BEYOND RITUALS: Durga Puja conveys harmony, childhood for showbiz stars



Anima Roy



Tamalika Karmaker



Bidya Sinha Mim



Chanchal Chowdhury

PHOTOS: COLLECTED

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Autumn brings with it the warmth and joy of Sharadiya Durga Puja, a time of devotion, reunion and celebration for the Hindu community.

For some, the festival means visiting temples and soaking in the festive spirit; for others, it is an opportunity to reconnect with their roots and loved ones. Anima Roy, Tamalika Karmakar, Bidya Sinha Mim and Chanchal Chowdhury share what makes Puja special to them, from cherished childhood memories to the simple joy of celebrating together.

ANIMA ROY

For Anima Roy, the joy of Durga Puja lies in the little traditions that make the festival special. From standing in line to receive *prasad* to taking part in *sidur khela,* she looks forward to rituals that bring people together.

"On Ashtami, I will visit Ramakrishna Mission and stand in line to receive *prasad*. There is a special kind of joy in waiting in line for it," she said.

On Dashami, she plans to visit Dhakeshwari Temple with her mother, where she hopes to receive *prasad* as well. She also looks forward to participating in *sidur khela*.

This Puja, she has a special gift for her mother. Having bought her a saree, Anima plans to visit her in Keraniganj and give it to her in person. She also hopes to visit the festivities in Gulshan and Narayanganj, where the celebrations are particularly vibrant.

For the singer, however, the spirit of Puja extends beyond rituals and personal plans. It is about sharing happiness and ensuring that everyone can celebrate in a peaceful, welcoming atmosphere.

"Puja season always makes me happy. This joy is universal and belongs to everyone. My wish is for Durga Puja to be celebrated in a beautiful atmosphere, where we can all come together and enjoy the festive days in harmony," she said.

TAMALIKA KARMAKER

For Tamalika Karmaker, the arrival of Puja brings a deep sense of nostalgia. Living away from Bangladesh, she finds herself thinking of home and the celebrations she enjoyed in years gone by.

"During my teenage years, Puja meant wearing new clothes. That tradition continued as I grew older, when I would receive new outfits as gifts from my parents. I will never experience that same joy again in my life," she said.

Among her fondest memories is the opportunity to spend several days with loved ones, as relatives and friends, both near and far, came together to celebrate.

"What I loved most about celebrating Durga Puja back home was the opportunity to rejoice together. For a few wonderful days, people would come together and spend time with one another. Those memories still bring me happiness," she said.

Although she is now far from home, the approaching festival continues to offer her a sense of comfort and peace. The memories of celebrations past remain close to her heart, reminding her of the connections that make Puja so meaningful.

BIDYA SINHA MIM

For Bidya Sinha Mim, Durga Puja is a celebration best enjoyed together. The excitement surrounding the festival is something she hopes everyone can share, making the most of the festive days in a welcoming atmosphere.

"Puja brings a special excitement, and the festivities begin. I hope that spirit continues throughout the celebrations. Rather than celebrating alone, I hope we can all share in the joy," she said.

Visiting a temple during Puja is part of her annual plans, and this year will be no different. She also enjoys travelling to Rajshahi during the festival, where she has spent memorable moments.

"I believe the joy and festivities of Sharadiya Durga Puja should belong to everyone," she said, extending her love and festive greetings to her fans and to people both near and far.

CHANCHAL CHOWDHURY

For Chanchal Chowdhury, Durga Puja holds a deeply personal meaning, rooted in the village home where he grew up and the family traditions that shaped his childhood.

For him, the festival means reuniting with his siblings, spending time with villagers and sharing the joy of being together. It is an atmosphere he has cherished since childhood and hopes to see preserved for generations to come.

"I grew up witnessing this beautiful atmosphere, and it is something I want to see continue throughout my life," he said.

Yet, the festive season also brings a bittersweet feeling. While Puja once meant unreserved happiness with his family, the absence of his father has changed the way he experiences the occasion.

"Puja felt even more special when my father was alive. Since his passing, I think of him more often during the festival. I miss him especially on these joyful days," he said.

His father was not only a parent but also a teacher, making his memories an inseparable part of the actor's life. Even now, Chanchal finds comfort in the thought that his father continues to bless him from afar.

Despite the longing that accompanies these memories, his wish for the festival remains unchanged: to spend the days surrounded by his loved ones and share in the joy of being together.

For Chanchal, as for many others, Puja is ultimately about family, belonging and the enduring bonds that make the celebrations meaningful.



Vikings to mark 30 years with new album, film

Bangladeshi rock band Vikings will celebrate its 30th anniversary next year with an album and a 45-minute film, both titled ***Vikings Replayed***.

