

James to perform in Lisbon this July

Bangladeshi rock icon James is set to perform in Lisbon for the first time at the *Lisbon Bangla Live Concert 2026*, scheduled for July 26. The concert will be held at Lisboa ao Vivo, beginning at 5 pm, and is expected to be a major cultural gathering for the Bangladeshi diaspora in Portugal.

Organised by Casa do Bangladesh and Noticias Bangla, the event has been described as the largest Bangla musical show ever held in the country. James is expected to perform his most popular songs, offering audiences a nostalgic musical experience. A press conference and dinner marking the announcement were held in Lisbon, attended by community members, cultural figures, and media representatives, as excitement continues to build.



'We trust and respect each other, our love never faded'

Wahida Mollick Jolly and Rahmat Ali on thirty years of marriage

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Veteran actors Wahida Mollick Jolly and Rahmat Ali reflect on three decades of marriage, arguing that trust, restraint and honesty and not only romance—have sustained their partnership.

Both trained at Rabindra Bharati University and later taught at University of Dhaka, the couple have balanced long academic careers with work across theatre, television and film.

They married in 1990 and have two children, now based abroad. "We want them to grow up as good, humane people," Jolly said.

Asked about the foundation of their relationship, Jolly pointed to emotional attachment over theory. "Many people explain relationships in different ways. For me, the key is affection—affection for the family, for the children, and for my husband. Trust is there, of course. But affection is what matters most. It is because of that we have come this far together."

She added, "I cannot even imagine living apart from my family."

Their connection began in Rajshahi during their school years. "We were both from Rajshahi. We met when I was in class ten. He used to do theatre with my father," she said.

Their bond deepened in Kolkata, where both enrolled at Rabindra Bharati University. "He wanted to join a theatre group and encouraged me to join too. At that time, Theatre Workshop was well known. He joined first, and my father later asked me to join as well," she recalled.

Jolly said those early days shaped both their craft and relationship. "We often returned late from rehearsals. The group would ask him to drop me home, I did not know Kolkata then. That is how we grew closer."

Her early promise was evident from the start. "On my first day



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

at Theatre Workshop, I was given a script to read. Everyone was surprised. We did not have to wait long before getting roles," she said.

On her husband's flaws and strengths, Jolly was direct. "His weakness is that he gets angry quickly and speaks the truth bluntly. But he is very simple. A good person, and above all, honest. He has lived his life with integrity. That is perhaps why we are happy."

Rahmat Ali echoed the emphasis on balance rather than perfection. "We are happy. There is happiness and sorrow in every life, but ours has more happiness. We also argue, we have disagreements, but they do not last. We forget, we accept mistakes."

He added, "The most important thing is compromise. We make space for each other. Without that, it does not work."

For him, the principle is clear. "Living honestly—that is where happiness lies."

On responsibility within the

household, Rahmat credited his wife. "I think Jolly has carried more responsibility—family and children."

He recalled a period when their careers were based in different cities. "I was teaching at the University of Chittagong while she was at Dhaka University. She managed everything at home during that time. Later, I joined Dhaka University, and we shared responsibilities."

Asked about Jolly's defining quality, he pointed to her judgment. "She is very thoughtful. She measures her words. She does not speak impulsively. She thinks before she speaks and before she decides."

Both emphasised mutual regard as the core of their relationship. "We trust each other. We respect each other. We respect others, too. That is why, we have received so much love in our lives," Rahmat said.

Jolly closed on a note of restraint rather than sentiment. "I have never harmed anyone. I have respected people and loved them."



'Atarbibilane' set for nationwide release on May 1

A new Bangladeshi film on the struggles of marginalised women, *Atarbibilane*, is set for nationwide release on May 1.

Produced by Times Media, its trailer, songs and poster were unveiled at a press conference at the BFDC in Dhaka. Directed by Mejanur Rahman Labu, the film features Farzana Sumi in the lead as Atarbibibi.

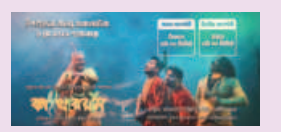
"This role was completely different from anything I've done before," Sumi said, citing extensive preparation and a demanding Ramadan shoot.

The story follows a woman navigating exploitation and repeated setbacks while striving for dignity. Filmed across Dhaka, Daulatdia, Rajbari, Goalanda and Faridpur, the cast includes Mostafa Prokash, Rashed Mamun Apu and others.

WHAT'S THE HAPS?

'Bonnotherium'

Adapted from Sukumar Ray, *Bonnotherium* turns absurdity into critique.



Directed by Ivan Riaz, the play follows a research company chasing profit after discovering a rare species, drawing in opportunists and dreamers alike. Beneath its wit runs a sharper question—what happens when nature is reduced to commerce and spectacle.

Date: Friday | May 1, 2026

Time: 4:30 pm and 6:30 pm onwards

Venue: Bangladesh Mohila Samity, Bailey Road

NEWS

Credible, well managed election

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monitoring and enforcement so that all parties achieve 33 percent women's representation in all internal committees by 2030.

