Sarika Sabah's dancing roots flourish beyond the spotlight

SHARMIN JOYA

Known primarily for her acting, Sarika Sabah recently took centre stage with an opening dance performance at Blender's Choice-The Daily Star OTT & Digital Content Awards 2025.

Reflecting on the experience, she said performing on stage as a dancer wasn't something she usually did, making the opportunity even more thrilling and memorable. Her connection with dance, however, dates back much further. Sarika began learning at the age of four, when her mother enrolled her at Shishu Academy. She received her initial classical training there before continuing lessons with a Shilpakala tutor who taught her at home.

"My foundation in classical dance was built through six to seven years of continuous learning as a child," she recalled, noting how those early lessons and movements have stayed with her.



PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

"It was the first time I had performed at such a major award ceremony, and it was a great experience for me. The daily rehearsals and the opportunity to bond with fellow artistes made it particularly memorable," she added.

Attending the awards ceremony as a performer rather than simply as an audience member also gave Sarika a fresh perspective on the event. She appreciated its efforts to recognise background crew members and technicians, whose contributions often go unnoticed.

Speaking about the award results, Sarika graciously acknowledged Runa Khan's win in the category in which she had been nominated for ***Bohemian Ghora***, describing it as well-deserved given the project's immense popularity among audiences.

"Although I was nominated in the same category, I am really happy for her, and it was a much-deserved win!" she said.

While admitting that she felt a little disappointed that her own project, ***Gulmohor***, did not receive more accolades, she remained confident about her team's potential and future work.

Following her web debut with ***Gulmohor***, Sarika has completed shooting for her second OTT web film. Although the production house has yet to permit the release of promotional details, the project is expected to premiere by the end of this year.

"It features a brand-new co-artiste pairing, and it is my first time working with this director," Sarika revealed, adding that she has high hopes for the project.

After a two-year break from television dramas, during which she focused on OTT projects and commercials, Sarika is preparing to return to the small screen with upcoming festival productions. With Valentine's Day and Eid falling close to each other, she has already completed shooting for five to six fiction projects, mostly opposite Saad Salmi Naovi, alongside a couple of new co-stars.

Her on-screen chemistry with Naovi has earned considerable appreciation from audiences. The two have been friends since their student days at North South University and had previously worked together on commercials and brand campaigns before reuniting on television sets.

"We had known each other for a long time, and as he started working in the industry, we began connecting more professionally. Because we share a genuine bond, we give each other honest input on performance and storytelling, which helps both of us grow," she said.

With new web films and television dramas in the pipeline, Sarika continues to explore new opportunities and expand her presence across platforms.



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

Muza, Sanjoy reunite for new single 'Eka Eka'



US-based Bangladeshi-origin musicians Muza and Sanjoy have reunited for ***Eka Eka***, following collaborations including ***Jhumka***, ***Shei Ashate*** and ***Koynare***.

Released last Friday, the single features vocals by Muza, who co-wrote the song with Sanjoy. Sanjoy also produced the music.

Directed by Hector Toro, the music video features both artistes, with choreography by Meghna Chakraborty, Saleena Rajan and Ridy Sheikh. The release is from Qinetic Music.

Muza gained recognition among Bangladeshi listeners with his reimagining of the traditional song ***Noya Daman***. Sanjoy, an electronic dance music producer and DJ, has worked with artistes including Arijit Singh, Sunidhi Chauhan, Habib Wahid and Xefer.

The duo's previous collaborations have involved songwriting, shared vocals and music production, with Sanjoy also producing several tracks that feature Muza.

Events

'Monpakhi'



Bhumi Gallery presents ***Monpakhi***, a group art exhibition organised by Addopanto celebrating the beauty and poetic spirit of avian life. Featuring works by 12 promising artists, the showcase captures the grace, colour, and free-spirited essence of birds through a diverse array of creative interpretations and visual styles.

Date: Friday–Thursday | November 6–12, 2026
Time: 3:00pm–8:00pm
Venue: Bhumi Gallery, Lalmatia

NEWS

Deep urban-rural divide laid bare

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Under Chattogram Board, 66.20 percent passed in the metropolis, against 29.85 percent in Khagrachhari, 33.24 percent in Rangamati and 41.42 percent in Bandarban. Elsewhere in Chattogram district, 45.59 percent passed.

Under Rajshahi Board, the rates were 55.33 percent in Rajshahi district and 53.64 percent in Bogura, against 36.93 percent in Naogaon, 37.88 percent in Sirajganj and 38.36 percent in Chapainawabganj.

Under Sylhet Board, 57.62 percent passed in Sylhet district, compared with 43.84 percent in Moulvibazar. Under Barishal Board, the figures were 49.95 percent in Barishal district and 37.09 percent in Jhalakathi.

Barishal Board had the lowest pass rate, at 44.84 percent.

Dhaka metropolis produced 13,482 of the 35,948 GPA-5 achievers under the nine general boards, or 37.5 percent, despite accounting for only 10.6 percent of examinees.

