

Theatre needs state support to survive

TROPA MAJUMDAR

PHOTO: STAR

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Tropa Majumdar is a prominent theatre director and actor who has carved out her own place in the country's cultural scene, growing up in a family closely associated with the stage. The daughter of veteran actors Ferdousi Mazumder and Ramendu Majumdar, she has carried forward her passion for theatre through directing and acting, while also teaching at the University of Dhaka and working in television.

Among her notable works is ***Mukti***, a production she directed for her theatre group, ***Theatre***, around 20 years ago and which has now completed its 100th show. More recently, she has directed her parents in ***Love Letters***, a stage production that has drawn appreciation from audiences.

In an interview with The Daily Star, Tropa spoke about directing ***Love Letters***, the lasting appeal of ***Mukti***, her preference for the stage over television and the need for state patronage to keep theatre alive in Bangladesh.

The idea for ***Love Letters*** initially involved the late theatre personality Aly Zaker, who was expected to perform alongside Ferdousi Mazumder. The script was read at Aly Zaker's home, where he showed considerable enthusiasm for the project. However, his health began to deteriorate soon afterwards, forcing the team to wait for several months. Eventually, Aly Zaker encouraged them to proceed with the production.

Directing ***Love Letters*** also required Tropa to consider how to keep audiences engaged in a play where the performers spend much of their time seated. She explored ways to enrich the production through its staging, music and overall presentation.

"I tried to think about what else we could do and what we could add to make it better and more enjoyable for the audience," she said.

> **"When Afsana Mimi *Apa* was directing 'Poush Phaguner Pala', she scheduled my shoots on Fridays and Saturdays, which made things easier. I worked on the serial continuously for a year under that arrangement."**

The presence of two veteran artistes on stage has generated particular interest among theatre lovers. She said, "Many people who had not watched theatre for years have come to see ***Love Letters***."

Another important chapter in Tropa's career is ***Mukti***. The production, featuring four artistes, including Ferdousi Mazumder, has completed 100 shows, with all four performers continuing to appear in it since its inception.

Tropa recalled how Abdullah Al Mamun encouraged her to take up directing, emphasising the need for a new generation of theatre-makers to carry the work forward.

"Mamun *Kaka* used to ask, 'What will happen after me? You will have to take up directing.' It was his insistence that led me to direct the play," she said.

First staged around two decades ago, ***Mukti*** continues to resonate with audiences, reaffirming the lasting appeal of theatre. "Completing its 100th show has helped me understand how interested audiences remain in it," she shared.

Despite her involvement in television, Tropa has always felt a stronger pull towards the stage. She said, "Television did not attract me that much as the stage did."

Nevertheless, she has appeared in several television serials directed by Afsana Mimi, including ***Poush Phaguner Pala***, ***Doll's House*** and ***Sare Tin Tola***.

"When Afsana Mimi *Apa* was directing ***Poush Phaguner Pala***, she scheduled my shoots on Fridays and Saturdays, which made things easier. I worked on the serial continuously for a year under that arrangement," she recalled.

Beyond her own productions, Tropa is concerned about the financial challenges that theatre groups are facing in Bangladesh. The withdrawal of subsidies from the Ministry of Cultural Affairs has increased the costs for groups staging productions at Bangladesh Mahila Samity, a venue closely associated with the country's theatre movement.

"Theatre survives on state patronage around the world. Theatre can never run on its own," she said. "Yet in Bangladesh, even the small subsidy that was provided has been withdrawn."

She added, "The history of Bangladeshi theatre is intertwined with Mahila Samity. I hope the government will take a constructive initiative. I think the subsidy can be restored if the issue reaches the right people in the government. Perhaps it is not reaching the right place at the moment," she said.

For Tropa, the future of theatre rests on the dedication of artistes, the continued interest of audiences and a support system that recognises the value of the performing arts. The success of ***Love Letters*** and the lasting impact of ***Mukti*** demonstrate that stage productions can continue to attract audiences across generations. Ensuring that theatre remains accessible and sustainable, however, will require more than the commitment of artistes alone.

Elvis Presley estate sues Anthropic over AI use of music catalogue

The estate and rights holders of Elvis Presley have sued artificial intelligence firm Anthropic, alleging it used 274 of the late singer's copyrighted compositions to train its AI models without authorisation.

Filed on October 23, the lawsuit names songs including ***Can't Help Falling in Love***, ***Don't Be Cruel*** and ***A Little Less Conversation***. The plaintiffs include a division of Authentic Brands Group, which controls much of Presley's intellectual property and licensing rights.

Their lead attorney, Richard Busch, said the action seeks to protect the exclusive rights to Presley's catalogue. The lawsuit adds to growing legal disputes over the use of copyrighted works in AI training. Anthropic has not issued a formal statement on the filing.



EVENTS

'Oki Gariyal Bhai'

Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy hosts a commemorative musical evening titled ***Oki Gariyal Bhai*** to mark the 125th birth anniversary of legendary folk icon Abbas Uddin Ahmed. The cultural program celebrates his enduring legacy through timeless folk melodies that defined the soul of Bengali traditional music.

