Whenever Puja approaches, I miss my mother

APU BISWAS

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

For Apu Biswas, Durga Puja brings cherished childhood memories and thoughts of her late mother. As she looks forward to the festival, the Dhallywood actress is also keeping busy with three upcoming films, ***Shikar***, ***Durbar*** and ***Secret***.

In an interview with The Daily Star, Apu spoke about her hopes for this year's Puja, the memories that make the festival special to her, and her plans for the big screen.

"Puja is all about joy. I hope everyone can celebrate this year's Puja happily, with the festive spirit intact and without any problems," she said.

For the actress, the festival holds a special place in her heart, bringing back memories of celebrations from her childhood.

"Since childhood, I have seen everyone celebrate the days of Puja beautifully. We did the same. I have always wished for the Puja days to be filled with joy and happiness. My best wishes to everyone on the occasion of Durga Puja," she added.

However, the festive season also brings a sense of longing. Having lost her mother a few years ago, Apu finds herself missing her more as Puja approaches, particularly remembering the special moments they shared.

"My mother passed away a few years ago. Whenever Puja approaches, I miss her dearly. I will never again get to taste the payesh she made. I often think about it. She would prepare a special payesh for the occasion. Those days were truly beautiful," she recalled.

While the memories remain close to her heart, Apu is also looking ahead to her professional commitments, with three films in various stages of production.

She recently travelled to Nepal to shoot ***Shikar***, but sudden flooding disrupted the production, forcing her to return to Bangladesh before completing the shoot.

"I couldn't complete the work entirely," she said.

Filming for her other two projects, ***Durbar*** and ***Secret***, has also progressed considerably, although neither has been completed. The actress hopes to gradually wrap up the remaining work.

Having starred in numerous commercially successful films that drew audiences to cinemas, Apu remains deeply invested in the future of Dhallywood. She hopes to see the industry regain its former glory and has plans of her own for the coming years.

"Cinema is what has made me who I am today. I want to see Dhallywood enjoy its glorious days again. I have many plans for cinema as well, and I hope something good comes out of them in the future," she said.

Beyond filmmaking, Apu continues to juggle several professional commitments, including inaugurating establishments and participating in product photoshoots. She also makes time to manage her beauty parlour and spend time with her son.

"I will travel to Bogura on October 17 to inaugurate an establishment. I enjoy these engagements as well," she said.

Family, meanwhile, was at the centre of another special occasion for the actress. Apu celebrated her birthday on October 11, and the most memorable surprise came from her son, who saved money to buy her a cake.

"He saved Tk 1,000 to buy a cake for me and surprised me on my birthday. I was deeply moved. My heart was filled with happiness because of my son's love," she said.

The celebrations also included the women who work at her beauty parlour, who organised a gathering and cut a cake with her. Apu considers them part of her extended family. Her fans also celebrated her birthday by cutting cakes, gestures that made the occasion even more meaningful.

"They are also my family. Besides, my fans cut cakes to celebrate my birthday, which makes me even happier," she added.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

JAMES, HASAN among major acts at upcoming Dhaka rock concert





Nagar Baul's James and Ark's Hasan are set to share the stage after a long time at ***Rock N Rhythm 5.0: No Limits in the Zone*** on October 23 at Carnival Arena, Jamuna Future Park, Dhaka.

Organised by Adventor Communications, the concert will also feature Warfaze, Aurthohin and Shunno. Guitarist Oni Hasan will perform with Warfaze and deliver a solo set, while AK Rahul is also scheduled to perform.

The organisers confirmed that all necessary administrative permissions have been secured. Early-bird tickets went on sale on Monday through Tickify.live, priced at Tk 999.

Launched in 2022, the ***Rock N Rhythm*** series has held four editions, with the fifth planned on a larger scale.

EVENTS

'12 Angry Men'



After a short break, ***12 Angry Men*** returns to the stage. The play follows 12 jurors who must decide the fate of a young man accused of murder. While most favour a guilty verdict, one juror questions the evidence and urges the others to reconsider. Their discussion soon turns into a tense debate about justice, prejudice and reasonable doubt. The production has completed 80 shows over nearly a decade, drawing audiences and sparking discussions.

