



UNITED FOR LALON

DU speaks up against violence and vandalism

FAIZA RAMIM

On the evening of October 19 and the eve of Lalon Shah's 135th *tirodhan* (death anniversary), the student-run quarterly magazine Siren convened the programme titled **Manush Bhojle Shonar Manush Hob**i (If you seek the human within, you become the golden human) at the open concourse of Payra Chattar at TSC, Dhaka University. From six until ten, the square became a temporary public institution of song humming with the strong voices that spoke of humanity and secularism that persists despite the forces that want to uproot them, the vibrations of ektara strings and the layered sound of harmonium and flute.

The event had assembled performers from every corner of the country united by their love for Lalon -- Kuhok Team from Narayanganj, Indrani Shoma from Chattogram, Kotha Baul from Tangail, Oikko Jit Baul from Gazipur, Shukhonlal Rai from Lalmonirhat and Anan Baul from Sirajganj, joined by

SMRakib, Shimul, Anupam, Lanju, Akash Giyan, Lau Band and writer-philosopher-performer Arup Rahi.

The instrumental ensemble consisted of Asim Chakma (harmonium), Narayan Dash (tabla), Mishal Tripura (cajón), Mofizur Rahman Birohi (dotara) and Kanon Molla (flute). There were also modern instruments like ukulele and guitar that went smoothly without taking away from the folk aesthetics, rather making for a subtle addition.

The current political atmosphere of Bangladesh emphasises a moral urgency of this music that translates into a broader statement on communal harmony. Since its inception, violence against Bauls and Fakers and suppression of their voices has been common. The vandalism of mazars, surveillance of rural akhras, and public humiliation of spiritual mendicants constitute a recurring pattern of disciplining difference. The recent outrage over the forceful hair-cutting incidents of September 2025 was merely a more visible and direct transgression of human



PHOTOS: RATUL CHOWDHURY

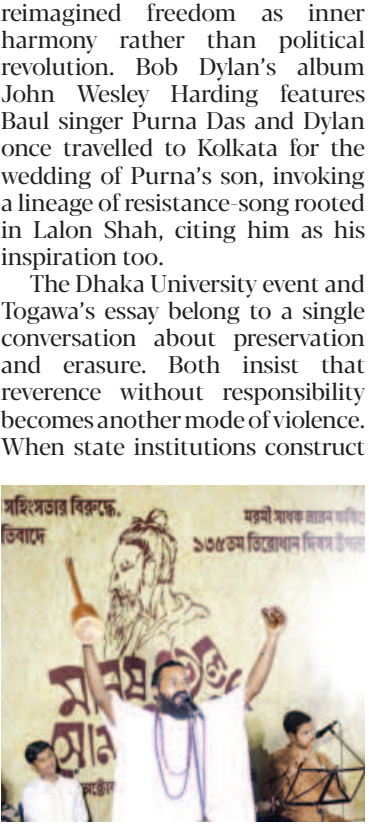
rights that couldn't be swept under the rug easily. However, instances of such injustices have always been there. Anan Baul's performance of his own song about the 2020 attack on his Sirajganj akhra emphasised that, asking why singers are punished for their harmless devotion and if his music killed anybody.

The performers each revisited Lalon's canonical songs **Shob Loke Koy Lalon Ki Jaat, Khachar Bhetor Och**in Pakhi, **Ja**at Gelo

Jaat Gelo **Bo**le, **E Shob Kanar Haat Bajar**, and **Milon Hobe Koto Dine**.

Lalon's philosophy of embodiment continues to structure Bangladeshi popular consciousness. His verses imagine the body as both cage and a channel where spirit encounters material constraint. When the musicians at Payra Chattar sang **Ja**at Gelo **Ja**at Gelo **Bo**le, it acted as a critique of caste and class hierarchies still embedded in bureaucratic and religious institutions.

