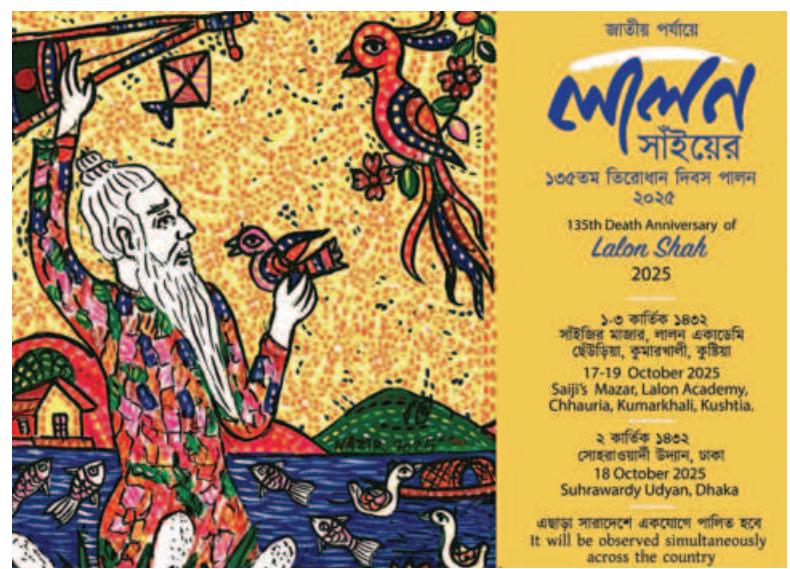


No ceremony can contain FAKIR LALON SHAH -yet it is crucial



DOWEL BISWAS

In the heart of Bengal, where rivers meander like untamed verses and wind hums through fields of ash and mustard, the name Lalon drifts like incense — faint, eternal, ungraspable. On this autumn day, as Kushtia gathers beneath a honeyed October sky to mark the 135th death anniversary of Fakir Lalon Shah, one feels that the unseen bird of his song still flutters between us — restless, undying.

The Ministry of Cultural Affairs has turned this remembrance into a national homage — a three-day festival from October 17 to 19 at Lalon's resting ground in Cheuriya. There will be music, discourse, and a fair that carries the rhythm of his spirit.

In Dhaka, too, Suhrawardy Udyan will echo with the same songs on October 18. The celebration begins today at

Lalon's Mazar in Kushtia, with the scent of marigolds, the hum of ekstras, and a gathering of minds — among them Professor Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, the eminent scholar who will deliver the keynote address.

The ceremony, presided over by poet Farhad Mazhar, Professor A Al Mamun, and others, will close with a musical soiree in memory of the late Farida Parveen — the voice that once carried Lalon's spirit to the world.

Yet no ceremony, no grand podium, can truly contain the man who lived outside all boundaries. Born in 1774, Lalon's life began like any other, until illness — smallpox — cast him adrift. His companions abandoned him by the Kaliganga River, and there he was found by a Muslim couple, Malam Shah and Matijan.

They nursed him, gave him land, and unknowingly midwifed a spiritual

revolution. From that modest akhra in Cheuriya rose one of Bengal's greatest humanists — a man who sang not of heaven, but of the body as its own temple.

In his akhra, Hindus and Muslims ate together, women sang alongside men, and all hierarchies dissolved. The ekstra and dhol became tools of liberation, their rhythms echoing his dream of a society without caste or creed. His songs, carried orally across generations, speak of human oneness and rebellion against division — a philosophy that found its way into the works of Tagore, Nazrul, and even Allen Ginsberg.

Today, as the festival lights flicker across Kushtia's fields, and Professor Spivak's words rise under the open sky, one can almost imagine Lalon himself among the crowd — barefoot, smiling, the unseen bird fluttering on his shoulder. The ekstra hums softly in the dusk, and his voice seems to return once more:

*Dhonna
d h o n n o
boli tare,*

bendhechhe emon ghor...

Blessed is he who built such a house upon the void, where a mad one sits — alone with the One.

In a world still divided by faith and flag, perhaps this madman of Kushtia was the sanest of us all — still teaching, even now, that the divine begins where humanity does.

