



Jaya Ahsan's 'Putulnacher Itikatha' to release on August 1

Jaya Ahsan starrer *Putulnacher Itikatha* (The Puppet's Tale) is set for theatrical release on August 1. Directed by Suman Mukhopadhyay, the film also stars Abir Chatterjee and Parambrata Chatterjee. Based on Manik Bandopadhyay's iconic novel, the story has been slightly shifted to the late 1930s–40s for modern relevance.

The long-delayed project, first conceptualised in 2008, had its world premiere at the Rotterdam Film Festival earlier this year. Suman Mukhopadhyay was inspired by his father's stage adaptation and revived the film in 2022 after a 14-year gap.

Meanwhile, Jaya is busy promoting *Taandob* and *Utshob* and will next be seen in *Dear Maa* on July 18 and *Ajo Ardthagini* later this year.



Afran Nisho and Redoan Rony unite for the survival drama 'Domm'

Afran Nisho and director Redoan Rony are collaborating for the first time on the upcoming film *Domm*, slated for release during Eid-ul-Fitr 2026.

Inspired by true events, the film explores the rise of an ordinary man, with both Nisho and Rony praising its emotional depth and performance-driven nature.

Nisho describes *Domm* as a survival-inspired story with a larger canvas than his previous works, emphasising its acting challenges as a key motivator.

The project also stars Chanchal Chowdhury, whose involvement was confirmed by Rony in December 2023.

Domm, produced by SVF Alpha-i Entertainment and Chorki, promises to be a gripping, story-centric film that blends emotional storytelling with powerful performances.



BTS' V tops global music influencer list on Instagram

BTS member V, also known as Kim Taehyung, has been ranked the world's most influential music figure on Instagram, surpassing international stars such as Selena Gomez and Billie Eilish. The 2025 rankings were published by data analytics platform HypeAuditor.

Despite being inactive on social media for several months due to his military service which concluded last month, V



secured the top position with over 68 million followers and an impressive engagement rate of 20.6 percent. He currently ranks third overall among all Instagram influencers, trailing only Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi.

V is now the most influential Asian celebrity on the platform, with fellow K-pop stars Jimin and Blackpink's Lisa also listed in the Top 5.

SCARLETT JOHANSSON becomes highest-grossing actor of all time

Scarlett Johansson has officially become the top-grossing lead actor at the global box office, with total earnings reaching \$14.8 billion, according to The Wrap.

This milestone follows the success of her latest film, *Jurassic World Rebirth*, which earned \$318 million globally in just six days. Johansson plays Zora Bennett, taking over the franchise from Chris Pratt.

Much of her box office success stems from her role as Natasha Romanoff in the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU), with over \$8.7 billion from films like *Avengers: Endgame* and *Infinity War*.

At 40, the actress surpasses Samuel L. Jackson and Robert Downey Jr, achieving this feat with only 36 lead roles—demonstrating her strong bankability and global appeal.



WHAT'S THE HAPS?

'Ali Mehedi: Made in Bangladesh'

Bangladeshi-born stand-up comedian Ali Mehedi, who codes by day and cracks up crowds by night, is set to present his laugh-out-loud stories this Friday.

He has performed at the New York Comedy Festival, Halifax Comedy Festival, Edinburgh Festival Fringe, and made his TV debut on CBC Canada in 2024.

Ali will take the stage delivering sharp, heartfelt comedy about culture clashes, family drama, and life between borders. Tickets for this open-to-all event are priced at Tk 500.

DATE: FRIDAY | JULY 11
TIME: 7:30PM ONWARDS
VENUE: NAVEED'S COMEDY CLUB



Jon M Chu to helm live-action 'Hot Wheels' film

Following the success of *Wicked: Part One*, director Jon M Chu is set to helm a live-action *Hot Wheels* movie for Warner Bros and Mattel. Based on the iconic toy line, the film will feature some of the "hottest and sleekest vehicles," though plot details remain undisclosed.

The script will be written by *Creed II* writers Juel Taylor and Tony Rettenmaier, with production by JJ Abrams' company Bad Robot and Chu's Electric Somewhere. Chu described the film as a chance to honour *Hot Wheels'* legacy while exploring bold new directions.

This project follows the success of *Barbie* and joins Mattel's lineup of toy-based adaptations. Chu is also working on projects including *Play Doh, Oh, the Places You'll Go*, and more.

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Next polls key to rebuild trust in police

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Calling on journalists to ensure that "headlines" do not dilute the core message, he said: "Please be mindful while presenting news. I have seen many times that even if the report is positive, the headline or scroll carries a negative message. This confuses and disheartens the public. Please use captions that help people grasp the positive message."

