

Representing Bengal’s Gaudiya Nritya on the world stage

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DOWEL BISWAS

“Every piece of art that you create and practice can do wonders for you. It can take you to the deepest parts of your soul and allow you to see and experience things not readily visible. Art is an innate curiosity that drives my life, and thus, I live in art,” says eminent dancer Rachel Priyanka Perris, who is taking Bengal’s sole dance form, Gaudiya Nritya, to the world stage. Rachel, also an associate professor at Dhaka University, started learning various dance styles—Bharatanatyam, Odissi and Kathak—from renowned teachers. Curiously, she discovered the dance form that would shape the course of reconstruction and reemergence of the Bengali dance form Gaudiya Nritya in Bangladesh. When asked about her introduction to the almost extinct dance form, Rachel recounted that she learned about it through a workshop during her school years. In ninth grade, the then 15-year-old Rachel saw a performance by a visiting company from Kolkata, captivating her with the dance style of classical dance



PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

legend Mahua Mukherjee and her troupe performing Gaudiya Nritya. “I instantly fell in love with Gaudiya Nritya. The most dignified aspect of this particular dance form is its Bengal origin. I could instantly connect and relate to the structure, language and style,” Rachel said. “I am a trained dancer in many other dance forms as well. Nonetheless, I feel Gaudiya speaks about our soul, identity and entity as an independent nationality with a strong cultural background and history. The technicality and postures are somewhat similar to



Bharatanatyam, but if you look closely, you will see the philosophical and structural differences,” the classical dancer explained. Gaudiya Nritya is a Bengali classical dance originating in Gaur, Bengal, the ancient capital of the region. Gaudiya Nritya is a composite art form representing the pre-colonial division of larger Bengal with a unique combination of music, history, poetry, literature, drama and rhythm. Later, Rachel Perris studied at Rabindra Bharati, Kolkata, starting her Bachelor’s degree on Bharatanatyam. “Going to Kolkata turned my life around completely. I actually began classes on Gaudiya with Mahua Mukherjee before my Bharatanatyam classes. My attention started shifting towards that form,” the eminent dancer recalled. Rachel later joined Gaudiya Nritya Bharati, a Gaudiya dance troupe, and travelled throughout India for shows. She lived in the guidance and shelter of her Guru during her years in Kolkata, practicing dance day and night. After completing her education in Kolkata, Rachel returned to Bangladesh, joined the Department of Dance at Dhaka University as a teacher, and aimed to spread the joy and practice of the dance form. The travelling dancer also continued to mesmerise art lovers worldwide, such as her recent visit to the Hemantika Festival in the UK, where her brilliant performance enthralled the audience. Reflecting on the festivals she attended over the years, Rachel addressed a challenging chapter of her life. She said, “Wherever in the world I get invited to perform Gaudiya, the organisers and audiences love it. I cannot count how many times I received standing ovations at such dance events abroad.” “However, gaining recognition and acceptance for Gaudiya as a classical and independent dance form in my own country has been challenging. I have a dance school where I only train young dancers in Gaudiya, and my students love it. I am going everywhere in Bangladesh where they invite me to perform Gaudiya, as I understand how significant its existence is for our distinctive ethnicity and culture. I am doing my best to promote the dance form, but I am not receiving enough patronage for the unique dance style to be established appropriately as a distinct form,” said the dance prodigy. “What I aspire to see in my lifetime is Gaudiya Nritya being recognised as a Bengali classical dance form and being taught, practiced, performed, and appreciated in the country of its origin by the people meant to perform it,” concluded Rachel, filled with hope, dreams, and optimism.

Meryl Streep breaks own record with new Golden Globes nomination



Meryl Streep, the recipient of multiple Oscars has achieved a new milestone by exceeding her own record as the actor with the most Golden Globes nominations in history, as indicated by the recently released list of nominations by the organisers. In this year’s Golden Globes, Meryl Streep earned a nomination for Best Supporting Actress for her role in Hulu’s *Only Murders in the Building*, raising her total nomination count to 33. She shares the category with Elizabeth Debicki (*The Crown*), Abby Elliott (*The Bear*), Christina Ricci (*Yellowjackets*), J Smith-Cameron (*Succession*), and Hannah Waddingham (*Ted Lasso*).