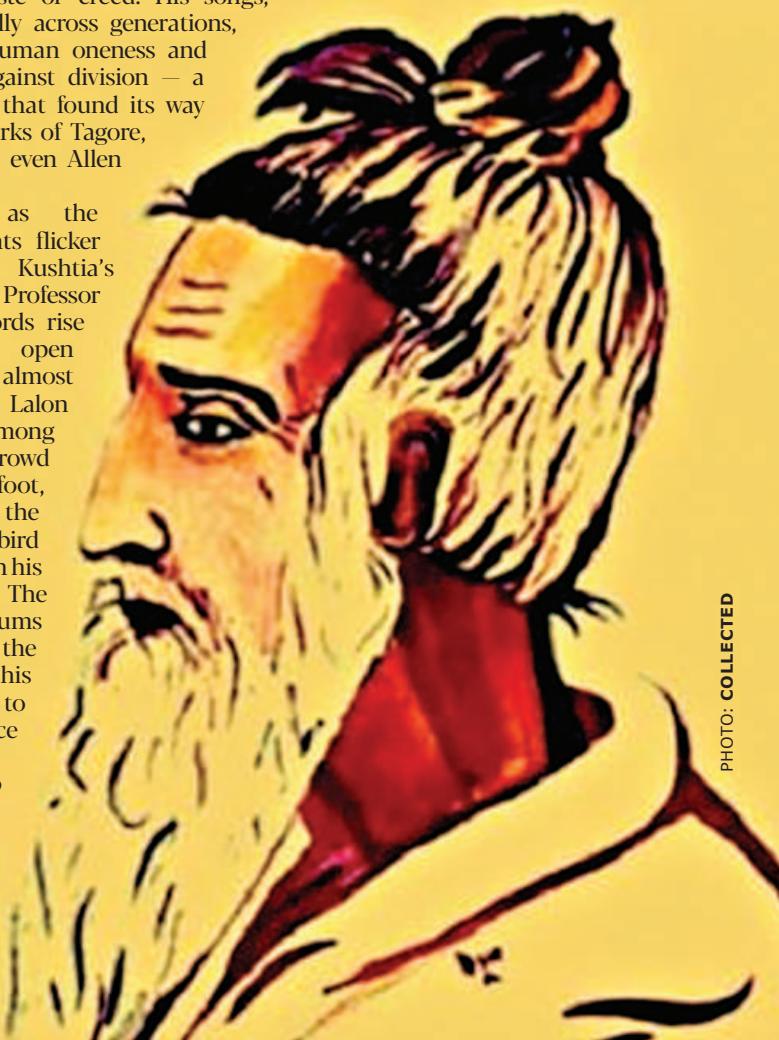


PHOTO: COLLECTED



Ityadi celebrates Bhawaiya heritage in Kurigram

Ityadi, the country's longest-running television show, has filmed its latest episode in Kurigram, the heartland of Bhawaiya music.

Shot at the 150-year-old Ulipur Maharan Swarnamayee School and College, the episode blends folk rhythm, local history, and human stories.

Creator Hanif Sanket said the special pays tribute to a region "where music flows like its rivers." The show features over 50 local dancers, new renditions of classics like O ki gariyai bhai, and performances by the Bangladesh Bhawaiya Academy.

The program also includes reports on Kurigram's heritage sites, river island communities, and social initiatives.

Written, directed, and hosted by Sanket, the Fagun Audio Vision production will air on BTV on October 31 at 8 pm, sponsored by Keya Cosmetics.

WHAT'S THE HAPS?

'Biday Hyena Express'



Popular rock band Sonar Bangla Circus is set to conclude their solo concert series *Biday Hyena Express* with a grand finale. The three-hour conceptual show will blend music, poetry, and performance art, featuring tracks from their acclaimed debut, *Hyena Express*, and their upcoming album, *Mahashmoshan*.

Date: Today (Friday) | Oct 17, 2025

Time: 5 pm-9 pm

Venue: Russian House, Dhanmondi

NEWS

Ensure fair trial, victim protection

FROM PAGE 12

the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence, as well as former officials of the Rab.

On Saturday, Bangladesh Army announced that it had detained over a dozen of its officers accused of serious crimes committed under the previous administration.

"It is crucial that the army promptly produces these detained officers to a competent civilian court, for fair and transparent criminal proceedings," read the

statement.

"I urge full respect for the most scrupulous standards of due process and fair trial, as guaranteed in international law. The protection of victims and witnesses in these sensitive and significant cases must be ensured," the high commissioner said.

He also urged the Bangladesh authorities to prioritise the handling of the large number of other pending cases, with some dating back to the previous administration and others

since then.

"Beyond ensuring individual accountability, the best way forward for Bangladesh is a comprehensive process of truth-telling, reparation, healing and justice. Such a process must address the legacy of serious human rights violations and ensure that these abuses can never happen again," he added.

"I also call on the interim government to deal with ongoing concerns promptly in line with international law," Türk said.

whether to leave and brave dangerous boat journeys in search of a better life," Save the Children said in a statement on Wednesday.

Rahim, 20, who lives in one of the camps in Cox's Bazar, said he has contemplated fleeing.

"Life in the camp is getting harder every day. There's no proper work, no chance to study," he said.

"I believe that if I could cross the sea and go abroad, I could support my family financially. Many of my friends talk about going to Malaysia; they think it's the only way to build a future and support their families."

"I also thought about it once, but after hearing how some people were caught, beaten, or never came back, I'm scared. Still, when you see no hope here,

it's difficult not to dream of leaving."

Reduced funding, which has led to cuts in essential services such as education and healthcare, has made this a particularly difficult year for children living in the world's largest refugee camp, said Save the Children.

Traditionally, Rohingyas looking to leave Bangladesh have taken to the sea in October, at the end of the region's rainy season, on journeys often fraught with danger — including for children who risk abuse at sea and sometimes travel unaccompanied without their parents or guardians.

Abeda Sultana, senior project officer for child poverty at Save the Children, said limited livelihood options and growing insecurity in the camps are major reasons why many Rohingya youth take the risk of

migrating irregularly.