Asked about the date of the next election, Nasir said it has not been finalised yet. All details, including the polling day, will be announced at least two months prior to the election.

Foreign observers who had termed

the past three national elections "credible" will not be allowed to observe the upcoming parliamentary election.

"Why should we accept observers who certified the last three elections as 'very good' and 'acceptable'?"

Meanwhile, a three-member delegation from Canada met the CEC. After the meeting, the CEC said that the Election Commission has contacted the European Union regarding the deployment of foreign observers for the election.

The EU has been requested to send observers from all 28 member states in a coordinated manner.

However, the CEC made it clear that biased observers will not be allowed under any circumstances.

"We will review them carefully. We will accept those who are experienced, defensible, reliable and have observed elections in various countries. Under no circumstances will we approve those who certified the last three elections."

Election commissioners Abdur Rahmani Masud, Tahmida Ahmad, Md Anwarul Islam Sarker and Abdul Fazal Md Sanaullah were present at the event.

RFED General Secretary Golam Rabbani moderated the event, which was presided over by its President Kazi Jebel.

Nahid warns against 'serving Indian hegemony'

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If people are with us, there's no need to flee to Delhi or stay in London."

He also urged the citizens not to support any party blindly in the next general election.

Before the Kushtia rally, NCP leaders visited the grave of Abrar Fahad in Kumarkhali upazila's Raydanga village, where they also met his parents. Abrar, a student of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, was beaten to death by members of the now-banned Bangladesh Chhatra League on October 7, 2019.

During the rally, Nahid said, "The soil of Kushtia is stained with the blood of martyrs. It is here that Shaheed Abrar Fahad lies buried. We speak of Abrar -- the brilliant BUET student who was brutally tortured and killed overnight by the now-banned terrorist organisation Bangladesh Chhatra League in his dormitory for speaking

in favour of the country and against aggression and hegemony."

"We are the successors of Shaheed Abrar. We stand on the soil of Shaheed Yamin. From Shaheed Abrar to Shaheed Abu Sayed and Shaheed Yamin -- we carry forward the hopes and aspirations of the people of Bangladesh, and their longing for politics free from domination and aggression."

Last year, Rangpur's Begum Rokeya University student Abu Sayed was killed on July 16, and MIST student Sheikh Ashabul Yamin on July 18, during the quota reform movement that turned into a mass uprising and toppled the Awami League government.

Nahid said, "There was a time when people couldn't speak out against Delhi's dominance. But Abrar did -- he posted on Facebook about our rightful share of river water, our ports, and the rights of the people of Bangladesh. We will carry on the anti-hegemony

struggle in his spirit.

"Until we achieve a new constitution and meaningful reforms, I call upon you to join this movement. Together, we will build an egalitarian and democratic Bangladesh."

NCP Chief Organiser (North) Sarjis Alam, Chief Coordinator Nasiruddin Patwary, Joint Convener Nusrat Tabassum, and Senior Joint Member Secretary Tasnim Jara, took part in the rally.

During her speech, NCP Senior Joint Member Secretary Nahida Sarwar held a handful of soil from Abrar's grave in her right hand and said, "Dear people of Kushtia, this is soil from the grave of Shaheed Abrar Fahad -- the soil of Bangladesh. We must build this country as the Bangladesh of our martyr, Abrar. With this soil as our oath, we will build a new Bangladesh, Insha'Allah."

After concluding the rally, the central leaders departed for Meherpur at around 3:30pm.

Injured protesters vandalise

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occasions, but no funds were released.

Mamun Hossain, one of the injured, told reporters that a staffer tried to push them out, triggering a scuffle.

"There was no July Foundation before the uprising. It exists because of us -- the injured," he said, adding, "Yet, we're the ones being misled while desperately seeking support for our treatment."

Mamun is still undergoing treatment nearly a year after being shot in the head during the movement. "What guarantee do we have about our lives anymore?"

Nazmul Hossain, a third-year management student at Savar

Government College, said he had been seeking the second instalment of funds for seven months.

"Those with connections are being prioritised. Even the critically injured, including those receiving treatment abroad, are still being denied the second-phase payment. The CEO keeps giving us dates, but the money never comes."

CEO Kamal Akbar said, "Many of the injured are still traumatised. Their frustrations and the outburst have context. We hold no complaints against them. They acted under emotional stress."

On the allegations of repeated

delays, he admitted the gap between expectations and available resources.

"We prioritised the critically injured during the first phase. So far, 806 severely wounded individuals have received the second-phase funds. The remaining will be paid in stages. We're trying to resolve this quickly."

