

Sheikh Hasina sworn in as PM for 5th term, forms 37-member cabinet

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT: Awami League president Sheikh Hasina, elder daughter of the country's founding father, yesterday Thursday formed the government for the fourth consecutive term with a 37-member cabinet as she took oath as the prime minister for fifth term. Her council of ministers included 25 ministers and 11 state ministers. President Mohammed Shahabuddin administered the oath of office and oath of secrecy to Sheikh Hasina and her new ministers at Durbar Hall of

Bangabhaban at 7.06pm. After the swearing-in, Sheikh Hasina signed the oath of office and oath of secrecy. The ministers, who took oath, are: AKM Mozammel Haque (Gazipur-1), Obaidul Quader (Noakhali-5), Nurul Majid Mahmud Humayun (Narsingdi-4), Asaduzzaman Khan (Dhaka-12), Dr Dipu Moni (Chandpur-3), Md Tajul Islam (Cumilla-9), Muhammad Faruk Khan (Gopalganj-1), Abul Hasan Mahmud Ali (Dinajpur-4), Anisul Huq (Brahmanbaria-4), Dr Hasan Mahmud

(Chattogram-7), Md Abdus Shahid (Moulvibazar-4), Sadhan Chandra Majumder (Naogaon-1), RAM Obaidul Muktedir Chowdhury (Brahmanbaria-3), Md Abdur Rahman (Faridpur-1), Narayan Chandra Chanda (Khulna-5), Abdus Salam (Mymensingh-9), Mohibul Hasan Chowdhury (Chattogram-9), Farhad Hossain (Meherpur-1), Md Faridul Haque Khan (Jamalpur-2), Md Zillul Hakim (Rajbari-2), Saber Hossain Chowdhury (Dhaka-9),
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Awami League President Sheikh Hasina took oath as Prime Minister for the fifth time. Yesterday Thursday at 7 pm the President Shahabuddin recited the oath to Sheikh Hasina — PID

Chinese President congratulates Sheikh Hasina on her re-election as PM

STAFF REPORTER

Chinese President Xi Jinping has greeted Sheikh Hasina on her re-election as Prime Minister of Bangladesh. In a letter wrote to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the Chinese president said on behalf of the government and people of China and on his own, "I would like to extend to you my warm congratulations and best wishes". He said China and Bangladesh are neighbours with long-established friendship, adding,
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'It's the choice of prime minister' Momen on no longer being a minister

STAFF REPORTER

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen, who has not been chosen in the list of the upcoming cabinet, yesterday Thursday said being a minister was a privilege and it was solely a choice of the prime minister. "The prime minister gave me a chance and I have done my best with sincerity, honesty and best of my ability over the last five years as a foreign minister," he told The Daily Star over phone when asked why he has been dropped from the council of ministers. "It is the choice of the prime minister."
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Japan earthquake survivors struggle to rebuild lives

DW NEWS

On New Year's Day, Shinji Takesono was in his car when he felt a magnitude 5.7 foreshock. He stopped to call his wife Hatsue, asking her to turn off a heater at home — a potential fire risk. The 58-year-old is the chief priest at a 500-year-old wooden temple in the center of the small town of Wajima in the northwest of Japan. Shortly afterwards, 59-year-old Hatsue, to whom he had gotten married only five years earlier, texted him back to say she had shut off the heater. It was the last time he heard from her. When Takesono rushed back to the temple next to their 45-year-old house two minutes later, the main quake hit. The shaking was so strong he couldn't even get out of the car. Then, right in front of his eyes, their house collapsed, its ground floor completely squashed. He called his wife's name many

times. She did not answer. "I wish I had just told her to save herself," said Takesono, full of regret and choking back tears in the temple yard covered with broken roof tiles

Landslides and bad weather continue to hamper rescue efforts in a remote rural region devastated by the January 1 earthquake. The magnitude 7.6 quake caused some of the strongest tremors on record.

and debris. In the afternoon, two police search units including a sniffer dog began taking turns climbing into the rubble, carrying out loose bits and pieces and smashing obstacles with heavy

tools. But after well over three hours they had to give up, coming out empty-handed. Takesono now wants his story to be a cautionary tale to others. In a twist of fate, just a few meters across the street, a large swath of land was reduced to nothing but charcoal and molten plastic and metal, still smoldering four days later, after a massive fire raged through the famous morning market and lacquerware quarter after the quake. It destroyed about 200 buildings and a legacy, but left Takesono's temple unscathed.

Quake causes widespread destruction
Hatsue is one of 102 people in Ishikawa prefecture whose fate currently remains unknown since the magnitude 7.6 earthquake rocked the Noto Peninsula just over a week ago. As of Tuesday, 202 death had been confirmed, 91 and 81 respectively in the most severely affected towns of Suzu
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Google awaits EU legal opinion on 2.4-bn-euro fine

AFP

The Advocate General of the European Court of Justice will on Thursday publish a long-awaited opinion on a contested 2.4-billion-euro (\$2.6-billion) fine that Brussels slapped on Google for anti-competitive practices. Although such opinions are not binding, they do carry weight and are often followed by EU judges in their rulings. In this case, the opinion will feed into a legal battle Google has been waging to overturn the fine the European Commission hit it with in 2017. The commission determined that Google abused its dominant position by favouring its own Google Shopping service in results from its ubiquitous search engine.
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Passport Index 2024: Bangladesh shares 97th spot with North Korea

STAFF REPORTER

Bangladeshi passport has been placed at 97th place in the 2024 edition of Henley Passport Index, the most widely-accepted rating of global travel documents, published on Tuesday. Bangladesh was ranked 98th in the last year's ranking. The latest edition of the passport index features a total of 104 spots with some countries' passports sharing the same spot. Bangladesh shared 97th spot on the index with North Korea. The ranking is based on the number of destinations passport holders can access without a prior visa. According to the 2024 Henley Passport Index, a Bangladeshi passport entitles visa-free travel to 42 destinations. In South Asia, the Bangladeshi passport fared

better compared to that of Nepal (98), Pakistan (101) and Afghanistan (104). Ranked at 58, Maldives' passport has become the strongest in South Asia with visa-free access to 94 countries. India, Bhutan and Sri Lanka's passports ranked at 80th, 87th and 96th respectively. An unprecedented six countries share the top spot for the most desirable travel documents in 2024. Citizens of France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Singapore, and Spain now have access to visa-free or visa-on-arrival entry to a remarkable 194 destinations worldwide. The Henley Passport Index is updated every quarter, and is regarded as the go-to resource for global citizens and sovereign states for determining where a passport ranks on
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WHO: 10,000 died from Covid-19 in December

