

Anjan Dutt serenades Dhaka on Mala's birthday

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TASRIYA TRISHA

Prominent Bengali singer Anjan Dutt has graced Bangladesh with his magical voice on several occasions, but this time his visit held a special significance—Mala's birthday. Mala, much like Bela Bose and Ronjona, is a character in one of Anjan's songs. However, both the singer himself and his devoted fans have kept Mala alive throughout the years, across generations. May 12 holds particular importance, as it is referenced in Anjan Dutt's song *Mala* released in 1993, sparking annual celebrations of Mala's birthday and ongoing speculation about her identity.

Anjan Dutt identified Mala as a common girl from Kolkata who is known for wearing the traditional "jongla parer" Dhakeshwari saree. His songs resonate deeply with his fans because they reflect everyday life, particularly the experiences of the middle class. During his previous visit to Bangladesh, the singer promised to celebrate Mala's next birthday with his Bangladeshi fans, and he fulfilled that promise.



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PHOTOS: ARSHADUL HOQUE ROCKY

borders, particularly amongst Bangladeshi fans, who make up a significant portion of his fan base. Anjan proudly acknowledges that 50% to 60% of his fans hail from Bangladesh, which fuels his desire for repeated visits.

Before the legendary singer took the stage, musician Ahmed Hasan Sunny and his band, Sunny and Revolution, captivated the crowd. Sunny dedicated his first song, *Amare Uraiya Dio*, to Ahsan Tanvir Pial, the vocalist of local band Odd Signature, who tragically passed away in a car accident earlier that morning. His performance of hit songs like *Amra Hoyto*, *Manush Keno Erokam*, and *Shohorer Duita Gaan* resonated deeply with the audience.

The atmosphere reached new heights when Anjan Dutt took the stage. Fans were moved to learn that despite his illness and back injury, the 71-year-old singer had visited the venue directly after landing in Dhaka for sound checks, earning him a well-deserved round of applause. Anjan Dutt treated the audience to a performance of his popular songs like *Brishti*, *241139 (Bela Bose)*, and *Ranjana Ami ar Ashbona*, leaving the crowd overwhelmed with joy.

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industry began in the early '80s, and his excellence has persisted to this day, winning the hearts of millions worldwide.

In a final gesture of appreciation, the veteran singer performed his last song and cut the cake for Mala's birthday. Before leaving the stage, he urged the audience to stay and enjoy the performances of Kaaktaal band and other artistes, demonstrating his respect for local talent.

Popular celebrities like Afsana Mimi, Jon Kabir, and Moushumi Hamid were also spotted enjoying Anjan Dutt's musical event alongside the crowd.

Following Anjan Dutt's departure, Kaaktaal band took over the stage, thrilling the audience with their performance of five songs, including the crowd favourite *Abar Dekha Hole*. Asif Iqbal, known as AiA Lemonsky, the composer, lyricist, and vocalist of Kaaktaal, expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to share the stage with the legendary Anjan Dutt.

The concert, organised by ArcLight Events in collaboration with Assen and Zirconium, was supported by Mutual Trust Bank as the title sponsor, with Junior Chambers International Bangladesh serving as the youth engagement and outreach partner.



Tahsan to host Bangladeshi version of 'Family Feud'

The Bangladeshi version of the popular US TV show *Family Feud* is coming on local OTT platform Bongo. This family programme, which has attracted audiences in over 50 countries worldwide, is set to launch in Bangladesh for the first time. The show will be hosted by popular musician and actor Tahsan Khan.

Two families compete by guessing the results of surveys conducted with a hundred people. Contestants strive to identify the most popular survey answers to earn points. The first family to reach 300 points earns a chance to participate in the bonus round called Fast Money.

Blockout 2024: Hollywood stars' online follower count declines

This year's Met Gala, often likened to *The Hunger Games* for its opulence, faced scrutiny as celebrities adorned the red carpet seemingly detached from global suffering, notably the Israeli attacks on Palestinians.

Internet users mobilised with hashtags like #letthecatcake and #celebrityblockout, urging public figures to advocate for ceasefire. The movement gained traction post gala, prompting individuals to block celebrities silent on crises.

The extensive celebrity blocklist includes well-known names such as Kim Kardashian, Taylor Swift, Beyoncé, Kylie Jenner, Zendaya, Miley Cyrus, Selena Gomez, Khloe Kardashian, Ariana Grande, Doja Cat, Demi Lovato, Lizzo, Nicki Minaj, Travis Scott, Kanye West, Katy Perry, Zac Efron, Joe Jonas, Nick Jonas, Kevin Jonas, Justin Timberlake, and numerous others.



Ahmed Hasan Sunny

Kaaktaal band

Despite battling illness and a back injury, Anjan Dutt arrived in Dhaka to celebrate Mala's birthday eve on Saturday (May 11), with his fans at the concert titled *Anjan Dutt in Metropolis - VOL 2.0* at Dhaka Arena, Purbachal in the capital.