It suggested considering a requirement for parties to nominate at least one-third women candidates.

Other priorities include amending the Cyber Security Ordinance to place binding obligations on platforms, strengthening campaign finance rules, and extending postal voting to homebound voters, persons with disabilities, internally displaced persons, migrant labourers, and students.

The report praised the Election Commission, saying that it worked independently and transparently, maintained stakeholders' confidence, and upheld the integrity of the polls.

It said the peaceful election day, transparent tabulation, and broad

acceptance of the outcome helped renew democracy.

The elections were held under a renewed legal framework that largely accords with international standards. The 2025 amendments to the RPO strengthened inclusion and credibility.

Still, the legal framework remained fragmented and required revision to enhance legal certainty, close loopholes, and revise or repeal laws that unduly restrict freedom of expression.

The mission received and corroborated reports of some 56 campaign-related incidents across 27 districts, resulting in at least 200 injuries, mostly involving BNP and Jamaat supporters.

On campaign finance, existing rules were "old and ineffective". Although spending was capped and post-election reporting was mandatory, limited oversight weakened efforts to verify compliance, the report said.

Women accounted for just under four percent of contestants, and only seven women were elected. The BNP fielded 10 women candidates, while the NCP nominated two. Jamaat and 30 other parties fielded none.

Partisan influencers and deceptive media accounts, including some from outside Bangladesh, were the main sources of disinformation on Facebook and TikTok, according to the report.

On media, the mission said several private outlets tried to offer balanced coverage, but self-censorship remained deeply entrenched. It cited harassment of journalists, digital-led violence, economic vulnerability, and inadequate police protection.

Minorities remained underrepresented, while many persons with disabilities could not vote independently because many polling booths were inaccessible and postal voting was unavailable.

UAE pulls out

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since the 1970s, is likely to weaken OPEC, dominated by the UAE's neighbour and rival Saudi Arabia, indicating further turbulence for markets, analysts said.

Gulf oil shipments are currently being strangled by Iran's blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, which flows past the UAE and normally carries one-fifth of the world's oil.

The UAE, hard-hit by Iranian attacks, has also faced trouble in its relationship with Saudi Arabia, the world's top oil exporter, after a stand-off between rival forces backed by the two countries in Yemen.

Pre-war, the UAE was the fourth biggest producer in the 22-member OPEC+, behind Saudi Arabia, Russia and Iraq.

Jorge Leon, an analyst at Rystad Energy, said its withdrawal may not immediately impact oil markets while Hormuz shipments remain on hold.

But the UAE will now be free to raise production, "raising broader questions about the sustainability of Saudi Arabia's role as the market's central stabiliser—and pointing to a potentially more volatile oil market as OPEC's capacity to smooth supply imbalances diminishes".

Jamie Ingram, managing editor for the Middle East Economic Survey, posted that OPEC is losing 13 percent of its production capacity with the UAE's departure, citing the International Energy Agency.

Founded in 1960, the 12-member OPEC cartel in 2016 partnered up with 10 other producers to form OPEC+ to gain more clout.

BJP eyes saffron surge

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will have to wait until May 4 for the counting, when it will be revealed whether TMC's symbol Jora Ghas Phul (two flowers with grass) or BJP's emblem the Lotus blossoms.

The contest is also a high-stakes prestige fight between Mamata and Suwendu, once her closest aide in TMC.

Suwendu defeated her in Nandigram in 2021 by about 1,900 votes.

Following the ego boost from taking Nandigram, this time, Suwendu made politics personal. The second seat he is contesting the elections from is Mamata's home turf Bhabanipur in South Kolkata. There Suwendu is challenging his former mentor, Mamata herself.

The elections have unfolded amid

a row between parties over a Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the voter roll.

Nearly nine million names, about 12 percent of the electorate, were removed in the SIR, reducing the tally from 7.66 crore in October 2025 to 6.75 crore. West Bengal had 7.34 crore voters in 2021.

TMC has opposed the move, accusing the BJP of polarisation, while the BJP insists it was aimed at eliminating illegal infiltrators.

The deletions could shrink TMC's vote bank, as seen in Bhabanipur, where 51,000 voters, 21 percent of the electorate, were removed. Mamata had won her by-poll there by 58,800 votes, roughly the same number now deleted.

Besides Mamata, the fate of Kolkata Mayor and Urban Development

Minister Firhad Hakim, Sports Minister Aroop Biswas, Agriculture Minister Sovandeb Chattopadhyay, Education Minister Bratya Basu, Finance Minister Chandrima Bhattacharya, and Industries Minister Shashi Panja will be decided today. BJP leaders Tapas Roy, Swapan Dasgupta, Arjun Singh, Subrata Thakur, and Sajal Ghosh are also in the fray.

Though the election is a high-stakes battle between TMC and BJP, the Indian National Congress, once in power for 25 years, and the CPI (M), which ruled for 34 years, remain on the sidelines.