Date: Today | October 27, 2026
Time: 6 pm onwards
Venue: National Music and Dance Centre Auditorium, BSA



NEWS

Govt to hold roadshows in HK, NYC, London

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It will also advise the government on liaising with international credit rating agencies.

JP Morgan's final commission will be negotiated between both parties.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by Finance Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, approved in-principle two separate proposals for their appointment.

The government is also exploring Japanese yen-denominated Samurai Bonds and Chinese yuan-denominated Panda Bonds alongside US dollar-based Eurobonds.

The development comes after the government in July formed an eight-member high-level inter-ministerial committee led by Tanvir Ghani, PM's special assistant on investment and capital market affairs, to assess the feasibility of issuing sovereign bonds.

The move comes as part of broader institutional reforms to reduce reliance on debt financing and boost equity-based foreign direct investment.

The government is implementing policy and institutional reforms to make public debt management more efficient, cost-effective and sustainable while keeping medium-term debt risks within acceptable limits, said the finance ministry proposal.

Entering international capital markets aims to diversify funding sources, extend debt maturity profiles, mitigate refinancing and rollover risks and build a strong foundation for long-term financing.

The government is appointing Hong Kong-based Bridgeworks International to advise on capital market reforms and attract foreign investment for a one-year tenure.

Bridgeworks will also advise Bangladesh on sovereign bonds, investment funds, telecommunications, digital infrastructure, data centres, renewable energy and mega-infrastructure projects.

Meanwhile, an international debt conference is set to take place in Cox's Bazar by the middle of next month.

The conference will be jointly organised by the Asian Development Bank and the government. Representatives from 30 countries have been invited to attend the event.

Woman sent to jail over remarks criticising BNP

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custody at around 8:30pm on Sunday.

The video triggered angry reactions among local BNP activists and supporters who took position in front of her shop.

In the videos, Sathi said she had been running her business for nearly 14 years but had suffered financial losses following a series of thefts this year. Last month, electrical wires connected to an air conditioner were stolen from one of her shops.

On Sunday morning, she discovered that electrical wires had been cut and stolen from two of her showrooms, while air-conditioner wires were also taken from one of them. She said wires had also been stolen from several nearby shops.

During the Facebook Live sessions, Sathi expressed frustration over her decision to vote for the BNP.

Guljar Ahmed, joint convener of Bhaluka upazila BNP, said party activists were angered by her remarks and, along with locals, went to the scene. Police later went there and brought the situation under control.

Mohammad Zahidul Islam, officer-in-charge of Bhaluka Model Police Station, said Sathi was taken to the police station to maintain law and order.

"No specific complaint has been lodged in connection with the incident so far," he said.

The OC said the local businesswoman had made the remarks out of frustration over the repeated thefts at her establishment. He added that her comment about voting for the BNP and later suffering losses did not amount to an anti-state statement.

She was produced before a Mymensingh court on Monday afternoon under Section 151, the OC said.

ASM Mustasinur Rahman, court inspector in Mymensingh, said Sathi was produced before the court of Senior Judicial Magistrate Md Sajidul Islam, which sent her to jail.

Contacted, Mymensingh Additional Police Superintendent (Admin) Md Abdullah Al Mamun said if there is any scope for deterioration of law and order, police can arrest a person under Section 151.

'Brazil is no one's backyard'

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defeated foreign intervention through them. Bolsonaro, however, refused to accept the loss and said he would seek to annul the vote, reports AFP.

Lula, who turns 81 today, defied projections to win an unprecedented fourth term. According to official results, he won 51.8 percent of the votes to 48.2 percent for Flavio Bolsonaro, with Lula pulling around 4.4 million more votes.

The senator is the son of former far-right president Jair Bolsonaro, who is serving a 27-year jail term for attempting a coup after his loss to Lula in the country's last election in 2022.

World leaders hailed the victory of Lula in the runoff. Sunday's vote was marked by confusion after a Supreme Court ruling extended voting by two hours as some polling stations had already closed.

The move came at the request of Lula who complained that buses had been pulled from circulation in various cities, barring citizens from voting.

Flavio Bolsonaro also requested an extension in some regions due to heavy rains, but he described the decision as "unacceptable" and a "dirty trick".

"It is impossible to recognize the results. I am going to request the annulment of these elections," he said, stone-faced, in a brief speech in Brasilia.

No candidate who lost the first round has gone on to win the second in Brazil since 1989, the first direct election after the end of the country's military dictatorship.

"People went to vote because we managed to convince them that voting was very important for ensuring democracy in the country," Lula said in his first comments after the win.

Fireworks and vuvuzelas rang out in Rio de Janeiro, while thousands of people dressed in red, the color of Lula's Workers' Party, streamed into the streets of Sao Paulo to celebrate.

Serbian student movement gets ready to govern

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the 250-seat assembly, with 103 for the SNS. So far no other party has passed the required threshold to enter parliament.

