

Kolkata becomes Durga: The City of Joy in pujo splendor

Anushka Nandy, Krittika Roy,
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Kolkata: Every year, when the month of Ashwin (the sixth month of the Bengali calendar) arrives with white clouds, blue skies, the fragrance of Shiuli flowers, and Kash phool blooming in the fields, something magical happens in Kolkata. The city itself takes on the form of a goddess. The beat of the dhaak becomes her heartbeat, and the streets shine like her crown. This is Durga Pujo — when Kolkata stops being just a city and transforms into a living, breathing celebration. For five days, day and night lose their meaning. The pandals glow brighter than the stars, and the crowds never stop flowing. Shopkeepers decorate their stores, while hawkers sell balloons, phuchkas, and countless other treats on the bustling streets. Only in Kolkata can one witness two contrasting faces of the same worship. Inside the bonedi bari pujos, time seems slower. Courtyards glow

with oil lamps, and the goddess stands tall, draped in red and gold. last. Some resemble palaces, others temples, and many transform into



Kolkata dances with the Goddess.

Source: Google File Photo

There are no elaborate decorations or deafening sounds only the rhythmic beat of the dhaak and the fragrance of dhunuchi smoke. Here, Pujo feels intimate and sacred, as if time itself has paused. But the city also reveals her modern face. Theme pandals take center stage, each more imaginative than the

fantasy worlds built from bamboo, fabric, and light. Each pandal becomes a universe of its own, crafted over months by artists who know it will vanish in just five days. Yet, in those five days, colorful moments: friends sharing ice cream at midnight after hours of walking, snapping selfies, recording vlogs; old

friends reuniting; families coming together. Laughter and giggles fill the air the true soul of Pujo. On the final day, as the idol is carried away for immersion, the city both weeps and smiles. Women smear sindoor on each other's faces and foreheads, while children wave at the goddess as though bidding farewell to a family member. Crowds perform the spirited Bhashan-Naach before the idol and her four children are twirled three times, following age-old rites, before immersion in the Ganga. The farewell chant rises: "Asche bochor abar hobe" ("It will happen again next year"). Durga Pujo marks only the beginning of Kolkata's festive season, to be followed by Lakshmi Pujo, Kali Pujo, and Diwali. For the city, Pujo is not just worship it is identity. It is Kolkata seeing herself in the goddess: strong, beautiful, and full of energy. Every year, when the dhaak begins to beat and the city lights up, Kolkata remembers exactly who she is.

Necessity of foreign food habits: Pros and cons of embracing global diets vs. traditional Indian foods

Shomili Mukherjee (MA Sem 1)

"Globalized foods are often overpriced and more of a market gimmick. Our local foods provide ample nutrition and are easier to digest," says Dr. Mahua Sahakundu, a clinical nutritionist with over 20 years of experience. She emphasizes

India boasts a rich diversity of regional foods, each tailored to the local climate, culture, and dietary needs. For example, a person from Kerala may not enjoy the rich, ghee-laden sweets popular in Rajasthan, and each diet has evolved to suit specific health needs. However,



Flavors best when shared.

Source: Google File Photo

es that seeds like flax, pumpkin, and chia—rich in fiber and minerals—are good snack alternatives to junk foods, provided they're consumed in moderation. Her insights underline a growing question: should we truly embrace foreign food habits, or is our traditional diet sufficient? The Influence of Global Food

as more people try diets like keto, intermittent fasting, and others influenced by foreign trends, there's concern about whether these changes are beneficial or even necessary.

