



PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

Where art empathises with the silent struggles of cancer-affected lives

Rabindra Sangeet exponent Mahnaz Karim was to perform, but she became deeply emotional hearing the stories of cancer patients. She is a mother of a cancer survivor herself. She shared memories of her son's diagnosis in 2011 and the long journey that followed.

RAKSHANDA RAHMAN MISHA

Cancer does not only attack the body; it slowly drains the soul. It pulls patients and their families into a daily battle, watching a loved one fight for life while the disease relentlessly tries to take everything away. Each day becomes a test of endurance, patience, and hope.

For those with financial means, there is at least a fragile possibility of treatment and care. But for those who cannot afford the fight, the suffering feels endless. Their lives are marked by uncertainty, pain, and the quiet fear of being left without options.

For them, a ray of hope arrives through Alok Nibash, an initiative of BANCAT, Bangladesh's first holistic cancer care home. Alok Nibash provides free treatment, accommodation, counselling, and emotional support for patients and their families. It is more than a shelter; it is a space of dignity and compassion. Founded by Najmus Ahmed Albab, himself a cancer survivor, the initiative grew from his determination to ensure that financial hardship does not decide who gets to fight cancer.

On Saturday night, BANCAT created a space where pain could finally speak. Through kabbo sangeet, poetry, and storytelling, untold emotions found voice. The audience included

survivors bearing their scars with courage, families still fighting beside loved ones, and those living with irreversible loss. Together, they shared stories of love, loss, fear, and resilience. It was not merely a cultural event, but a collective act of healing.

Mahzabin Ferdous, General Secretary of BANCAT, hosted the event by introducing the guests. The first to take the stage were Jeetu Ahsan and Kishi Tahnin, who narrated moving stories of cancer patients. The struggles and pain of these families brought tears to everyone's eyes.



Dr Zobaida Akhter, originally scheduled to narrate a poem, instead read a heartfelt piece dedicated to her mother—an open letter to her dearest mother.

Rabindra Sangeet exponent Mahnaz Karim was to perform, but she became deeply emotional hearing the stories of cancer patients. She is a mother of a cancer survivor herself. She shared memories of her son's diagnosis in 2011 and the long journey that followed. Despite her struggle, she moved the audience with renditions of *Sokatore Oi Kadiche Sokole* and *Bhalobese Sokhi Nibhrite*.

Fahim Hossain Chowdhury followed with renditions of *Akash Bhora Surjo Tara* and *Neel Akasher Niche Ei Prithibi*.

Professor Dr Nashid Kamal shared her reflections about losing her husband to cancer. She then performed *Tomar Du Chokhe Amar Swapna Aka and Srijono Chonde Anonde Nacho Notoraj*.

Later, Najmus Ahmed Albab and his wife Kaniz Fahmida Ahmed then recited poems written during Albab's own battle with cancer. He described how poetry became a lifeline during his darkest days. He reflected on forgiveness, love, and hope through his works *Khoma and Khushi*.

He concluded by reading a poem dedicated to his father, with whom he had a distant relationship that became deeply close during his cancer journey.

The kabbo sangeet segment concluded with Mustari Hossain Panna, who lost her son to cancer and later joined Alok Nibash to support patients in need. She performed *Khelicho E Bissho Loye and Dui Chokhe Dui Nodi*.

The evening ended with a powerful recitation by Jayanto Chattopadhyay, narrating Albab's journey through acute myeloid leukemia and the birth of Alok Nibash. Lt Col (Retd) Mudassar Hossain Khan, Bir Pratik, Chief Advisor of BANCAT and a cancer survivor, closed the programme by urging collective responsibility in supporting cancer patients across the country.

As the night drew to a close, what stayed was not just music or poetry, but courage and hope. Alok Nibash is more than a place for treatment—it is a home where lives are restored, hearts are healed, and hope is given a chance to grow.

Jagannath University hosts three-day theatre festival

Jagannath University has opened its third annual theatre festival, a three-day programme running until February 3 at the Bangladesh Mohila Samity auditorium at New Bailey Road in the capital. Organised by the Department of Theatre and Performance Studies, the festival features six productions under the theme "Andhar Katuk Monchaloke" (Let the stage light cut through the darkness).