NEWS DESK

The World Health Organization (WHO), on Wednesday, said that nearly 10,000 Covid-19 related deaths were reported in December. Hospital admissions during the month jumped 42% in nearly 50 countries, largely in Europe and the Americas, the UN-backed health agency said. There was also a 62% increase in intensive care unit admissions, compared with November. "Although 10,000 deaths a month is far less than the peak of the pandemic, this level of preventable deaths is not acceptable," WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told reporters. This comes when the new JN1 variant has become the most reported coronavirus variant in the world. Tedros added that he was "certain"

that cases were on the rise in other countries too but were not being reported. He urged governments to keep up surveillance and continued access to treatment. "We continue to call on individuals to be

■ This comes when the new JN1 variant has become the most reported coronavirus variant in the world

■ The WHO declared an end to Covid-19 as a pandemic in May 2023

vaccinated, to test, to wear masks where needed and to ensure crowded indoor spaces are well ventilated," he said.

Tracking trends Maria Van Kerkhove, technical lead at the global health agency for Covid-19, cited an uptick in respiratory diseases across the

world due to the coronavirus but also flu, rhinovirus and pneumonia. "We expect those trends to continue into January through the winter months in the northern hemisphere," she said.

Dr Michael Ryan, head of emergencies at WHO, recommend that people get vaccinated when possible and wear masks. "The vaccines may not stop you being infected, but the vaccines are certainly reducing significantly your chance of being hospitalized or dying."
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US' desire to see fulfilment of Bangladeshis' aspirations unchanged

NEWS DESK

The White House said that nothing has changed about its desires to see that the aspirations of the Bangladeshi people are met, and that includes being able to conduct free, fair, and transparent elections. "We obviously still believe in the importance of viable, vibrant democratic institutions all over the world. And nothing has changed about our desires to see that the aspirations of the Bangladeshi people are met, and that includes being able to conduct free, fair, and transparent elections," said the US National Security Council Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby at a briefing
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BB authorises 90-day buyers' credit to import essentials for Ramadan

STAFF REPORTER

In a strategic move to bolster supplies during Ramadan, the Bangladesh Bank has authorised a 90-day buyers' credit for importing eight essential products. This initiative, announced in a notification by the bank's Foreign Exchange Policy Department yesterday Thursday, aims to ensure adequate supply and stable prices for critical commodities during the holy month. The list of permitted imports under this scheme includes edible oil, chickpeas, pulses, peas, onions, spices, sugar, and dates. The central bank's directive, effective immediately, allows for deferred payments on these imports, a policy designed to remain in effect for import initiations until

March 31, 2024. A Bangladesh Bank official emphasised the necessity of this decision, stating, "This measure is critical to prevent a supply crisis and price escalation of these essential products during Ramadan. Ensuring these goods are imported in a timely manner is paramount to maintaining the supply chain during this significant period." Under the new guidelines, authorised dealers (ADs) are expected to expedite the opening of import letters of credit (LCs), following proper procedures to guarantee on-time arrival of goods. This approach is anticipated to secure a steady flow of essential items for Ramadan, meeting the heightened demand and contributing to the overall wellbeing of the community during this sacred time
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South Africa tells the UN top court Israel is committing genocide in Gaza as a landmark case begins

AP NEWS

A continent away from the war in Gaza, South Africa accused Israel of committing genocide against the Palestinians and pleaded with the United Nations' top court on Thursday to urgently order a halt to the country's military operation. Israel has vehemently denied the allegations. South African lawyers said during the opening arguments that the latest Gaza war is part of a decadeslong oppression of the Palestinians by Israel. They asked judges to impose binding preliminary orders on Israel, including an immediate halt to Israel's military campaign in Gaza. "Genocides are never declared in advance, but this court has the benefit of the past 13 weeks of evidence that shows incontrovertibly a pattern of conduct and related

intention that justifies as a plausible claim of genocidal acts," South African lawyer Adila Hassim told the judges and audience in the



packed, ornate room of the Peace Palace in The Hague. "Nothing will stop the suffering except an order from this court," she said. And South Africa insisted Israel committed genocide by design. "The scale of destruction in Gaza, the targeting of family homes and civilians, the war being a

war on children, all make clear that genocidal intent is both understood and has been put into practice. The articulated intent is the destruction of

proceedings, hundreds of pro-Israeli protesters marched close to the courthouse with banners saying "Bring them home," referring to the hostages held by Hamas since it attacked Israel on Oct. 7. Among the crowds, people held Israeli and Dutch flags. At a separate demonstration nearby, pro-Palestinians protesters waved flags saying: "End Israeli Apartheid Free Palestine" and chanting "Netanyahu criminal" and "Ceasefire now!" Israel's offensive has killed more than 23,200 Palestinians in Gaza, according to the Health Ministry in the Hamas-run enclave. The dispute strikes at the heart of Israel's national identity as a Jewish state created in the aftermath of the Nazi genocide in the Holocaust, during which 6 million Jews were murdered. It also evokes issues

Palestinian life," said lawyer Tembeka Ngcukaitobi. "What state would admit to a genocidal intent? Yet the distinctive feature of this case has not been the silence as such, but the reiteration and repetition of genocidal speech throughout every sphere of the state in Israel," he said. Ahead of the

proceedings, hundreds of pro-Israeli protesters marched close to the courthouse with banners saying "Bring them home," referring to the hostages held by Hamas since it attacked Israel on Oct. 7. Among the crowds, people held Israeli and Dutch flags. At a separate demonstration nearby, pro-Palestinians protesters waved flags saying: "End Israeli Apartheid Free Palestine" and chanting "Netanyahu criminal" and "Ceasefire now!" Israel's offensive has killed more than 23,200 Palestinians in Gaza, according to the Health Ministry in the Hamas-run enclave. The dispute strikes at the heart of Israel's national identity as a Jewish state created in the aftermath of the Nazi genocide in the Holocaust, during which 6 million Jews were murdered. It also evokes issues

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Khaleda discharged from hospital after 5 months

STAFF REPORTER

After five months of treatment at Evercare Hospital in Dhaka, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia was finally discharged from the medical facility yesterday. Khaleda Zia was discharged from the hospital around 5:00pm and is on her way back to her Gulshan residence, said the party's media cell member Shairul Kabir Khan. The former prime minister was admitted to the hospital on August 9 last year and has been treated for various health complications. Khaleda Zia's personal physician AZM Zahid Hossain said members of Zia's medical board reviewed her overall condition and took the decision to discharge her as she is now stable. "The physical condition of the BNP leader is now much more stable. Besides, she had been in the hospital for a long time. Considering all these, she was allowed to go home," he added.