Western diets often work well for people abroad, but these trends might not suit everyone. Adopting foreign food habits isn't essential for

Indian diets, which, when balanced, provide all necessary nutrients. The sudden popularity of foods like chia seeds or flax seeds, often consumed for weight loss, may not align with all body types or nutritional needs. Benefits of Flax Seeds, Chia Seeds, and Other Superfoods: Are They Needed? Seeds like flax and chia are rich in fiber, antioxidants, and omega-3 fatty acids, making them healthy choices when used correctly. Dr. Sahakundu, however, cautions that "overconsumption of these seeds can lead to health issues like hormonal imbalances," which may be worsened without proper guidance. Though adding small amounts of these superfoods can be beneficial, traditional Indian foods like whole grains, lentils, and fresh vegetables provide similar nutritional value and are often more accessible. Pros and Cons of Globalized Foods: Are They Worth the Hype? Globalized foods often come at a high price, marketed as "superfoods" or essential for modern diets. While they bring variety, these foods can overshadow the value of local ingredients that have long sus-

tained balanced diets. Dr. Sahakundu explains that "without consulting a nutritionist, global foods can pose health risks and may not suit every body type." Foreign foods, though beneficial in moderation, aren't necessary for a healthy lifestyle. The Bottom Line: Should We Change Our Diet? Adopting foreign food habits can be enriching, but it isn't necessary to achieve a balanced, nutritious diet. Traditional Indian foods—prepared thoughtfully—provide all the essential nutrients and suit our climate and lifestyle. Consulting with a nutritionist before making drastic diet changes can ensure that we're consuming foods aligned with our health goals, rather than simply following trends. Ultimately, food is deeply tied to culture, tradition, and individuality. While experimenting with global diets can be exciting, embracing the richness of our own local foods ensures both sustainability and long-term health. The key lies in balance, not in blindly following trends. Listening to our bodies can often be the most effective path to healthy living.

FEATURE

A pioneer of animated cartoons – Fantasmagorie

Shweta Biswas (MA Sem 1)

Fantasmagorie, often considered the world's first fully animated cartoon, marked its 117th anniversary on August 17, 2025. The short film, described as “moving drawings,” features a stick-figure character whose environment constantly transforms in whimsical and unpredictable ways — a flower becomes a bottle, an elephant turns into a house, and scenes shift without warning. Released in 1908 by the Gaumont Company in Paris, the film was created by French artist Émile Cohl using the traditional hand-drawn animation technique. He drew and redrew 700 individual images on paper, making slight alterations to each drawing. When

photographed and projected in sequence, these changes created the illusion of smooth movement. The film ran for about 1 minute and 20 seconds at a projection rate of 16



The first ever fully animated film.

frames per second, with each image photographed twice. Because it was printed in negative, the characters and objects appear as white outlines

against a black background. The French term *fantasmagorie* means “a constantly shifting sequence of images,” perfectly describing the film's playful metamorphoses. At



Source: Google File Photo

the beginning and end of the cartoon, Cohl's own hands appear on screen — requiring him to draw in white ink on black paper to match

the reversed film stock, as noted by Donald Crafton in *Émile Cohl, Caricature, and Film*. Although Cohl originally joined Gaumont as a writer, he soon turned to animation. Earlier works such as J. Stuart Blackton's *Humorous Phases of Funny Faces* (1906) experimented with animated drawings, but *Fantasmagorie* is recognized as the first true animated cartoon because of its continuous sequence of moving images and innovative double-exposure technique. Émile Cohl, often hailed as the “Father of the Animated Cartoon,” pioneered a new art form with *Fantasmagorie*. This landmark creation not only demonstrated the potential of hand-drawn animation but also laid the foundation for the global industry of animated entertainment.

Lights, Camera, Bengal

Mouboni Majumder (MA Sem 1)

Kolkata— In a landmark move set to reshape the cinematic landscape of West Bengal, Bengali films — both commercial and independent — will now receive priority screening slots across theatres in the state.