The ceremony was inaugurated yesterday in the presence of the International Theatre Institute Bangladesh Centre president, Professor Abdus Selim, as the chief guest. Veteran actor Ferdousi Majumdar received a theatre honour. The festival opened at 7:30 pm with *Mulluk*.

Productions by Badal Sircar, Franca Rame, Osvaldo Dragún and others will be staged over three days. Actor-director Tariq Anam Khan will attend the closing ceremony. A single ticket allows access to all shows each day.



Amar Bhashar Cholochitro to kick off tomorrow



Inspired by the spirit of the Language Movement, the University of Dhaka's Teacher-Student Centre (TSC) hosts the annual film festival Amar Bhashar Cholochitro. Organised by the DU Film Society, this year's edition will run from February 3 to 8.

The festival will screen 23 films, including 20 feature-length and three short films, featuring both new and older works. One film will be shown on the opening day, followed by four screenings

daily at 10 am, 12:30 pm, 3:30 pm and 6:30 pm. Ahmed Hasan Sunny's *Ekhane Rajnoitik Alap Joruri*, starring Intiaz Barshon, will be screened at 6:30 pm as the opening film.

NEWS

Harassment of teachers stalks public univs

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Referring to section 59 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), Sayeed said it allows "a private person to arrest" someone committing a cognisable offence. "We did not take the law into our own hands. We handed him over to the authorities."

When asked, Sara Hossain, a senior advocate at the Supreme Court, said that any person may make an arrest under the CrPC provision if they believe that someone has committed a non-bailable and cognisable offence — one for which it is possible to arrest someone even without a warrant. But, in doing so, they cannot assault or abuse the person in any way.

"The images of a teacher being chased and assaulted by students on the Chittagong University campus are deeply disturbing. Reports suggest that the students alleged his 'direct involvement in the July massacre,' while a proctor described him as a 'soldier of the fascist regime.'"

These are serious allegations and can only be verified through independent and impartial investigations, said Sara, also honorary executive director of Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST).

Asked about the January 10 incident, CU Pro-Vice Chancellor (academic) Prof Kamal Uddin said, "If no one files a complaint with us, we cannot take action on our own."

He, however, said that taking the law into one's own hands was unjustified.

Earlier on July 4, a group of CU students entered the office of Vice Chancellor Prof Muhammad Yahya Akhtar and intimidated him, saying, "You did not sit here on your own merit; we installed you here. You are bound to listen to us."

That day, Assistant Professor Kushal Baran Chakraborty was confined to the VC office for three hours, and his promotion process was allegedly postponed under pressure from student groups.

Similarly, another assistant professor, Rantu Das, was confined to the office of the history department chairman for nearly two hours on October 23, 2024, and forced to resign over his alleged links to the BCL.

CU Shibir General Secretary Mohammad Parvez; Shibir Publicity Secretary Md Ishaq Bhuiyan, and ex-office activities secretary Habibullah Khaled were present during all three incidents, as shown in video clips.

A nearly identical situation prevails at Rajshahi University.

At a rally on December 19 last year, Rucus General Secretary Salahuddin

Ammar announced that any teacher favouring the "fascist Awami League" would be "dragged by the collar and tied up".

A couple of days later, Ammar demanded the resignation of six deans over their alleged links to the AL regime. He phoned them one by one, asking them to sign pre-drafted resignation letters.

That day, a group of students locked the Deans' Complex and the main administrative building, and staged a demonstration attended by several Shibir leaders, video clips show.

The six deans resigned later that night.

Terming the forced resignations unwarranted, RU Pro-Vice Chancellor Prof Farid Uddin Khan said, "The university administration cannot evade responsibility when students engage in such activities."

"Political tagging without evidence of anti-uprising activities is not justified," he added.

Incidents of teacher harassment also took place at Dhaka University.

On December 11 last year, a group of students, led by Ducus Social Welfare Secretary AB Zubair, harassed three teachers who belong to the pro-AL "Neel Dal".

