

Theatre brought peace to my life: NAWSHABA

RAKSHANDA RAHMAN MISHA

There was a time when Quazi Nawshaba Ahmed found herself facing one of the most challenging phases of her life. In the middle of that chaos, theatre entered her world — offering a rare sense of hope and peace just when she needed it most.

"Theatre isn't just close to my heart; it's a reflection of my soul. I haven't been involved in theatre for very long. I might have worked in one play before 2018, but my real journey began after that. During that turbulent period, my presence on screen became limited, and even stepping outside the house felt overwhelming," shared the actress.

"As a nation, we're also going through a turbulent period. With everything happening around the world, the wars, the uncertainty — Siddhartha doesn't just give answers; it also raises questions. It inspires you to love your life and helps you move forward. Siddhartha is not a destination; it's a journey."

Nawshaba is currently starring in *Siddhartha*, directed by Reza Arif and produced by the theatre troupe Aarshinagar Dhaka. Based on Hermann Hesse's acclaimed novel, the play features Nawshaba in the titular role of Siddhartha, a young Brahmin on a profound journey through wisdom, disillusionment, and ultimately, enlightenment.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Nawshaba reflected on how the play has helped her rediscover inner peace during one of the most challenging periods of her life.

"When I started working on *Siddhartha*, I was going through a lot mentally," she said. "Around that time, I

created Together We Can — my own group through which I offer art therapy to people with special needs. I wanted to use art to support their mental health. Since 2018, I've directed two or three productions featuring their stories and performed in different parts of Bangladesh."

"While I was sitting and watching a rehearsal, Reza Arif sir suddenly told me to read for *Siddhartha*. I thought he meant only for the reading, but when he told me I would actually be playing Siddhartha, I became anxious. Siddhartha is traditionally a male character. When I asked him, 'Why me?', he simply replied, 'Does Siddhartha belong to any gender? What does Siddhartha mean to you?' I told him Siddhartha is a feeling. And he said, 'Feelings don't have a gender.' After that, I never doubted it again."

For Nawshaba, the play resonates far beyond her personal experience. "As a nation, we're also going through a turbulent period. With everything happening around the world, the wars, the uncertainty — Siddhartha doesn't just give answers; it also raises questions. It inspires you to love your life and helps you move forward. *Siddhartha* is not a destination; it's a journey."

This is the fourth edition of the play, with four shows scheduled from November 19 to 21. There will be two shows today — one at 4pm and another at 7:30pm.



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED



Oscars to air all 24 awards in 2026

The Oscars will air all 24 competitive awards during the 2026 broadcast, including a new category for achievement in casting, the Academy confirmed.

The casting prize is the first new addition since the best animated feature joined the lineup in 2001.

The 98th Academy Awards will take place on March 15 and air live on ABC at 7 pm ET, with Conan O'Brien hosting. A shortlist of 10 films for the casting award will be selected by members of the Academy's casting directors branch.

It will follow rules similar to categories such as documentary, international film, makeup and hairstyling, and visual effects. The shortlist will be announced on December 16, and nominees will be revealed on January 22. A stunt design award is slated for 2028.

WHAT'S THE HAPS?

'Navapallava – Annual Bharatanatyam Showcase'

Navapallava gathers dancers across generations from Arthy Ahmed Dance Academy to trace a year of discipline and transformation. From beginners to seasoned students, the performance celebrates growth, refined technique, and evolving expression — affirming that Bharatanatyam thrives through consistency, community, and lifelong learning.



Date: Today | November 21, 2025

Time: 6pm - 8pm

Venue: Bangladesh Girl Guides Association Headquarters, Bailey Road

NEWS

15-yr-old sent to jail

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superintendent.

Contacted, prominent rights lawyer Jyotirmoy Barua termed the incident "objectionable" and said the boy should have been granted bail.

"It shows the judicial malpractices of the past regime are repeating, where judges appear unable to carry out their duties independently," he told The Daily Star. "Refusing bail has now become the norm in cases where the opposite should have been the norm."

Sub-inspector Alamgir filed the case at Nangolkot Police Station under the Anti-Terrorism Act against 25 named accused, including the boy, and at least 50 unnamed activists of the banned BCL and Awami League, on charges of

holding a torch procession on Chilpara-Urktu Road under Dhalua Union.

