

COKE STUDIO BANGLA CONCERT

Can the franchise rise above controversy?



ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Amid social media-- Coke Studio Bangla will look to entertain the audience with its **Coke Studio Bangla Live 2.0** concert today. The event, featuring an array of popular bands and artistes coming together to celebrate a musical night, will be unveiled for the audience at the Army Stadium.

The organisers have packed numerous surprises this year. From Lalon to Artcell, they are preparing to craft an unforgettable night featuring renditions of their popular songs, including **Kotha Kooyo Na** and **Deora**, on stage.

Their lineup includes artistes from both seasons like Shayan Chowdhury Arnob, Animes Roy, Pantho Kanai, Momotaz Begum, Mizan Rahman, Ritu Raj, Sanzida Mahmood Nandita,

Nigar Sultana Sumi, Jalali Set, Ripon Kumar Sarkar (Boga), Sunidhi Nayak, Soumyadeep Sikdar (Murshidabadi), Kaniz Khandaker Mitu, Md Makhon Mia, Rubayat Rehman, Shanila Islam, Armeen Musa, and Ghashphoring Choir, Riad Hasan, Pollob Vai, Meghdol, Jahura Baul, Sohana (Daughter of Coastal), Mukul Mojumder Ishaan, Pritom Hasan, Islam Uddin Palakar, Fazlu Majhi, Emon Chowdhury, Arfan Mredha Shiblu, Aleya Begum, Fuad Al Muqtadir, Bappa Mazumder, and Hamida Banu.

To enhance the festivities, special guests including Elita Karim, Shuvo (D Rockstar), Anika, and Anuradha Mandal, as well as captivating band performances by Hatirpool Sessions and Lalon, will be featured.

However, since its announcement, the concert has faced numerous controversies, including calls for a boycott and artistes

being unhappy with the event.

The calls for boycott stem from the fact that Coca Cola is a product based in the USA, who is an ally of Israel, and is 'supporting' them in Israel's attempted takeover of Gaza in the Israel-Hamas conflict.

Speculations were abundant that James would be joining the Coke Studio Bangla concert. Several newspapers even featured headlines suggesting that the Nagarbaul vocalist would be performing with the band. However, a spokesperson for James refuted the rumours. They clarified that while the organisers did approach James for the concert, he had to decline as he had prior work commitments. Despite the clear refusal, they were disappointed when James' name was still associated, leading them to criticise Coke Studio Bangla for the mix-up.

On Wednesday night, popular band Lalon declared their withdrawal from the event, citing concerns about the organisers neglecting their lead singer, Sumi. However, the matter was resolved on Thursday, as the band reached a reconciliation with Coke Studio and confirmed their participation in the event.

Despite the resistance, tickets for the Coke Studio Bangla concert were sold out within days of their release. Many musicians have poured their hearts and souls into delivering a spectacular performance for the audience. It's now up to the audience to decide whether they will embrace the music with an open heart or let their conscience guide them.

The event's gate will open at 1:30 pm, and the main programme will kick off at 6 pm today. This year, fans will enjoy an exclusive Coke Studio Bangla experience like never before - for the pre-show will take place from 3 pm, during which time concertgoers can engage in fun and refreshing activities at the venue.

Greta Gerwig's next venture: 'The Chronicles of Narnia'

Netflix has announced that Greta Gerwig is set to kick off production on her adaptation of **The Chronicles of Narnia** in 2024. The acclaimed filmmaker and actor signed a deal with the streaming giant to both write and direct two movies based on C S Lewis' beloved fantasy series.

In a recent update, Netflix's movie chief, Scott Stuber, shared the exciting news with fans, and expressed the streaming platform's aspiration to bring Greta Gerwig's vision of **The Chronicles of Narnia** to life, with production slated to commence next year.

Despite the anticipation surrounding the project, details about how Gerwig plans to translate Lewis' iconic books onto the screen remain scarce.

Jungkook's debut album becomes first Korean solo act to top record units

BTS star Jungkook is on a winning streak as his recently launched first solo album, **Golden**, is currently making waves in the global music industry.

Notably, in the UK music chart, he has secured three top singles in the Top 10, surpassing the previous record held by PSY of **Gangnam Style** fame.

Reportedly, **Golden**, is on the brink of securing the second spot on the Billboard 200 chart. Projections indicate that **Golden** is expected to sell around 200,000 units in its first week, equaling the record for the most significant debut on the chart by a K-Pop solo artiste.



NEWS

Don't comment on diplomats' remarks

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facing criticisms by AL leaders and ministers over the formers' public comments about the upcoming election and political unrest.

Soon after the PM's directive, the AL decided to take disciplinary action against Mujibul Haque, a local AL leader and union parishad chairman in Chattogram, for his comment about US Ambassador Peter Haas.