Scheduled for release on January 1, 2027, the album will feature 11 reimagined songs from the band's first two albums, ***Jiboner Kolahol*** (2000) and ***Din Joto Dukkho Toto*** (2002). The film will follow about a week later.

Vocalist Tonmoy Tansen said the new arrangements aim to reconnect longtime fans while introducing the songs to younger listeners.

The film will explore the band's journey, memories, struggles and achievements. Work on the project began in Cox's Bazar in September 2025.

Having remained largely absent from the stage since 2024, Vikings also plans to record new original songs.

EVENTS

'Solo Painting Exhibition by SK Mehedi Kamal'



Gallery Chitrak is hosting a solo painting exhibition by SK Mehedi Kamal, featuring the artist's recent works. Curated by artist and Professor Nisar Hossain, the exhibition offers visitors a chance to explore Kamal's latest paintings. The collection offers a glimpse into the artist's recent practice.

Date: Wednesday–Thursday | October 14–22
Time: 11:00am–8:00pm
Venue: Gallery Chitrak

NEWS

N Korea tests two types of submarine-launched missiles

AFP, *Seoul*

North Korea has test-fired two types of submarine-launched strategic cruise missiles, state news agency KCNA said yesterday.

The agency said the missiles were fired Wednesday into the East Sea, also known as the Sea of Japan, without "any adverse impact on the security of neighboring countries".

The reported launch came after weeks of mounting friction over a landmine explosion along the heavily fortified border between North and South Korea.

Three South Korean soldiers were injured in the September 21 blast in the Seoul-controlled area of the Demilitarised Zone (DMZ), with both countries testing upgraded missile technology in the aftermath.

The latest testing "aimed to examine the current mobilized posture of the underwater combat systems" and served as a Navy training exercise, KCNA said.

The tests showed the "high reliability, trustworthiness and ability of the war deterrents of the DPRK," the agency reported, referring to North Korea by the abbreviation of the country's official name.

Photos released by KCNA showed one missile blasting vertically out of the sea trailed by a thick plume of smoke. Another photo appeared to show a projectile erupting from the water at a 45-degree angle.

Pay hike demo by RMG workers

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Rifa Begum, a garment worker, said they would continue protesting until the government met their demands.

"We want a wage of Tk 30,000," said another worker, Rumi.

Around 12:15pm, police used sound grenades and charged batons to disperse the protesters.

DMP Uttara Division Deputy Commissioner Rezaul Karim said one group agreed to leave the road, allowing traffic to resume. However, some protesters later attacked vehicles and vandalised two cars, prompting police to chase them away.

He denied allegations that police had used batons.

Meanwhile, workers of C-Stage (BD) Ltd blocked the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway in the MC Bazar area of Gazipur's Sreepur for an hour, demanding their unpaid September wages.

More than 1,000 workers arrived at the factory in the morning but found it closed for a general holiday despite repeated assurances that their wages would be paid.

They blocked the highway around 9:00am, causing tailbacks stretching several kilometres.

Industrial police used sound grenades after the workers refused to leave. Traffic resumed after an hour, said Md Kamruzzaman, officer-in-charge of Mawna Highway Police Station.

Mohammad Amjad Hossain, superintendent of Gazipur Industrial Police-2, said police had urged the protesters to clear the road and offered to arrange talks with factory authorities.

Govt working on new wage board

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demanding higher wages as rising prices of essential commodities drive up living costs.

The current minimum wage came into effect in December 2023, when garment factory owners raised the minimum monthly salary from Tk 8,000 to Tk 12,500.

The wage structure is due for review this December, as the amended labour law requires wages across different sectors to be reviewed every three years to adjust for inflation.

A six-member wage board is usually formed, with representation from the government, trade unions and factory owners, along with an economist and an independent representative, to recommend minimum wages across different grades.

Md Towhidur Rahman, president of the Bangladesh Apparels Workers Federation, said the new wage board could be announced next week.

He urged the government to form the board without delay, warning that labour unrest could spread across industrial areas.

Trade union leaders would submit proposals for wage increases once the board is formed, he said.

MPO pay hike needs Tk 13,392cr more

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The Pay Commission report noted that MPO-enlisted personnel fall outside its direct purview as they are not employees of the republic. However, it stressed the need to consider their pay structure given the size of the non-government education sector.

"Since budgetary allocations are regularly made for MPO staff, necessary provisions should be arranged to improve their living standards through inter-ministerial consultations," the report recommended.

There are currently 30,932 MPO-enlisted institutions employing 444,628 teachers and 157,731 staff.

Air pollution in Dhaka a matter of shame: PM

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decided to identify and preserve the country's mother trees within the next six months.