BTS’ ‘Spring Day’ dominates charts amid Jungkook and Jimin’s military enlistment

BTS’ stirring 2017 song *Spring Day* has surged to the number one spot on the US iTunes charts, surpassing even Mariah Carey’s enduring holiday classic, *All I Want For Christmas Is You*. After 29 years of heralding the holiday season, Mariah Carey’s festive anthem graciously yielded the spotlight this year as BTS’ *Spring Day* took center stage. This significant event coincides with the recent commencement of military service for RM, V, Jimin, and Jungkook on December 11 and 12 (KST). Fans can look forward to the return of Jin and J-Hope in 2024, and the remaining members will complete their military service in 2025.



NEWS

EC for not allowing

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Elections of 2008 and 2018 were participatory while the BNP and other major opposition boycotted the polls in 2014. Yesterday, several reporters trying to enter the office of the EC spokesperson Jahangir Alam were barred by his personal secretary AKM Saiful Alam who said news-related issues should be dealt with by the public relations department. Asked why the EC issued such a letter, EC’s Additional Secretary Ashok Kumar Debnath said, “The Election Commission will be able to answer such questions.” He said there was no relation between the oppositions’ programme and the letter sent to the

home ministry. He added that he has no knowledge about whether the EC sent such letters during previous elections. Contacted, former election commissioner Brig Gen (ret’d) M Sakhawat Hossain said, “As far as I recall, the EC had not made such a move in recent times.” The parties that have taken to the streets may be forced to choose some other type of programmes, he added. Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, senior joint secretary general of the BNP, said, “Holding rallies and processions are democratic rights of a political party. Today, the Election Commission has once again proved that it wants to satisfy the

Awami League and wants to hold a lopsided election.” Ruhin Hossain Prince, general secretary of the Communist Party of Bangladesh, said article 37 of the constitution guarantees political rights of all citizens. “We were surprised to know that the Election Commission issued such a letter. This is also a move to curtail the democratic rights of citizens who will not take part in the election. Who defines what anti-election activities are?” he asked. Everyone has the right to take part in or shun elections and hold peaceful political programmes in favour or against elections, he said. “We hope the Election Commission will withdraw its letter.”

Aid distribution to Gaza

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Since the October 7, Israel’s assault has killed at least 18,412 people and wounded nearly 50,000, according to the Gaza health ministry. The ministry also said Israeli forces raided Kamal Adwan hospital in the north of the Palestinian territory. The UN General Assembly was due to vote later yesterday on a non-binding resolution demanding “an immediate humanitarian ceasefire” in Gaza – a call that the Security Council has so far failed to make. In occupied West Bank, Israeli forces killed four Palestinians in the city of Jenin yesterday. The Palestinian Red Crescent Society said they were killed in a drone strike on

the Old City. Meanwhile, Yemen’s Iran-aligned Houthis said they carried out a military operation against the Norwegian commercial tanker STRINDA in its latest operation to protest against Israel’s bombardment of Gaza. Police bar FROM PAGE 12 to go abroad. But I could not,” Hafizuddin said. Requesting not to be named, an officer of the special branch (immigration) said a certain intelligence agency barred Hafizuddin from travelling because of a lawsuit against him.

11 int’l flights

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The temperature may continue to drop until December 18 and then it might improve for a few days before dropping again when a second mild cold wave may hit parts of the country, he said. Yesterday’s lowest temperature was recorded at 11.8 degrees Celsius in Tentulia of Panchagarh. In another development, 11 international flights bound for Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport were diverted due to fog between 12:00am and 8:00am yesterday. Of the flights, 10 were passengers flights, Group Captain Kamrul Islam, executive director of the HSLA, told The Daily Star. After 8:00am, the flights that were diverted started to land in Dhaka, said Kamrul.

Stop crackdown on protesters

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cases, where bail is consistently denied despite valid grounds and due process guarantees are undermined. Moreover, at least 50 people were injured as a result of a clash between police, ruling party and opposition party activists during a human chain on December 10 in Habiganj, the statement claimed. It said the indiscriminate and excessive use of teargas, sticks, truncheons, rubber bullets, and similar instruments by law enforcement authorities raises serious concerns. The rights bodies also spoke about “consistent and credible” reports of torture and illegal isolation of detainees in custody. The alleged tortures

include “beatings; electric shocks; waterboarding; deliberately shooting to maim, including knee-capping; mock executions; and forced nudity.” They said the government is systematically using the judiciary to convict the key opposition leaders en masse, through prosecuting in the extended hours in the evenings to disqualify the potential opposition candidates ahead of the January 7 elections, as planned months ago. “The large-scale detentions and convictions not only erode the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, freedom, personal integrity, and the right to a fair trial but also leave countless families in distress, as the detained individuals are often the sole earners of their

households,” the statement said. They expressed concern about the draft data protection act, which allows law enforcement unrestricted authority to access citizens’ data “if it is deemed necessary for national security or prevention or detection of an offence”. Misuse of such power could lead to widespread surveillance, particularly of political dissenters, and poses a threat to human rights, particularly the right to privacy. The rights bodies urged revising the draft act to ensure it aligns with international standards. They also urged the international community to closely monitor the situation and advocate for the protection of fundamental rights in Bangladesh.

