly. Most are trapped—brought here through betrayal, victims of trafficking, or even born into it."

Reflecting on her role, Runa said it was her director's vision that helped her truly embody the character. "We shot across real locations, and the people whose stories we portrayed were extremely supportive. We're deeply grateful to them."

Runa, after visiting four states in the USA, is currently visiting Turkey.

She is also awaiting the release of three other projects: Masud Pothik's *Bok*, Kaushik Sankar Das's *Dafon*, Zahid Hossain's *Neelamonthon*, and a short film by Sohel Rana Boyati.

## Bangladeshi short film headed to South Africa



Bangladeshi short film *Untongue*, directed by Golam Rabbani, has been officially selected for the Waterloo Film Festival (WFF), scheduled to take place in Durban, South Africa, from July 4 to 6.

The film, exploring themes of the right to expression, will represent Bangladesh among 82 global entries and 16 musical films.

*Untongue* has already received an Honourable Mention at the Venice Intercultural Film Festival and has been screened at numerous local and international events, including BUFT Film Fest and the BSA Film Festival.

Featuring a cast including Mizanur Rahman and Prosun Azad, the film follows Rabbani's earlier acclaimed work *Chhurat*. His upcoming projects *Stitch Life* and *Nishi* are awaiting release.

## BTS to release first-ever live album this month



Global pop sensation BTS will release their first-ever live album, *Permission to Dance on Stage - Live*, on July 18.

The album includes 22 tracks from their world tour, capturing stadium shows in Seoul, Los Angeles, and Las Vegas. Launched online in October 2021, the tour drew over four million fans globally.

Live versions of hits like *Dynamite*, *Butter*, *On*, and *Boy With Luv* will be officially released for the first time. Moreover, the album mirrors the full concert setlist, allowing fans to relive or newly discover the tour's highlights.

Also included is a 141-minute concert video titled *Permission to Dance on Stage - Seoul*, and a 92-page photobook with exclusive interviews, behind-the-scenes moments, and reflections from the members.

# NEWS

## Charges pressed against Chinmoy

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Ex-ISKCON leader Chinmoy – also the spokesperson for Sammilita Sanatan Jagaran Jote – was shown arrested in the Alif murder case by a court on May 5 following a police application.

On October 31 last year, Firoz Khan, former general secretary of Chattogram's Mohora Ward BNP, filed a case with Kotwali Police Station, accusing Chinmoy and 18 others of disrespecting the national flag during a rally of the Hindu community on October 25 in the port city's New Market area.

On November 26 last year, Chinmoy was sent to jail after a Chattogram court rejected his bail plea in the

sedition case.

Following the bail rejection, his supporters blocked the police prison van on its way to jail and staged a demonstration demanding Chinmoy's immediate release.

Police later charged with batons to disperse the agitating supporters, triggering a clash in the court building area that afternoon.

Advocate Alif, a lawyer of the Chattogram Court, was brutally beaten and hacked to death outside the court premises during triangular clashes between Chinmoy's supporters, police, and a group of lawyers.

In connection with the vandalism, attacks, and clashes, police filed three

cases – for assault on police, vandalism, and obstructing law enforcement from performing official duties – accusing 79 named individuals and around 1,400 unidentified ones.

Alif's father, Jamal, filed a murder case against 31 individuals, while his brother Khan-e-Alam filed another case accusing 115 persons, including 70 lawyers, with Kotwali Police Station.

Police held 10 accused, mostly cleaners by profession, after their presence was detected in CCTV footage, police said.

Among the accused, Chandan Das, Ripon Das, and Rajib Bhattacharya gave confessional statements before the court involving their roles in the murder.

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**US aid cuts may force millions more from homes**  
Says Danish NGO

AFP, Copenhagen

Cuts to global aid budgets spearheaded by the United States could nearly double the number of people forced to flee their homes this year, the Danish Refugee Council warned yesterday.

US President Donald Trump has cut 83 percent of funding for overseas programmes run by development agency USAID, with France, Germany and Britain also slashing their aid commitments.

The Danish NGO warned that development programmes directly targeted the issues that force people to flee their homes – conflict, rights violations, the effects of climate change, and economic crises.

"When funding is suddenly cut, lifelines are cut: The vital services that protect vulnerable communities from poverty, hunger, and displacement abruptly disappear, leading to tragic consequences," the group's Secretary General Charlotte Slente said in a statement.

If US funding is fully withdrawn and other donors also decrease aid, the council said, it could lead to a "staggering" 7.85 million people being displaced this year.

Since then, officials say fresh documents have surfaced, including files linked to then-Bridge Division secretary Mosharrif Hossain Bhuiyan.

The ACC boss said, "Evidence of graft have already emerged. If anyone's involvement is proven, they will be held accountable, no matter how powerful they are."

## Govt slashes interest rates on savings certificates

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for investments of up to Tk 7.5 lakh, down from 12.40 percent. For investments above Tk 7.5 lakh, the rate will be 11.80 percent, down from 12.37 percent.

Similarly, Post Office Savings Certificates will yield 11.82 percent for investments of up to Tk 7.5 lakh, down from 12.30 percent, and 11.77 percent for higher investments, down from 12.25 percent.