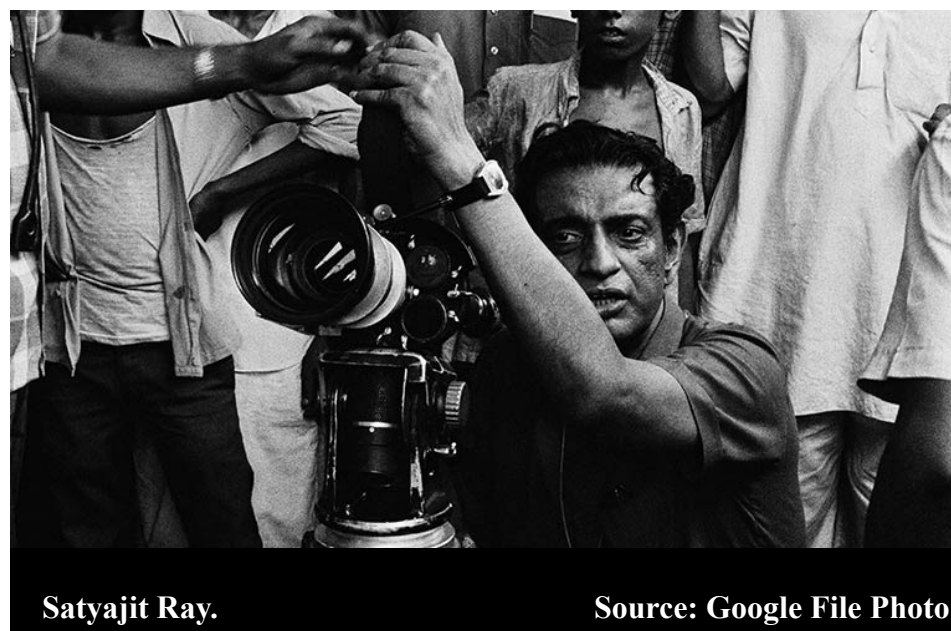
The decision, hailed as a much-needed boost to Tollywood, was reached unanimously during a key meeting held at Nandan on Thursday. The session was chaired by Minister Aroop Biswas and saw the attendance of over 40 influential figures from the Bengali film fraternity — including exhibitors, distributors, producers, directors, actors, and technicians.

A special panel has been formed to coordinate film releases, particularly when multiple Bengali films are scheduled for the same day. The aim is to avoid market overcrowding while ensuring that each film receives its fair share of screen space and audience reach. Navin Chowkhani, owner of Navina Theatre, confirmed that the majority of prime-time slots will now be dedicated to Bengali cinema. “Bengali films will be given prominence and preference going forward,” he said, highlighting a shift in focus that many within the industry see as

long overdue. Satadeep Saha, a leading distributor, echoed this sentiment. “All stakeholders agreed — it's time Bengali content receives the visibility it deserves,” he said. On concerns raised about Mumbai distributors potentially demanding exclusive screening rights for Bollywood releases, Saha clarified that Mumbai producers will be duly informed of this state-level directive, with the understanding that regional cinema takes precedence within West Bengal. This development marks a significant policy push towards supporting the local film industry, which has long struggled to compete with the overwhelming presence of Bollywood films in West Bengal multiplexes. By placing Bengali films in the spotlight — literally and figuratively — this move seeks to empower homegrown stories, create equitable screen time for local creators, and foster a cultural resurgence through cinema. Industry insiders believe this step could usher in a renaissance for Bengali cinema, both in terms of storytelling and box-office performance. With guaranteed visibility, filmmakers will have greater creative freedom to experiment with diverse themes rather than catering solely to commercial for-

mulas. Independent directors, often sidelined by lack of screens, are expected to benefit greatly from this decision, giving audiences access to bold, fresh narratives. The move also comes at a time when Bengali cinema has been regaining momentum on the national and international

employment and stability in an industry that has long been volatile. Moreover, cultural analysts argue that prioritizing local cinema helps preserve regional identity and language in a rapidly globalizing entertainment market. In a state where cinema has historically played a



Satyajit Ray.

Source: Google File Photo

al stage, with several films earning accolades at global film festivals. Exhibitors have pointed out that audience turnout for Bengali films often peaks during festive seasons like Durga Puja, but without adequate slots, many films previously struggled to capitalize on the demand. B Film technicians, too, see this as an opportunity for greater

vital role in shaping cultural consciousness, this initiative is being viewed as both an economic and a cultural necessity. The decision reflects a recognition that cinema is not just entertainment. The success of this initiative will ultimately depend on how wholeheartedly audiences embrace and support their own cinema.