Train services on Khulna-Mongla railway line not operational after 2 months since inauguration



NEWS DESK

Two months have passed since its inauguration, but train services on the Khulna-Mongla railway line are yet to become operational. Residents of the Khulna region are anxiously waiting the commencement of train services on this line. However, authorities stated that some minor work on the railway line is still pending, and the date for starting train operation will be determined by March. The Fultala Rail Station project, connecting Khulna's Fultala Station to Mongla for efficient transportation of goods with neighboring countries like India, Nepal, and Bhutan, began in 2010. Despite the initial completion deadline set for December 2013,

various delays prolonged the project. By the end of December 2022, only 75 out of the total 90 km of the rail track was completed. To extend the project deadline, an application was submitted to the relevant ministry for a six-month extension until June 2023. Despite another deadline extension, no additional funds were allocated for the project. The railway project faced numerous obstacles since its approval on December 21, 2010, during a meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council. The initial tendering process alone took two years to finalize for the three-year project. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the Khulna-Mongla railway line on November 1, and

the railway authorities announced the start date for commuter trains from January 1, 2024. However, due to the incomplete work, services have not commenced yet. As per the Western Zone General Manager (GM) of the Railway, Asim Kumar Talukdar, some minor work on the Khulna-Mongla railway line are still pending. The official handover of the line to the railway authorities has not taken place, and it will take some more days for the transfer to occur. Once transferred, a new date for train operations will be announced. Regarding the project's status, the Project Director of the Khulna-Mongla Railway Line, M Arifuzzaman, mentioned that some

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AL takes over through fake polls on January 7

STAFF REPORTER

BNP senior leader Dr Abdul Moyeen Khan on Thursday alleged that the Awai League government seized office again through a fake election on January 7. "This government has taken over the parliament as per its will by holding a fake and farcical election. It has now become clear to all that there was no election on January 7," he told a press conference. Dr Moyeen claimed that the victory and defeat of the candidates in the 12th parliamentary election were predetermined by the highest level of the government. "It's now no longer only BNP's statement as it's now exposed to the entire world with all the proofs." He said that the most depressing, shameful, disgraceful thing is that the government has indulged in vote robbery in broad daylight. "They shared the seats openly through negotiations and openly decided who would be elected to which seats (before the elections)." Dr Moyeen, a BNP standing committee member, said it is needless

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Ukraine builds barricades, digs trenches as focus shifts to defence

REUTERS

Rows of white concrete barricades and coils of razor wire stretch across an open field for more than a kilometre. Trenches with rudimentary living quarters are being dug under cover of darkness. Artillery rumbles not far away. New defensive lines visited by Reuters near the northeastern city of Kupiansk on Dec 28 show how Ukraine has stepped up construction of fortifications in recent months as it shifts its military operations against Russia to a more defensive footing. The defences, which bear some similarities to those rolled out in the Russian-occupied south and east, aim to help Ukraine weather assaults while regenerating its forces as Moscow takes the battlefield initiative, military analysts said. "As soon as the troops are moving, traversing fields, you can do without fortifications. But when the troops stop, you need to immediately dig into the ground," a Ukrainian army engineer with the call sign Lynx told Reuters near Kupiansk. President Volodymyr Zelensky announced that Ukraine was "significantly enhancing" fortifications on Nov 28 after a counteroffensive that it launched in June was unable to rapidly punch through Russian lines. Kyiv says it is unswayed in its ambition to retake all remaining occupied territory, but for now is focused on politically sensitive conscription reforms to replenish manpower and on addressing

artillery shortages at the front. Russia has been ramping up offensive pressure around eastern towns such as Kupiansk, Lyman and Avdiivka, and no longer needs to hold back its reserve troops for fear of a possible Ukrainian breakthrough, the military analysts said. Zelenskiy said Ukraine's defensive constructions needed to be boosted and work on them accelerated around the three towns, in eastern parts of the Donetsk region, and in

The defences aim to help Ukraine weather assaults while regenerating its forces as Moscow takes the battlefield initiative

the regions of Kharkiv, Sumy, Chernihiv, Kyiv, Rivne and Volyn. Those regions stretch all the way up from Ukraine's east, along the border with Russia and Belarus, to its western ally Poland. Zelenskiy said the southern Kherson region, a swathe of which is still occupied, would also be reinforced. **DEFENSIVE POSTURE** There is no publicly available data for the intensity or scale of the fortification construction. Ukraine has had defensive lines in some areas of the eastern Donbas region since 2014, when Russia

backed militants who seized territory. It has been heavily dug in at places such as Avdiivka throughout the full-scale invasion. Stronger fortifications would slow down Russian troops and suck fewer Ukrainian forces into defence, freeing them up from the front so they could, for instance, receive more training, said Jack Watling, senior research fellow for land warfare at the Royal United Services Institute. "The Ukrainians are now shifting onto a defensive posture because their offensive has culminated," he said in a telephone interview, adding that Russia had retaken the initiative on the battlefield and was able to choose where to attack. With Ukrainian artillery ammunition stocks declining, the rate of Russian casualties was falling, making it easier for Moscow to generate new units, which in time could allow them to open up new lines of attack, he added. "On the Ukrainian side, they are trying to minimise their own casualties, but also regenerate offensive combat power," said Watling. He said fortifications could also be used to defend Ukraine's flanks when it goes back on the offensive. **DRAGON'S TEETH** On Wednesday, Reuters reporters visited trenches being dug with an excavator and shovels at an undisclosed location in the Chernihiv region near the Russian border. "When the civilians have done

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Kajaikata Ideal Technical School and College teachers meeting with UNO

MD. RUHUL AMIN RAJU

On behalf of Mahmudpur Kazaikata Ideal Technical School and College of Melandah Upazila of Jamalpur District, Honorable President of the College Managing Committee and New Upazila Executive Officer of Melandah Upazila Mr. AKM Lutfar Rahman,

Principal of Mahmudpur Kazaikata Ideal Technical School and BM College, Md. Rafiqul Hasan. Under the leadership of Lewis, all the teaching staff gave hearty congratulations and presented crests on behalf of the crowd. Melandah went to the office of the Upazila Nirbahi Officer at noon yesterday.

