celebrated the festival in similar ways.

In Rangamati, on the first day of the *fulbijhu*, indigenous people float flowers on river early in the morning, seeking divine blessings for peace and prosperity. To mark the occasion, houses are also decorated with flowers. On the second day of *Mulbijhu*, the main function of the thee-day festival, the ethnic people prepare different kinds of pithas, sweetmeats, and they also specially make *Pachon* a kind of mixed vegetable curry to feed their guests. Besides that, they also prepare *Dachoawni* a kind of local liquor, which is the main attraction for them during the festival. Though the festivities are related to the ethnic minorities, Bengalis also enjoy the celebration. On the last day of the festival which also happens to be the first day of the Bangla New Year, people offer prayers seeking divine blessings for peace and prosperity at different Buddhist temples, they also light candles in the evening.





Marma young boys and girls spraying water on each other in the traditional Sangraine Utsab (Water Festival) session in Rangamati.

On the second day of the Bengali New Year, the Marmas, organise the *Sangraine Utsab* (water festival), the biggest traditional festival of the Marma community, at Chitmorang in Kaptia. Thousands of indigenous people, mostly the Marmas, from three hill districts thronged at the compound of the Chitmorang Bazar to enjoy their traditional *Sangraine Utsab* (*Pani Khela*). The young boys and girls celebrate by spraying water on each other. Interestingly an anti-peace treaty organisation, the United Peoples' Democratic Front (UPDF), was also brought out a big rally in Rangmati on the day of *Fulbijhu*. The Marma Sangskritic Sangstha (MSS), the lone cultural organisation of the Marma community in Rangamati, organised the function. Dipankar Talukder, state minister for CHT affairs inaugurated the festival as the chief guest while president of MSS and Kapati upazila chairman Aungsu Chine Chowdhury attended the event as well. Aungsa Prue Marma, secretary of the MSS and Chitmorang UP chairman Thoai Ching Marma also spoke on the occasion.

In their speeches, Marma leaders said the culture of the ethnic communities, including that of the Marma was under severe threat as the majority people suppressed them through political, economic and social means. They urged the government to be sincere about the rights of the ethnic people so that they can enjoy their fundamental rights. Dipankar Talukder said the present government is committed to the minority people so that they can practice their own culture and customs. ■