

Buddha Purnima cultural festival to be held in six districts including Dhaka

To mark the occasion of Buddha Purnima, the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, in collaboration with the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy (BSA), organised a simultaneous cultural festival across six districts, including Dhaka yesterday. While the Buddhist holiday falls on May 11 this year, the festivities were scheduled a day in advance.

The festival took place in Dhaka, Chattogram, Cox’s Bazar, Bandarban, Rangamati, and Khagrachari. The central event was held at the Nandan Mancha of BSA in Dhaka, where Cultural Affairs Adviser Mostofa Sarwar Farooki and several other dignitaries were in attendance.

Ambassadors from countries including China, Thailand, Singapore, and Cambodia were invited. The president of the Bangladesh Bauddha Kristi Prachar Sangha, Bhedanta Buddhapriyo Mahathero, also graced the event.

The festival showcased cultural harmony, with traditional Buddhist music and dance taking centre stage alongside popular musical acts in each region.



Cannes Market to feature Ebadur Rahman’s ‘Tractatus Bengalium’

The film *Bangali Bilash* by Ebadur Rahman—one of Bangladesh’s most esteemed writers, film critics, and directors—is confirmed to be screened at the Marché du Film de Cannes (Cannes Film Market), the commercial wing of the Cannes Film Festival, this year.

In a press statement, Rahman shared that he will be attending the 78th edition of the Cannes Film Festival, running from May 13 to 25. Notably, the 190-minute feature *Bangali Bilash*, internationally titled *Tractatus Bengalium*, is scheduled to be screened before agents and distributors on May 18, as part of the Marché du Film segment.

It features Indian actress Rituparna Sen, alongside Bangladeshi artistes Farhana Hamid, Naima Tasnim, Shatabdi Wadud, and Azad Abul Kalam, among others.

The filmmaker also mentioned that *Bangali Bilash* has already



drawn the attention of international distributors and festival curators. “My trip to Cannes this year is part of that ongoing journey.”

Deepto Star Hunt crowns its champions

The grand finale of Deepto Star Hunt revealed the winners of the competition. Misti Ghosh from Kishoreganj and Sakib Hossain from Barishal were officially declared the champions.

The first runners-up are Fariha Rahman from Jashore and Shafiul Raj from Barishal, while the second runners-up positions went to Sanjida Chowdhury from Sylhet and Hafiz Rahman from Barishal.

The star-studded finale featured captivating performances from the top six contestants and popular Bangladeshi musicians.

The event was graced by judges, including Tariq Anam Khan, Shihab Shaheen, and Rafiath Rashid Mithila.

As part of their victory, the winners of Deepto Star Hunt will have the opportunity to star in major films, web-films, web-series, and TV series. Kazi Media Limited will sign an exclusive two-year contract with them, offering regular acting opportunities across multiple platforms.




WHAT’S THE HAPS?

‘Bhalo Theko Phool’

Cultural organisation Joltorongo is set to celebrate its 10th anniversary this Friday (May 16) with *Bhalo Theko Phool*, a crowdfunded musical tribute to patriotism and humanity.

Professor Serajul Islam Choudhury will inaugurate the event, which will notably feature special performances by young sarangi players Mahima Mehzabin and Yusuf Ahmed, along with other musical presentations.

Date: Friday | May 16
Time: 7pm onwards
Venue: Chhayanaut Cultural Center



Bangladesh Film Directors Association gets new leaders



The Bangladesh Film Directors Association held its election on Friday at the Reporters’ Unity. The results were announced by Election Commission Chairman Abdul Latif Bachchu following voting.

Shaheen Sumon has been elected president for the new term, securing 166 votes, while Shahin Kabir Tutul has been elected general secretary with 180 votes.

Others elected to the new committee include Abul Khair Bulbul as vice president, Kabirul Islam Rana as deputy general secretary, Simon Tariq as treasurer, Wazed Ali Bablu as secretary of publicity, Publications and Office, Bandhan Biswas as secretary of International Affairs and Information Technology, and Mostafizur Rahman Manik as secretary of Cultural Affairs and Sports.

The Executive Committee members are Chotku Ahmed, Shahadat Hossain Liton, Polli Malek, and Zakir Hossain Raju, among others.

Kangana Ranaut to make Hollywood debut



Kangana Ranaut is gearing up for her Hollywood debut with the horror drama *Blessed Be The Evil*.

As reported by Variety, she will play the lead alongside *Teen Wolf* star Tyler Posey and Scarlett Rose Stallone. The story centres on a Christian couple who, after experiencing a heartbreaking miscarriage, relocate to a remote, abandoned farm with a sinister past.

There, their relationship and faith are put to the test by a dark supernatural force.

