

Coke Studio Bangla concert: Could music save a logistical nightmare?

I found myself amidst the swirl of lights and beats at the Army Stadium on Friday, attending the highly-anticipated, Coke Studio Bangla Live 2.0. The air, however, was thick with over crowdedness and controversy, making my overall experience a blend of musical highs and critical lows.

MAHIYA TABASSUM

As a journalist, my decision to attend wasn't without a sense of conflict. The call for boycotting the event resonated strongly on social media, with many urging a stance against corporations complicit in the Israeli violation of Palestinian rights. Coca-Cola, amongst other giants, faced scrutiny, sparking a dialogue about the ethics of corporate partnerships in tumultuous times.

My experience of the night started to take shape as soon as I arrived at gate-3 (designated media gate). I found a locked gate and a bunch of police officials who had no clue what was going on. As I inquired with multiple members of the organising team, they echoed the same clueless attitude. Multiple gates and a game of cat and mouse later, I found myself at gate-2, surrounded by a sea of people clamouring for entry. The struggle was magnified as I was caught in a surge of people, and my tiny body got squeezed amongst the male crowd; screaming at the security to tackle the situation didn't do anything. After putting up a physical fight, I finally was able to make my way into the stadium. and upon asking one member of the organising team regarding the mismanagement, he replied, "We didn't expect this many people; we are at our full capacity and lacking the manpower to handle it."

After sharing my experience with another, he responded, "These things often happen at Bangladeshi concerts, it's pretty common."

As a distressing episode of PTSD was triggered, I feel it's important to reassess the priorities of such events. In any gathering, the paramount concern should be security, prioritising the well-being of attendees before the entertainment aspect takes precedence.

A witness shared a harrowing account of the entry turmoil, describing a lack of proper arrangements leading to injuries. "While I was entering the gate, it was chaos. One woman got pushed and fell so hard that she cut her jaw, and there was blood all over. She was taken to a nearby hospital."

The musical event began to unravel its pre-show at 3:30 pm, showcasing the talents of private university students handpicked through the Coke Studio campaign. Subsequently, the emerging band Hatirpool Sessions graced the stage.

Shayan Chowdhury Arnob and Ripon Kumar Sarkar (Boga) infused emotional resonance with *Chitley Roud*, setting the stage for a transition from soothing hues to vibrant tones with *Nahubo Nahubo* by Animes Roy and Sohana, complemented by the mesmerising fire performance of Dragon House Dhaka. The energy soared with Jalali Set's *Bhober Pagol*. Bappa Mazumder presented renditions of *Joto Dure Jao* and *Tumi Amar Bayanno Tash*, followed by a performance from Fuad Almuqtadir

and Tashfee. Armeen Musa also gracefully performed at the show.

However, the overflow of the Army Stadium, denying people the minimum space to stand, became a significant drawback. Reportedly, many people entered without tickets, resulting in an overcrowded venue.

The disarray outside mirrored the dissonance within the concert grounds throughout the event. One Liana Afri Shorna shared, "The so-called three-step frisking was just talk! Youngsters were sneaking in with cigarettes, and I saw alcohol being consumed openly. No one seemed to care about the smell of marijuana. In such a situation, it was unbearable to continue with the family. As a result, we had to leave the stadium only after enjoying a few performances."

Momotaz Begum and Mizan Rahman ignited the stage with their fiery performance of *Prarthona*, captivating the audience. Elita Karim's soothing rendition of *Ghum Ghum* was nothing short of a moment of tranquillity, followed by Arnob and Sunidhi Nayak's enchanting performance of *Shondhatara*, which added further moments of brilliance to the event.

Artcell, the much-awaited act, took the stage almost at 11 pm, opening with *Dukkho Bilash* and ending their performance with *Oniket Prantor* after a 15-minute stint, significantly

longer than other performers. The tribute to Ayub Bachchu by Emon Chowdhury with *Shei Tumi Keno Eto Ochena Hole* and *Hashte Dekho Gaite Dekho* added a poignant touch. The atmosphere in the auditorium shifted to a joyous mood as Aleya Begum captivated the audience with her performance of *Kotha Koijo Na*.

The night reached its pinnacle with the enchanting performance of *Bulbuli* by Rituraj Baidya and Sanzida Mahmood Nandita, featuring contemporary dance groups. The stadium was filled with the echoes of Bengali Ghazal, providing a visual and auditory spectacle.

As the clock approached midnight, anticipation peaked for Pritom Hasan's live rendition of *Deora*, fulfilling the expectations of the remaining audience.

It was reported that the dispute between the Lalon band and Coke Studio Bangla was resolved on Thursday, and the band even confirmed their participation in the event. However, Lalon didn't ultimately take the stage at Friday night's musical event.

Amidst the echoes of the Gaza horrors and the internal dilemma of attending such an event, a counter-argument emerged. The harsh reality of life, with its demands for meals, happiness, and work, persisted even as the world faced tragedies. The question lingered – how impactful could skipping this one concert be in the grand scheme of things?

Upon reflection, the concert emerged as a paradoxical experience—an evening of musical brilliance overshadowed by the shadows of controversy and logistical challenges. The audience, caught in the crossfire of a cultural celebration and global concerns, departed with a medley of emotions, leaving the debate on the ethics of attending such events whilst alive, in the aftermath of a night filled with highs and lows.



PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED



NEWS

3 Bangladeshi

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However, the officials said preliminary investigations suggested that the fire broke out in one of the houseboats due to the malfunction of a heating appliance.

The bodies will be identified through DNA samples with the family members of the victims before being handed over, the officials said.