On Monday, Mujibul told a rally that he would beat up Ambassador Haas.

The US State Department Spokesperson Vedant Patel termed it a "violent rhetoric" that is "deeply unhelpful."

After the meeting, AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader said Hasina warned all party leaders against making harsh comments about any dignitaries, including foreign diplomats.

In the wake of repeated comments by several foreign envoys in recent months, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Md Shahriar Alam on Wednesday told a briefing that he hoped the diplomats would be careful about what they say.

The US in October 2022 imposed sanctions on some Rab officials over alleged extrajudicial killings.

In September this year, it

started taking steps to impose visa restrictions on individuals responsible for, or complicit in, undermining the democratic election process in Bangladesh.

Over the past several months, top AL leaders, including several ministers, spoke critically about some foreign diplomats.

A number of diplomats held a series of meetings with top politicians from different political parties, ministers, the Election Commission, and government officials and encouraged them to hold a free and fair election and create political space for the opposition.

160 RMG units shut as workers, cops clash

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factories gathered in Kashimpur area of Gazipur and kept the Dhaka-Tangail highway blocked for almost an hour, witnesses said.

Law enforcers used teargas, beat up the workers and chased them away, witnesses said.

In Konabari, Gazipur, workers started protesting on the premises of Tusuka Garments around 3:00pm, workers said, adding that the management then called the police who arrived and beat up several workers.

The workers then threw brick chunks at the police and the factory windows, said witnesses.

Police then used teargas, sound grenades and firearms, and more police and teams of Rab went to the scene.

Law enforcers drove out the workers from the factory around 5:30pm.

AKM Ashraf Uddin, officer-in-charge of Konabari Police Station, refuted the allegation of assault.

Clashes between workers and police also took place on Abdullahpur-Baipail road in Narsinghapur, Ashulia. Several workers, a reporter named HM Atik, and Assistant Superintendent of Industrial Police ABM Rashidul Bari were injured by brick chunks thrown by demonstrators.

Arif, a worker of the Hameem Group, said he was working at the factory, and around 10:00am, the authorities said the factory would be closed immediately as demonstrating workers from other factories started gathering outside.

He added that he was injured by a piece of brick while walking out of the factory.

Police used teargas and firearms to bring the situation under control, said Inspector Riaz Uddin Ahmed Biplab of DB in Dhaka district (north).

Besides teams of police and Rab, 44 platoons of BGB were deployed in Dhaka, Gazipur, Ashulia and other areas where factories are located.

On October 30, garment worker Rasel Howlader, 26, died after Gazipur Industrial Police personnel allegedly shot him at close range, and on November 8, Anjuara Khatun, 28, a sewing machine operator of Islam Garments in Gazipur and mother of two children aged below 10, was shot dead as police opened fire on protesters. **STOP 'CRACKDOWN ON WORKERS'** In a statement on Wednesday, the US Department of Labor's Deputy Undersecretary for International Affairs Thea Lee said, "The US Department of Labor is deeply

concerned over the escalation of violence and crackdown on workers and trade unionists in connection with Bangladesh's minimum wage review. The department condemns the alleged police shootings of Rasel Howlader on Oct. 30, 2023, and Anjuara Khatun today....

"We call on the government of Bangladesh to respect workers' freedom of assembly, end the violent crackdown on workers and conduct a full investigation of alleged police involvement in Howlader and Khatun's killings.

"We also call for the immediate release of Jewel Miya, a labor organiser from the Bangladesh Independent Garment Workers Union Federation arrested in connection with the minimum wage protests.

"We urge the government of Bangladesh to revisit the recent minimum wage decision to ensure that it provides equitable compensation that meets the needs of workers and their families. To prevent future unrest, we also urge the amendment of existing labour laws to guarantee that all workers can fully exercise their right to freedom of association and collective bargaining, as called for by the International Labor Organization."

China for Bangladesh polls

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crisis, the Chinese envoy said it was not for a foreign ambassador to comment on that, rather the answer lies with the relevant parties.

"We hope the Chinese people and property will be protected. So far, we feel safe," Wen said in reply to a question if the Chinese businesses and people feel safe here amid the blockade.

"The future of Bangladesh shall be determined by the people of Bangladesh. China is full of confidence about the better future of Bangladesh as well as China-Bangladesh relations," he said.

Asked how China can help Bangladesh that faces a shortage of foreign currency reserves, Wen said if Bangladesh wants, China will support Bangladesh towards this end.

The ambassador said it was not a problem faced only by Bangladesh, but the whole world. However, compared to other Asian neighbours, Bangladesh still stands out in terms of financial stability.

"So definitely that is our expectation that next year the situation will turn better," he said.

Responding to a query about how

Bangladesh can reduce the trade gap with China, the envoy said they are discussing the possibility of a free-trade agreement between the two countries. The China-Bangladesh bilateral trade is close to \$28 billion, but Bangladesh exports products to China worth less than \$1 billion a year.