The incident occurred at the Faculty of Social Sciences after the three — Prof AKM Jamal Uddin; Prof Azmal Hossain Bhuiyan; and Prof Zeenat Huda — submitted a memorandum to the VC, demanding that the teachers barred from taking classes be allowed to resume duties.

Video footage showed students chasing Prof Jamal and blocking his car from leaving.

About the incident, Zubair said he and several Ducus members went to the faculty to hand over "accomplices of fascism" to police.

Earlier in August 2024, student groups forced Arts Faculty Dean Prof Abdul Bashir and Biological Sciences Dean Prof AKM Mahbub Hasan to resign.

When contacted, Education Adviser Prof CR Abrar termed the assaults on teachers "criminal offences", and said that no grievance justifies such intimidation.

Asked why the ministry did not make any move, he cited legal constraints regarding autonomous institutions.

"I am walking a very thin line. As per the law, I cannot do much, as these are autonomous institutions governed by the University Grants Commission [UGC]... But no one has the licence to assault, harass or intimidate any

individual," he told The Daily Star.

He attributed the present crisis to "blatant partisan politics" involving both teachers and students. "This is a dangerous trend. The previous regime practiced it, but that does not justify us doing it in this new era."

Meanwhile, various teachers' platforms condemned the incidents of assault and harassment of teachers, describing them as forms of "mob justice".

The White Panel, a platform of pro-BNP teachers at DU, said allegations must be resolved through legal procedures, not assault.

The Nationalist Teachers' Forum of Jahangirnagar University expressed concerns, while the University Teachers' Network condemned the "extra-judicial criminal activities" of elected student representatives, highlighting their links to Shibir. The network urged Jamaat-e-Islami to rein in its student wing.

Prof Anu Muhammad, a member of the teachers' network, said these student leaders wore a "mask of inclusivity" before elections but revealed a "violent and anti-education face" after their victory.

"We are seeing these representatives incite vandalism," Criticising the authorities, he said, "It is under the patronage of an incompetent administration that students have the audacity to do whatever they please."

Drawing a parallel with the past, he said the "tagging culture" seen during the BCL era has now taken a more violent form.

The economist said that if there are specific allegations of crime, corruption, or murder against certain teachers, they should be tried under the law of the land.

When contacted, UGC Chairman Prof SMA Faiz described the recent incidents as "completely unexpected and unacceptable".

Referring to the incidents at the CU, Faiz said, "I have spoken with the vice chancellor of the university. He assured that his administration is taking necessary steps."

He said the UGC cannot interfere in the internal affairs of a university to the extent of issuing show-cause notices to individuals.

Faiz also pointed out a breakdown in the student-teacher bond.

"A healthy relationship cannot be ensured by rules alone. The relationship falters when teachers don't view students as their own children, and vice versa," he added.

Ctg port faces congestion risk

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than crippling the country's main seaport.

Neither the port authority nor the government are yet to initiate any discussion with the protesters, said Md Humayun Kabir, coordinator of Bandar Rokkha Songram Parishad.

The authorities have instead taken punitive measures by transferring and placing on standby several protesting labour leaders, he said.

The Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) yesterday transferred seven more CPA employees to Pangaon Inland Container Terminal (ICT) in Keraniganj and Kamalapur ICD in Dhaka. The seven employees were actively taking part in the work abstention.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Jubo Arthanibid Forum, a philanthropic organisation, yesterday moved a fresh petition before a chamber judge of the Supreme Court seeking an order of status quo on the entire process until the filing of a leave to appeal petition against the High Court verdict on the issue.

"The national parliamentary election is imminent, and at such a critical, sensitive and transitional juncture, the intended execution of the disputed contract amounts to an act of manifest executive high-handedness, arbitrariness and mala fide exercise of power on the part of the government," Md Anwar Hossen, one of the lawyers for the petitioner, told The Daily Star.

If the court is not pleased to pass an order of status quo, the petitioners will suffer irreparable loss and injury and

the rights and interests of the public at large will be materially prejudiced, he added.