Their relevance is only being discussed in the event neither TMC nor BJP crosses the majority mark of 148 seats, when their support could become crucial.

'No militancy in country'

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"These intelligence units monitor whether any member is involved in anti-state or other unlawful activities. There are also coordinated forces and central vigilance systems in place. If anyone is found involved, they are identified and dealt with under military law. This is nothing new," he said.

Regarding a recent letter reportedly issued by Police Headquarters warning of possible militant attacks, the minister said no such letter had been issued by them.

"However, we always take precautionary measures during different national occasions," he added.

Meanwhile, at a different programme in the capital, Zahed Ur Rahman, an adviser to the prime minister on information and broadcasting, said that militancy continues to exist in the

country. "We do not want to deny reality—we want to combat it. However, the risk of militancy in the country is not at an alarming level. But as the old saying goes, if we don't acknowledge a crisis or a disease, it cannot be treated. So, it is there, and we are working to bring it down to zero," he said.

During the Awami League rule, the militancy issue was presented on a massive scale; they used it as a narrative to stay in power, he alleged.

"Their message was, 'There are militants in Bangladesh, they will take over everything, so don't worry about whether I held a fair election—just keep me in power.' That was the narrative."

During the interim government's time, some people tried to claim that there were no militants in Bangladesh at all, Zahed said.

"That is another extreme [position], and it is also false. Militancy existed in Bangladesh at one stage, and it still exists. We actually want to combat it."

"Being cautious is the need of the hour," Zahed said.

"Because we have noticed that during the interim government's rule, people with these [militant] tendencies have shown a trend of becoming more organised and appearing more openly in public," he said.

He said the BNP-led government would combat such activities.

"We should not generalise the word 'militant' too much. In the past, we clearly saw stories where a house would be surrounded, claims would be made that bombs were being built there, and then Rab would kill people in 'crossfires'. So, we will be very careful about how we use this term," he said.

Fear of 'frozen conflict'

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region anytime soon, we do not want to see a frozen conflict that ends up being thawed every time there is a political reason," Qatari foreign ministry spokesman Majed al-Ansari said at a press conference.

While a ceasefire has halted the fighting, diplomacy aimed at permanently ending the war has proven inconclusive.

"We are very keen to see an end to this war that is sustainable," Ansari added.

Trump met with top security advisors on Monday to discuss the Iranian proposal after Tehran passed "written messages" to Washington via Pakistan spelling out its red lines, including on nuclear issues and Hormuz, Iran's Fars news agency reported.

The proposal was "being discussed," spokeswoman Karoline Leavitt told a White House briefing.

The plan would reportedly see Tehran ease its chokehold on the strait and Washington lift its retaliatory blockade on Iranian ports while broader negotiations continue, including over the thorny question of Iran's nuclear programme.

But CNN, citing two sources familiar with the matter, said Trump had signaled at Monday's meeting that he was reluctant to take Hormuz off the table without resolving the nuclear question, though it was unclear what his next steps would be.

Trump yesterday claimed that Iran has said it was in a state of collapse and wants the US to open the Strait of

Hormuz while it sorts out its leadership.

"Iran has just informed us that they are in a 'State of Collapse'. They want us to 'Open the Hormuz Strait', as soon as possible, as they try to figure out their leadership situation (Which I believe they will be able to do!)" Trump said in a social media post.

Iranian defence ministry spokesman Reza Taleai-Nik yesterday said that Washington "must abandon its illegal and irrational demands."

"The United States is no longer in a position to dictate its policy to independent nations," he said, according to state TV.

Asked about Iran's proposal, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio told Fox News "it's better than what we thought they were going to submit," but questioned whether it was genuine.

"They're very good negotiators," he said, "and we have to ensure that any deal that is made, any agreement that is made, is one that definitively prevents them from sprinting towards a nuclear weapon at any point."

Tehran would need guarantees that Washington and Israel would not attack again if it was to offer security assurances for the Gulf, Iran's envoy to the UN said.

TRUMP MAY DECLARE VICTORY!
Iran's blockade of Hormuz has cut off flows of oil, gas and fertiliser and sent prices soaring. As the deal prospects dimmed, Oil prices rallied, with Brent crude for June delivery rising 2.8 percent to \$111.26 a barrel. The benchmark US contract, WTI for June delivery, rose 3.4 percent to \$99.62 per barrel.

they can live with dignity and access to justice and remedies," he said.

Tarique recalled that former president Ziaur Rahman restored judicial independence, laying the foundation stone of justice in the country, while former prime minister Khaleda Zia introduced legal aid initiatives to make justice more accessible.

Law Minister Asaduzzaman, EU Ambassador to Bangladesh Michael Miller, and National Legal Aid Services Organisation Director General Manjurul Hasan also spoke at the programme.

Panel lawyers Syed Khan of Dhaka and Nilima Biswas of Rajshahi received crests and certificates from the prime minister for their contributions.