"Students won and with them also a hope that Serbia can be a country of justice, freedom and dignity," Radomir Saicic, a candidate for the List, told supporters in a speech at the movement's election headquarters late Sunday.

Near-record turnout of almost 70 percent, the Balkan nation's highest at a parliamentary election in more than three decades, likely drove the political upset. The figure surpassed the 1993 parliamentary election, when just over 61 percent voted.

Shocking many observers, Vucic, who has grown increasingly authoritarian in recent years, conceded defeat less than two hours after polls closed.

It triggered raucous scenes as supporters of the movement celebrated the defeat of a government they blamed for deep-rooted corruption.

Thousands poured into the streets of Belgrade and other cities to celebrate, with cars honking, crowds chanting, and fireworks lighting up the skyline.

Addressing supporters late Sunday, Vucic, who has maintained close ties with Russia throughout his tenure, blamed foreign powers for the result.

"I want people to know, this was the validation of a revolution carried out with the direct support of various European countries and the US deep state, the one that is also against President Trump," he said.

For nearly two years, students have staged rallies and marched across the Balkan nation to reach voters directly and counter the media machine of Vucic's Serbian Progressive Party.

Their protests have drawn huge crowds. A final pre-election rally in Belgrade on Thursday attracted around 150,000 people, according to an independent protest monitor.

Houthi missile

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support to help defend Saudi Arabia, parliamentarians said and local media reported, a move that could push Cairo directly into the regional conflict.

Top officials from Makkah Pact countries Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Pakistan were due to meet Iran's leaders in Tehran yesterday in their first high-level contact since the kingdom became a pressure point in the wider Middle East conflict.

An oil spill from a damaged tanker off the coast of the United Arab Emirates has widened, satellite images showed, triggering more beach closures and raising environmental concerns, reports Reuters.

Images from the European Union's Copernicus satellite observation network dated October 24 show the oil spill has widened over the last few days and is reaching close to the shores of the northern Umm Al Quwain emirate, with dark layers of oil spreading at sea and along its coastline.

The US Central Command on Sunday said it helped Gulf countries export 1.5 billion barrels of oil via the Strait of Hormuz since summer, bypassing an Iranian blockade.

"More than 3,000 commercial vessels have successfully transited the Strait of Hormuz with support from CENTCOM forces over the last six months," it added, stating that "over 95 percent of ships navigating the Strait of Hormuz have sailed through safely".

JS committee seeks probe into alleged irregularities

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Committee Chairman Shahadat Hossain Salim told reporters that the committee had asked the ministry to temporarily suspend fertiliser dealerships in places where specific allegations had surfaced.

"Necessary steps would be taken if allegations against anyone were proved within three months," he said.

The committee also recommended that dealership agreements yet to be signed remain on hold until complaints are resolved. Where agreements have already been signed, the allegations should be properly investigated and appropriate action taken, according to a Parliament Secretariat press release.

The chairman noted fertiliser stocks remain adequate, with supplies exceeding demand. The committee expressed satisfaction with the ministry's briefing on fertiliser stocks and distribution.

The committee also formed a subcommittee to inspect fertiliser distribution, stock management and allegations of illegal hoarding and other irregularities.

Mostafizur Rahman was named convener of the subcommittee, with Md Rokon Uddin and Sabira Sultana serving as members.

Jubo Dal leader

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told journalists: "There are many political issues. The Home Minister's flawed decisions are causing harm to many people, including the prime minister.....That is why, he [home minister] should resign. I will continue to speak the truth."

Contacted, the upazila unit Jubo Dal's Convener Farhad Iqbal said Rafiqul made different types of inappropriate comment about several party leaders in the past. He was warned, but he remained unchanged.

Cops foil protest

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Several cultural activists, including Ehsanul Aziz Babu and Shamima Shawkat Lovely, protested the men's actions, prompting them to leave the area.

A senior official at the Tejgaon division of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP), speaking on condition of anonymity, said the slogan was not banned, but police had asked protesters to refrain from chanting it.

"Although the slogan is not banned, both the government and the police feel uncomfortable with it. That is why the protesters were asked not to chant it. The current circumstances are not conducive to chanting 'Joy Bangla'," the official said.

Abdul Halim, officer-in-charge of Mohammadpur Police Station, said there had been some chaos at the event.

"Police later brought the situation under control and detained one person, who was taken to the police station. A decision on further action will be made after questioning him," he said.

Jordan arrests three over church attack: state TV

AFP, *Amman*

Jordanian security forces arrested three people over the unprecedented attack on a Greek Orthodox church that killed nine people and wounded 25 others, state TV reported yesterday.

"Following a joint security operation, specialised investigation and raid teams apprehended the three terrorists responsible for the cowardly terrorist attack," the broadcaster said on X, adding that all three were wounded during an armed clash.

Gunmen stormed the compound of St George's Church in the village of Hammoud in Karak governorate during a funeral procession on Friday and opened fire, Jordanian authorities said.