

Stars celebrate Durga Puja at home and abroad

Leaving a bittersweet note, Durga Puja celebrations concluded yesterday with the Bijoya Dashami. Bangladeshi stars around the world shared the celebrations with their fans.



ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Durga Puja, the most significant festival for Bangladesh's Hindu community, concluded yesterday with Bijoya Dashami. This year, leading figures from film, television, and music observed the celebrations in diverse ways—across cities, on stage, and overseas.

Actress Bidya Sinha Saha Mim divided her

time between Dhaka, her parental home in Rajshahi, and her in-laws' residence in Cumilla. After Saptami in the capital, she travelled to Rajshahi to join her parents, later reuniting with her in-laws for Dashami. Alongside family visits, she appeared in multiple television and online programmes and shot new commercials.

Bappy Chowdhury spent his first Puja abroad, joining events in the United States. He

is scheduled to appear at a Dashami celebration in New York's Times Square. Reminiscing about childhood Puja in Narayanganj, he admitted missing the company of family and friends.

For actress Puja Cherry, the occasion carried a note of grief. Known for visiting mandaps with her mother, who passed away last year, she marked the festival with friends while sharing photos online during Mahashami. Yet, she described her celebrations as incomplete without her mother's presence.

Actress Mondira Chakroborty, who usually observes Puja in Khulna, remained in Dhaka due to professional commitments, visiting local mandaps with family but expressing nostalgia for her hometown festivities.

Singer Shithi Saha, whose family has organised Puja in Sirajganj for more than 150 years, performed at the Sharadiya Cultural Festival at Shilpakala Academy before returning to Sirajganj for the final day.

Meanwhile, producer and presenter Debashish Biswas began celebrations in Dhaka before travelling to the United States, also set to perform at Times Square. Actor Manoj Pramanik, currently studying in South Korea, extended greetings from Busan.

From Rajshahi to New York, this year's Puja highlighted tradition, memory, and performance for Bangladesh's cultural stars.

WHAT'S THE HAPS?

'Jokes in Progress—Comedy Open Mic'

Jokes in Progress—Comedy Open Mic invites audiences to an evening of laughter and spontaneity. Emerging and seasoned comedians take the stage to test new material, delivering sharp wit, clever punchlines, and unexpected humor. The event offers an intimate space where comedy evolves in real time.

Date: Saturday | October 4, 2025

Time: 8 pm onwards

Venue: 1/6, Noorjahan Road, Mohammadpur



Kalidas Karmakar's 'Holy War' takes centre stage at Sotheby's



Bangladeshi art gained global spotlight this week as works by five masters were featured at Sotheby's London auction of South Asian Modern & Contemporary Art. Highlighting the segment Five Bangladeshi Jewels, Kalidas Karmakar's rare 1978-79 piece **Holy War** reaffirmed his pioneering role in experimental

printmaking.

Alongside works by Zainul Abedin, Rashid Chowdhury, Mohammad Kibria, and Shahid Kabir, the five pieces, collectively estimated at £46,000, sold for £181,610. **Holy War**—a mixed-media reflection on violence and the Liberation War—was hailed as a rediscovered milestone.

Fahmida Nabi set to release three new songs

Renowned singer Fahmida Nabi is gearing up to release three new songs, with recordings and video productions already underway. She has completed the voice recordings for all three tracks and has filmed music videos for **Ami Bhalo Achi** and **Akash Upor**. The third, a rain-themed song, is awaiting its video shoot. All three songs will be released one by

one on YouTube.

Fahmida Nabi not only lent her voice but also composed the tune for **Ami Bhalo Achi**, with lyrics written by Ela Majid. **Akash Upor** was composed by Sochhol Kazi, with lyrics by Hasan Mashuk, while the rain song was penned by Sohel Alam and composed by Sheikh Mohammad Rajon.



NEWS

At least 1,100 accused in 3 police cases

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Another case was filed against around 300 unidentified people on charges of obstructing government duties, injuring officials, vandalism, and arson, the OC said.

The case statement says people kept protesting and chanting slogans in violation of Section 144, defying repeated requests from police and army.

It further said that 250-300 members of an armed hill group from within the crowds clashed with security personnel, attempting to grab government weapons.

Bangalee settlers also gathered at the scene at that time.

As tensions escalated, the OC and army personnel urged both sides to disperse. Their appeals went unheeded, and the crowds began hurling stones.

At one point, the armed group moved toward the Ramesu Bazar area, firing at the army, police, and Bangalees. As the Bangalees advanced, the clash turned into a full-scale riot.

According to the case statement, gunfire erupted as fighting moved toward Ramesu Bazar.