He added that the foundation has Tk 7 crore in its fund and is trying to support the injured and the families of martyrs.

Following the vandalism, the injured met Kamal Akbar for further discussions. It was agreed that the next round of payments would be disbursed this coming Sunday.

Rubio to attend Asean meeting in first Asia trip

AFP, Washington

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio will make his first trip to Asia since taking up his post, traveling this week to Malaysia for meetings with Asean allies, his office said Monday.

The trip, started yesterday, will see Rubio, who is also President Donald Trump's national security advisor, focus on US policy in Asia after months of Washington concentrating on the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East.

"In his first trip to Asia as Secretary of State, Secretary Rubio is focused on reaffirming the United States' commitment to advancing a free, open, and secure Indo-Pacific region," spokeswoman Tammy Bruce said in a statement, using Washington's traditional wording aimed at curbing China's growing influence in the Asia-Pacific region.

Prioritizing and reaffirming

Washington's commitment to East Asia and Southeast Asia "is in America's interest," a senior State Department official told reporters on condition of anonymity.

"It promotes American prosperity and promotes American security," the official added.

As with any trip to Asia by a US official, China will be the elephant in the room amid concerns over its expansionary behavior in the South China Sea, which the United States deems to be provocative.

The visit also comes as many countries around the world are waiting for the next step in Trump's tariff wars. Sweeping levies announced in April were mostly suspended, as Washington engages in negotiations with friends and foes alike.

On Monday, Trump said he would impose 25 percent tariffs on key US allies Japan and South Korea and a handful of others, including

Southeast Asian nations Malaysia (25 percent) and Laos (40 percent), as of August 1.

Export-dependent Vietnam, which like Malaysia and Laos is a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean), is one of the few countries to already reach a tentative agreement with Washington that spares it the high level of levies that Trump had threatened.

At a summit in late May, Southeast Asian leaders expressed their deep concern at Trump's protectionist offensive.

The senior US official said the issue was expected to be raised, and that Rubio would likely tell Asean that the United States wants to "rebalance" its trade relationships.

A deadline on the tariffs is due to expire today, with Trump suggesting elevated levies would snap back into place on August 1 for any trading partners who do not make a deal.

Cops sue 35 Bangladeshi expatriates

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28 and June 21 this year.

Asked why the case names 35 while the Malaysian authorities mentioned 36, a senior ATU official said, "Our case is based on what we learnt during interrogation of the three deported Bangladeshis. We are not aware of what the Malaysian authorities have said."

KM Tariqul Islam, the ATU inspector investigating the case, said they have information that eight of the 35 accused, including the three deportees, returned home.

Another of the deportees, Mahfuj, returned on June 19, and the ATU arrested him from his home in Cumilla's Muradnagar upazila on July 7, Tariqul said.

Yesterday, Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Md Minhazur Rahman placed the four arrestees on a four-day remand after Inspector Tariqul produced them before the court, seeking a seven-day remand for each, said a court staffer.

According to the police forwarding report submitted to the court, primary interrogation revealed that the accused had been inspired by the ideology of

the banned militant outfit. They then aligned themselves with the outfit and had been involved in its activities for long while in Malaysia.

The report mentioned that the accused used Malaysian IP addresses to recruit members and spread propaganda through social media platforms operated by some Bangladeshis.

Intelligence findings further indicated that the group conducted oath-taking ceremonies, held religious discussions, and arranged secret virtual meetings via social media to promote the organisation's ideology and plans.

As active members of the organisation, the accused reportedly collected funds through donations and sent the money abroad using e-wallets and international money-transfer services.

Each member also paid an annual subscription fee of 500 Malaysian Ringgit to the group.

"Primary findings show they used various social media platforms, as well as messaging apps such as WhatsApp and Telegram, to recruit new members.

So, the Malaysian police have begun repatriating the arrested and fugitive suspects to their countries," the forwarding report added.

"Based on information, we have also managed to arrest another FIR-listed accused, Emon Mohiduzzamna, and are conducting drives to arrest three others," Inspector Tariqul told The Daily Star last night.

However, the ATU did not mention the militant outfit's name in the report.

Addressing the media on Sunday, Home Adviser Lt Gen (retd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury said the deportation of suspected extremists from Malaysia does not indicate any operational connection to terrorist networks within Bangladesh.

"We have not received any official communication suggesting they were involved in militancy. Our foreign ministry has already issued a press release clarifying the situation. As far as we know, three individuals were deported due to overstaying their visas," he said after a visit to the export cargo village of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport and the BADC cold storage facility in Dhaka.