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39 held in anti-drug drives in city

STAFF REPORTER

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP), in anti-drug drives, arrested 39 people from different areas in the city in the last 24 hours till 6:00 am, yesterday Thursday. Additional deputy commissioner of DMP Media and Public Relation KN Roy Niyati confirmed the matter. During the drive, a total of 4,024 Yaba pills, 5.9 kilograms of hemp, 81.2 grams of heroin and four liters of wine were seized from their possessions. A total of 30 cases were filed with the police stations concerned under the Narcotics Control Act.

Papua New Guinea PM declares state of emergency in capital

INTERNATIONAL DESK

Papua New Guinea's prime minister declared a 14-day state of emergency in the capital Port Moresby on Thursday, after riots in two cities left 15 people dead as crowds looted and burned shops. More than 1,000 troops were on standby "to step in wherever necessary" under the emergency decree, Prime Minister James Marape announced, a day after the violence broke out, reports AFP. AP reports said the unrest began in the capital, Port Moresby, on Wednesday after hundreds of police officers, soldiers, prison staff and public servants walked off their jobs in protest over a pay dispute. The Papua New Guinea government attributed the



pay cut to an administrative glitch. Similar riots also caused damage in Lae, the second-biggest city in the southwestern Pacific country. The

Australian Broadcasting Corporation reported that at least 15 people died in Port Moresby and Lae. An

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Distribution of winter clothes among children in Thakurgaon

SHAMSUL ALAM

Free winter clothes (blankets) are distributed to children under the "Christmas Bounce Back Program" of World Vision, a development organization in Thakurgaon. The distribution was held on Thursday at St. Mother Teresa school grounds in Gobinagar of the city. Under the slogan "Say no to child marriage and ensure child protection", the distribution ceremony organized by World Vision Thakurgaon AP under the

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Oil tanker in Gulf of Oman boarded by masked men in military uniforms

AL JAZEERA

Armed men wearing military uniforms and black masks have boarded an oil tanker near Oman, according to a British maritime security firm and the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) authority. In the latest in a spate of shipping incidents in the region, about four or five men boarded the Marshall Islands-flagged St Nikolas at about 7:30am (03:30 GMT) on yesterday Thursday, some 50 nautical miles east of Sohar in Oman and then headed towards Bandar-e-Jask in Iran, according to Ambrey, the maritime security firm. Tankertrackers.com, which tracks and reports global shipments of crude oil, identified the vessel as the St Nikolas and said it was carrying "Iraqi oil". It said the tanker previously went by the name Suez Rajan and had been seized by the United States

government for transporting sanctioned Iranian oil. Ambrey also said the recently renamed tanker was previously prosecuted and fined for carrying sanctioned Iranian oil, which was confiscated by US authorities. The yearlong dispute ended with the US Justice Department seizing one million barrels of Iranian crude. "Iran has previously taken action against those it has accused of cooperating with the US," it added. The British military's UKTMO, which provides warnings to sailors in the Middle East, said the incident began in waters between Oman and Iran, and it had received a report from the ship's security manager of hearing "unknown voices over the phone" alongside the ship's captain. Ambrey said that the men covered surveillance cameras as they boarded the vessel. As the tanker appeared to veer towards Bandar-e-Jask, its tracker was turned

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Sheikh Hasina

Jahangir Kabir Nanak (Dhaka-13), Nazmul Hasan (Kishoreganj-6), Architect Yeafesh Osman (technocrat) and Samanta Lal Sen (technocrat). The state ministers are: Simeen Hussain Rimi (Gazipur-4), Nasrul Hamid (Dhaka-3), Zunaid Ahmed Palak (Natore-3), Mohammad Ali Arafat (Dhaka-17), Md Mahibbur Rahman (Patuakhali-4), Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury (Dinajpur-2), Zaeed Farooque, (Barishal-5), Kujendra Lal Tripura (Khagrachhari), Rumana Ali (Gazipur-3), Shafiqur Rahman Chowdhury (Sylhet-2) and Ahsanul Islam Titu (Tangail-6). Guests present at the jam-packed glittering Durbar Hall of Bangabhaban included Chief Justice, Chief Election Commissioner, Judges of the Supreme Court, MPs, political leaders, chiefs of the three services, members of diplomatic corps, journalists, and high civil and military officials. President's spouse Dr Rebecca Sultana, PM's youngest sister Sheikh Rehana and other family members were present at the function. Attired in a white Jamdani saree, Sheikh Hasina was looking confident and lively at the Durbar Hall. The spacious hall was overflowing with the invited guests, while many of them were seen standing along the walls. Sheikh Hasina was given a standing ovation when she entered the Durbar Hall at 6.55pm. Minutes later President Shahabuddin entered the Durbar Hall where the Prime Minister took oath at 7.06pm. The ceremony began with the recitation from the holy Quran. Sheikh Hasina took oath first pledging to preserve, protect and defend the national constitution and the state sovereignty. Cabinet Secretary Md Mahub Hossain conducted the oath-taking function, while around 1,400 guests were invited to witness the historic ceremony. On January 7, the 12th parliament election was held in 299 seats. The Awami League attained a resounding victory bagging 222 seats with 'boat' symbol. The Jatiya Party won 11 seats and independent candidates 62 seats, partners of the Awami League-led 14-party combine-Workers Party and Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (Jasod) got one seat each. Bangladesh Kalyan Party won one seat in the polls. Earlier, people had assembled in processions from different parts of the capital, chanting slogans hailing Sheikh Hasina.

Chinese President

"Over the past 49 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations, both our countries have always respected each other, treated each other equally, and achieved mutual benefit and win-win results." Xi Jinping said, "We firmly support each other on issues that bear on each other's core interests, and jointly pursue the development and revitalisation of each country, bringing tangible benefits to our two peoples." In this regard, he mentioned their last August meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa, where both of them reached important consensus on the development of China-Bangladesh relations. "It is expected that China and Bangladesh would make joint efforts to further implement the important consensus we have reached, enhance political mutual trust, promote traditional friendship, further synergise development strategies, promote high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, so as to uplift the China-Bangladesh Strategic Partnership of Cooperation to a new height," he said. The Chinese president wished Sheikh Hasina good health, rewarding career and every success in life. "May Bangladesh enjoy prosperity and its people happiness," he ended.