The case statement says police arrested one person on the spot. They later conducted drives in different areas and arrested five more, including the eighth grader, whom the SI described as a child and BCL activist.

At the Cumilla court premises yesterday, the boy's father said that despite trying for two days, he could neither secure bail nor obtain permission for his son to sit for annual exams, which began yesterday.

He said the false charges have put his son's academic year at risk.

"My son is not involved in any political activities, and neither am I. I am a decorator [event organiser] by profession, and it requires me to supply

products to BNP, Jamaat, Awami League — any political party. That is simply the nature of my business," he said.

"On what grounds are they saying my son goes to rallies or meetings? He is not even old enough for that. If my son has done anything wrong, show me proof. I am appealing to all of you for justice."

Officer-in-charge Fazlul Haque of Nangolkot Police Station said they arrested six individuals based on specific allegations of participating in the rally by a banned organisation and sent them to court.

The head teacher of the boy's school said the annual exams began yesterday and that the father has collected a certification letter to present before the court.

Govt moves for UAE lease amid protests

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the evaluation of the technical proposal was conducted on November 5. On November 6, the financial offer was assessed and negotiations began on the same day.

Negotiations between CPA and APM Terminals were completed on November 7 and November 8, which was a weekend.

A ministry official, however, said the negotiations were done on November 9. That day, the CPA board approved the proposals and sent the summary to the shipping ministry.

The following day, it was forwarded to the Ministry of Law. On November 12, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved the final proposal.

The chief adviser gave final approval on November 16, and on the same day, a Letter of Award (LoA) was issued to APM Terminals for the agreement.

Usually, there is a two-week gap between the awarding of LoA and the signing of the contract. But the concession agreement for the Laldia Container Terminal was signed the following day on November 17.

After evaluating the technical and financial proposals submitted by APM, the draft concession agreement was sent to the Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs Division for vetting.

The division later issued a set of specific opinions and recommendations, requesting that these be implemented before finalising the agreement.

The shipping ministry asked the CPA to verify several legal, financial and technical issues before finalising the concession agreement.

The Development 1 Wing of the

shipping ministry on November 16 sent a letter signed by Joint Secretary HM Moniruzzaman to the CPA Chairman in this regard.

According to the letter, the draft agreement, submitted for vetting after CPA evaluated APM Terminals' technical and financial proposals, must be revised in line with specific observations and recommendations made by the legislative division.

One of the key issues flagged is the omission of the date on which the CCEA, now functioning as the Advisers' Council Committee on Economic Affairs, granted the project's in-principle approval.

The legislative division noted that the CCEA had approved the PPP project on November 29, 2023 and directed the ministry to ensure that the date is inserted correctly.

It is a big question why the interim government had to sign this agreement amid secrecy, lack of transparency and excessive haste, said noted economist and activist Anu Muhammad.

"What was the necessity behind such haste that the government had to complete the signing of the deal three months before the national election?"

Such hurriedness has created doubt over the government's motives, he said, while questioning why the two deals with the two foreign operators were signed on the day of the verdict of Sheikh Hasina's crimes was given.

"That day was chosen to divert people's attention. The government is saying that the deals were signed for the betterment of the people. So why do the people have no right to know the details

of the deals?" he asked.

Former CPA Member Mohammad Zafar Alam, however, said the discussion on the Laldia terminal started ten years ago when a Canadian company was appointed as the transaction adviser.

The latest transaction adviser, the IFC, also worked for months while the CPA officials engaged in talks with APM Terminals for a long period before the deal, he said.

Such a deal involving highly technical issues cannot be done in quick time, said Alam, who believes that due negotiations has been conducted.

He, however, said the Pangaon project was not on the table earlier.

Since Pangaon ICT was a losing concern, there is no matter for concern of losing anymore, he said, adding that it is better that a global logistics operator like Medlog, a subsidiary of renowned shipping line MSC, is hoping to make it efficient.

Chattogram Port Users Forum Convener Amir Humayun Mahmud Chowdhury also said the deal with APM Terminals was not done all on a sudden; rather, it was done after taking enough preparations.

The previous government took the initiative but progressed little, Humayun said, adding that after getting repeated requests from the Danish government the interim government expedited the process.