His influence now extends far beyond the Bengal region. His humanist philosophy, grounded in the sanctity of the human body and the rejection of sectarian division, continues to inspire scholars, poets, and musicians across the world. The Japanese anthropologist Masahiko Togawa, one of the most devoted international interpreters of Baul culture, wrote with anguish after visiting the Kustia mazar in 2000. He observed the striking contrast between Lalon's ascetic



monumental "heritage" around a living tradition while neglecting its practitioners, they replace dialogue with display. The students who organised **Manush Bhojle Shonar Manush Hob**i chose the opposite gesture: they created a space where the Baul voice spoke for itself, surrounded by listeners rather than curators.

Lalon's voice endures because it identifies freedom with recognition, the capacity to see another as part of one's own being. Among the crowd at Payra Chattar that resonance was visible. Street vendors hummed while selling snacks, children repeated refrains, and students from diverse disciplines joined the chorus. Lalon continues to speak to ordinary people because his language does not require mediation. He addresses hunger, love, mortality, class anxiety and the search for justice with equal intimacy. That recognition still animates the streets of Dhaka and the villages of Kustia. In that continuity lies the true legacy of Lalon Shah, and in that continuity the possibility of an ethical Bangladesh remains alive.

Ayub Bachchu's legacy to be preserved through museum and cultural hub



A museum and cultural hub is set to be established in Dhaka's Moghbazar area at the initiative of the Ayub Bachchu Foundation.

Spread across 10 kathas of land, the museum will preserve an extensive collection of memorabilia from the legendary musician's personal and musical life.

Ferdous Akhtar Chondona, wife of Ayub Bachchu and president of the foundation, said that work on the project is progressing steadily, though sponsorship is needed to carry it forward.

The museum will display many of Ayub Bachchu's personal belongings, including his guitars, T-shirts, hats, caps, rings, and sunglasses, along with other treasured items from his life and career.

A recording studio modeled after AB Kitchen, Ayub Bachchu's iconic workspace, will also be part of the museum.

WHAT'S THE HAPS?

'The Seesaw Soirée'

The Seesaw Collective, an eclectic ensemble celebrated for its improvisation and rhythmic interplay, returns to Dhaka with a dynamic performance. Featuring Rahin Haider on saxophone and traditional flute, the band blends jazz and fusion with original compositions. Guest appearances include acclaimed vocalist Tashlee and composer Shahrin Shahriar.

DATE: FRIDAY | OCT 24, 2025
TIME: 7 PM - 9:30 PM
VENUE: JATRA BIROTI, BANANI

Friday, October 24

NEWS

Liberation War not accurately represented

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particularly concerning differing opinions and the "note of dissent".

The parties further objected to a clause that restricts the right to challenge the Charter in court, saying it goes against fundamental rights.

They opposed the removal of the Proclamation of Independence and the Declaration of Independence from the sixth and seventh schedules of the Constitution, calling it an attack on the nation's founding principles.

Speaking to reporters, Riaz said the commission had clarified that the Proclamation of Independence had not been removed from the Charter.

"We have urged them to sign the July Charter," he said, adding that the discussions with the parties are ongoing and the commission hopes they will sign soon.

BSD (Marxist) Coordinator Masud Rana said his party had formally submitted its written concerns to the commission.

"The issue of the note of dissent should have been clearly defined in the Charter. We are willing to compromise on political matters, but not on the historical and structural realities of Bangladesh," he said.

CPB General Secretary Abdullah Al Kafi Ratan reiterated his party's firm position on the basic principles of the Constitution.

"We support incorporating the proposed principles of the July Charter alongside the existing constitutional ones. But we will not accept any move to replace them," he added.

Later in the afternoon, a 13-member team of July victims met with the Commission, where they called for legal protection for their families and demanded the issuance of official identification cards for every victim.

During the meeting, held at the LD Hall of the National Parliament, the victims said that many of them have been unable to receive medical treatment at hospitals since last Eid-ul-Azha even though they possess official health cards.

The delegation urged the commission to ensure that the health adviser issues written instructions to all hospitals to guarantee medical care for the injured July victims.

