

# ‘Blessed to have led a simple life’

## Dr Sanjida Khatun celebrates 90th birthday

**The Ekushey Padak winning singer is a lighthouse of the cultural arena, who does not merely make music, but also enlightens people with music.**

SHARMIN JOYA

“90 years of my life have passed and at this age, today, I am thinking about what I wanted to achieve in my life and how it actually went.” The voice of eminent musicologist, Dr Sanjida Khatun echoed at the houseful auditorium of Chhayanaut yesterday.

A event was organised at Chhayanaut cultural auditorium, celebrating the 90th birth anniversary of Dr Sanjida Khatun.

The Ekushey Padak winning singer is a lighthouse of the cultural arena, who does not merely make music, but also enlightens people with music. She was also honoured with the Padma Shri, in 2021, considered as the fourth highest civilian award in India.

Rabindra sangeet exponent Dr Sanjida Khatun, the president of Chhayanaut, was born on April 4, in 1933. Her endless contributions, in upholding the spirit of liberal thinking, is vividly reflected in her work and her lifelong philosophy.



Dr Sanjida Khatun speaking at the event.

PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

sangeet, performed by Avijit Kundu. The event progressed with a group dance, presented by Monipuri troupe—led by distinguished dancer Sharmila Banerjee, her daughter Sudeshna Swayamprabha Tathoi, and the team.

Singers including the likes of Fahmida Khatun, Ifat Ara Dewan, Jahirul Ara Dewan, Zahirul Haque Khan, Laiza Ahmed Lisa, Khairul Anam Shakil, Farhana Akter Shirley, Sumon Majumdar, Sharmin Shathi Islam Moyna, and Chandana Majumdar all performed at the event. The function also had a group dance performance from the Bharatanatyam troupe.

Dr Sarwar Ali, Vice President, Chhayanaut, presented a welcome speech, wishing the luminary artiste a happy and prosperous life ahead. Dr Sanjida Khatun is often called Minu, by her close ones. “We are lucky indeed, even at this age, our Minu *apa* is capable of persevering the spirit of liberal thinking, and undoubtedly she is a source of strength for the society to fight any restrictive ideologies,” he shared.

At one point, sharing her thoughts on her life, Sanjida Khatun expressed her concerns on how she worked on enlightening people through her music and established a school for children, Nalonda, which she believes is a movement to preserve the communal harmony. “I gradually learned music and sang on radio and later on television, and after a while I realised the lack of musicians in the country while making Chhayanaut’s Srotar Ashor.”

She noted that, in order to get out of that situation, she started Chhayanaut Sangeet Vidayatan. By giving all of her efforts, she worked with the entire team in pursuit and promotion of music education. “The joy of this movement exceeded all the demands of life,” she expressed. “I am blessed and content with this simple life.”

The legendary singer concluded her speech by singing a few lines from her most favourite song, *Trishnaro Jol Esho Esho He*.

Dr Sanjida Khatun was one of the founders of Bangladesh Mukti Sangrami Shilpi Sangstha during the Liberation War in 1971 and Chhayanaut in the early 1960s.



## Apurba and Tarin together after 7 years

Ziaul Faruq Apurba and Tarin are coming together after seven years for Eid tele-fiction *Priyo Poribar*. Directed by Rubel Hasan and written by Mezbah Uddin Sumon, the story revolves around two elderly parents portrayed by the on-screen duo. Earlier on, Tarin and Apurba had worked together in the TV series *Sunflower*.

Apurba was super excited about acting with Tarin again on this special project.

“Tarin *apu* is one of the most talented co-artistes I have ever worked with. I have learned a lot from her in terms of acting. Even now, I always ask for her approval whether my shot was perfect or not. I am really fortunate that I got to work with such a wonderful artiste after a long time,” said the actor.

## Mithun Chakraborty in Tagore’s timeless classic ‘Kabuliwala’



Veteran actor Mithun Chakraborty is all set to play the role of the iconic character, Kabuliwala, from Rabindranath Tagore’s all-time classic *Kabuliwala*.

The story centers around a middle-aged Afghan man’s affection and paternal love for the small girl of a middle-class Bengali family, whose house he would occasionally visit.

Suman Ghosh, who previously collaborated with Mithun on the film, *Nobel Chor*, will be directing *Kabuliwala*.

# NEWS

## The champion girls deserve better

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coach Golam Sarwar Tipu was not ready to accept BFF’s explanation and he came hard on the incumbent officials for wasting the opportunity.