Post Office Savings Certificates will yield 11.98 percent for investments of up to Tk 7.5 lakh compared with 12.55 percent earlier. For amounts above Tk 7.5 lakh, the rate is 11.80 percent, down from 12.37 percent.

The three-month profit-bearing savings certificate will now yield 11.82 percent for investments of up to Tk 7.5 lakh and 11.77 percent for higher investments, down from 12.25 percent.

Pensioner Savings Certificates will yield 11.98 percent for investments of up to Tk 7.5 lakh compared with 12.55 percent earlier. For amounts above Tk 7.5 lakh, the rate is 11.80 percent, down from 12.37 percent.

On November 26 last year, Chinmoy was sent to jail after a Chattogram court rejected his bail plea in the

**Ex-ACC top brass forcibly**

sheer force. There was enough evidence at that time, yet the commission chose to walk away."

The case was filed with the ACC in 2012, following global scrutiny over alleged corruption linked to the World Bank's \$1.2 billion funding commitment to the Padma Bridge project.

Seven people, including top government officials, were named in the case.

But in 2014, the charges were quietly withdrawn, a move that drew widespread criticism, both at home

and abroad.

In January this year, nearly a decade later, the anti-graft body reopened the case and formed a high power committee to reinvestigate it.

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## Woman raped

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The husband said he had returned to his village home in Tajumuddin about two weeks ago. On Friday night, his third wife – now under arrest – called and lured him to her house, where her associates tied him up, demanded Tk 1.8 lakh, and physically assaulted him over two days.

Upon hearing about the incident, his first wife arrived at the scene on Sunday to rescue him but was also beaten up. She then tried to contact her father-in-law to help acquire the money demanded.

The husband further alleged that he was later taken outside and held captive, while the accused confined his first wife in another room and raped her. They reportedly threatened them with dire consequences if they disclosed the incident.

Meanwhile, Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal, in a press release signed by its President Iqbal Hossain Liton and General Secretary Mohammad Selim, announced that accused Farid Uddin has been expelled from the party due to "serious breach of party discipline and unethical conduct".

Omar Sharif Rintu, member secretary of Tajumuddin upazila BNP, confirmed the expulsion to The Daily Star. "Farid Uddin has been expelled from the party for his alleged involvement in the case. However, the allegation regarding Chhatra Dal leader Russell's involvement is inaccurate. The Russell accused in the case is a different individual."

Shortly after the rape, a video went viral online through several digital news portals, which police have clarified is not a footage of the incident in question.

In a Facebook post, Bholi district police stated, "A manipulated video is being circulated on social media through Ajker Kantha and several other online platforms, falsely claiming it to be an incident from Tajumuddin Police Station area of Bholi district."

Further clarifying, SP Sharif said, "We are investigating the rape allegation. However, the video being spread online is not related to this incident."

## Ex-CEC Huda blames govt

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approximately three and a half hours.

"Nurul Huda said in his statement that night-time voting was done without his knowledge, keeping him in the dark. He learned about it later, but by then, there was nothing he could do," a PBI official told The Daily Star, requesting anonymity.

The magistrate sent Nurul Huda to jail after recording his statements.

Around 6:10pm, he was escorted to the lockup of the CMM Court.

Earlier, the defence filed a petition seeking his bail. But it was not heard.

The hearing on the bail petition is scheduled today, said Touhidul Islam, a defence lawyer.

Contacted, Enayet Hossain Mannan, additional DIG of Dhaka Metropolitan (North) PBI, acknowledged that the former CEC gave a confessional statement admitting his responsibility and clarifying the irregularities.

In the police forwarding report submitted to the court, Sajedur said that Nurul Huda voluntarily agreed to give a confessional statement

regarding the 2018 elections during four days of interrogation.

The 11th parliamentary elections were held under the Nurul Huda-led Election Commission on December 30, 2018. The Awami League secured another landslide victory in the polls, which is widely considered by opposition parties and election observers to be rigged.

According to the forwarding report, former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, along with the election commissioners, deprived the people of their right to vote by allowing law enforcement personnel and election officials to stuff ballot boxes with votes cast the night before the polling day in 2018.

Nurul Huda was arrested on June 22 after a top BNP leader filed a case with Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station, naming 24 individuals, including former CECs Kazi Habibul Awal, Nurul Huda, and Kazi Habibul Awal.

He was handed over to police after being assaulted by a mob at his residence in Dhaka's Uttara.

The next day, he was placed on a four-day remand.

On June 27, a court granted police another four-day remand for further interrogation.

## Hounded by media

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Investigation Department's lab for forensic examination.

Meanwhile, rights groups have called for the immediate recording of the survivor's statement before an executive magistrate under Section 22 of the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, along with the formation of a medical board.

OC Zahidur said recording her statement under Section 22 was not required as she is the complainant. "If any directive comes from higher authorities regarding a medical board, we will comply."

## EC working on Feb, Apr polls timeline

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the national election. We are moving forward with preparations based on that commitment."

When it comes to ensuring that the election is acceptable, fair and neutral, the government and the Election Commission are on the same page, he said.

"During the courtesy meeting that day, he [Yunus] gave such an indication and asked