Date: Thursday | October 15

Time: 4:30 pm and 7:15 pm

Venue: Studio Theatre Hall, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy

NEWS

Cops escort Cuet VC, JCD leaders out after 30hrs

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that he would not return to the campus.

Current and former leaders of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, who had been trapped inside the building alongside the VC since Monday noon, were also escorted out.

The demonstrating students also cut power and water supplies to the building.

Addressing the gathering through a megaphone, DC Zahidul explained that the administration stepped in after the VC informed them that he was feeling unwell.

"He has been confined for a long time. Excessive sweating and hypertension due to the heat have made him feel uncomfortable," he said.

Prof Shariful's health had been a much-talked-about issue throughout the day. Around 11:00am, he complained of chest pain and headache. At 1:30pm, a medical team led by the university's Medical Centre doctor Shahabuddin examined the VC, and found his blood pressure normal despite sweating and discomfort due to severed electricity and water supplies.

However, Raozan Upazila Health Complex Resident Medical Officer Tiplu Kanti Dey later found his blood pressure fluctuating, sweating, and chest pain. The doctor then recommended immediate hospitalisation. After students sought clarification, both doctors re-examined the VC, confirmed blood pressure fluctuation, and agreed that hospitalisation would be beneficial.

At 5:49pm, the students opened the administrative building gate, allowing the Chattogram DC, the SP, and Additional District Magistrate Mahbubul Haque to enter. Additional police personnel were deployed on the campus.

Around 25 minutes later, the VC, along with current and former leaders of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, was brought out of the building.

Protest coordinator Arnab Shahriar reiterated that the new VC must resign because he had "brought outsiders to the campus". Another student, Asadul Galib, criticised the district administration for failing to act against those allegedly involved in Monday's attack on student buses.

DC Zahidul assured them that he would convey their demands to higher authorities.

SP Masud said a thorough investigation would be conducted over the alleged attack on student buses and the presence of outsiders inside the administrative building.

He added that action would be taken against anyone found guilty.

Migrants face growing risks at home, abroad

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and Central Asia instead of relying heavily on South Asia, posing a long-term challenge.

Citing a 2016 World Bank-International Labour Organisation survey, Ratha said some workers paid agents recruitment fees equivalent to two or three years of expected wages abroad.

Some borrowed at 40 to 50 percent annual interest, exposing them to exploitation and reducing remittances to their families.

He called the resulting debt burden "modern day slavery" and urged lower fees. Referring to press reports, he said Bangladeshis paid $4,000 to $5,000 for jobs abroad.

Migration would keep growing due to income gaps, ageing populations, climate change and conflict, he said, urging greater use of remittances for development.

At the event, Neil Adger, professor of human geography at the University of Exeter, said research found that many people leaving coastal Bangladesh did not consider themselves climate migrants.

They cited jobs, income, and their children's education as reasons for migration, although changing rainfall patterns, storms, and other environmental pressures were undermining their livelihoods and influencing their migration decisions, he said.

In Chattogram, migrants sometimes earned more but faced illness, eviction threats, flooding, and poor access to public services, his research found. Such insecurity worsened during prolonged stays in informal settlements.

Prof Neil said migration helped people adapt to climate change only when it reduced insecurity, improved wellbeing, and strengthened resilience to future shocks.

Planned relocation could improve housing security but fail to secure livelihoods or address gender inequality.

"We need a plan for internal migration," he said, also calling for safer international migration and city planning involving migrant communities.

State Minister for Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Nurul Haque Nur admitted that the government had not done enough to protect migrants or regulate recruiters.

His ministry received complaints from people who paid agents but could not travel, or reached abroad to find no promised jobs, he said.

Of over 3,000 recruiting agencies, only 300-500 might meet strict performance standards, he said. Some agencies blocked from online recruitment over alleged irregularities have resumed operations.