Anjan Dutt is a sensation amongst his fans, known for his versatility as a film director, actor, singer, songwriter, and theatre personality. His popularity extends beyond

NEWS

7 held over exam fraud

FROM PAGE 12

type of job, the gang made contracts with job seekers for up to Tk 8-10 lakh to help them cheat on their MCQ, written, and viva exams," DB Chief Harun Or Rashid told a press briefing yesterday.

The arrestees are Jewel Khan, 40, Rasel, 30, Mahmudul Hasan, 39, Abdur Rahman, 38, Ariful Islam, 35, Azharul Islam, 29, and Masum Hawlader, 25.

They were arrested from Shahjahanpur and Sher-e-Bangla Nagar areas in the capital and Dhamrai upazila under Dhaka district.

Their conversations on WhatsApp revealed their involvement in leaking questions for at least nine recruitment tests,

namely: primary assistant teacher recruitment (3rd stage), ticket collector (grade 2) and booking assistant (grade 2) at Bangladesh Railway, office assistant at Palli Sanchay Bank, office assistant at Tangail deputy commissioner's office, office assistant at fisheries department, accounts assistant and office assistant cum computer numerologist at public works department, office assistant at disaster management department, computer operator at land ministry, and assistant manager at Bakhrabad Gas Distribution Company.

Harun said the gang amassed lakhs of taka by leaking questions and supplying answers through digital devices during recruitment tests.

HOW THEY DID IT

Jewel, the mastermind, supplied the spy devices and coordinated with other team members.

Rasel, Shakil, and Abdur Rahman distributed the devices and instructed candidates on their use.

Ariful, once the exam started, leaked the question papers and sent digital copies to a team of solvers waiting outside the exam halls.

The solver team would then quickly solve the questions and feed the answers to candidates inside the hall through electronic spy devices.

The DB Chief explained that GSM-enabled receivers [that can use SIM cards] were worn discreetly under clothing, which connected to earpieces that fit inside the candidate's ear for receiving answers.

A complaint centre or an info hub?

FROM PAGE 12

In 2023, the "others" category took the lead as well – 76.64 percent.

Dr Prakash Kanti Chowdhury, director of the multi-sectoral project, noted that some callers seek information, such as legal aid contacts, which the helpline provides.

"Providing this information is also a service, as callers benefit from it even if they seek further assistance elsewhere."

Raisul Islam, in-charge and programme officer at the helpline, said 45 employees are currently works round-the-clock in three shifts, with 10 trained operators in each.

"Upon receiving a call, the operator tracks the caller's location and provides information or connects them with the local administration, such as the women and child affairs officers, UNOs, upazila education officers, AC land, and police stations."

"For urgent situations that require rescue, local police are dispatched, while medical needs are addressed through OCCs [one stop crisis centres]. Counseling is offered through psychosocial counselors, and interventions for child marriage involve support from the UNO to halt the marriage."

However, according to Raisul, on weekends and during late-night or remote-area calls, they face challenges for such activities. He also noted cases where "109"

played the role of a trusted source of support for women and children in remote areas.

Last February, a five-year-old from Jamalpur's Dewanganj, was raped by a neighbour on her way back from school. Her father, a farmer, felt helpless, while her mother was in shock.

A cousin of the victim took swift action by contacting the 109 helpline, which advised seeking medical help and involving the local authorities. Subsequently, the rapist was arrested and the child was able to receive treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

"If I hadn't made that call, we wouldn't have received such prompt support from the UNO and the police ... Relying solely on the UP members of chairman might not have yielded the same prompt results," said the cousin.

However, there are cases where 109 agents made improper suggestions to callers.

During one such call, a woman sought assistance because her roommate was experiencing cyber harassment by a man she was in a relationship with, who had been sharing her private photos and videos with friends and other roommates.

However, the male agent suggested marrying the harasser as a solution to stop the blackmail.

"When I expressed my shock, he insisted saying families often accept

such solutions. He even suggested influencing her family for the marriage. Disappointed, I thanked him and ended the call," she shared.

Termining the suggestion "inappropriate", Dr Prakash said, "This is why we're going to deploy three psycho-social counselors to train the call operators."

He said that in order to minimise call response delays, they are also planning to expand the number of operators to 80.

Govt aiding plunder

FROM PAGE 12

Six months after his last press conference, Fakhrul today said, "AL's goal is to make the country completely dependent (on others) through corruption while financially benefiting the privileged group."

"In London, a minister may own up to 300 homes. Each and every minister and MP has assets overseas. They don't care or feel disturbed as a result," he continued.

Fakhrul claimed that the government's main aim is to remove politics from the country.

"The Awami League government is not accountable to the people. The current government does not need people," he said, adding "They don't care whether the nation's economy collapses or whether people's health is safe. They just want to hold onto power."

Relationship with the US now stronger

FROM PAGE 12

Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) in Cox's Bazar yesterday afternoon.

Regarding national politics, Hasan, also the Awami League Joint Secretary, said the BNP has started relying on invisible forces after the parliamentary elections. "They are now leaning towards amulets and prayers."

On the issue of Rohingya repatriation, Hasan said, "The Myanmar government is using the recent conflict in Rakhine State as an excuse to delay the repatriation of Rohingyas. The conflict in Myanmar has been an ongoing issue for the last 80 years and the country was never free from conflict. It cannot be an excuse not to take back Rohingyas."

"Because of the Rohingya refugees, we are facing various problems. The militant and extremist groups are recruiting members from Rohingya camps," he said.

The conflict in Myanmar doesn't have an impact on the 33 shelters in Ukhiya-Teknaf as those are far from the border, he added.

Amid the ongoing conflict in Myanmar, 138 Myanmar troops including a lieutenant colonel and two majors of Myanmar Army have taken refuge in Bangladesh, said the foreign minister, adding that they would be sent back the same way Myanmar security members were repatriated earlier.

In the morning, a six-member delegation of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs led by its chairman Dr AK Abdul Momen visited the Rohingya camp of Cox's Bazar.

The delegation visited the e-voucher centre of World Food Programme (WFP) at Camp 4, a learning centre, and met with Rohingya community leaders at Camp 5.

Later the team visited the

Ghumdhum transit camp, which is being constructed to repatriate Rohingyas to Myanmar.

During the visit, former foreign minister Abdul Momen said, "We came here to witness the ground reality in person, as the situation is becoming more complex day by day. The purpose of the visit is to find a way out of the crisis."

"We talked with the Rohingyas and they are willing to go back to their country," he added.

After the visit, the parliamentary committee will submit recommendations to the government in this regard, he added.

The delegation includes Nurul Islam Nahid, Nahim Razzaq, Shaimum Sarwar Kamal, Habibur Rahman, and Zara Jabeen Mahbub.

Refugee, Relief, and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) Dr Mizanur Rahman along with other officials of the foreign ministry were also present during the visit.

Will renew passports of 69,000 Rohingyas

FROM PAGE 12

Saudi Arabia would not send anyone back.

"The Saudi government will not give Rohingyas citizenship. Then how will they live in the country? That's why they need some documents. We signed a deal last year in this regard. They [Saudi delegation] came here to talk directly whether we are having any difficulties [in renewing the passports]," he said.

In reply to a query, the home minister said the Rohingyas went there with Bangladeshi passports. "So, we will just renew their passports. Their names and addresses will remain the same as they are in their passports."

The minister added that they also discussed different bilateral issues during the meeting.

Asaduzzaman said the delegation proposed having an extradition agreement between the two countries. "Bangladesh has extradition treaties with many countries. It would be good if Saudi Arabia made this deal. We have proposed sending Ansar

members there from Bangladesh for security purpose. They will look into the proposal. As you know, we have made the Ansar as a guard regiment for VIP security," he said.

Bangladesh has deals with some Middle Eastern countries which allow on-arrival visas for Bangladeshis, he said, adding, "We are in discussion with the UAE, and the agreement with the UAE will be signed. Saudi Arabia has agreed [to ink such a deal with us]."

Asked about the management of pilgrimage this year, the home boss said the pilgrims do not need to wait for immigration at Saudi Arabia as the immigration is done in Bangladesh. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia has introduced a system called Road to Mecca, he said.

"Pilgrims will deposit their luggage here in Bangladesh. The luggage will be delivered to their hotels in Saudi Arabia. I hope the pilgrims will take this opportunity," the minister said.

The home minister said the deputy interior minister of Saudi Arabia said around 30 lakh Bangladeshis are working in Saudi Arabia.

Gaza bleeds

FROM PAGE 12

In Rafah, Gaza's southernmost city which sits on the border with Egypt, the Kuwaiti hospital said yesterday it had received the bodies of "18 martyrs" killed in Israeli strikes over the past 24 hours.

The health ministry in the territory said that at least 63 people had been killed over the last 24 hours, bringing the overall death toll from Israel's bombardment and offensive in Gaza to at least 35,034 people, mostly women and children.

Months after Israel said it had dismantled Hamas's command structure in northern Gaza, fighting has resumed in recent days in Jabalia refugee camp and Gaza City's Zeitun neighbourhood.

Military spokesman Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari said late on Saturday that "in recent weeks we have identified attempts by Hamas to rebuild its military capabilities in Jabalia, and we are acting to destroy these attempts". He also said there was an operation in Zeitun.

The military yesterday said its troops and tanks were operating in Jabalia after launching an operation overnight.