The film is being produced by Lions Movies and is set to begin filming this summer in New York. The production team opted to shoot in the US to steer clear of potential complications arising from recently announced Trump-era industry tariffs.

Blessed Be The Evil will be directed by Anurag Rudra, known for *Tailing Pond*, who also co-wrote the script with Gatha Tiwary, the founder and president of Lions Movies.

NEWS

Getting loans

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a record Tk 345,765 crore, with toxic loans rising sharply following the ouster of the Sheikh Hasina-led government in August last year. The large amount of defaulted loans is a reflection of massive irregularities.

According to the new guideline, banks must now obtain prior approval from the BB before providing loans of Tk 50 lakh or more to bank directors, their family members, any related institutions or companies under their control. For shareholder companies or their nominated directors, the threshold is Tk 1 crore or more.

If the total or expected amount of credit facilities provided to significant shareholders, their family members or related institutions exceeds Tk 1 crore, the bank must report the transaction to the BB within seven working days. This requirement marks a major shift as such prior approval was not mandatory under previous rules.

Additionally, a bank director can only borrow up to 50 percent of the value of the shares they hold in the bank.

If a director’s loan exceeds the 50 percent-limit, the matter must be presented at the bank’s board meeting and reported to the BB immediately.

The guideline also states that the total amount of loans issued by a bank to all related persons and institutions must not exceed 10 percent of the bank’s Tier-1 capital. Tier-1 capital is the bank’s core financial strength, including equity and retained earnings, and is used to absorb losses.

Furthermore, while someone is serving as the managing director or chief executive officer of a bank, neither they nor any institution or company under their control can receive any form of credit facility.

Any existing loans to such individuals or their affiliated entities cannot be extended, renewed or modified, and no interest waivers or exemptions are permitted.

However, the MD or CEO may be issued a credit card, but only under the same conditions as regular customers. In this case, the BB must be notified at least seven working days before the credit card is issued.

India blocks YouTube

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The blocked Bangladeshi channels – Jamuna TV, Ekattor TV, BanglaVision, Mohona TV, Somoy TV, and DBC News – are all YouTube-verified and together have over 54 million subscribers. Indian users trying to access these channels now receive the message: “This content is currently unavailable in this country because of an order from the government related to national security or public order.”

Digital rights research group Digitally Right, through its initiative Dismiss Lab, first reported on Friday that four

YouTube channels Bangladeshi TV stations had been blocked in India. The figure was updated to six in a revised report on Saturday.

Jamuna TV confirmed to Dismisslab that they received official notifications from YouTube regarding the blocking.

Geo-blocking is the practice of limiting access to digital content based on the user’s geographic location. In this instance, while the Bangladeshi channels remain available worldwide, their content has been specifically made inaccessible to viewers in India.

A guardian of Bangladesh’s folk music

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age-related complications and was admitted to the hospital on Friday after experiencing severe breathing difficulties. Just before dawn, at 5:30 am, his resonant voice—one that had carried the spirit of Bengali folk music across borders and generations—fell silent.

He was laid to rest later that day at Dhaka’s Azimpur graveyard, beside his parents—his father, the legendary folk music pioneer Abbasuddin Ahmed, and his mother, Lutfunnesa Abbas.

A tireless researcher and collector, Abbasi devoted his life to safeguarding over 2,000 traditional folk songs—captured not from scripts but from mouths weathered by time and toil. His Dhaka home became a sanctuary for Baul singers from Kushtia, whose sacred songs, once fading in obscurity, found a second life through his efforts. He was the first to document and broadcast the original melodies of Lalon’s works, opening a path for spiritual folk music to reach new audiences.

Abbasi’s influence transcended performance. He served as Director General of the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, wrote more than 21 books, and represented the country at numerous international forums. His anthologies—“History of Folk Music”, “The Birthplace of Bhawaiya”—remain cornerstones in cultural research. Yet, despite accolades and

acclaim, he stayed rooted. He valued a handwritten letter from a village admirer as deeply as an academic award.

His funeral, held at the Gulshan Azad Mosque, was attended by family, admirers, and fellow artists. Among the tributes, Professor Muhammad Yunus described Abbasi as a light in the cultural firmament whose work would continue to inspire.

Indeed, Mustafa Zaman Abbasi leaves behind more than memory—he leaves a map. A bridge between generations, a steward of tradition, his legacy will echo in the strains of folk songs sung by riverbanks, in archives preserved with care, and in the hearts of all who still believe in the quiet power of melody.

Buddha Purnima

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Religious Affairs Adviser AFM Khalid Hossain was present on the occasion.

On the eve of Buddha Purnima, Prof Yunus extended warm felicitations to the Buddhist community in Bangladesh and around the world today.

“This year’s celebrations have come at a time when the teachings of Lord Buddha to foster peace, harmony, and unity are more relevant than ever before,” he said in a message issued by the CA’s Press Wing.