Nur said training was being revised for overseas demand, and acknowledged inadequate support for women migrant workers facing abuse abroad.

The "Probashi Card" was being tested in four or five countries, including Jordan and South Korea. The government sought to raise the cash remittance incentive from 2.5 percent to 3 percent for cardholders and offer priority services.

At the programme, Law Minister Md Asaduzzaman said expatriates faced years of disputes over money sent home and property bought with overseas earnings. Some cases continued after their deaths, leaving heirs to pursue them.

The government is drafting a proposal for special courts, particularly at district headquarters, to hear expatriates' cases, he said. The proposal would undergo consultations before possible placement in parliament.

Expatriates could seek help through a 24-hour legal aid hotline and district mediation, the minister said. He also criticised recruiters for submitting forged certificates from non-existent institutions.

ActionAid Bangladesh Country Director Farah Kabir said women workers' remittances were often overlooked. Migrants sometimes faced court battles to recover money sent home, she said. ActionAid's research collaborations also examined how disasters forced people to migrate to cities, informing policy responses.

Diepak Elmer, chargé d'affaires at the Swiss embassy, said, "Migrants are not simply senders of money, they are people with ambitions, families, and rights."

Citing a limited survey, Elmer said the share of prospective migrants checking their visas before departure rose from 3 percent to 58 percent. More than 300 recruiting agency representatives received ethical recruitment training this year, while migrants recovered over Tk 10 lakh with programme support.

Elmer said migration was increasingly a form of climate adaptation, demanding development policies rather than humanitarian measures alone. Strong national institutions were needed to sustain reforms beyond short-term projects.

Overhaul the child marriage

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The law should include provisions to protect girls who escape or experience child marriage, ensuring access to shelters, rehabilitation, livelihood opportunities and financial support.

"A girl may escape a child marriage but find that her family will not accept her or that she faces stigma in her community. Where will she go? The current law does not adequately address these social protection needs," she said.

WHAT THE REVIEW SAYS?

Child marriage is a major barrier to development, perpetuating poverty by cutting short girls' education, exposing them to early and repeated pregnancies, and severely limiting their employment opportunities, the review says.

The link is reflected in the rising adolescent birth rate, which increased from 83 to 92 per 1,000 adolescent girls between 2019 and 2025, according to the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2025.

The review attributes persistently high child marriage rates to poverty, poor quality and unequal access to education, entrenched harmful social and gender norms, and safety concerns.

Deep-rooted social norms, fears of elopement and widespread economic insecurity, particularly in climate-affected or remote areas and urban slums, often lead families to view early marriage as a way to ease financial hardship and a better option for girls, it says.

A major shortcoming of the act is that it sets minimum marriage ages but does not declare underage marriages void.

Personal laws continue to recognise such marriages, meaning they can be both punishable offences and legally valid unions.

Section 19 is another major flaw. It allows marriage below 18 in "special circumstances" with court approval but does not clearly define those circumstances, "leaving the term dangerously open to misinterpretation and misuse".

The law contains other contradictions. The minimum marriage age is 18 for girls and 21 for boys, meaning a woman aged 18 or older who marries a man under 21 could face prosecution.

Section 7(2) also allows minors to be detained and fined for child marriage, contradicting the law's protective purpose and the Children Act 2013, which prohibits penal sanctions against children.

The review identifies other weaknesses, including the absence of a legal requirement for all marriages to be registered and the lack of criminalisation of marital rape.

Enforcement also remains weak, it said.

Child marriage prevention committees often fail to function properly, and officials sometimes arrive after wedding ceremonies have taken place.

Some families move ceremonies to neighbouring districts to avoid scrutiny while forged birth certificates and marriages through affidavits also persist.

To address the problems, UNFPA and Unicef recommend setting 18 as the minimum marriage age for both sexes and removing Section 19 entirely.

They also want the act to take precedence over conflicting personal laws and customs.

The agencies propose allowing children to annul their marriages at their own request until the age of 22, with compensation paid by the adult party.

