

DEEPIKA-RANVEER announce second child

Deepika Padukone and Ranveer Singh have announced that they are expecting their second child. The actress shared the news through a social media post that featured their daughter, Dua.

The couple got married in November 2018 in Italy in a ceremony that blended Sindhi and Konkani traditions, and welcomed their first child, Dua, in September 2024.

On the professional front, Deepika is set to appear in Siddharth Anand's upcoming film *King*, starring alongside Shah Rukh Khan, Suhana Khan, Abhishek Bachchan, Jaideep Ahlawat, and Arshad Warsi. The film is scheduled for a theatrical release on December 24. She also has Atlee's *Raka* in development, co-starring Allu Arjun.

Ranveer Singh, meanwhile, is enjoying the success of his recent release *Dhurandhar: The Revenge*, which has reportedly grossed over Rs 1,700 crore worldwide and crossed Rs 1,000 crore in India. He is next set to appear in Jay Mehta's *Pralay*, alongside Kalyani Priyadarshan.



A STALWART'S SIXTY Tauquir Ahmed celebrated by cultural personalities

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

At sixty, Tauquir Ahmed stands at a point where a life in the arts begins to take on its full shape. Yesterday (April 19), at Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, colleagues gathered to take stock of a career that has moved steadily across theatre, television, and film.

Organised by the Actors' Equity Bangladesh, the seminar, held from 10 am to 9 pm under the title *Sixty Years of Tauquir Ahmed*, brought together artistes to reflect on Tauquir Ahmed's life and work. Notably, the artiste was born on March 5, 1966. Among



those present were Ekushey Padak-winning artistes including Abul Hayat, Mamunur Rashid, and Afzal Hossain, alongside Mahfuz Ahmed, Azizul Hakim, and Deepa Khandakar, among others.

The evening opened on a musical note with a performance by Pintu Ghosh. Soon after, a ceremonial candle-lighting, joined by senior and contemporary artistes including Tauquir Ahmed himself, formally inaugurated the programme, setting the tone for an evening of remembrance and reflection.

Speakers revisited personal memories and professional milestones, sketching a portrait of an artiste whose journey has traversed theatre, television, and cinema with equal conviction. Mahfuz Ahmed recalled their early years as students;



PHOTOS: STAR



he at the University of Dhaka, Tauquir at BUET, and a simple yet enduring memory of a ride to the Ekushey Book Fair on Tauquir's red motorcycle. "He was someone we admired, even envied," he said, before adding, "Today, I can say, he is our teacher. Tauquir Ahmed is the most progressive man of our generation."

For Abul Hayat, the reflection was more personal. "I tried to think of his flaws today, I could not find any," he remarked, calling

Tauquir a committed and visionary creative whose habit of reading and constant learning sets him apart. Recalling Tauquir's performance in the television serial *Hasuli Baker Upokotha*, he described it as one of the finest of his career.

Reflecting on decades of collaboration, Azad Abul Kalam spoke of Tauquir's multifaceted career — spanning acting, writing, and directing; while emphasising his unwavering love for the stage.

In his own remarks, Tauquir Ahmed remained measured and grounded. Thanking those in attendance, he described age as "just a number," reiterating that the true measure lies in the work itself. "I have tried to stay committed to my craft, whether in theatre or cinema, always keeping quality at the centre," he said. Looking ahead, he revealed plans to direct new films and bring *Oggatonama* to the stage, seeking the continued support of audiences.

What emerged from the evening was not merely a celebration of longevity, but a recognition of sustained relevance — the weight of six decades carried in a body of work the years have steadily built, one that speaks for itself, even as the veteran artiste moves forward in his work.



Chitrlekha Guha returns to stage with 'Lutfar Pradeep'

Theatre troupe Samotol is set to stage its acclaimed production *Lutfar Pradeep* today at 7 pm at the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy's Studio Theatre Hall in Dhaka.

The play, written by Tanvir Mokammel and directed by Sagir Mostafa, features a solo performance by Chitrlekha Guha. This will be the sixth staging of the production.

Set against a historical backdrop, the play revisits the fall of Bengal's last independent Nawab while centring on the emotional journey of Lutfunnisa, wife of Siraj ud-Daulah.

Lutfar Pradeep is not merely a story of the defeat of Bengal's last independent Nawab; it is a living narrative of Lutfunnisa's unwavering love, immense patience, and a lifetime of grief.