“On this auspicious occasion, I wish that our path forward as a humanity be lit with understanding, compassion, and joy,” said the chief adviser.

People don’t want fallen forces rehabilitated

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Tarique said democracy still remains the only viable option recognised globally to establish a safe and humane state.

He said the BNP has been consistently calling upon the government from the very beginning to announce a clear roadmap or action plan so that the public has a transparent understanding of its activities.

“If people have a clear understanding of the government’s operations, there will be no scope for confusion, suspicion, or misinformation,” the BNP leader said.

Tarique urged journalists to publish investigative reports on attacks against religious communities in various parts of the country, such as Ramu in Cox’s Bazar, Nasirnagar

38°C for the past week. Such weather conditions may prevail for the next few days.”

In Lalmonirhat, farmers are struggling to cope with the scorching heat.

Noor Hossain, a worker from Durakuti village, said he has not been able to work in the fields in the last five days. “Many are forced to work for just 1-2 hours before leaving the field,” he said.

Rajshahi experienced the highest temperature yesterday at 40.7 C,

in Brahmanbaria and other areas like Rangpur, Gaibandha, and Sunamganj.

He expressed his belief that identifying those responsible for these incidents would prevent anyone from using religious communities for political gain.

He also extended his greetings to the Buddhist community on the occasion of Buddha Purnima.

confirmed the Met office.

In Chattogram, the maximum temperature recorded yesterday was 35.6°C.

Fahim Hasan Reza, an assistant professor of Child Health at Chattogram Ma O Shishu General Hospital, said over 40 percent of the patients in his ward are being treated for diarrhea and pneumonia.

[Our correspondents from Lalmonirhat, Rajshahi, and Chattogram contributed to the report]

People don’t want to see AL

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Addressing the gathering as the chief guest, Fakhrul said, “While you’re holding a rally here at this ground, another rally is taking place in New Market in the city. Another rally is going on in Dhaka. And what is the demand? The demand is to ban the Awami League, isn’t it? Not only all of us who are here, my friends, but also the 18 crore people of Bangladesh don’t want to see the Awami League. Since the country’s independence, Awami League oppressed the people, destroyed democracy, and established one-party rule through Baksl regime.”

He claimed that Ziaur Rahman, late president and founder of BNP, implemented the first state reform by restoring democracy after a period of one-party rule.”

Zia granted freedom to the press, ensured the independence of the judiciary, liberalised the economy, and laid the foundation for today’s economic growth – whether through establishing the garment industry or by facilitating overseas employment, Fakhrul added.

He said, “Today, the main aim of Tarique Rahman behind these youth rallies is simple – you, the youth, have awakened, you have defeated the fascist, you have forced her [Sheikh Hasina] to leave the country. Now, reclaim your rights with courage, my friends. Stay

calm but vigilant – every conspiracy, every plot must be overcome.”

Speaking at the rally as the special guest, BNP Standing Committee member Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury praised the youth for their fight to restore democracy and the people’s rights.

For these, countless lives have been lost over the past 15 years, he said.

Khasru said that thousands of party activists were murdered or forcibly disappeared during the autocratic rule, while around 6 to 7 million were falsely implicated in legal cases. Some died in police custody; many were forced to flee their homes, taking shelter in paddy fields and remote areas. Yet, the movement never stopped.

“We have sacrificed much to return Bangladesh to its people,” the BNP leader said, adding that democracy must not be held hostage anymore.

He, however, said the signs are there. “No group should be allowed to hold the people hostage for their own interests. If anyone has a political vision or programme for the country, they must present it before the people. No one should be allowed to seize the country’s future, ignoring its citizens,” Khasru.

Khasru said the new political arrangements floated by some party have already been proposed by Tarique Rahman and Khaleda Zia through their

31-point reform agenda.

“We have visited every district, all corners of the country. Tell me, has any other party presented their reform proposals before the people as we have done?”

He added that in the upcoming election, they would seek the people’s mandate based on the 31-point agenda. If the people give them the mandate, a national government will be formed according to this framework.

He said the national government will include all stakeholders of the uprising and who faced oppression during the autocratic regime.

Former Bangladesh cricket captain Tamim Iqbal also spoke at the rally.

Naming several young BNP leaders, Tamim said that he regularly speaks to BNP leaders for the welfare of sports. “We discuss how we can bring back Chattogram’s sporting glory.”

He said he was confident that when the youth get the opportunity, they would do their utmost to advance sports in Chattogram – whether in cricket, football, badminton, or any other disciplines.

Citing his health condition, the former skipper said, “I’m happy to receive your love today. As you know, I have health issues and am recovering slowly. I shouldn’t speak too much.”

Swechhasebak Dal President SM Zilani presided over the event.