It's the choice

Momen spent crucial years, especially the last two, when Bangladesh came under huge scrutiny in terms of human rights, democracy, freedom of speech, as well as the

global pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war that is reshaping the global geopolitical space. During his tenure, the US imposed sanctions against Rab and a visa policy on Bangladesh relating to elections. He has been often a matter of discussion in media because of his frank comments that many said were not "diplomatically right enough". Momen, however, thinks that the greatest diplomats of the world have always been open and frank and assertive. "I am open. I have nothing to hide," he said. He said he went to the foreign ministry, which has been his office for last five years, and thanked the ministry officials for their cooperation. "I have always asked them to write briefs and make them perfect. So, I thanked them," Momen said. He said he focused on economic diplomacy, public diplomacy and regional peace and stability during his tenure as foreign minister. "I hope that these policies will help achieve our goal of golden Bengal," he said. Momen said now as an elected MP, he will serve the people and contribute to the policymaking for the greater good.

Japan earthquake

and Wajima. At least 565 people were injured. The tremors, which reached the highest levels of six and seven on the Japanese "Shindo," or seismic intensity scale, destroyed at least 1,400 houses — not even counting the most affected areas. They also triggered tsunami warnings along the Japanese west coast, sinking boats and wrecking sea walls, cars and houses in Suzu. On arrival in Wajima 72 hours later, the air was filled with blaring sirens from ambulances and fire trucks and the droning of helicopters. This soundscape was regularly pierced by the shrieking noise of yet another quake alarm pushed to mobile phones. The extent of the destruction is on a scale rarely seen even in earthquake-prone Japan: entire quarters, especially those with many traditional buildings, have been turned into large heaps of displaced roofs, broken tiles, splintered wooden pillars, glass shards, scattered belongings and squashed cars. Power lines are dangling from tilted electricity poles, and maintenance holes are protruding from sunken streets.

In the town center, a modern concrete apartment block of seven stories, built under much stricter rules than older buildings, fell 90 degrees to one side. Despite that, a couple used a ladder to climb back inside four days later, trying to retrieve cushions from their kitchen. "Don't film this house," the woman said upset. Another concrete building drilled itself into the ground, now leaning slightly over one of the main road arteries into town. Most streets have massive cracks and holes, and the pavement is covered in mud due to liquefaction. **Finding survivors is a race against time** "Seventy-two hours are considered the critical window, after which the chances of survival shrink rapidly," said Kuniyuki Kawasaki, general manager at the 175-bed Wajima Municipal Hospital. Its lobby was filled with Disaster Medical Assistance Teams, soldiers from the Japanese Self-Defense Forces, Red Cross workers and other rescue personnel from across the country. Patients brought in after that crucial window were usually badly injured, Kawasaki pointed out. After being trapped under heavy structures, the victims' legs would often turn purple, and would have to be amputated to save their lives.ensity of a strong 5 or higher within the next month.

Google awaits EU

Google, owned by US tech titan Alphabet, was forced to change how it displays search results. At the time the fine was a record. But it was overtaken in 2018 by a 4.3-billion-euro penalty Brussels levied on Google for putting restrictions on Android smartphones to boost its internet

search business. Google lost a first round in its challenge over the Google Shopping case when the lower EU General Court in 2021 upheld the commission's conclusions and penalty. Google then mounted an appeal to the higher EU Court of Justice with an argument that Brussels was going too far and misunderstanding how corporate competition works. The Advocate General, Juliane Kokott, is to deliver her opinion at 0830 GMT. - Months before ruling - The Luxembourg-based court, though, is not expected to hand down a ruling in the case for several more months. It could decide to confirm or overturn part or all of the lower court's decision. The European Commission has hit several US Big Tech companies with fines in recent years as it seeks to regulate online services and better protect European consumers and firms.

Last year the EU brought in laws, the Digital Services Act and the Digital Markets Act, that crack down on illegal online content and impose tough new curbs on internet giants. Google has so far borne the brunt of the European Commission's antitrust scrutiny, racking up a total of eight billion euros in fines.

It is currently the target of another probe by Brussels, launched in 2021, to see whether it abused its position to favour its online display advertising technology, including on YouTube. Depending on the outcome, that could result in another massive fine and a requirement that Google change its practices. Alphabet in the third quarter of last year brought in \$76.7 billion in revenue, most of it from online advertising, making \$19.7 billion in profit. In 2022, the tech giant had annual revenue of \$282.8 billion.

Passport Index

the scale of global mobility.

WHO: 10,000

he said. The WHO declared an end to Covid-19 as a pandemic in May 2023, over three years after the virus was first detected in Wuhan, China.

US' desire to see

early yesterday Thursday. He made the comment when a journalist asked for Washington's response to concerns about the Biden administration's limitations on democracy promotion in Bangladesh in light of the earlier commitment to taking all necessary steps to reflect the will of the people of Bangladesh. The US announced a visa policy for Bangladesh in May last year, saying those undermining elections will be denied visas. Over the last two years, the US repeated calls for free, fair and peaceful elections.

After the January 7 election, which was boycotted by the opposition BNP, Washington said the polls were not free and fair. However, it also spoke about the commitment of supporting Bangladesh's democracy, human rights, economic relations as well as deepen the relations under the broader Indo-Pacific vision.

South Africa tells

central to South Africa's own identity: Its governing party, the African National Congress, has long compared Israel's policies in Gaza and the West Bank to its own history under the apartheid regime of white minority rule, which restricted most Blacks to "homelands" before ending in 1994. In a sign of how seriously Israel is taking the accusation, although it normally considers U.N. and international tribunals unfair and biased, it has sent a strong legal team to defend its military operation launched in the aftermath of the Hamas attacks.

Train services on

tasks are yet to be completed. It is hoped that all work will conclude, and the railway line will be handed over to the authorities by March, followed by the announcement of a new date for train operations.