“It is prime duty for the federation to arrange funds. They should beg if needed. It is not a joke. You got an opportunity to play in the Olympic Qualifiers but alas, the BFF deprived our women’s team,” said Tipu.

“They should resign if they are not capable of arranging funds for such an important event for our women’s team. Now, when we talk about country’s football, we actually talk about our women’s football,” he continued.

Striker Sajeda Khatun also rued the missed opportunity to test themselves against strong opponents like Iran and Myanmar after the SAFF triumph.

“It’s very sad that Bangladesh missed an opportunity to play against strong opponents,” she opined.

It is worth mentioning here that women’s footballers hardly get opportunities to play competitive international matches. Instead, they play mostly in the sub-standard Bangladesh Women’s Football League.

Many were surprised by the BFF’s reasoning since the federation hosted three international women’s age-group tournaments and two FIFA friendlies for the senior men’s team on the back of an expensive training

camp abroad.

The BFF claimed that they were forced to pull out of the qualifiers after failing to get financial assistance from the Bangladesh Olympic Association and the Youth and Sports ministry.

But interestingly, the announcement came just two days after they outlined their requirements.

“They (BFF) applied for funding on March 27 and we haven’t informed them anything officially yet. You know it is not possible to suddenly get government funds because the ministry has to adjust its own fund or ask for funds from the finance ministry,” said a ministry official, requesting anonymity.

It was learned that the BFF had sent a letter seeking financial assistance of Tk 92 lakh on March 25 (Saturday). The ministry was closed the day after (Sunday) on the occasion of Independence Day and the announcement that the women’s team would pull out came the following Wednesday.

The National Sports Council (NSC) secretary Parimal Singh explained the procedure.

“Federations apply to the sports ministry for additional funds through the NSC, with whom they are affiliated. We usually forward the applications to the ministry after taking approval from the NSC chairman. Then, the ministry

processes the letter before seeking permission from the finance ministry. After getting approval from the finance ministry, the sports ministry issues a government order for the fund and it takes a few days,” he said, adding that the BFF had applied directly to the ministry, which is also in practice.

The FIFA and the AFC together provide more than US dollar 1.5 million per year to the BFF under the Financial Assistance Programme, while the BFF also gets additional funds from the FIFA and the AFC for the men’s and women’s national football teams and the local coaching staff.

In addition, Dhaka Bank and Bashundhara Group provide the BFF Tk 2.8 crore per year exclusively as sponsors of women’s football.

There have been whispers in the football fraternity that the BFF is trying to capitalise on this issue, attempting to make the government understand its deep financial crisis, in the aftermath of the finance ministry’s denial to accept BFF’s five-year football development proposal, worth Tk 450 crores.

BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag, however, completely denied the notion, saying they were indeed in a financial crisis.

Despite the denial, one may still ask the question: Why has the BFF decided to bring the issue to the public domain at the eleventh hour?

the Awami League for making derogatory comments about the martyrs of the Liberation War on November 25, 2021. He was suspended from the post of GCC mayor on the same day.

Senior lawyers M Yusuf Hossain Humayun and MK Rahman, and lawyer Belayet Hossain appeared for Zahangir while lawyer Sanjida Khanam argued for GCC and DAG Nawroz.MR Chowdhury and Assistant Attorney General Golam Sarwar Payel represented the state.

Zahangir and several hundreds of his supporters were present on the court premises.

## GDP growth not over 5.3pc this fiscal year

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The WB projects regional growth to be an average of 5.6 percent in 2023, a slight downward revision from the October 2022 forecast. All countries in the region except Bhutan have downgraded their forecasts.

In India, South Asia’s largest economy, growth would be 6.3 percent, while Pakistan’s GDP growth is projected to drop to 0.4 percent this year. In Sri Lanka, GDP is expected to contract by 4.3 percent this year. The Maldives would grow at 6.6 percent and Nepal at 4.1 percent.

“The situation in Bangladesh is not similar to Pakistan and Sri Lanka in that there is no imminent crisis, especially not after an agreement was reached with the IMF,” said Hans Timmer, the WB’s chief economist for South Asia, at a virtual press conference yesterday.

But there are challenges that need to be addressed.

“The challenges are very much concentrated on the balance of payments and the financial sector,” he said, while calling for reducing the distortions in the economy and putting the fiscal situation on a sustainable path.

A widening BoP deficit from the second half of fiscal 2021-22 led to a sharp decline in foreign exchange reserves, said the WB’s Bangladesh Development Update, which was unveiled yesterday.

