



ARTISTES AGAINST GENOCIDE

Drik stands by Gaza on the two-year anniversary of its occupation

FAIZA RAMIM

These artistes have long opposed every form of oppression, at home and abroad. Drik's solidarity with Palestine, however, started long before October 7. Even as you enter the building, a Palestinian flag and poster greets you for as long as I can remember showcasing Drik's longstanding refusal to back down in the face of injustice.

The programme featured an ensemble of artistes showcasing their art in different mediums. We saw beautiful, symbolic art take form in front of our eyes in real time by painters Jannatul Islam Bipar and Suman Halder.

Participants of the event included musicians Farzana Wahid Shayan, Fakir Arup



PHOTOS: RATUL CHOWDHURY

Rahee and Suchi Marma and Muiz Mahfuz, among others.

Every voice ached for Palestinians, every heart hoped for freedom, and every chorus



demanding an end to apartheid. Nokkhotra, a ten-year-old, built a LEGO flotilla, a symbol of a generation determined to resist injustice and a reminder that even if one ship is detained, another will follow, and then another.

The evening concluded with a rendition of Rounok Mollick's Bangla adaptation of *Bella Ciao*, dedicated to Palestine: *Mounota Bhango, Guriye Felo, Gazar Shishuder Kotha bole jao, Nodi Theke Shomudrote Filistiner Shadhinota Chao*.

As the world looks on in rage and horror, and media narratives are twisted or censored, artistes continue to write and keep the spirit alive. When others turn away, they keep looking. They refuse to soften their words or allow history to be rewritten.

On the two-year anniversary of Israel occupying Gaza, Drik organised a gathering of artistes across multiple disciplines to raise their voices, and their hands in prayer against the injustice in Palestine.



Coke Studio Bangla's 'Long Distance Love' tops Spotify India chart

Coke Studio Bangla's *Long Distance Love* has made history by securing the No. 1 position on Spotify's Top Viral Songs India chart for the second consecutive week—the first Bangladeshi track ever to do so. Sung by Ankan Kumar and Afrin and produced by Shuvendu Das Shuvo,

the song from Coke Studio Bangla Season 3 has captivated listeners with its soulful melody, cinematic visuals, and emotional depth. Industry analysts say the achievement marks a breakthrough for Bangla-language music in South Asia, underscoring the power of digital

platforms to transcend borders. Since its 2022 debut, Coke Studio Bangla has expanded its regional influence by blending traditional Bangladeshi sounds with modern production, redefining the contemporary South Asian music landscape.

NEWS

Delhi's remark on election 'unwarranted'

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prime minister, Sheikh Hasina.

Touhid also acknowledged receiving the letter from President Mohammed Shahabuddin on September 28 expressing his grievance about the removal of his portrait from the Bangladesh missions abroad.

"He [the President] simply expressed his feelings – I do not want to comment further on it," he said, adding that the letter had reached him physically long after it appeared on social media.

No law or official instruction was issued regarding the removal of the President's photograph from Bangladesh missions abroad, he said.

Asked about a reported meeting involving three foreign ambassadors at the residence of a former AL minister Saber Hossain Chowdhury, Touhid said "visiting a private

residence was not a crime".

"Ambassadors can go to anyone's home. Diplomats can, in general, go to anyone's home. However, the discussion and expected outcomes of that meeting are naturally drawing attention."

If he were a criminal, he would have been held in custody, which was not the case.

The adviser discussed growing visa difficulties for Bangladeshi students and workers in some countries, noting that the government is actively engaging with foreign authorities to ease restrictions.

"There is a huge demand for study visas."

For example, about 80,000 Bangladeshi students applied to German universities, but they can process only around 2,000 cases per year.

Bangladesh has requested Germany to increase its student

intake to at least 9,000 per year, which is similar to the quota offered to Pakistan.

The government is exploring alternative visa arrangements through other regional missions to address backlogs and service shortages.

However, he acknowledged that the issues of fake documents and irregular migration have hurt Bangladesh's reputation.

"Even genuine people are facing difficulties because of these practices. We must fix the problems at home first."

Regarding possible military cooperation with Türkiye, Touhid said that Türkiye has considerable military technology.

"We already have military cooperation with many countries and we will continue to expand it. This is a normal development between two friendly nations."

Israel detains Shahidul Alam, 144 others

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He further appealed to his "comrades and friends" to continue the struggle for the freedom of Palestine.