AL takes over

to say how mean this regime is. The BNP's Standing Committee, the party's highest decision-making body, arranged the press meet at the party's Nayapaltan central

office, which was reopened in the morning two and a half months after closure following clashes with police during the party's grand rally on October 28, 2023. Some BNP leaders and activists, led by the party's Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, broke open the padlock on the collapsible gate of the office around 10:42 am. After the party's grand rally was foiled halfway through on October 28 at Nayapaltan amid clashes with police, the collapsible gate of the BNP's office was closed with the deployment of a huge number of law enforcers in the area. Dr Moyeen said the government seized the central office of the country's "biggest party" BNP following its crackdown on October 28. "We reopened the office today (Thursday) and came here to speak in favour of the people as we do politics with people for their welfare."

Ukraine builds

their job (building the positions), we will densely mine it," Serhiy Nayev, Ukraine's joint forces commander who oversees the northern military sector, told reporters at the site.

Last month, Reuters reporters visited newly built Ukrainian trenches in Chornobyl near the border with Belarus, a Russian ally used by Moscow as a staging ground for the February 2022 invasion.

A large military engineering vehicle churned through the snowy ground as it carved out a wide anti-tank ditch.

"(The works are ongoing) along the whole Northern Operational Zone. These works are currently underway in Sumy region, Chernihiv region, here in the Kyiv direction," Nayev said at the site.

Kajaikata Ideal

congratulated him and gave him a gift.

Papua New

additional 180 defense personnel flew into Port Moresby on Thursday. Tensions in the country have risen amid high unemployment and increased living costs. Papua New Guinea Prime Minister James Marape said Port Moresby was "under stress and duress" but that violence had eased.

"Police were not at work yesterday in the city and people resorted to lawlessness — not all people, but in certain segments of our city," Marape said in a news conference on Thursday. "(The) situation report as of this morning shows tension in the city has subsided." Many shops and banking services were closed Thursday as business owners repaired damage.

Distribution of

chairmanship of Thakurgaon AP Manager Naresh Marandi, the guest in-charge of Thakurgaon Catholic Charge, Father Pradeep Marandi, President of Thakurgaon Press Club Mansoor Ali, women of Sadar Police Station spoke. - SI Parveen Akhter, in-charge of Child and Handicapped Desk, Swapna Gomez, Head Teacher of the school and Catholic Charge Sister, Parul Begum, Program Officer of the organization, Manuel Baidya, Child Protection Officer etc. Various officials of the organization, beneficiary children and their parents were present in the event. At this time, the guests gave one blanket to more than one and a half hundred children as winter clothes free of charge. Officials said that winter clothes (blankets) will be distributed among a total of 3 thousand 775 beneficiary children in the working area of the organization.

Oil tanker in Gulf

off, it added. The St Nikolas was sailing from the Iraqi port of Basra to Turkey, according to Marine Traffic, a tracking website. The Gulf of Oman, a key route for the oil industry that separates Oman and Iran, has witnessed a series of hijackings and attacks over the years, often involving Iran. Greek shipping company Empire Navigation, which operates the vessel, acknowledged losing contact with it. It said a crew of 18 Filipinos and one Greek national were on board. The company also said the vessel was carrying 145,000 tonnes of oil from Basra to Aliaga in Turkey.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Local Government Engineering Department
Office of the Upazila Engineer
Upazila : Sadar, District: Narsingdi
www.lged.gov.bd

Memo no. : 46.02.6860.902.14.001.23-25

Invitation for Tender (Works)
e-Tender Notice No : 07/2023-2024

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the Procurement of following Works, Details are Given Below.

Sl No	Package No	Name of Work	Tender Last Selling (Date & Time)	Tender Closing & Opening (Date & Time)	Tender ID No
1.	e-Tender/PEDP4/NAR/SAD/2023-24/W14-3347	Construction of Boundary Wall and Gate of DAKKHIN VASANIA, DAGORIA (CHOWDHURI BARI), GODAIR CHAR, CHOITAB GPS Under PEDP4.	30-Jan-2024 16:00:00	31-Jan-2024 13:00:00	922081
2.	e-Tender/PEDP4/NAR/SAD/2023-24/W14-3348	Construction of Boundary Wall and Gate of CHAR HAZIPUR, AKHALIA, TATA PARA, VATIRCHAR VASANIA COMUNITY Under PEDP4.	30-Jan-2024 16:00:00	31-Jan-2024 13:00:00	922082
3.	e-Tender/PEDP4/NAR/SAD/2023-24/W14-3349	Construction of Boundary Wall and Gate of VELANAGAR, ALGI, CHANDER PARA, BOTHUADI GPS Under PEDP4.	30-Jan-2024 16:00:00	31-Jan-2024 13:00:00	922083
4.	e-Tender/PEDP4/NAR/SAD/2023-24/W14-3350	Construction of Boundary Wall and Gate of BALA PURER CHAR, BAHER CHAR, BADAR PUR, ANONDI GPS Under PEDP4.	30-Jan-2024 16:00:00	31-Jan-2024 13:00:00	922084

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tender will be Accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline / hard copies will be Accepted.

To Submit e-Tender, Registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is Required.

The Fees for Downloading the e-Tender Documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be Deposited online through any Registered Bank's Branches up to 16:00:00 on 30-January-2024.

Further Information and Guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP Help Desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

(Mohammad Shah Alam Miah)
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GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
EDUCATION ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT
DHAKA

Memo No. 37.07.2600.009.34.001.23.897 Date: 09-01-2024

e-Tender Notice: 27/2023-2024
(Open Tendering Method)

e-Tender is hereby invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of works/goods mentioned below:

SL No.	Tender ID	Name of woks	Online Tender Publishing Date (On/After)	Online Tender Opening & Closing (Date & Time)
01.	935035	Construction of Four Storied Academic Building with Four Storied Foundation Including Sanitary, Water Supply & Electrification works at BPATC School & College under Savar Upazilla, Dhaka District.	10-Jan-2024	Please visit Tender Notice in e-GP Website