At Notre Dame College in Dhaka, 2,229 students secured GPA-5, exceeding the individual totals of five of the country's 11 education boards: Mymensingh, Cumilla, Sylhet, Barishal and Technical. Of its 3,256 examinees, 3,218 passed.

In Shariatpur, another district under Dhaka Board, just 35 of 5,727 examinees secured GPA-5. The proportion achieving the top grade was nearly 20 times higher in the capital.

Sylhet district accounted for 903 of its board's 1,204 GPA-5 achievers, or 75 percent, despite having 43 percent of examinees. Sunamganj recorded only 46 GPA-5s among 13,667 candidates.

Rajshahi and Bogura districts together produced 3,094 of Rajshahi Board's 4,520 GPA-5 achievers, or 68.5 percent, with fewer than 40 percent of candidates.

At Government Azizul Haque College, a sought-after college in Bogura city, 1,455 of 1,471 examinees passed and 747 secured GPA-5, more than half the district's 1,309 top grades.

Yet none of the 46 examinees at the rural Taslim Uddin Tarafder College in Gabtali upazila passed.

Under Dinajpur Board, 749 of 804 candidates passed at Dinajpur Government College, compared with 209 of 534 at Kaharol Government College.

The Daily Star's analysis found that 1,083 of 1,376 colleges under Rajshahi, Barishal and Chattogram boards had pass rates of 50 percent or below.

Under Rajshahi Board, the number rose from 457 of 750 colleges last year to 614 this year.

Rajshahi district colleges had an average of 40 teachers each in 2025, against 30 in Naogaon, according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS).

The averages were 22 in Chattogram district and 15 in Khagrachhari.

BANBEIS also found that 54.21 percent of colleges were rural, although urban areas accounted for 76.11 percent of college students.

Poor facilities and low enrolment were also reported at colleges in rural areas, where no HSC examinees passed.

For instance, at Majidbaria College in Patuakhali's Mirzaganj, classes are held in dilapidated tin-shed rooms. It has eight teachers, but its only HSC candidate failed.

Principal Faruk Mallik said the college had yet to secure monthly pay order (MPO) enlistment and poor infrastructure had contributed to low enrolment.

At Kadbhanu Memorial Secondary Girls' School and College in Barguna's Betagi, neither of its two HSC examinees passed.

Principal Shamima Nasrin said admissions to the higher secondary section had been suspended after 2024 because of a classroom shortage. It had applied to close the section.

Inequalities begin even before college.

Asadullah identified four factors: disruptions to earlier schooling, selective admissions, unequal family resources and private tuition, and weaknesses in teaching and institutional management.

Disadvantaged families had fewer ways to compensate for learning losses during the pandemic and later disruptions, including those caused by extreme weather.

Better-off households could afford tutors, materials, study spaces and sometimes relocation to better colleges, he said.

"HSC results are a late-stage expression of inequalities that often begin well before college," he said.

Students entering Class XI with weak reading comprehension or mathematics could struggle with the higher secondary syllabus, although timely remedial teaching could help.

Asadullah urged regular, credible assessments to identify learning difficulties before HSC.

District totals include both urban and rural colleges, so the results do not measure a nationwide rural-urban divide.

The disparities are unsurprising without an area-based plan to ensure acceptable standards at all institutions, said Manzoor Ahmed, professor emeritus at BRAC University.

Education boards mainly handled registration and examinations, doing little to improve teaching or monitor quality, although they could use part of their fee income to raise standards.

"Does the government accept the responsibility for providing school education of acceptable quality for all children? If so, where is the time-bound plan for that?"

He urged the government to consider recommendations from the interim government's consultation committee on secondary education and pursue a coordinated plan with education boards and agencies.

Fragmented, ad hoc and partial responses "can only aggravate problems further", he said.

'Father, please pray for me'

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made to sign a document, put into a military vehicle, had his hair cut and was given a military uniform," he said.

Nur Islam said Roni, the eldest of four siblings, had married just six months before leaving for Russia. He had mortgaged family land and taken out loans to finance the trip, but had yet to repay the debts.

"Despite repeatedly appealing to the government to bring my son back, I have not received any effective assistance. Now I have only one request: please arrange to bring his body home. I want to see his face one last time and bury him with my own hands," he said.

Roni's mother, Mafiza Begum, said Al Amin initially told her that Roni had been injured in a drone attack and hospitalised, but later informed her of his death.

Gopalganj Sadar UNO Koushik Ahmed said initial reports suggested Roni had been killed, but his death had not been officially confirmed.

"We are maintaining contact with the embassy. If they provide us with any information, we will take the necessary steps with utmost sincerity," he said.

CAAB expenses soar on loan repayment

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He stressed that the terminal needed to begin operations quickly to generate revenue and ease the repayment burden.

According to a ministry press release, committee members stressed the need for transparency and accountability in procurement and development projects.