"Most of our concerns were addressed as a local firm has been partnered with the global operator. We earlier demanded for open tender. But, as APM Terminals, a subsidiary of global shipping giant Maersk, got the work, we welcome them."

War of words erupts at ICT during cross-examination

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could challenge the witness's credibility but could not ask such questions.

Defence lawyer Mizanur shot back, "A police officer was beaten to death, and his body was hanged. Why can't I ask this question? The court has not convened here for a one-sided trial."

He added that just as the prosecution had come to court responding to a mother's plea, this matter involved the plea of Raju's widow, holding up documents from the case she filed.

At this point, Prosecutor Mizanul questioned whether the defence had permission to present such documents and whether the tribunal had received the defence witness list and submissions.

The defence counsel responded sharply, "Do you want to create

another Sukhranjan Bali? Whenever we submit a defence witness's name, threats begin."

Appearing before the tribunal over three months ago, Sukhranjan, a witness in the war crimes case against Delwar Hossain Sayedee, alleged that he had been kidnapped from the tribunal's gate and later found himself in an Indian jail.

Prosecutor Mizanul replied that the defence lawyers "should not have come to court at all," adding that they could have requested to keep the defence witness's identity protected, but had not done so.

The tribunal then rebuked both sides, noting that "every time we start taking evidence, it turns into chaos".

Defence counsel Mizanur argued that the law requires an approver to provide a true and full disclosure of all facts within his knowledge,

saying, "This matter falls within his knowledge."

The prosecutor countered that any question must be relevant to the crimes under trial.

Mizanur again asked Abzalul about the case filed by ASI Raju's widow, drawing further objections from the prosecution, who insisted that only the witness's credibility — not unrelated matters — could be probed.

"Then what does this relate to?" Mizanur asked, accusing the prosecution of "failing to uphold the law, relying instead on force".

Prosecutor Mizanul, visibly agitated, repeatedly shouted, "What is this?" prompting the tribunal to tell both sides to maintain decorum.

Sixteen people have been accused in the case, eight of whom are currently in custody.

Bangladesh loses \$8b annually

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two possible futures, contrasting what girls would have contributed to the economy had they stayed in school and entered better-paying work with what they contribute when early marriage cuts those opportunities short.

Economists calculate the gap between these two life paths in terms of earnings, health and long-term participation in the labour force.

The MICS-2025 also said that at the current rate of reduction, 4 percent per year, it would take over 64 years to eliminate child marriage in Bangladesh.

UNICEF officials yesterday said many existing child protection committees, including those on child marriage, child labour and anti-trafficking, function effectively only in areas where UNICEF and the government have jointly invested in social workers and community hubs.

"Bangladesh still has woeful levels of child marriage, with 49 percent of girls being pushed into early unions," said UNICEF Representative Rana Flowers, warning that early marriage drives a cycle of early pregnancy,

malnutrition, higher neonatal deaths and rising divorce rates.

She dismissed the justification often given by families that "marrying off girls preserves their dignity".

"Are we honouring the dignity of girls when they face the highest levels of violence, early pregnancy, poor nutrition, higher neonatal mortality and rising divorce rates? The answer is no."

Flowers stressed that a modest increase in investment could prevent further economic losses. Violence against women and children already costs Bangladesh 3–4 percent of GDP annually. "A small investment in child protection will offset massive economic losses."

According to the MICS-2025, 86 percent of children aged 1–14 experienced violent discipline at home in the past month, showing that violence against children remains widespread and costs Bangladesh an estimated 2 percent of GDP every year.

She also highlighted the country's chronically low investments in human capital: Bangladesh spends

1.7 percent of GDP on education, of which only 60 percent is utilised, and 0.7 percent on health, among the lowest globally.

UNICEF's Chief of Child Protection Natalie McCauley said major ministries remain so under-resourced that they cannot activate statutory mechanisms at the local level.

The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, for instance, still lacks a Department of Children Affairs, leaving significant gaps in coordination and oversight, she added.

Despite strong laws, including the Children's Act, implementation remains weak due to the absence of approved budgets and rules. "On paper, it looks strong, but in the field, it cannot be implemented without money."

UNICEF called on the government and political leaders to prioritise children in upcoming national agendas, warning that continued underinvestment will deepen losses for families and the country's economy.