"Economic pressure and the need to support their families also push youth to take such high risks. Hearing success stories from peers who migrated successfully continues to encourage others to follow the same unsafe routes," she said.

Save the Children has called on donors to urgently increase funding for education, livelihoods, and improved security in the camps to address the desperation driving dangerous sea journeys.

It also urged regional governments to allow boats to safely disembark and to provide assistance and protection to refugees. Regional cooperation and responsibility-sharing are essential to prevent further loss of life and protect vulnerable children and families.

MPO teachers threaten hunger strike

FROM PAGE 12

Later, the teachers postponed the "March to Jamuna" programme and announced that they would begin a hunger strike.

On Wednesday, the teachers blocked Shahbagh intersection for hours before returning to the Shaheed Minar to continue their sit-in over their three-point demands.

Their three demands are: 20 percent house rent allowance based on their basic salary, a 75 percent festival allowance, and a Tk 1,500

medical allowance.

Teachers across the country joined the protest in front of the Jatiya Press Club on Sunday and police dispersed their rally, using water cannons, batons, and sound grenades.

They then moved to the Shaheed Minar, where they protested the police action and announced a countrywide work abstention from the following day.

At the entry level, an MPO-listed teacher receives a monthly salary of

Tk 12,500, including Tk 1,000 house rent, Tk 500 as medical allowance, and 50 percent of their basic pay as festival bonus.

Recently, the finance ministry approved a Tk 500 increase in house rent, which the teachers rejected, calling it "insufficient."

Currently, there are over 26,000 MPO-listed non-government institutions across the country, employing around 3.8 lakh teachers and 1.7 lakh staffers.

'Will go in and kill Hamas if Gaza killings continue'

FROM PAGE 12

Hamas has been tightening its grip on ruined cities, launching a crackdown and executing alleged collaborators in the street.

The top US commander in the Middle East, Admiral Brad Cooper, had demanded on Wednesday that Hamas stop shooting Palestinian civilians and adhere to Trump's plan.

He added that the university administration had promised to use permanent ink but failed to do so.

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This is the second time a Shibir-backed panel has won the Cucus election. The first was 44 years ago in 1981, when Shibir leaders Jasim Uddin Sarker and Abdul Gafar were elected VP and GS.

The Oikyabaddho Chhatra Jote won the most votes in the sixth Cucus election, held almost a decade later on February 8, 1990. Nazim Uddin of Jatiya Chhatra League was elected VP and Azim Uddin Ahmad of Samajtantrik Chhatra Front became GS.

No Cucus election was held in the next 35 years.

At a press conference at Buddibibi

Rohingya boat departures triple

FROM PAGE 12

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He highlighted regional disparities as another reason behind the poor results, highlighting that urban areas performed much better than rural ones with a shortage of teachers and educational facilities.

"Nearly half of the students who sat for the exams failed. We don't want anyone to fail. However, these results have exposed the weaknesses in our education system. Now it is our collective responsibility to address them."

As per the board-wise results, Dhaka secured the highest pass rate -- 64.62 percent. It was 59.40 percent in Rajshahi, 48.86 percent in Cumilla, 50.20 percent in Jashore, 52.57 percent in Chattogram, 62.57 percent in Barishal, 51.86 percent in Sylhet, 57.49 percent in Dinajpur and 51.54 percent in Mymensingh.

Dhaka also has the highest number of GPA-5 achievers -- 26,063, followed by Rajshahi with 10,137. Dinajpur had 6,260 GPA-5 achievers, while Chattogram had 6,097, Jashore 5,995, Madrasah Board 4,268, Cumilla 2,707, Mymensingh 2,684, Barishal 1,674, Sylhet 1,602, and Technical Board 1,610.

a culture where numbers themselves had become the truth," he said at a press conference at the Secretariat.

Overall, girls have outperformed boys in terms of pass rates for the fifth straight year.

In that sense, he said, they consider the results "not bad".

Speaking to The Daily Star, Prof Runa Nasrin, exam controller of Comilla Education Board, of which the pass rate was the lowest, said the authorities this year were strict in every step of the exam process.

The board changed 162 centres after sensing possibilities of irregularities. "Answer sheets were evaluated without any political influence. Therefore, the published results are completely accurate and correct."

The pass rate for the HSC and equivalent exams was 47.74 percent in 2004. Since then, the rate never dropped to the current level.

This year's pass rate was 18.95 percentage points lower than last year's 77.78 percent across nine general education, madrasa and technical education boards.

Education Adviser CR Abrar said the results were an eye-opener, but "as the ministry, we cannot avoid responsibility for the results".

"We have chosen honesty over satisfaction -- giving fair marks instead of inflated ones. We had built

Across all education boards, 59,232 more girls passed than boys.

They also led in GPA-5 achievements, with 4,991 more girls obtaining it compared to boys.

In the nine general education boards, this gap is even more pronounced, with 87,814 more girls passing than boys. The GPA-5 gap is also significant, with 5,097 more girls achieving it than boys.

Prof Kabir said the highest number of students failed in English and ICT. The pass rate in English dropped from last year's 77 to 58 percent.

At a press conference at Buddibibi

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