Hridoy Khan to release new single 'Hahakar'



Popular singer and music composer Hridoy Khan is set to release a new solo track after a long hiatus. Titled *Hahakar*, the song is written by contemporary lyricist Someshwar Oli, while the artiste himself has composed and arranged the music.

The song will be released on April 24 on the singer's official YouTube channel.

Earlier this year, Hridoy released his short film *Trapped* on his official YouTube channel. Apart from directing the project, he also acted in it, alongside popular model and actress Monalisa.

He also released another song titled *Shada Kalo* on January 16. For the track, Hridoy not only lent his voice but also composed and arranged the music. He also directed the music video, with cinematography by Ali Afroz Arnob.

NEWS

Mobile number portability languishing

FROM PAGE 12
imposed a SIM tax on MNP users, treating a porting request as equivalent to acquiring a new SIM card.

Globally, there is no SIM tax for switching operators as the subscriber retains their unique number.

The situation worsened when the government significantly increased the VAT and supplementary duty to Tk 200 starting in July 2019 for new SIMs.

In July 2024, the VAT and supplementary duty were hiked to Tk 300. As a result, the operators now charge Tk 400 to Tk 465 for porting a number.

In stark contrast, many countries offer MNP either completely free or at a nominal cost, highlighting how Bangladesh's pricing structure has become a significant deterrent to a service originally designed to empower users.

What handicapped the MNP service further was the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission's (BTRC) position on awareness campaigns.

Despite licensing directives that explicitly mandate both the BTRC and mobile operators to educate consumers through print, electronic and digital media, no meaningful campaign has been undertaken to

inform the public.

But just a few days after issuing the licence, the regulator banned all promotional activities related to MNP.

This contradictory move not only undermined consumer rights but also stifled competition — allowing poor service and market complacency to persist unchecked.

The obstacles go beyond awareness or affordability, said Md Mustafa Kamal, chief executive officer of Infozillion, which paid Tk 11.5 crore in 2017 along with a Tk 10 crore bank guarantee to obtain the MNP licence for 15 years.

The company has to pay a Tk 28 lakh yearly renewal fee and forward 5.5 percent of its revenue to the BTRC and 1 percent to the social obligation fund.

"Many subscribers face deliberate resistance. Operators frequently reject porting requests citing vague, sometimes non-compliant reasons."

Exacerbating the issue, the MNP service is not readily available at most retail outlets, making it difficult for users to initiate the switch even when they are willing, he added.

The implementation of MNP in Bangladesh has deviated considerably from these global benchmarks, said Shahed Alam, chief corporate and regulatory officer of Robi Axiata.

Customers have encountered various obstacles, including unjustified rejections of porting requests, issues with one-time passwords (OTPs) and prolonged delays, all of which have undermined public trust in the service.

"Although a regulatory audit could have remedied the issue of unwarranted rejections, such an audit has not been conducted despite persistent advocacy."

Moreover, mobile operators have been prohibited from actively promoting MNP, which has significantly limited public awareness and understanding of the service.

To make matters worse, the imposition of SIM tax on ported numbers further discouraged users from availing this facility, he added.

The MNP service has not met the expectations it was launched with, said BTRC Chairman Md Emdad Ul Bari.

"MNP is a measure of competitiveness and we aim to promote it as a tool to enhance competition. However, we have realised that MNP alone cannot significantly increase competitiveness. Therefore, we are introducing a broader competitiveness initiative in the new guidelines, which will also help boost the MNP."

Teenager's family, home attacked

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on Thursday morning against Abul Khayer, said the police station's Officer-in-Charge (OC) Md. Lutfur Rahman.

Later in the day, around 100 people attacked the victim's house, assaulted the family members and carried out vandalism and looting.

Talking to journalists, the victim said the madrasa superintendent touched private parts of her body in the name of exorcism and tried to rape her.

"As my father has filed case, they attacked on our house," she told.

Talking to The Daily Star, the victim's father said, "My daughter is not the sole victim. Rather, the man (Abul Khayer) did the same things with some other girls in the past. But none disclosed it due to social stigma."

Finally, the victim's father filed a case with Charjabbar Police Station

"But I have protested and filed a case. That is why they attacked our house and are pressuring me to withdraw the case," added the father.