It also directed the authorities to ensure regular care of planted trees, monitor their survival through field visits and explore ways to expand afforestation in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Referring to the plan to plant 25 crore trees, he said the entire population will benefit if the programme is implemented properly.

The meeting also decided that the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change will take steps to cover any shortfall if other ministries fail to meet their tree-planting targets.

Noting that people have limited access to places where they can spend time in nature, Tarique stressed the need to increase such spaces and encourage people to develop rooftop and school gardens, as well as gardens in different buildings.

Public awareness is essential alongside government initiatives to protect the environment, he said, adding that greater awareness will make the work easier.

Tarique also stressed the need for separate public awareness plans to support the implementation of decisions and programmes for environmental and forest conservation.

Police step up patrols

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through the Citizen Information Management System.

It also mentioned the use of the Suspect Identification Verification System to preserve information about arrested offenders and help identify repeat offenders.

The working paper presented yesterday detailed the steps taken by police and the Department of Narcotics Control (DNC) in response to killings, drug trafficking and other criminal activities in Pallabi and Rupnagar.

In August, Pallabi police arrested 29 people in regular narcotics cases, while 280 people were handed various sentences through special magistrate courts for involvement in drug-related offences.

In Rupnagar, six people were arrested in regular narcotics cases, while 114 others received sentences through special magistrate courts.

The DNC filed 34 cases and arrested 35 suspected drug traffickers during operations in Pallabi and Rupnagar between February 17 and September 30. The operations resulted in fines totalling Tk 66,050 and prison sentences totalling 630 days.

According to the department's presentation, it conducted 82,626 anti-drug operations between January and September this year, filing 25,021 cases against 26,270 accused.

It also reported the seizure of large quantities of narcotics, including yaba tablets, cannabis, heroin and other drugs.

The working paper outlined measures to strengthen intelligence gathering, increase surveillance in border areas, identify drug dealers and improve coordination with other law-enforcement agencies.

Apart from crime prevention and narcotics enforcement, the home ministry's working paper highlighted police manpower requirements and progress in taking action against personnel implicated in incidents surrounding the July uprising.

Proposals to create 10,000 constable and 4,000 sub-inspector posts were being processed as part of efforts to address police manpower shortages.

According to the working paper, 147 police personnel, ranging from assistant superintendents to fourth-class employees, were sent into compulsory retirement in the public interest following the 2024 mass uprising.

Besides, 57 personnel were suspended, while another 29 officers arrested in cases linked to the uprising were also suspended.

Of the 57 suspended personnel, 28 were dismissed following departmental proceedings, while one was sent into compulsory retirement in the public interest.

Five police inspectors were dismissed or removed from service over incidents during the uprising, while departmental proceedings were under way against 30 others. Another 73 inspectors were sent into compulsory retirement in the public interest after the uprising.

Separately, five officers of superintendent rank or above, accused in cases before the International Crimes Tribunal, were dismissed, while departmental proceedings were continuing against eight others.

According to the home ministry's press release, the committee reviewed government initiatives to curb cybercrime, including the formation of a separate cyber police unit.



PHOTO: REUTERS

Motorcyclists queue to refuel at a state-owned Pertamina petrol station amid a fuel supply shortage in Badung, Bali, Indonesia, yesterday.

KSA executes 2 Bangladeshis for 'immoral act'

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Agency (SPA).

The ministry said Saudi security authorities arrested the two and subsequently brought charges against them following an investigation. They were then referred to a competent court.

According to the ministry, the court found the charges proven and sentenced them to death under ta'zir, a form of discretionary punishment under Islamic law, citing the gravity of the offence and the violation of the sanctity of the time and place.

The verdict became final after being upheld by the relevant authority, and a royal order was issued for its implementation, the statement said.

The executions were carried out in the Makkah region on October 14.

The official statement did not specify the precise nature of the act, identify the mosque or provide details about when the two Bangladeshis were arrested.

Durga Puja festivities begin with Maha Shasthi today

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six to every other mandap.

Another 104 striking teams will remain on standby to respond quickly to any untoward incident, Ansar Director General Major General Abdul Motaleb Sazzad Mahmud said at a press conference at the force's headquarters yesterday.

Border Guard Bangladesh set up 18 base camps and intensifying patrols to ensure security at around 1,800 puja mandaps within eight kilometres of the country's borders.

BGB Director General Major General Mohammad Ashrafuzzaman Siddiqui announced the plan while talking to reporters after inspecting security arrangements at the Ramna Kali Mandir in the capital on yesterday afternoon.

He said BGB personnel had already visited the mandaps and contacted puja committees in their respective areas to coordinate security measures.

The government has declared a three-day holiday for Durga Puja from October 20 to 22.

With October 23 and 24 falling on Friday and Saturday, the regular weekly holidays, the break will extend to five days, from October 20 to 24.