The declining reserves were further exacerbated by a multiple exchange rate regime that has disincentivised export and remittance inflows.

The BoP deficit surged in the first half of the fiscal year, but resilient export growth and slowing imports narrowed the current account deficit, the WB said.

“Downside risks to the outlook are rising and external risks remain elevated.”

A further rise in commodity prices could increase imports and worsening global economic conditions would limit export growth.

“Continued import controls and energy rationing would disrupt industrial production. Unresolved financial sector vulnerabilities may disrupt financial sector

intermediation,” it added.

Bangladesh’s post-pandemic recovery has been disrupted by elevated commodity prices, rising interest rates and slowing global growth, said Abdoulaye Seck, the WB’s country director for Bangladesh and Bhutan, at the event to unveil the report yesterday.

“The dollar became dearer, commodity prices rose, but peoples’ wages did not rise in every sector at the same pace. So, real wages declined and people’s purchasing power dropped.”

He went on to call for three policy reforms: removal of the lending rate cap, international standard legislation for banks and market-determined exchange rate.

Bangladesh must also reform its trade policy by removing trade barriers, he added.

The latest edition of ADB’s Asian Development Outlook, also released yesterday, made similar observations.

Inflation is forecast to accelerate from 6.2 percent last fiscal year to 8.7 percent as price pressures increase due to the upward adjustment of domestic-administered prices for fuel oil, gas, and electricity, and higher global commodity prices.

The current account deficit is anticipated to narrow from 4.1 percent of GDP in fiscal 2021-22 to 1.6 percent of GDP as imports loosen and remittances grow.

“The main risk to this growth projection is a greater economic slowdown in Bangladesh’s major export destinations driven by global uncertainty over the prolonged political tensions.”

The Asian Development Outlook April 2023 states that private investment growth will be lower because of energy shortages and higher production costs. With a shortfall in revenue collection, austerity measures, and depleting foreign exchange reserves, public investment growth will also be slower.

“The ongoing geopolitical crisis is an opportunity to increase economic resilience of Bangladesh by carrying out key reforms,” said ADB Country Director Edimon Ginting at the launch of the report.

Expected graduation from least-developed country status in 2026 and aspiration to become an upper middle-income country by 2031 and a high income-country by 2041 have also created an urgent need for carrying out key reforms, he added.

## Regional highways

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The premier said this while chairing a meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council held at the NEC Conference Room in the capital’s Sher-e-Bangla Nagar.

Hasina also expressed shock at the tragic fire incident at the Bangabazar in the capital.

Planning Minister MA Mannan and State Minister for Planning Shamsul Alam briefed the reporters after the meeting.

## Repeal DSA

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name of ‘hurting religious sentiment’ should be brought to book and the cases filed against Prothom Alo editor and other journalists must be withdrawn.”

Quoting Voltaire on the freedom of expression, Robaet Ferdous, professor of mass communication and journalism at Dhaka University, said the beauty of democracy lies in the fact that it accommodates opinions and counter-opinions. “In any democracy, this practice must be welcomed.”

Urging the government to revoke the law, he said the DSA is being used to silence the dissenting voices of journalists, human rights activists and critics.

Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh, said that DSA has triggered a sense of insecurity instead of ensuring security.

“The law stands against the spirit of the Liberation War and has become a tool to oppress people.”

Senior lawyer Tabarak Hossain, Kazol Debnath, member of Bangladesh Hindu-Buddhist-Christian Oikkyo Parishad, also spoke at the programme.

## No bar for Zahangir

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following the HC order.

Deputy Attorney General Nawroz MR Chowdhury agreed but said if there were any other reasons, such as defaulting on loans, may become an obstacle to his submission of nomination papers.

Earlier in the day, the HC bench deferred till May 2 the judgment on the petition filed by Zahangir.

The court was scheduled to deliver the verdict yesterday.

The bench deferred verdict delivery for a further hearing on sections 12 and 13 of the Local Government (City Corporation) Act-2009 regarding the

suspension and dismissal of a city corporation mayor.

It asked the defence and state lawyers to submit by April 30 relevant documents regarding the sections before the court.

The court said it will hear the issues and start delivering verdict on May 2 and may continue delivering the judgement on May 3.

On August 23 last year, the HC issued a rule asking officials concerned of the government to explain why the decision of suspending Zahangir from the office of GCC mayor should not be declared illegal.

Zahangir was expelled from