Following his post, Bangladesh has sought the assistance of a friendly Middle Eastern country to secure his release.

"We aren't making the name [of the country] public. We've requested the friendly country to help in the process of the release of Shahidul Alam," a government official told The Daily Star last night.

According to the FFC, an international network of pro-Palestinian activist groups, all nine boats in the Thousand Madlens to Gaza campaign – Abd Elkarim Eid, Alaa Al-Najjar, Anas Al-Sharif, Gaza Sunbird, Leila Khaled, Milad, Soul of My Soul, Umm Saad and Conscience – were intercepted 120 nautical miles off the shores of Gaza.

It said Israeli forces "hijacked the humanitarian fleet," adding that the ships were "illegally intercepted", and that a total of 145 unarmed participants, including humanitarians, doctors and journalists from across the world, have been "taken against their will and are being held in unknown conditions".

"The Israeli military has no legal jurisdiction over international waters,"

it said. "Our flotilla poses no harm."

The ships carried aid worth more than \$110,000 in medicines, respiratory equipment and nutritional supplies intended for Gaza's starving hospitals, it added on its Instagram account.

Meanwhile, the Israeli foreign ministry yesterday confirmed it had intercepted boats attempting to reach Gaza.

"Another futile attempt to breach the legal naval blockade and enter a combat zone ended in nothing. The vessels and the passengers are transferred to an Israeli port," it said on social media.

"All the passengers are safe and in good health. The passengers are expected to be deported promptly," it added.

Israel has imposed a blockade on Gaza, home to nearly 2.3 million people, for almost 18 years and tightened it further in March this year by closing border crossings and blocking food and medicine deliveries, triggering a famine.

Since October 2023, Israeli bombardments have killed more than 67,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, and devastated the enclave.

Negotiations to end the conflict are underway in Egypt through a 20-point plan unveiled by US

President Donald Trump.

BANGLADESH REACTS

Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shaiful Alam yesterday demanded the immediate release of Shahidul and others detained by the Israeli forces.

"Shahidul stands as a shining embodiment of the unyielding spirit of Bangladesh. May Allah protect and keep Shahidul and the rest of the team safe."

The press secretary also said, "The extraordinary courage and resilience that sustained Shahidul during his imprisonment under the Hasina government will once again carry him through this latest ordeal."

"Yet even as we focus on Shahidul's safety, we must not lose sight of the broader context: the ongoing devastation and genocide in Gaza."

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir urged the interim government to take immediate steps to ensure Shahidul's safe return.

With the same demand, Ganosamhati Andolon leaders brought out a procession in the capital's Eskaton area. Speaking from the procession, Ganosamhati leader Taslima Akhter said, "We're concerned about their [Shahidul and his team] safety. The interim government must play the highest role in ensuring their release."

Police arrest four

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Alam told journalists that his brother was involved in several businesses, including in Hamim Agro and an herbal medicine company in Raozan.

He said, "Before the murder, he went from his Baganbari residence. Later he headed to the city in his car, which was intercepted in the middle of the road and he was shot dead in broad daylight."

"We don't know of any personal disputes with anyone. We demand justice. There have been many killings in Raozan after August 5. This must stop," he added.

Kazi Tarek Aziz, additional superintendent of police (Hathazari Circle), told The Daily Star, "Several gunmen came on motorbikes, wearing helmets and masks, and fled after firing at the SUV. We have obtained CCTV footage and are working to identify the assailants. Four suspects have been detained for questioning."

Prothom Alo

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After receiving the awards, Matiur Rahman said through the year-long publication of district-based regional supplements, Prothom Alo set a new benchmark in local journalism, strategic planning, and creative presentation.

He added that during the July uprising, Prothom Alo's courageous journalism and its subsequent multifaceted initiatives related to that movement were exceptional. These global honours are recognition of that work – an international achievement for Bangladesh.

Matiur Rahman said the credit goes to all colleagues, well-wishers, and, above all, readers of Prothom Alo.

The winners of this global competition are selected from among WAN-IFRA's worldwide members – newspapers, magazines, publishers, advertisers, and agencies.

Previous winners include El Tiempo (Colombia), The Times of India, Dainik Bhaskar, and Anandabazar Patrika (India), Presse-Druck und Verlags GmbH, Südkurier GmbH, and VRM (Germany), Diari ARA (Spain), JP/Politikens Hus (Denmark), Verdens Gang (Norway), VK Media (Sweden), and Thai Rath Media (Thailand), among others.