They also highlighted the need for better coordination between the administration and medical institutions so that their healthcare

Three more held, no case filed yet

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We learned that the detainee and Mahir grew up in the same neighbourhood and had been in a relationship since school. When the girl expressed her liking for Jobayed, Mahir became furious. We suspect he killed Jobayed out of rage with the help of a friend Nafis."

Adding that jealousy may have been the motive, he said, "During questioning, the girl appeared very calm. She claimed to know nothing about the murder, and we are verifying her statement."

Asked whether the accused, Mahir Rahman's mother, had handed him over to police, Lalbagh DC Mallik said, "I have no information on this. Full details will be shared tomorrow [today] morning."

Contacted, Mahir's mother said, "Mahir returned home on Sunday evening with a wounded and bloodied hand, and told me about the incident. I first arranged for his treatment and took him to a hospital. The next morning, I took him to Chawkbazar Police Station and handed him over.

"My son had been in a relationship with that girl for nine years. They grew up together, and over time their bond turned romantic. But recently, the girl told my son that she no longer wanted to continue the relationship and introduced him to the boy [Jobayed].

"My son met him again that evening, and they went inside the building to talk. He asked Mahir to delete the girl's photos from his phone. Another friend of Mahir was waiting outside the building. At one point, an argument broke out between Mahir and Jobayed and a scuffle followed, during which Jobayed was accidentally killed. I handed my son over to police because he committed a crime. That boy [Jobayed] was also someone's son."

About the case filing, Jobayed's elder brother, Enayet Hossain Soikot, said, "We wanted to file a case naming the girl, her parents, Mahir, and Nafis. But the OC advised us not to include too many names, saying it might weaken the case."

Asked about this, OC Rafiqul said, "We will record the case. I advised them to consult university teachers before finalising the names of the

rights are protected.

About the October 17 incident, the victims said the event was completely unexpected and explained that they had gathered at the South Plaza of the parliament to present their legitimate demands peacefully, not to cause any disturbance.

However, a group of outsiders infiltrated the gathering and became involved in clashes and acts of vandalism, which tarnished the image of the July victims, they said.

The group claimed to have identified around 20 to 25 such individuals who were responsible for the disorder.

They expressed regret for what happened that day and apologised for the incident. At the same time, they sought the Commission's assistance to have the four cases filed in connection with the incident withdrawn.

In response, the Commission assured them that all of their concerns would be taken seriously and conveyed to the relevant authorities for appropriate action.

The team included Md Sohag Mahmud, Kamrul Hasan, Md Al-Amin, Mustain Billah Habibi, Marufa Maya, Ahadul Islam and Nusrat Jahan.

accused."

At a joint press briefing by the university administration and police earlier in the day, DC Mallik said, "We're working to ensure that no innocent person is harassed. I have spoken to Jobayed's father, who wishes to file the case only against the actual culprits. Once we confirm the prime suspect, a case will be filed accordingly."

JnU Vice-Chancellor Prof Md Rezaul Karim said, "We are profoundly shocked. The university has been cooperating with law enforcement since the beginning. The real perpetrators will be brought to justice as soon as possible."

Jobayed's first namaz-e-janaza was held on the JnU campus yesterday. After that, his body was taken to his ancestral home in Cumilla.

During the funeral prayers, his father, Md Mobarak Hossen, said, "I sent my son to university to study, but today he's returning home as a corpse. What will I tell his mother?"

In an appeal to the chief adviser, he said, "I'm 58 years old; my strength is gone. I want justice for my son's murder."

DIG praised cop brutality gave cash rewards

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to quell the student movement at a meeting held at Savar Police Station.

"He praised officers who had played a tough role in suppressing the protests and rewarded some of them with cash envelopes," Enayet said.

He said then Dhaka superintendent of police Asaduzzaman called the meeting on July 25, 2024, following DIG Nurul's directive and the district's all police high-ups attended it.