He laid emphasis on boosting Bangladesh's exports through product diversification.

On the Palestine issue, Wen said the UN should play its due role in resolving the question of Palestine. The UN Security Council needs to shoulder responsibilities for this, build international consensus as quickly as possible, and take real measures to that end.

"Israel has the right to statehood, so does Palestine. The answer to the question is the two-state solution and an independent state of Palestine."

Chinese Enterprises Association Bangladesh President Ke Changliang made a presentation highlighting the Chinese projects and funding in Bangladesh.

DCAB President Rezaul Karim Lotus and General Secretary Emrul Kayesh also spoke.

Prof Yunus pleads

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Nurjahan Begum, and Mohammad Shahjahan - appeared before the court around noon.

Earlier, the court recorded statements of four prosecution witnesses in the case.

On June 6, it framed charges against the accused, including Prof Yunus.

On September 9, 2021, Labour Inspector (general) SM Arifuzzaman of the Inspection for Factories and Establishments Department (IFED) filed the case with the court.

According to the case documents, IFED officials on August 16, 2021, inspected the office of Grameen Telecom in the capital's Mirpur and found several violations of labour laws.

On August 19 that year, the department sent a letter to the authorities of Grameen Telecom, mentioning that 67 of its employees were supposed to be made permanent employees. But it was not done, the case statement said.

Besides, the employee's participation and welfare funds were yet to be formed, and five percent of the company's dividends supposed to be paid to the workers were not paid, it added.

BNP looking to turn up the heat

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It is now consulting its grassroots and also the like-minded parties on the next course of action.

BNP sources said senior leaders are not in favour of taking the foot off the throttle once the election schedule is announced. They even are considering giving no weekend breaks.

"Our movement will pick up pace soon after the Election Commission announces the election schedule. We may add on programmes like sit-ins," said a standing committee member of the BNP, wishing not to be named.

The EC met President Mohammed Shahabuddin yesterday and told journalists afterwards that the election schedule will be unveiled soon.

Even though no date was mentioned, sources at the EC said the schedule could be announced between November 14 and 16.

The BNP yesterday called a 48-hour nationwide blockade that will end on Tuesday, November 14, morning.

This is the fourth spell of blockades since October 31.

BNP sources said they might call fresh hartals or blockades on Monday, November 13, but if the EC announces the

election schedule on Tuesday, they would add sit-ins to their protest programmes.

The party during its standing committee meeting on Wednesday night analysed the ongoing blockade and discussed movement strategy.

A committee member said their primary goal was to isolate Dhaka and that they had been successful in the last three phases of blockade.

The member believed the government would concede their demand for polls under a non-partisan interim government if this situation continued for a few more days as the economic and international pressure would be piling on.

BNP leaders said the international communities are closely watching the situation, and it won't be easy for the government to hold elections like those of 2014 and 2018.

The party has enforced either hartal or blockade every day since its rally on October 28 was foiled, with the exception being weekends and November 7, which the BNP observes as the National Revolution and Solidarity Day.

Meanwhile, BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman instructed the party's possible MP candidates to go to their

constituencies to help intensify the movement.

Soon after the instruction was issued, at least five BNP leaders told The Daily Star that they had returned to their localities to coordinate the movement.

"We must step up the movement in the districts too. Not only the highways but also the regional roads must be blocked," said a leader from Chattogram division.

Abdul Moyeen Khan, BNP standing committee member, said, "... Virtually no one inside the country or outside believes that this regime will allow the Election Commission to organise a free and fair election, to say the least. This fact has once again been corroborated by the by-elections held a few days ago when the ruling party indulged in indiscriminate sealing of ballot papers ... an obvious dress rehearsal for the forthcoming general elections.

"Sadly, the Awami League government fails to realise that conducting a one-sided election to create a fictitious parliament with a domesticated opposition will serve no purpose of neither this government nor this country."

Police, 41 people were arrested from across the capital on Wednesday for their involvement in violence and sabotage, while Rab said it arrested around 45 people yesterday for the same reasons.

DMP Additional Commissioner Kh Mahid Uddin said police are prepared to prevent any kind of untoward situation initiated by BNP Jamaat in the name of blockade.

blockade, while a higher number of long-haul vehicles left the capital.

BNP yesterday called another 48-hour countrywide blockade from Sunday, once again demanding the resignation of the government, the establishment of a polls-time government, and the release of its arrested leaders (more on this on Page 1).

According to Dhaka Metropolitan

7 more vehicles torched

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he said was defying the blockade and bringing out their vehicles.

The transport owners, meanwhile, have demanded immediate action against the arsonists and vandals involved.

The city saw a significant rise in vehicular movement yesterday, compared to other days during the