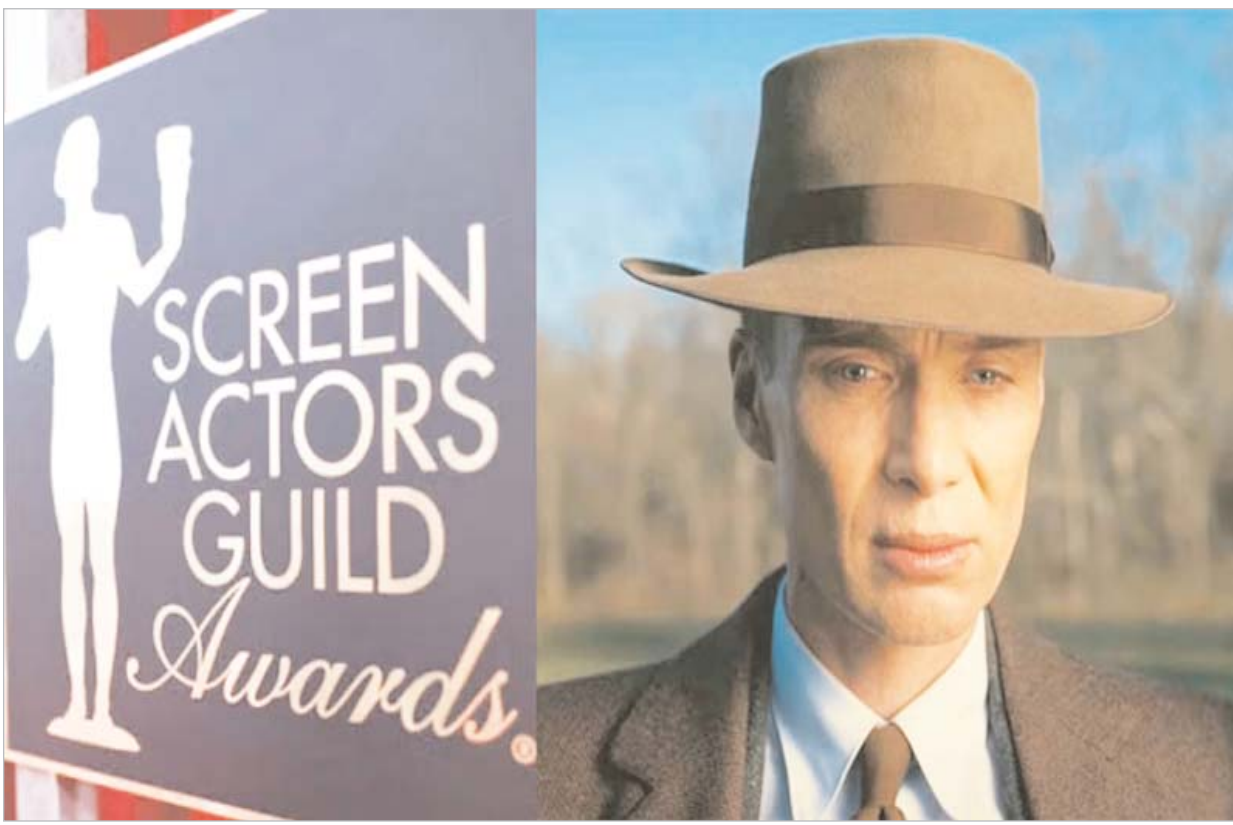
i) This is an online Tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.

ii) To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.

iii) The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents of following Package from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered Banks branches.

iv) Further information and guidelines are available in the Procuring Entity Office, National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

(Md. Zahadul Karim)
 Executive Engineer
 Education Engineering Department
 Dhaka.
 07/10/2023
 09.01.2024



'Oppenheimer' Leads Screen Actors Guild Nominations as Gala Moves to Netflix

ENTERTAINMENT DESK

This image released by Universal Pictures shows Cillian Murphy in a scene from "Oppenheimer." The film about the inventor of the atomic bomb is emerging as an Oscar favorite. This image released by Universal Pictures shows Cillian Murphy in a scene from "Oppenheimer." The film about the inventor of the atomic bomb is emerging as an Oscar favorite. Share Fresh from its wins at the Golden Globes, Christopher Nolan's "Oppenheimer" on Wednesday topped the nominations for the influential Screen Actors Guild Awards, which are key to Oscars success. The SAG Awards, voted on by Hollywood actors, are likely to enjoy a profile boost of their own this year as they are broadcast globally on Netflix — an awards show first for the world's biggest streamer. "Oppenheimer," which

tells the story of the inventor of the atomic bomb, earned nods for Cillian Murphy, Robert Downey Jr. and Emily Blunt, as well as "outstanding performance by a cast" — the SAG Awards' top prize. Nolan's three-hour epic, which earned nearly \$1 billion and received rave reviews from critics, is rapidly becoming the clear favorite for the Academy Awards in March. "Barbie," the other half of last summer's "Barbenheimer" box office phenomenon, and the year's highest grossing film, picked up nominations for Margot Robbie, Ryan Gosling and overall cast. The surreal comedy based on the wildly popular doll also picked up an additional nomination for its stunt performers. The other films with three acting nominations were Martin Scorsese's epic "Killers of the Flower Moon" — despite Leonardo DiCaprio missing out — and scathing satire "American Fiction," starring Jeffrey Wright. Both movies

are nominated for best cast, with musical remake "The Color Purple" closing out that category. Elsewhere, Globes winners Paul Giamatti and Da'Vine Joy Randolph picked up nods for "The Holdovers," as did Emma Stone and her co-star Willem Dafoe for "Poor Things." Bradley Cooper and Carey Mulligan were nominated for Leonard Bernstein biopic "Maestro." But all three films missed out on nominations for outstanding cast. The winner of that prize has gone on to win best picture at the Oscars in three of the past four years ("Parasite," "CODA" and "Everything Everywhere All at Once"). The SAG Awards also honor television, with "Succession" on top with five nods, followed by "The Bear," "The Last of Us" and "Ted Lasso," all on four. The 30th annual Screen Actors Guild Awards will take place in Los Angeles on February 24.

'Wonka' Is No. 1 at Box Office Again as 2024 Gets Off to Slower Start

ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Timothee Chalamet and "Wonka" topped the box office charts for the third time in its four weekends in theaters. Warner Bros.' family-oriented musical added \$14.4 million in ticket sales according to studio estimates Sunday, bringing its total domestic grosses to \$164.7 million. "Wonka" is following in the tradition of a film like "The Greatest Showman," said Paul Dergarabedian, the senior media analyst for Comscore. That Hugh Jackman musical opened under \$9 million in December 2017 and went on to gross \$435 million globally. "Wonka" is a perfect crowd pleaser released at the perfect time and it's going to ride that wave into January," Dergarabedian said. "It's an opportune time for it to be in the marketplace." After finishing 2023 on a high note, 2024 is getting off to a slower start than last year, down around 16%, with the Universal/Blumhouse horror "Night Swim" as the only major new offering in theaters. The movie stars Wyatt Russell and Kerry Condon as a couple with a sinister, supernatural swimming pool. "Night Swim" drew in an estimated \$12 million in its first weekend in 3,250 theaters in North America against a reported \$15 million production budget. Including international showings in 36 markets, "Night Swim" is heading towards a \$17.7 million global debut. "Not only did it perform really well

at the box office, but it's going to make us look at every swimming pool with a little more trepidation," said Jim Orr, Universal's head of domestic distribution. Horror movies are largely critic-proof, but with fairly negative reviews and a C CinemaScore rating, it's unlikely to repeat the viral success of last year's demon doll movie "M3GAN."