Founded in 1948, WAN-IFRA is headquartered in Germany's Frankfurt and France's Paris.

Since 2018, through its "World Printers Forum," WAN-IFRA has been honouring excellence in innovation, reader engagement, and sustainability in publishing worldwide.

Road adviser gets a taste

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To inspect the area, the adviser reached Bhairab by train and began his journey toward Brahmanbaria by road, but was soon caught in a long tailback near Ashuganj's Bahadurpur area.

Brahmanbaria's Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Didarul Alam, Superintendent of Police Ehteshamul Haque, and senior ministry officials accompanied the adviser during the visit.

Khairul Alam, officer-in-charge of Ashuganj Police Station, said, "The adviser started for Sarail but got stuck near the Maitree Stambha area. He left Ashuganj around 10:15am but by 12:30pm had not reached the Sarail-Bishwa Road intersection. In over two hours, his car moved only about 50 metres."

The OC added that the adviser then abandoned the car and continued toward the Sarail-Bishwa Road intersection on a motorcycle.

Speaking to reporters after his inspection, Fouzul blamed the persistent gridlock on negligence by the traffic division and said he had already spoken with the home affairs adviser to address the issue. "Plans are also underway to construct a flyover at the Sarail Bishwa Road intersection to ease congestion.... We'll resolve this problem as quickly as possible."

He also said he instructed 12 senior officials of the Roads and Highways Department to temporarily relocate from Dhaka to the Sarail Bishwa Road

office to oversee the work on the highway. "Any officer found absent from duty would face suspension."

According to sources, work to upgrade the 51km Ashuganj river port-Akhaura land port stretch into a four-lane highway has been progressing painfully slowly. Meanwhile, the 12km section from Ashuganj intersection to Sarail-Bishwa Road intersection has become riddled with potholes, turning travel into suffering.

Locals said gridlock has persisted for three consecutive days along this stretch, forcing many commuters to spend nights inside their vehicles.

Sanjay Poddar, a passenger of Shyamoli Paribahan, said, "I boarded a bus from Fakirapal in Dhaka around 1:30am for Sunamganj. It's now 1:00pm, and we still haven't crossed the Sarail-Bishwa Road area. We spent the entire night inside the bus.... This highway has been in this condition for months, yet nobody seems to care. We suffer like this almost every day."

Temporary repair work is underway, but with one side of the road closed, congestion has worsened. It now takes four to six hours to cross the 12km stretch.

Brahmanbaria's Khatihata Highway Police Station OC Jahangir Alam said, "Poor road conditions are mainly responsible for the persistent traffic jam. Highway police are trying to keep vehicles moving."

I'm staying in Bangladesh, no exit plans

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the government has a good working relationship with the newly formed political party [NCP] like other parties."

The adviser added that Nahid has to clarify that whether he said it out of frustration or due to some grievance on any particular issue. Once he clarifies it, then comes the question of a government response.

"Many political leaders are making comments about various government issues – it's their right, and that's how democracy works. If we start responding to every statement, when will we have time to run our ministries?" Rizwana said in reply to another query.

Theatre Factory honours Jibanananda Das with a five-day festival

Theatre Factory will celebrate the life and works of poet Jibanananda Das with a five-day festival, *Jibanananda Das Smaronutshob o Theatre Factory er Astham Prothisthabarshiki*, from October 18 to 22.

The festival opens at Mohila Samity with *Komola Rong er Bodh*, written and directed by Alok Basu, presenting a poetic portrait of the modernist poet through memory, philosophy, and emotion.

Three initial shows will be followed by a reflection event, *Our Jibanananda*, and nightly discussions with distinguished guests. The troupe's anniversary on October 20 will include a gathering of Theatre Factory members and artists.

The festival concludes with two performances at Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy's Experimental Theatre Hall. Founded in 2017, Theatre Factory has staged five productions over eight years, aiming for enduring, meaningful theatre.



WHAT'S THE HAPS?

Reels of Resistance: Voices from the Hill Tracts



The Dhaka University Film Society (DUF'S) is set to host *Reels of Resistance: Voices from the Hill Tracts*, an open film screening showcasing *Mor Thengari (My Bicycle)* by Aung Rakhine and *Kyory Pekra Uyuw (Dear Mother)* by SK Shuvo Sadique, highlighting the struggles and resilience of Bangladesh's Indigenous communities.

Date: Sunday| October 12, 2025

Time: 7 pm onwards

Venue: TSC, Dhaka University