Officers in charge of Ashulia, Dhamrai, and Savar were among the attendees, said Enayet, who himself was present at the meeting.

Another prosecution witness, Karimul Islam, elder brother of martyr Bayezid Bostami, whose body was burnt after being shot in Ashulia, testified before the tribunal yesterday.

During cross examination, defence lawyers asked Enayet if he was making a false statement to save himself from being an accused in the case since he was sent on retirement for playing a tough role in quelling the student movement.

Enayet denied the defence's claim.

In the case, a former local lawmaker and several former police officers are accused of ordering and executing the fatal shootings and subsequent arson attack during the July uprising in Ashulia.

Six of the victims were shot dead while another was injured. Police later burnt five of the dead and the injured.

Footage showed the bodies of the five dead and the lone survivor were first thrown onto a rickshaw van and later onto a police pickup truck.

A cop then poured a flammable substance over their bodies and lit a matchstick, setting them ablaze as the only man still alive moved his hands while the fire erupted.

Another officer, who was smoking, threw his burning cigarette onto the flames, while a third one added a wooden bench to the fire, intensifying the inferno that reduced the six to ashes.

Up to 8.5 lakh law enforcers may be deployed

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"The Election Commission initially planned to deploy law enforcers for five days during the election. At today's [Monday's] meeting, a proposal was made to extend the period to eight days. This will be reviewed," he said, adding that the law enforcers would be stationed three days before the polls.

The secretary said discussions were held on preventing the misuse of AI, banning the use of drones, and equipping police with bodycams.

Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin chaired the meeting that was attended by all four election commissioners, the home secretary, the EC secretary, and representatives from law enforcement agencies.

The EC secretary mentioned that no specific directives were given to the law enforcement agencies.

The 13th national election is expected to take place in the first half of February, before Ramadan, while the election schedule is likely to be announced in the first half of December.

During the 12th parliamentary polls, members of the armed forces were initially deployed for eight days, but they were kept on the ground for five extra days. Law enforcers were deployed for 10 days during the 11th national polls.

EC Secretary Akhtar said yesterday's discussions focused on polling centres, election officials, security at the polling stations, number of centres, and the development of a coordinated action plan for nationwide law and order during the polls.

The meeting also discussed controlling illegal firearms and ensuring safety of foreign journalists and observers.

In response to a question about whether members of the armed forces would be deployed with civil magistracy powers, he said, "This is under discussion. 'In aid of civil power' is included, but we will ensure that this does not conflict with the Representation of the People Order (RPO)."

Regarding law and order, the EC secretary said, "The election period spans from the announcement of the schedule to the publication of the gazette. Our discussions focused within that timeframe. There's currently no scope for discussion beyond that, nor did we. I did not notice any concern among them [law enforcers]. Rather, I saw a commitment to conducting a good election. They are providing us with the highest level of support they can."

The secretary added that the environment is suitable for holding the polls.

NCP to call for protest rally

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Commission asking why the 'shapla' symbol was not allocated to them.

The commission did not provide any positive response to that either.

As a result, NCP has decided to go for street protests from Friday, they said.

The rally's announcement will come in a day or two, the NCP leaders said.

Although the day for the rally has been finalised, the exact time and venue are yet to be set, said a leader, who is one of organisers of the rally.

The time and venue will be announced through a press briefing between Wednesday and Thursday.

Four possible venues are being considered for the rally: the north gate of Baitul Mukarram, the National Press Club, the Central Shaheed Minar and Shahbagh, he said.

Meanwhile, the Election Commission has decided to revisit the allocation of the "shapla" symbol, following a renewed request from NCP.

According to the commission, the matter will be reviewed in light of existing electoral laws and regulations before a final decision is made.

Akhtar Ahmed, senior secretary of the EC, said, "We had asked the NCP to choose from 50 available symbols and had given them time until October 19.

"On the final day, a party delegation submitted a renewed request for the shapla symbol. The matter will now be placed before the commission for further consideration."