"We don't have 'Avatar: The Way of Water,' which totally dominated the box office a year ago, or 'M3GAN,' which made that a bigger weekend," said Dergarabedian. "But it's a bit early to call it in

Lost Kingdom" earned \$10.6 million in its third weekend, bumping its domestic tally just over the \$100 million mark. Universal's animated "Migration" added \$10.3 million, bringing its running domestic total to \$77.8 million. Sony's Glen Powell and Sydney Sweeney romantic comedy "Anyone But You" landed in fifth place with \$9.5 million, up 9% from last weekend. The movie has grossed \$43.7 million to date. Cineplexes are full of awards contenders, including "The Color Purple," "The Iron Claw" and "The Boys in the Boat,"



terms of how the year is going to turn out." Warner Bros. and Universal placed third and fourth on the charts as well. Warner Bros.' DC superhero movie "Aquaman and the

and "Poor Things," and the Golden Globes broadcast Sunday night might help spread awareness for those and other films. "The Golden Globes are like a three-hour infomercial for the

\$6 million. 7. "The Color Purple," \$4.8 million. 8. "The Iron Claw," \$4.5 million. 9. "Ferrari," \$2.5 million. 10. "Poor Things," \$2 million.

Jennifer Lopez pokes fun at being a four-time bride in 'Can't Get Enough' music video

CNN

Jennifer Lopez is a multi-hyphenate musician, actor and overall icon who also happens to have tied the knot four times. But, after all is said and done, even she doesn't take herself too seriously. Her very playful self-awareness is on full display in the fun new music video for her single "Can't Get Enough," which was released on Wednesday. Featuring "Dancing with the Stars" judge and Lopez's "World of Dance" cohost Derek Hough, the wedding-themed music video showcases a lavish soiree where the "Jenny From the Block" singer is seen dancing with a number of different grooms. The clip also showcases Lopez in several different bridal gown getups, leaning heavily into the matrimonial vibe that has shown up several times in her career, from 2001's "Wedding Planner," to 2005's "Monster In Law," to "Marry Me" and "Shotgun Wedding," both from last year. "This guy don't stand a chance," a wedding guest in the video says snarkily, while another guest warns, "Don't catch it, it's cursed!" during the bouquet toss. Cursed or not, Lopez seems to be doing just fine with her fourth husband, Oscar-winner Ben Affleck, who she married in July 2022. The pair notoriously were first engaged in 2002 before they called the wedding off, going on to reunite 20 years later. zBen Affleck and Jennifer Lopez at the 81st Golden Globe Awards held at the Beverly Hilton Hotel on January 7, 2024 in Beverly Hills, California. (Photo by Christopher Polk/Golden Globes 2024/Golden Globes 2024 via Getty Images) Lopez was previously married to Ojani Noa, Chris Judd and singer Marc Anthony, with whom she shares two children. "I am somewhat of an expert you could say, in a weird way — not so much on marriage but on weddings," she joked to Variety's Marc Malkin on Sunday's Golden Globes red carpet. As far as her meta music video goes, she also said her husband Affleck is fully supportive. "He sees me as an artist and he knows that I'm going to express myself," she said, adding, "He's my biggest fan and my biggest supporter, as I am of his." "Can't Get Enough" is a single off Lopez's upcoming ninth studio album "This Is Me... Now," which will be released on February 16. The album is her first major musical offering in almost a decade. Lopez will also release an accompanying concept film titled "This Is Me... Now: A Love Story" the same day, which, according to a press release, will spotlight "her tough childhood, unsuccessful relationships and the incredible emotional journey she has been on."



Music streams hit 4 trillion in 2023 fueled by Taylor Swift and global artists

AP NEWS

The global music industry surpassed 4 trillion streams in 2023, a new single-year record, Luminate's 2023 Year-End Report found. Global streams were also up 34% from last year, reflective of an increasingly international music marketplace. Stateside, three genres saw the biggest growth in 2023: country (23.7%), Latin (which encompasses all Latin musical genres, up 24.1%) and world (a catchall that includes J-pop, K-pop and Afrobeats, up 26.2%). It seems that more Americans are listening to non-English music. By the end of 2023, Luminate found that Spanish-language music's share of the top 10,000 songs streamed in the U.S. grew 3.8%, and English-language music's share dropped 3.8%. Under the Latin umbrella, regional Mexican music saw massive growth. The genre term — which encompasses mariachi, banda, corridos, norteño, sierrero and other styles — grew 60% in U.S. on-demand audio streams, accounting for 21.9 billion. Four of the six Latin artists to break 1 billion audio streams in the U.S. were Mexican acts: Peso Pluma, Eslabon Armado, Junior H, and Fuerza Regida, who also placed in the top 125 artists streamed. Armado and Peso Pluma's "Ella Baila Sola" surpassed a billion streams on Spotify in less than a year and became the first regional Mexican Top 10 hit on Billboard's all-genre Hot 100, peaking at No. 4 — later, Bad Bunny's collaboration with Grupo Frontera, "Un x100to," hit No. 5. As for the Taylor Swift of it all: Time's 2023 Person of the Year made up 1.79% of the U.S. market, Luminate found, accounting for 1 in every 78 U.S. on-demand audio streams. Her dominance is reflected in Luminate's 2023 top albums chart, where Swift accounts for five of the top 10 albums in the U.S. However, when it comes to overall music consumption in the U.S. — even with the success of Swift and the massive successes of country music and non-English language programming — hip-hop continues to rule, accounting for 25.5% of all streams. Maybe it had something to do with hip-hop celebrating its 50-year anniversary in 2023, because streams for current R&B and hip-hop acts dropped 7.1% from 2022, while catalog streams — older material — grew 11.3%.