Asked, union chairman Jamal Uddin admitted that the victim's family members went to him, and he tried to arrange a social arbitration.

He claimed the attempt failed as no party came to him on the day scheduled for the arbitration.

Contacted, OC Lutfur Rahman said the girl's mother filed another case on Saturday in connection with the attack. Later police arrested a person, Jahangir, 35, for his alleged involvement with the attack on their home.

"However, attempted rape accused Abul Khayer went into hiding after the filing of the case. Police are trying to arrest him," added the police officer.

Nationwide vaccination drive begins

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A total of 21.8 lakh children from the 30 upazilas and the four city corporations are targeted to be jabbed, while 1.58 crore children in the rest of the country are expected to be vaccinated, the ministry said.

The campaign launched on April 5 will continue until April 25, while the one that began on April 12 will end on May 12, Hasanul said.

The nationwide campaign, starting today, will run until May 20 in the city corporation areas and until May 12 in other parts of the country, he said.

He added that the shots will be administered from all fixed and outreach centres from 8:00am.

Meanwhile, the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) recorded one more confirmed measles deaths in last 24 hours ending at 8:00am yesterday, taking the number to 36. The victim was

from the Dhaka division.

Besides, the DGHS logged three more suspected deaths from the disease in the last 24 hours, rising the number to 181. The three deaths were reported in Dhaka, Rajshahi, and Barishal divisions.

In the 24-hour period, 165 more confirmed measles cases were reported, bringing the total number to 3,443. Some 1,197 suspected cases were recorded during the same time, increasing the number to 23,606.

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Decision on IMF loan

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next course of action."

The details of the discussions could not be disclosed at this stage.

"Whether we will get the IMF loan by June or July is a misconception."

The IMF programme began during the previous Awami League government, which, he said, was unselected.

The programme contains many conditions that may not be acceptable to the new BNP government, he said.

"We are an elected government. We will not accept any condition that goes against public interest. This programme will end in six to seven months, after which we will decide whether to continue further."

Regarding loan conditions in general, he said: "It is a matter of mutual agreement. There is no charity here. These are business

transactions and that must be kept in mind."

About emergency funding to manage the inflated energy bills as a result of the Middle East crisis, he said discussions with the WB, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the Asian Development Bank are almost complete, while talks with the IMF are ongoing.

The government must consider whether accepting conditions would create pressure on the people or businesses before making a decision, he said.

Khosru dismissed claims that fuel oil prices were raised under pressure from the IMF as part of the negotiations for the release of the loan tranche.

"Let me state clearly: there is no connection between the IMF and the fuel price hike. When the oil prices

were being adjusted worldwide, we did not raise prices considering public interest."

The US doubled the fuel price, while Sri Lanka raised it by 25 percent, according to Khosru.

"Compared to that, our price hike was much less."

Asked whether the fuel price hike would fuel inflation, he said: "It may increase or it may not. If the supply side remains stable, then prices may not rise."

On whether the Family Card programme was a flashpoint in the negotiations with the IMF, he said: "The Family Card is a social welfare programme of the current government. There is no issue of excluding it to fulfil any condition. All development partners have appreciated it and received it very positively."

Asked what the commission would do if a candidate fails to submit their statements on time, Election Commissioner Abdur Rahmanel Masud earlier told this newspaper, "The commission can file a case against the candidates, but the law does not empower us to directly impose punishment."

He added that a provision could be included in the law for cancelling candidacy, adding, "I personally discourage filing cases. The law was designed to keep them [candidates] in order, and we will enforce it. But enforcing it through the court is very difficult."

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On April 6, the EC held a meeting to make a decision. After the meeting, EC Secretary Akhtar Ahmed said they extended the deadline for another month.

"Several candidates applied for extensions due to illness and other reasons. We have granted them time."

On possible action for those failing to submit the statements, the EC secretary said, "We should go by the book. We must act according to the law. The commission will sit and decide under which legal framework

EC still waiting on 92 candidates

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candidate must file a return of election expenses with the returning officer within 30 days of the gazette notification. Returns must include daily payment receipts, details of the designated bank account, certified bank statements, records of personal spending, lists of disputed or unpaid claims, and a breakdown of funds with sources specified. Even candidates who incurred no expenses must submit a "zero" return along with an affidavit.

The RPO also caps election expenses at Tk 10 per vote or a maximum of Tk 25 lakh. Failure

action will be taken.

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