

BLENDER'S CHOICE-THE DAILY STAR OTT & DIGITAL CONTENT AWARDS

Celebrating the unprecedented success

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Yesterday felt special, as winners of *Blender's Choice-The Daily Star OTT and Digital Content Awards 2024* gathered for an afternoon filled with warmth and laughter. The winners came together under one roof at The Daily Star office, not just to share a meal, but also to relive those unforgettable award moments through the newly released supplement.

The room was vibrant with familiar faces. From celebrated actors like Runa Khan, Zinnat Ara, and director Kajal Arefin Ome with his 'Bachelor Point' team Marzuk Russell, Saidur Rahman Pavel, Touhid Talukder, Chashi Alam, Sanzida Mahmood Nandita, Angel Noor, Sadat Hossain and Priyontee Urbee—to the talented technicians Zannat Mouri, Shihab Nurun Nabi, Saleh Sobhan



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

Auneem, and designer Safia Sathi. Influencer Nafees Salim also joined, adding to the cheerful atmosphere. The afternoon began with a heartfelt

welcome from Aasha Mehreen Amin, Joint Editor of The Daily Star, who expressed her gratitude to all the winners for joining the lunch. The event ended on

a high note with Angel Noor mesmerising everyone with his soulful rendition of Jodi Abar.

Between laughter and conversations, Runa Khan reflected on the joy of reconnecting after the awards: "The food was great, and the company, even better. It was wonderful to see everyone again after the event. I couldn't have asked for a better evening."

Designer Safia Sathi also shared her excitement at seeing her creations showcased in the OTT supplement: "It feels amazing to see my designs being featured so beautifully. I loved working with this award show, and my heart was full watching all of the hosts wear my designs this year."

Amid the hearty lunch, everyone came together to enjoy a wonderful time, even as Dhaka's rainy weather lingered outside.

'Ontoheen' heads to South Korea's prestigious arts platform

Katthakiya Center of Arts has earned a significant international milestone as its acclaimed production *Ontoheen* has been selected to participate in the '2025 Next-Generation Asian Artistes Community Initiative – Beyond Borders: Asia's New Wave', organised by the Asian Culture Center in South Korea.

Chosen after a rigorous evaluation process, *Ontoheen* will be staged on October 3, representing Bangladesh at one of Asia's most dynamic cultural platforms.

The team is led by Katthakiya's founder and director, S M Hasan Ishtiaque Imran, and features three distinguished independent artistes – Anandita Khan, Asif Muhammed



Musaddeque, and Annessha Biswas Agni. Together, they will bring Bangladeshi theatre to the international stage, carrying the nation's artistic spirit beyond borders.

Alongside their performance, the troupe will also take part in a series of workshops designed to foster cultural exchange, dialogue, and collaboration among emerging Asian artists, creating opportunities for new creative connections.

With this selection, Katthakiya Center of Arts not only celebrates its own achievement but also strengthens Bangladesh's presence in the global arts scene.

Def Leppard to receive star on Hollywood Walk of Fame this October

Def Leppard will receive the 2,825th star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame on October 9, at 11:30 am PT, in front of Capitol Records at 1750 N. Vine Street.

The ceremony will feature Jon Bon Jovi and Universal Music Enterprises CEO Bruce Resnikoff as guest speakers, hosted by Sirius XM's Bob Buchmann, with a live stream available worldwide.

The honour follows the

NEWS

Economic recovery at risk from tariffs

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governance reform."

The ADB highlighted Washington's August decision to impose a 20 percent tariff on Bangladeshi exports as a threat to external performance. These exports amounted in FY2025 to 18 percent of total exports and 1.9 percent of GDP.

The tariffs could undermine the country's dominant garment sector, a key driver of export earnings and employment. The ADB warned that the tariffs would disproportionately affect women workers. While less stringing than those applied to India or China, they could erode demand for Bangladeshi exports to the US.

Industrial output is also expected to grow more slowly due to the US tariffs, the ADB said.

"In addition, exports to the European Union will face stiffer competition, forcing exporters to lower prices unless they diversify markets, pursue new trade agreements, and enhance competitiveness," the report said.

Despite these risks, the ADB expects modest economic acceleration

compared with last fiscal year's sluggish pace. Consumption will be the main growth driver in FY26, with public consumption rising ahead of the elections. Imports are expected to increase as the central bank lifts restrictions on letters of credit.

Services are also expected to expand, supported by stronger household purchasing power and election-related spending. Agriculture should return to more normal growth, "assuming favourable weather and government policy support."