COP28 forced into overtime

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Germany’s Climate Envoy Jennifer Morgan said the talks had entered a “critical, critical phase”. “There is a lot of shuttle diplomacy going on,” she said on X, formerly known as Twitter, referring to fast-paced meetings between countries to hunt for compromise. The draft released on Monday triggered negotiations that ran overnight into early yesterday. The text had suggested eight options countries “could” take to cut emissions. One was “reducing both consumption and production of fossil fuels, in a just, orderly and equitable manner so as to achieve net zero by, before, or around 2050”.

That would be the first time in history that a UN climate summit has mentioned reducing use of all “fossil fuels”. But the move fell short of the “phase-out” of coal, oil and natural gas or the emphasis on cutting their use this decade, which scientists say must happen to avoid climate change escalating. Negotiators were waiting for the new text yesterday, when the COP presidency wanted the summit to end. COP summits rarely finish on schedule. “I’m worried ... because it’s very obvious that we need more ambition,” Denmark’s Global Climate Minister Dan Jorgensen told Reuters. “I haven’t given up

yet of course, we still think this is possible.” The draft was also criticised as too weak by participants such as Australia, Canada, Chile, Norway, the European Union and the United States, among the 100-strong group demanding a firm commitment to wean the world off coal, oil and gas. Greenhouse gas emissions from burning fossil fuels are the main cause of climate change. Despite the rapid growth of renewable energy, they still produce about 80 percent of the world’s energy. Some African nations said any deal must require wealthy countries, who have long produced and used fossil fuels, to quit first.

2 buses, lorry set on fire

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fair election can be held is if the AL government resigns. “What kind of development has Sheikh Hasina achieved? She has increased the number of law enforcers to suppress the opposition.” As of yesterday afternoon, he said 21,150 BNP leaders and activists have been arrested in 599 cases filed across the country since October 28, when a BNP rally in the city ended in clashes between activists and police. In the 24 hours preceding yesterday evening, 255 BNP leaders and activists

were detained, and seven cases were filed against 870 named and many unnamed supporters of the party. Meanwhile, in Gazipur, unidentified arsonists set fire to a lorry in Bhogra Jajar area yesterday morning, firefighters said. In Jhenaidah’s Kaliganj, police said they arrested three BNP men who were vandalising two trucks and a human haulier during a demonstration. [Our Gazipur and Jhenaidah correspondents contributed to this report]

Four people

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In the afternoon, UPDF leaders and activists demonstrated, took out a torch procession and blocked a road for around one hour in the district town, demanding rescue of the abductees and immediate arrest of the killers. The UPDF also announced a series of programmes to press home the demands. It will hold protest rallies for three consecutive days from today in Khagrachhari town and different upazilas of the district.

BNP plans rally, procession in city

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front of the Jatiya Press Club during the human chain event in the capital that day. According to party sources, the BNP’s top leadership was undecided about organising the rally on the Victory Day. But the ruling Awami League’s recent announcement on taking out a “victory procession” prompted the BNP to plan for the December 16 rally. Another senior BNP leader, wishing not to be named, said the party’s leaders and activists from

Dhaka and its adjacent districts will take part in the rally. He added that the next phase of BNP’s anti-government movement will begin on October 18 when campaigning for the January 7 national election will start. “If we can hold a significant gathering, it would be a big morale boost for the party members to intensify the ongoing movement,” he added. BNP leaders believe that the hartals and nationwide blockades, being enforced by the party and

its allies for around one and a half months since October 29, is now becoming ineffective. Despite this, the party wants to continue its street agitations through holding various programmes. The party will also observe the Martyred Intellectuals Day tomorrow and the Victory Day on December 16. If these programmes are held successfully, the BNP may proceed with fresh demonstrations across the country on December 25, said party sources.