Meanwhile, it added, flames were seen

rising from nearby homes and shops.

Thirteen army personnel, three policemen, and the OC were injured by gunfire from the crowd. Police fired seven tear gas shells to protect lives and property, and the armed group fled when reinforcements arrived.

By around 4:30pm, the situation was brought under control. Police and army advanced toward the bazar and found several injured individuals lying on the road, who were then taken to Khagrachhari Sadar Hospital, said the case statement.

Meanwhile, SI Shahriar filed a case with Khagrachhari Sadar Police against 700 to 800 unidentified people on charges of violence and obstruction of officials on government duties.

Khagrachhari Superintendent of Police Arelin Jewel confirmed the filing of three cases and said the situation is now under control.

Law enforcement agencies remain deployed across the district, with intelligence surveillance ongoing.

Although Section 144 remains in force in both upazilas, vehicular and public movement appeared normal yesterday, with crowds seen at the

weekly market.

Deputy Commissioner ABM Iftekharul Islam Khondker said the administration is monitoring the situation. "If law enforcement deems it stable, Section 144 will be lifted."

The violence followed allegations that a teenage girl was raped on September 23 while returning home from private tuition. Her father filed a case the next morning with Khagrachhari Sadar Police Station against three unidentified men.

Law enforcers arrested a man named Shoyon Shil in connection with the case, and a court placed him on a six-day remand.

However, a medical board report submitted to the civil surgeon on Tuesday found no evidence of rape. Khagrachhari Civil Surgeon Dr Saber Ahmed said, "All 10 indicators examined showed no signs of rape. Still, it is for the court to decide."

The girl's father declined to comment yesterday, saying he would speak only in court. He also questioned how his daughter's photos and medical details had been circulated by the media despite her being underage.

Tigresses off to flying start

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run stand for the third wicket with skipper Nigar Sultana Joty (23) to power Bangladesh to 131 for three in 31.1 overs and help them begin on a winning note.

This was Bangladesh's second win in the showpiece event—the first also coming against Pakistan in 2022 in Hamilton.

After Marufa's in-swingers stunned everyone by knocking over the stumps of Omaira and an in-form Sidra, Pakistan managed to put up some resistance through a 42-run stand between Muneeba Ali and Rameen Shamim. However, experienced left-arm spinner Nahida broke the partnership by removing both the batters in quick succession.

Nahida dismissed Muneeba (17), caught brilliantly at point by youngster Nishita Akter Nishi, before having Rameen (23) caught off her own bowling in the next over.

Pakistani batters—Aliya Riaz (13), Sidra Nawaz (15), Fatima Sana (22)—then tried hard to get their side back in the contest but Bangladeshi spinners took wickets at regular intervals to keep their opponents at bay.

Pakistan's number nine Diana Baig made an unbeaten 16 off 22 balls but it still could not stop them from being bowled out for their lowest total at a neutral venue against Bangladesh.

Bangladesh started cautiously in the below-par run chase, losing Farzana Hoque Pinky (two) and

Sharmin Akter Supta (11) early.

However, since the arrival of skipper Joty at the crease, Bangladesh took a completely different approach, as both Jhelik and Joty struck Pakistani bowlers to all parts of the ground for boundaries, taking the Tigresses close to the 100-run mark.

Bangladesh did lose skipper Joty in the 25th over, but Jhelik stayed till the end, while Sobhana Mostary made an unbeaten 19-ball 24 as the Tigresses got over the line with ease.

Bangladesh will now travel to India, where they will face England in Guwahati in their second match on October 7. Bangladesh's remaining six matches will also be held in India.

Country struggles to break free

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highlighting chronic malnutrition and an urgent need for interventions.

According to the 2022 Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey (BDHS), one in four children (24 percent) is stunted (low height for age). The figure is 40 percent in urban slums—far above the WHO threshold of 15 percent.

Besides, 22 percent of children are underweight, while 11 percent are affected by wasting (low weight for height)—more than double the WHO emergency threshold of 5 percent.

The WHO emergency threshold serves as a benchmark to determine whether a public health issue, such as a disease or malnutrition, has reached a critical level that requires immediate intervention.

The BDHS report showed that economic disparities play a major role in child malnutrition: stunting affects 34.5 percent of children from the poorest households, while rates of wasting also show a strong correlation with household income.

Nazma Shaheen, a professor at the Institute of Nutrition and Food Science of Dhaka university, said, "When the cost of a healthy diet soars, many families simply cannot afford it and are forced to compromise on the quality of meals."

Unhygienic food, poor sanitation, and unsafe water lead to an increase in diarrhoea and infections, driving

up malnutrition, she said.