Tight monetary and fiscal policies could dampen both private and public investment, but investor confidence should improve with the general election planned for February and finance sector reforms ongoing.

Inflation, meanwhile, is projected to stay elevated at 8 percent in FY26, unchanged from the ADB's April forecast.

"Inflationary pressures are likely to moderate, assuming favourable weather, lower global oil prices despite Middle East conflict, and tighter monetary and fiscal stances," the

report said.

The central bank has pledged to maintain restrictive policies, focusing on inflation control. It is expected to keep policy rates steady unless headline inflation falls below 7 percent.

Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed yesterday agreed with the ADB's 5 percent GDP growth projection but rejected its inflation forecast.

"I'll be happy if growth reaches 5 percent. But inflation will be below 7 percent," he told reporters in Dhaka.

He said inflation could be contained with proper budget monitoring and easing supply constraints.

"It is true that during election time, more money flows into the market. People won't just have tea and snacks anymore – they'll go for 7 Up and chicken fry."

Ahmed added this surge in consumption is not negative as it benefits rural communities. "The US economy grew on high consumption. This isn't bad – but we must secure both food and non-food supply chains."

Little headway made in stolen arms recovery

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in whose hands the missing weapons have ended up.

"Some may have gone to separatist groups, some to hill people, and some possibly to groups like ARSA. These are all possibilities, and we are working on every lead," he said while speaking at a press briefing at the PHQ.

**NO LICENCES AHEAD OF POLLS**  
The government has suspended the issuance of new firearm licences before the next election, expected in February.

"In view of the upcoming election, we are not issuing firearm licences to anyone except members of the armed forces, certain high-ranking officials, and for bank security," said a district deputy commissioner.

After August 5, Dhaka's administration issued about 45 licences.

Between 2009 and 2024, the Awami League government issued some 17,200 firearm licences. The interim administration suspended these and ordered surrender of the weapons by September 3, 2024. Of these, 13,340 were deposited while 3,860 were not.

Those not surrendered are now deemed illegal, with police drives under way to recover them.

After scrutiny, the government has so far returned around 3,000 weapons submitted last year.

Officials confirmed that no more arms would be returned before the polls, and even those released could be asked to return.

Dhaka Deputy Commissioner Tanvir Ahmed said, "We are discouraging civilian applicants for new licences unless there is an urgent and unavoidable need."

**LICENCES CANCELLED**  
The home ministry has cancelled 1,177 licences, mostly linked to AL politicians and businesspersons. The highest number of cancellations was in Dhaka 796, followed by Pabna 141, Chattogram 73, Jashore 66, Sylhet 63, and Cox's Bazar 38.A

Police officials said many licence holders have left the country, while others are hiding. Several claimed their weapons were stolen during the uprising.

Sources confirmed that AL leaders, including Mahbubul Alam Hanif, Nizam Uddin Hazari, Shamim Osman, Kamal Ahmed Mojumder, Mohibul Hasan Chowdhury Nowfel, Zunaid Ahmed Palak, and Gazi Golam Dastagir, failed to deposit their arms within the deadline.

**SECURITY THREAT**  
Experts warn that the large number of

missing firearms poses serious risks ahead of the polls. This raises fears of violence, political intimidation, and crime.

Tawhidul Haque, associate professor at Dhaka University's Institute of Social Welfare and Research, said, "The reward initiative is a good idea, but it may not be effective now since a year has passed. These firearms were looted by criminals and used or rented out for crimes. They may have been kept in stock to create instability before the election."

Police say their challenge is twofold – recovering looted arms and cracking down on illegal possession of once-licensed weapons.

"The unrecovered arms and illegally keeping licenced ones is a major security concern. Unless there is strong cooperation from the public, recovery will remain slow," said a senior officer, wishing not to be named.

Asked if the missing weapons pose a threat ahead of polls, Additional IG Rafiqul Islam said, "Illegal arms are already available in the black market. But carrying high-powered, long-barrelled firearms openly is not so easy. So, I don't think the missing weapons create any new kind of fear."

JOY SHAHRIAR releases 'Tomake Bhulte Shomoy Lagbe' from upcoming album 'Boka'

After six years, singer-songwriter Joy Shahriar is releasing his fifth studio album *Boka*, featuring eight tracks, with the first release, *Tomake Bhulte Shomoy Lagbe*, now available on his official YouTube channel.

Shahriar wrote and composed the track, incorporating the final line from late poet-filmmaker Abul Hossain Khokon's poem: *Tomake bhulte arektu shomoy lagbe amar*. He dedicated the song to Khokon calling him *Mama*.