At the meeting, Millat said a lack of sustained accountability over the past 20 years had led to the implementation of various unplanned projects.

Unnecessary purchases made in the past would be investigated, he said.

Meanwhile, CAAB documents reveal that six issues remain unresolved between the government and the prospective operator of HISA third terminal, although preparations are under way to begin operations on December 16.

According to a CAAB progress report dated October 28, bid evaluation and negotiations with the SWG consortium have been completed, but the operating agreement has yet to be finalised.

The outstanding issues include Biman Bangladesh Airlines' payment obligations as an airline and self-handler, revenue sharing, the defect notification period, changes in law, a letter from the civil aviation ministry, and the issuance of preference shares to JICA.

The report said a Readiness Steering Committee had been formed involving SWG and relevant stakeholders to prepare for the proposed commencement of operations.

The third terminal is designed to increase the airport's annual passenger-handling capacity from 8 million to 20 million. However, testing and commissioning of several facilities, including baggage-handling and security systems, remain under way, according to the documents.

The CAAB presentation also highlighted the need for a new international airport near Dhaka, as projected passenger demand is expected to exceed Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport's capacity despite the ongoing expansion.

According to the presentation, annual passenger numbers at Dhaka airport are projected to reach around 33 million by 2045.

Even after the third terminal and two proposed pier extensions are completed, the airport's annual passenger handling capacity would reach 24 million, leaving a substantial shortfall against projected demand.

Increasing urbanisation around the airport had made the construction of an independent second runway and further infrastructure expansion difficult.

Cancel dealerships for fertiliser s

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use farmer cards and lists to ensure fair distribution among genuine farmers.

He said more fertiliser than required had been supplied this year, while cultivation of new crops had not increased significantly. The government was prepared to meet any additional demand.

However, he stressed the need for strict vigilance against smuggling, particularly in border districts.

He said higher demand and prices for non-urea fertilisers in some areas of neighbouring countries created a risk of smuggling. Urea could also be smuggled out due to shortages in some places.

"Under no circumstances can the country's fertiliser be allowed to go outside the country," he said.

He instructed deputy commissioners and agriculture officials to make decisions based on local conditions, environmental factors and actual demand.

He also warned against the unauthorised use of urea as a raw material in industrial factories, directing swift action against textile and dyeing factories found using it.

HRFB alarmed by sedition case

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office under surveillance and harassing her family members.

According to the FIR, Shampa is accused of making provocative remarks against the elected government and state at a public gathering held at her office on August 14, 2026. Sedition, under Section 124A of the Penal Code of Bangladesh, is a non-bailable offence carrying a penalty of three years up to life imprisonment.

In the statement signed by Tahmina Rahman, convener of HRFB and executive director of Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), the forum said that in light of such allegations, the protection of citizens' fundamental rights and personal privacy guaranteed by the constitution requires special consideration.

Noting that Article 36 of the constitution guarantees citizens' freedom of movement and Article 43 ensures the right to privacy of home and correspondence, HRFB stressed the urgency of addressing the allegations of surveillance on an individual's residence and office, as well as the harassment of their family members, with due importance.

The forum also observed that specific allegations are essential when bringing serious charges like sedition against anyone involved in human rights activities.

HRFB called upon the authorities concerned to verify the legal basis and veracity of the charges brought against Shampa, and to conduct an impartial investigation into the allegations she has raised.

It also demanded appropriate measures to ensure that Shampa, as a human rights activist, can carry out her peaceful and legitimate activities, and that she, her family, and the staff and volunteers of her organisation are not subjected to any form of intimidation, harassment, or retaliation.

HRFB is a coalition of 20 human rights and development organisations in Bangladesh, including ASK, Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF), Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST), Bangladesh Mahila Parishad (BMP), and Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB).

F1 crowns its youngest king

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Alberto Ascari 73 years ago.

At 20 years and 68 days old, he is by far the youngest ever champion: the previous record holder Sebastian Vettel was 23 years and 133 days old when he won his first title in 2010.

Flung into Formula One in 2025 at just 18, he has dazzled in his second season. His Mercedes team has dominated but the Italian has emphatically outperformed his British teammate, Russell.

After finishing second to Russell in the opener in Australia, Antonelli won the next five races.

Coming into Mexico, he had won nine of the 18 races, displaying his consistency with six other podium finishes.

His ability and chutzpah were best illustrated in Monza when, after starting 19th, he weaved his way through the pack -- and past Russell who had started on pole -- to win his home grand prix comfortably. It was one of the all-time great race performances.

The son of Elisabetta, who stays out of the spotlight, and Marco, a former driver and team principal, Andrea Kimi Antonelli started karting at seven, although his father, surprisingly, opposed a career in the sport.

"He didn't want me to become a driver because motorsports can be very cruel at times, especially financially, since it's very hard to succeed without the support of the right people," said Antonelli before the US Grand Prix.

"He taught me everything he knew, first about racing, and now about life. It's really important to have him by my side during races."