Adolescent pregnancies also heighten health risks—51 percent of girls marry before 18, and 73 out of every 1,000 girls aged 15-19 give birth, perpetuating intergenerational malnutrition.

THE CONSEQUENCES

Nutritional gaps in childhood have lasting effects on growth, cognition, and well-being.

Md Akhtaruzzaman, a professor at the Institute of Nutrition and Food Science, said, "Stunting can limit learning abilities and academic performance, eventually leading to economic disadvantages in adulthood."

According to UNICEF, wasting further compromises immunity and increases the risk of child mortality, while severely underweight children face a greater risk of death.

Highlighting the economic case for early nutrition, UNICEF Country Representative Rana Flowers said, "If you get health, nutrition, and brain development right early on, education and long-term economic growth follow."

Bangladesh's per capita nutrition spending is only \$18, and many ministries fail to fully utilise even this, found a 2024 study by South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM).

Of the spending, 98 percent goes to broad "nutrition-sensitive"

programmes and just 2 percent to direct interventions.

Efficiency is further weakened by misaligned local priorities, political influence, and overlapping roles between ministries such as the health ministry and the food ministry, it said.

THE WAY FORWARD

Experts suggest that frontline health workers should lead interventions on maternal supplementation, breastfeeding promotion, dietary diversity, and school-based nutrition education, hygiene initiatives, and aid targeted at slum residents and the extreme poor.

They also call for the expansion of school meals that will include eggs, nuts, fortified biscuits, and milk.

SANEM recommended a real-time database to monitor programmes regularly, and a dedicated, module-based nutrition budget enabling local authorities to set regional priorities.

Sayema Haque Bidisha, research director at SANEM and a professor at DU, suggested strengthening social safety net programmes such as Open Market Sale (OMS) for low-income families.

Sayema's suggestions were backed by Nazma Shaheen.

"Without strengthening the current programmes, years of progress in child nutrition could vanish, leaving the nation to pay the price in health, education, and economic potential," she noted.

The passing of a Language Movement hero

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capital's New Eskaton area after his wife passed away in 2006. He had no children.

Sadi told The Daily Star that Rafique had been receiving treatment at other private hospitals since September 11 after suffering multiple mild strokes. Rafique also had kidney problems and other issues related to old age.

He was transferred to the Birdem Hospital on September 28 and placed on life support on Wednesday afternoon.

Quoting doctors, Sadi said Rafique suffered a cardiac arrest before his death.

Born on September 12, 1929 at Shahbajpur village in Brahmanbaria's Sarail Upazila, Rafique spent his early life in different districts including Narail and Munshiganj.

He passed intermediate from Munshiganj's Haraganga College in 1949. There, he engaged himself in different democratic movements, including the Language Movement.

After getting admitted to Dhaka Medical College, he became one of the organisers of the Language Movement. He was among those who challenged a

ban on gathering on February 21, 1952, marching in the front lines.

Rafique became a member of the East Pakistan Communist Party in 1953, according to a write-up by Sadi in the magazine Kali o Kolom.

Following the events of the movement, Rafique had to live two years as a fugitive. He was allowed to sit for his exams and earned his MBBS degree in 1957.

However, he was the only student denied an internship for his involvement in the Language Movement.

He later co-founded a pharmaceutical company with friends, but could not remain there for long. He also contributed to Bangladesh's drug policy formulation and served as a senior officer at BCIC.

He eventually stepped away from these roles to devote himself fully to writing and literary pursuits.

He authored several books on different aspects of the Language Movement. One of his most notable works is "Language Movement: History and Significance", which he co-authored with Abdul Matin, a fellow activist and leader of the movement. Rafique penned more than 20

books on Rabindranath Tagore. For his significant contributions to research on Tagore's life and writings, the Tagore Research Institute in Kolkata honoured him with the "Rabindratattacharya" title in 2011.

Besides, he has written books on Kazi Nazrul Islam, Jibanananda Das, Bishnu Dey, the partition of 1947, and the 1971 Liberation War.

He received the Bangla Academy Padak in 1979 and Ekushey Padak in 1995.

Rafique's writings on the partition of Bengal shed new light on this historic event. One of his most well-known books on the subject is "Desh Bibhag: Fire Dekha", widely praised for its insightful analysis and original perspective.

As a vigilant guardian of the nation's freedom, The Daily Star paid tribute to Rafique on its 33rd anniversary in 2023 by honouring him with the "Sentinel of Freedom of Thought" award.

His first book of poetry is "Nirbasita Nayak" (1966) and prose work is "Shilpa Sangskriti Jiban" (1958). He also wrote on medical issues. He edited numerous literary works and scientific research papers.