Property worth crores of rupees was destroyed in the fire, which was brought under control after efforts by locals and fire and emergency services personnel, the officials said.

This was the second major fire incident involving houseboats that are anchored on the Dal and Nigeen lakes.

In April 2022, seven houseboats were gutted in a devastating fire on Nigeen Lake, particularly popular among foreign tourists, on the outskirts of Srinagar city. However, no one was hurt in that incident.

No fuel in takeaway

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used for."

Further instructions have been given to authorities of petrol pumps and CNG stations to strengthen security systems and prevent all kinds of vandalism and arson.

Habibur said the deputy commissioners of every division and officers in charge of all police stations were also instructed to coordinate with petrol pump and CNG station owners in their respective jurisdictions to take adequate security measures.

The authorities of petrol pumps and CNG stations were also asked to ensure round-the-clock security through adequate manpower and installation of CCTV and DVRs in safe places and with night-recording capabilities.

The owners of petrol pumps and CNG stations were asked to ensure security at all times through their manpower at their establishments and install CCTV cameras with night-vision capability and DVRs should be installed in a safe place there.

Speaking to The Daily Star yesterday, Mashhur Rhamn, OC of Rampur Police Station, said he had received the information from the DMP commissioner.

"We've taken necessary measures as per the instructions."

EC to roll out mobile app

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"They will just have to key in their NID numbers and date of birth," he said.

They will also be able to find candidates' names and affidavits submitted with nomination papers, which will contain financial records, income information, details of their moveable and immoveable assets and other such data.

"The voters will further get the status of election day proceedings and result analyses of current and previous polls," the election commissioner added.

With the app, there will be more transparency in the electoral system, he said, adding that it will also help earn the trust of voters and make election management much simpler.

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

EC officials said that for years, many voters complained about not being sure which polling centre was designated for them as there has been no such mechanism to help in this regard.

Earlier, candidates would go door to door to inform voters about their voter numbers and polling centres.

However, it was observed during the last national polls and some local elections that candidates were not interested in going door to door anymore.

Many of them, especially from the ruling party, were seen setting up camps near polling stations to provide people with voter numbers.

"The app will help voters save time and, in some cases, avoid harassment as they can find their own voter numbers ... They will not have to depend on any party."

EC sources said the cost of the app will be over Tk 21 crore.

APP FOR VOTERS

- Know polling centre locations
- Know the number of votes cast every 2 hours
- Find any candidate's affidavit information

However, EC Secretary Jahangir Alam said it was estimated to be around Tk 12 crore.

"We needed to buy a server system and other hardware to ensure that one or 1.5 crore people can access the app at the same time."

As per the voters list, there are 11,96,91,633 registered voters across the country.

At least 150 RMG factories shut

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unrest and vandalism under Section 13(1) of the labour law," Hassan added.

Section 13(1) of the Labour Act says "no work, no pay".

Subsequently, factory owners at the Jamgara, Narsinghpur, Zirabo and Kathgara under the Ashulia industrial area hung closure notices at the entrance.

The factories employ more than two lakh workers, according to Sarwar Hossain, general secretary of the Garments Shramik Unity League.

"We know that the workers will not be paid as the factories were closed under section 13/1 of the Labour Act. We want the factories to be opened as soon as possible by settling the issues," he added.

Some 123 garment factories

were vandalised during the demonstrations in Gazipur and 22 cases were filed in this connection, said Zakir Hossain Khan, deputy inspector general of industrial police.

At least 88 people have been arrested so far, he added.

Over at Ashulia, only five cases have been filed by the factory authorities so far, said Sarwar Alam, superintendent of police of Ashulia Industrial Police-1.

Four workers involved in the unrest have been arrested.

Sixteen named and many unnamed have been accused in these cases, he said without mentioning the number of total accused.

"We are trying to ensure that no innocent person is victimised. We are trying to identify the real culprits," he

added.

According to three case documents obtained by The Daily Star, 1,500 have been made accused.

Meanwhile, the BGMEA yesterday gave financial assistance to the families of three dead garment workers who died from the ongoing labour unrest.

Families of Anjuara Khatun, Rasel Hawlader and Md. Imran received Tk 5 lakh each from the BGMEA at an event held at the BGMEA office at Uttara in Dhaka, according to a statement from the BGMEA.

"The welfare of our workers is of paramount importance, and we must remain united to uphold their rights and interests," the BGMEA president Hassan said in the statement.

Gaza hospital

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complex from time to time, limiting the ability of medics and people to move.

"We are besieged inside the Al Shifa Medical Complex, and the (Israeli) occupation has targeted most of the buildings inside," he said.

Palestinian officials said on Friday 11,078 Gaza residents had been killed in air and artillery strikes since October 7, around 40 percent of them children.

Meanwhile, Arab leaders and Iran's president meeting in the Saudi capital yesterday roundly condemned Israel's actions in Gaza, as fears mount the conflict could draw in other countries.

Host Saudi Arabia "confirms that it holds the occupation [Israel] authorities responsible for the crimes committed against the Palestinian people," Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the Gulf kingdom's de facto ruler, said as yesterday's summit began.

"We are certain that the only way to guarantee security, peace and stability in the region is to end the occupation, siege and the settlements," he said of Israel's actions in Gaza and the occupied West Bank.

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, on his first trip to Saudi Arabia since the two countries mended ties in March, said Islamic countries should designate the Israeli army a "terrorist organisation" for its conduct in Gaza.



People sit in a metro station to shelter from an air raid, during Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Kyiv yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS