

"I have been in the national training camp for the last month and got a five-day [Eid] vacation from today [Friday]. So, there is no special plan to celebrate Eid. I usually hang out with friends and family members on Eid. However, I'll have to maintain my fitness during the vacation and take some rest. One thing I usually miss during Eid is how I used to go shopping with my father before Eid."

ASHRAFUL ISLAM, Hockey player



Eid between cheers and commitments

Eid is a time of joy, togetherness, and celebration -- a cherished occasion in every Bangladeshi household. But for the country's athletes, the festival often arrives with a bittersweet note. National duty rarely allows room for family time, and the festive spirit is often experienced from hotel rooms or distant fields. However, this year brought a rare twist. For once, the Bangladesh men's cricket team found themselves at home, free from international commitments. In what would be a rarity, the men's cricketers can do things that general people do during Eid -- exchange warm embraces, share plates of delicious food, and perform Eid prayers with loved ones. It's a luxury they seldom enjoy, making this Eid all the more special. On the other hand, the Bangladesh women's cricket team, though on home soil, have to sacrifice the celebrations for something greater. With the ICC World Cup Qualifiers looming, they are locked in training camp -- focused, determined, and chasing a dream that demands everything.

In other sports, the story is mixed. Some athletes will be able to spend Eid at home, basking in the warmth of their families. Yet others, particularly those involved in international tournaments, will watch celebrations unfold from afar, hearts tugged by both duty and desire. Despite the varying circumstances, there is a shared athletes' sacrifices often go unnoticed, but during Eid, their stories remind us of the human side behind the rare joy. For others, it is yet another quiet reminder of the price of passion and patriotism.

GG I'll be missing my parents, wife, and friends during Eid-ul-Fitr because I have to stay in the preparation camp in Dhaka for a four-nation tournament to be held in Bhutan next month. I also missed being with my family during the last Eid-ul-Adha due to my duty on a UN mission. In my 15-year professional career, I've missed many Eid celebrations and have become used to it. However, I feel better when the hard work pays off and I can deliver something good for the nation.

MOHAMMAD SELIM
Boxer

'Eid different now as we've embraced responsibilities'

Bangladesh women's team will be celebrating this year's Eid-ul-Fitr at their training camp in Mirpur as they gear up for the ICC Women's World Cup Qualifiers -- set to take place from April 9-19. In a recent conversation with The Daily Star's Samsul Arefin Khan, seasoned campaigner and vice-captain Nahida Akter opened up about her past Eid celebrations with teammates, her fond childhood memories of the special occasion, and more. The following are excerpts from the interview:

DS: How is your recovery going on after missing the Women's Dhaka Premier League (WDPL)?

NA: Alhamdulillah, I'm feeling better at the moment. I missed the WDPL to play in the qualifiers, so the recovery was very important.

DS: It must be tough to miss Eid with your family due to the camp.

NA: Obviously, there is a sad feeling. But as a professional cricketer, I have to accept it. I can't decide where I should be. I remember when we went to Pakistan in 2015, a similar thing happened to us. We had to leave for Pakistan the day after Eid, so we celebrated that Eid together here. It's obviously a matter of sorrow not to be with your family during Eid days, but the team is also a family for us, so that sad part doesn't last long.

DS: How do you celebrate Eid when you are with the team?

NA: Usually, in the morning, after waking up, we speak to our families over the phone. Then we exchange Eid greetings with everyone here. Normally, we spend the morning doing so. The BCB also arranges all

kinds of things for us on this special day so that we don't feel we are away from our families. We spend Eid day mostly together and might also go out in the evening.

DS: Is there anyone in the side who also cooks for you?

NA: Earlier, there were some senior cricketers who cooked for us on Eid day. In 2015, the senior apus cooked for us and treated us in such a way that we didn't feel we were away from family.

DS: The juniors will probably be expecting the same from you.

NA: Previously, the seniors had to give us *salamis* (a traditional gift of money given during Eid, particularly by elders to younger family members), but now we have to give them to the juniors. I feel happy to get *salami*, but I feel happier to give it. As we are earning better now, it makes me happier to present my family members and my teammates with Eid gifts and *salamis*.

DS: Now that you have become a star, how different is your Eid day from your childhood ones?

NA: Previously, I didn't have to worry

about anything. I celebrated Eid day mostly by visiting family, relatives, and friends and receiving *salamis* from them. I also roamed around with my friends. But now, being in this profession, I don't often get the opportunity to do the same. Eid lasts just two days, but we can't go home. So, in a professional setting, despite our wishes, we can't do it. There is some sadness, but it has become normal for us. Now we have all grown up, and we have embraced our responsibilities for our family, friends, and team.

DS: Your favourite Eid tradition?

NA: What I like the most about Eid is when my father and two brothers go for Eid prayer, and I lay out their Panjabi (a traditional long tunic worn by South Asian men) and *tupi* (prayer cap) after they have taken a shower. They then leave for Eid prayer wearing new clothes and shoes, and my mother, sisters, and I step outside to watch them go to the Eidgah (An open-air prayer ground where Muslims gather for special congregational prayers). That's the most satisfying thing about Eid for me. When I'm not with my family, I miss that moment very much.

GG I usually celebrate Eid with my teammates at the BFF dormitory due to training camps or international engagements, and speak with my parents over the phone. But this time, I'll be celebrating Eid with my parents, sister, and relatives, and I'm really glad for the opportunity. Receiving *salami* from elders is always fun, but this time I'll be the one giving it to the younger ones, which will also be a joyful moment. However, I can't go out much, as everyone comes to meet me at home on Eid day.

AFEIDA KHANDOKAR
Footballer

GG This Eid is going to be special for me because I'll get to spend it with my mother, who worked so hard for me to reach this stage. I missed her during the last Eid-ul-Adha, although that day I achieved the Olympic quota place in Turkey for the Paris Olympics. As we have a lot of international matches and training camps, we often can't go home to celebrate Eid. I may miss celebrating the next Eid-ul-Adha with my family due to international engagements.

SAGOR ISLAM, Archer



GG This will be the third consecutive Eid that I'll spend outside Bangladesh, as I'm currently in a training camp in Thailand, where I also celebrated both Eids last year. There wasn't much festivity in Thailand; I couldn't even enjoy sweetmeats, especially *Lachcha Shemai*. On Eid day, I'll attend training early in the morning before going to a mosque nearly 5 km away for Eid prayers. I really miss celebrating Eid back home.

SAMIUL ISLAM RAFI, Swimmer



GG This Eid is going to be different for me as I'll celebrate it with my only son and my parents, while my elder brother is also coming home for Eid. So, I think the day will be joyous for us. During my childhood, I used to receive money from the elders, but now the responsibility is on my shoulders to give cash gifts and clothes to family members -- it's a very different feeling.

MOHAMMAD ISMAIL
Sprinter