The album includes *Dukkho Elegy*, *Ekla Thakar Gaan*, *Baba*, and *Shopno Protarito*. Musicians featured are Tanim Hasan and Maruf-ul Haque on bass, Mahaan Fahim, Ahnaf Khan Anik, Ontu Das, and Michael Shirsho Das on guitars, Rafiqul Islam Forhad on keyboards, and Jalal Ahmed on flute. Sound design is by Amjad Hossain Bappi. All eight songs will be released on streaming platforms this November.

Lifting ban on AL activities

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not behaving as a political party.

"They have not expressed remorse that they have killed people. They have not taken responsibility for anything that they have done during this period. Not a word. Instead, they're always alleging that somebody else is responsible for that," he said.

**'STAY 5 YEARS'**  
During the interview, Mehdi questioned the interim government's time in power, asking why it is taking too long – 18 months – to hold the election while Nepal's interim leader promised to hand over power after six months.

Yunus replied, "You said people are saying it takes so much time. There are also people who say, 'Stay 5 years, stay 10 years, stay 50 years.' So, people are saying all kinds of things."

He said no one defined how long the interim government should be in power. "It's our decision how long we should be there. But we have an understanding that we have three tasks to perform. One's reform. And there's a trial. The last one is election."

The chief adviser said reform was a

"big agenda" to have "a different kind of structure that will block the path for "fascism to come back".

If the election is held without the reforms, the "same old stuff will happen again under different names, different pictures and so on", he said.

**ATTACKS ON HINDUS**  
The chief adviser dismissed the allegation that violence targeting Hindus increased since he took charge after the uprising.

"One of the specialties of India right now is fake news. A barrage of fake news," he claimed.

Mehdi then asked if Yunus was insisting that there is no anti-Hindu violence.

At that, the chief adviser said there were "some conflicts" that were not communal in nature, but related to issues like land and family disputes.

When Mehdi noted that The New York Times and other independent media have reported that attacks on Hindus have increased, Yunus said, "No, it has not increased. I would say [the] government is very alert on that one because this is the one thing India is always pushing that we are..."

Social bonds

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age, says the research published in the journal Brain, Behavior & Immunity – Health.

Researchers analysed data from more than 2,100 people who participated in a study called the Midlife in the United States.

They noted that people with greater "cumulative social advantage" showed slower rates of biological ageing and reduced levels of chronic inflammation. "Cumulative social advantage is really about the depth and breadth of your social connections over a lifetime," study co-author Anthony Ong said.

The study focuses in particular on the body's epigenetic clocks, which are molecular markers that estimate how quickly one is ageing. Two such clocks are DunedinPACE and GrimAge.

These markers on the DNA are among the best predictors of disease risk and lifespan, the study explains.

The participants with consistent social networks showed notably younger biological profiles on both these body clocks.

IMF wants banking sector

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banking sector restructuring, NBR modernisation, repatriation of laundered money, harmonisation of VAT rates and adjustments to advance income tax.

It will be possible to bring back a portion of the money laundered abroad by the previous regime by February next year, he said, without disclosing the amount likely to be retrieved.

When asked, he said the Bangladesh Bank governor will give further details.

"Money launderers know all the tricks of the trade, so we need time to retrieve that amount. But, we have made some progress on our end," he said, adding that the interim government is completing groundwork for recovering the laundered funds.

The formalities required for recovering laundered funds must be completed and those take time.

"Imagine I tell a Swiss bank to return the money – they won't comply. Legal

procedures must be followed. We are giving top priority to 11–12 cases. As for the remaining ones, we are pursuing those cases involving upwards of Tk 200 crore."

Asked whether the next government would continue with the initiative, he said: "They are bound to carry on our work or else the money won't be brought back. That's the international norm."

Some of the assets brought with laundered funds have already been seized.

"We have all the information on where the money is, which accounts they are held in and which countries' passports the launderers possess. We just need to complete the rest of the task."

Ahmed also stressed the need for exercising greater caution when taking on foreign loans in the future.

"Our position on foreign loans was different even six months back. We

are now considering not taking on budget support. We will do more due diligence in case of taking loans from China."

About a pay rise for government employees, Ahmed said the interim government will leave behind the National Pay Commission's recommendations and the next political government will implement those.

"That's why there won't be any allocation [for pay rise] in this fiscal year's budget. The revised budget will be finalised by December," he said.

At the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant, the adviser said the station is expected to begin its trial operations in December.

Asked about extortions, Ahmed blamed it on "collusion of politics".

"We are not a political government, so we can't take harsh actions. But extortion rates have gone up from Tk 1 to Tk 1.5 or Tk 2."