The deal signing procedure with the foreign operator is being carried out by the government through the Public Private Partnership Authority following the PPP guideline, said CPA Secretary Md Omar Faruk in a press briefing.

"So far, there is no news of the deal being signed — it is not right to start agitation and movement before the signing," he said, adding that such work abstention is having an impact on the port's normal activities.

Regarding the transfer of employees, he said it was a routine transfer done for an emergency official requirement.

Remittance jumps

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Bangladeshis abroad sent home a record \$32.8 billion in 2025, according to central bank data.

Surging remittances have been a key driver behind the recent increase in reserves, indicating improved performance of the external sector.

As of January 29, gross foreign exchange reserves stood at \$28.9 billion, up from about \$20 billion a year earlier.

The Bangladesh Bank is now purchasing US dollars from banks to build up foreign exchange reserves.

The banking regulator has purchased a total of \$3.93 billion from the interbank foreign exchange market so far this fiscal year.

Pakistan forces kill 145

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Friday and Saturday, as well as additional militants killed during ongoing clearance operations, the chief minister of Balochistan, Sarfaraz Bugti, told a press conference in Quetta. The military had said 92 militants were killed on Saturday.

The latest total is the highest number of militants killed in such a short span

since the insurgency intensified, Bugti said, without providing comparative figures. He also said 17 law enforcement personnel and 31 civilians were killed in the attacks.

Balochistan, Pakistan's largest and poorest province, has faced a decades-long insurgency led by ethnic Baloch separatists seeking greater autonomy and a larger share of its natural resources.

Alcaraz makes

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each from Wimbledon and the French and US Opens.

At 22, he surpassed legendary countryman Rafael Nadal — in the crowd to witness the feat — who was two years older when he did the same.

A seventh Slam put him alongside John McEnroe and Mats Wilander and one behind Andre Agassi, Jimmy Connors and Ivan Lendl.

It was a first defeat for Djokovic in a Melbourne final, having won all 10 previously, leaving him still searching for a landmark 25th major to better Australia's Margaret Court, who was also watching on centre court.

Djokovic, striving to become the oldest man to lift a Grand Slam singles trophy, last won one at the US Open in 2023. Since then Alcaraz and Jannik Sinner have shared the spoils

Editors' Council

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and General Secretary Dewan Hanif Mahmud said the structure and provisions of these draft ordinances clearly raise concerns about increased state control rather than the protection of media freedom. Moreover, the initiative to complete the law-making process by seeking opinions within a limited timeframe runs contrary to participatory and democratic practices.

The Council believes that the enactment of such important laws should take place after the formation of an elected parliament, through broad and meaningful consultations with all relevant stakeholders — journalists, editors, media organisations, and representatives of civil society.

When it comes to ensuring media freedom and professional security, haste is not the answer. Instead, a transparent, participatory, and responsible process best serves the country and democracy, the statement added.

Pakistan to play in T20WC

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hosted by India and Sri Lanka and featuring 20 teams, with Bangladesh replaced by Scotland following the former's unwillingness to travel to India over security concerns.

Cricket's governing body, the International Cricket Council (ICC) rejected Pakistan's decision.

"This position of selective participation is difficult to reconcile with the fundamental premise of a global sporting event where all qualified teams are expected to compete on equal terms per the event schedule," ICC release said.

"ICC tournaments are built on sporting integrity, competitiveness, consistency and fairness, and selective participation undermines the spirit and sanctity of the competitions."

The ICC said decision was not in the interest of the game.

"While the ICC respects the roles of governments in matters of national policy, this decision is not in the interest of the global game or the welfare of fans worldwide, including millions in Pakistan."

ICC said it expects Pakistan to consider implications of the decision.

"The ICC hopes that the PCB will consider the significant and long-term implications for cricket in its own country as this is likely to impact the global cricket ecosystem, which it is itself a member and beneficiary of."

ICC hopes Pakistan will reconsider the decision.

"It (ICC) expects the PCB to explore a mutually acceptable resolution, which protects the interests of all stakeholders."