The other recommendations include protecting the rights of children born from such marriages and removing criminal penalties for children involved in child marriages.

The review also proposes renaming the law "Shishu Bibaho Nirodh Ain" in Bengali.

To strengthen enforcement, the agencies call for functional prevention committees at every administrative level, trained Child Marriage Prohibition Officers down to the union level, and clear procedures for police and local officials.

They also recommend a state-funded support system providing survivors with rescue services, healthcare, shelter, counselling and legal aid, alongside a dedicated compensation fund.

Contacted, Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs Division Secretary Hafiz Uddin Chowdhury said the women and children affairs ministry is supposed to take the initiative in this regard.

"If they take steps and submit it to the cabinet division, then we will have a role to play," he told this correspondent.

Rowsan Ara Begum, women and children affairs secretary, could not be reached for comment.

Yunus harassed

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responsible and take appropriate action.

In a statement, the foreign ministry strongly denounced the incident, saying those responsible were suspected of having links to the Awami League, political activities of which are banned in Bangladesh.

It said Bangladesh's mission in New York had been asked to take up the matter with local law enforcement agencies to identify those involved and seek legal action.

The ministry also urged Bangladeshi expatriates to refrain from such conduct, saying the incident had tarnished the country's image.

PM's Information and Broadcasting Adviser Zahed Ur Rahman also criticised the incident.

"The government views these incidents as Awami League terror," he said, referring to earlier incidents involving people associated with the July uprising.

"If anyone from the Awami League abroad attempts to take such steps, it will not go unchallenged," he said while briefing the press at the Secretariat.

Zahed said Yunus's actions as interim government chief adviser could be legitimately criticised, but harassment was unacceptable. He added that Yunus might have been targeted for taking charge of the country after Sheikh Hasina fled.

The government would also verify whether there had been any lapse in arrangements related to Yunus's VVIP status as a former chief adviser, he said.

Zahed said legal proceedings would be initiated against those responsible, referring to steps taken after actress Azmeri Haque Badhan was harassed in Italy last month.

National Citizen Party Convener and Opposition Chief Whip Nahid Islam condemned the incident, blaming AL supporters.

In a Facebook post, he called for action against what he described as a network of violent activists at home and abroad. He also demanded speedy trials in cases involving killings during the July uprising, enforced disappearances, and other killings under the AL government.

Jamaat-e-Islami Nayeb-e-Ameer Syed Abdullah Mohammad Taher said it had humiliated Bangladesh internationally.

He urged everyone to refrain from such conduct towards respected figures of Bangladesh and called on officials at Bangladeshi missions abroad to take responsible and courageous steps.

Several former interim government advisers, in a statement, expressed their unreserved outrage and strongest possible condemnation of the persistent harassment, online smear campaigns, and targeted attacks on former chief adviser Yunus.

They are Salehuddin Ahmed; M Fouzul Kabir Khan; CR Abrar; Asif Nazrul; Adilur Rahman Khan; Lt Gen Jahangir Alam Choudhury (retd); Brig Gen Sakhawat Hussain (retd); Faruk E Azam BP; Farida Akhter; Sharmeen Soneya Murshid, Mostafa Sarwar Farooki; and Syeda Rizwana Hasan.

Delhi police detain

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will continue, and it will triumph," he wrote on X.

Meanwhile, a joint petition filed by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and several opposition leaders against alleged electoral irregularities and the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls has 14 "defects", the Supreme Court said, including a shortfall of Rs 220 in court fees.

Other errors cited by the top court are missing authorisations from nine petitioners and an illegible photocopy of Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge's identity card, reports NDTV online.

The youth movement, which has mobilised protests in recent months against issues ranging from government school infrastructure to jobs, is among the biggest political challenges to Modi and his BJP in his 12 years in power.

A weeks-long sit-in by its supporters at Jantar Mantar earlier this year forced the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan over exam paper leaks.

The latest protests erupted after the Indian Express newspaper reported last month that Kumar's two deputies raised several concerns internally about voter list revisions, registration procedures and digital systems.