INTERNATIONAL

YouTube launches AI-powered age checks using viewing habits in the US

Arkaprabha Banerjee (MA Sem 1)

YouTube has begun piloting an artificial intelligence-based age-verification system in the United States, a move that could redefine how platforms protect younger users online. Launched quietly in late July, the trial is being tested on a limited number of accounts and is designed to identify under-18 users even if they enter a false date of birth at signup. The system relies on machine learning to analyse factors such as a user's viewing history, search activity, and account age. If the AI detects behaviour patterns suggesting that an account belongs to a minor, it automatically places that account under stricter safeguards. These include disabling personalised advertising, activating wellbeing tools like "take a break" reminders, and limiting exposure to repetitive, addictive, or age-inappropriate content. According to YouTube, the goal is to create a safer online environment for children and teenagers without requiring them to upload sensitive identification documents upfront. The move has triggered mixed reactions. A widely circulated change-

org petition opposing the feature has already gathered tens of thousands of signatures, highlighting fears of excessive data monitoring and the risk of misclassification. Critics argue that the system lacks transparency, with YouTube providing few details on exactly



YouTube Tests AI Age Checks

Source- Google File Photo

how the AI draws its conclusions. Concerns also centre on the appeals process: users who are wrongly flagged may be asked to provide government-issued IDs, credit card details, or even facial selfies to prove their age. Privacy advocates warn that this could expose users to unnecessary data risks and undermine the principle of online anonymity.

Supporters, however, see the experiment as a necessary step in strengthening online child safety. In the U.S., lawmakers have been steadily increasing pressure on social media platforms and video-sharing sites to reduce minors' access to harmful content. Sever-

al states have already introduced or are considering laws that mandate stronger parental controls, and Congress continues to debate nationwide child safety legislation. Against this backdrop, YouTube's AI-driven verification trial appears to be a pre-emptive effort to align with regulatory expectations. Parents and educators remain di-

vided. Some welcome the additional protections, viewing them as long overdue in an online landscape where harmful content can easily slip through filters. Others remain worried that the AI may cast too wide a net, flagging innocent behaviour or failing to adapt to cultural and contextual nuances in viewing habits. The development also raises questions about the future of digital identity online. If age and personal attributes can be inferred through algorithms rather than self-declaration, platforms may gain unprecedented influence over how users are categorised and treated. For critics, this signals a slippery slope toward greater algorithmic control of user experience, closing gaps in traditional systems. Such predictive profiling could affect access to services, content visibility, and even pricing, raising questions about fairness and transparency. As platforms increasingly rely on automated assessments, the balance of power may shift further away from users, making oversight and accountability more crucial than ever. Without proper regulation, these systems could inadvertently reinforce biases and social inequalities.

Monsoon mayhem: South Asia reels under relentless rain and flooding

Shomili Mukherjee (MA Sem 1)

South Asia is in the grip of a devastating monsoon season, with unrelenting rainfall triggering catastrophic flooding, landslides, and widespread disruption. The extreme weather has claimed the lives of over 400 people across the region and left thousands displaced or stranded, as entire towns battle with rising waters and collapsed infrastructure.

India: Cities Under Siege

In India, the financial capital Mumbai bore the brunt of torrential downpours, receiving more than 200 millimetres of rainfall on 16 August alone. Low-lying areas were quickly inundated, halting suburban train services and paralysing public transport. A red alert was issued by the India Meteorological Department (IMD), warning of continuing heavy rain for two days.

Tragedy struck in the Jankalayan area, where a landslide killed two people and injured two others. Meanwhile, the southern state of Kerala has been placed under orange alert, with weather officials forecasting further intense rainfall.

The deluge has severely affected commercial activities. Across northern India, food delivery networks and rapid

commerce operations collapsed due to widespread waterlogging. The hospitality sector has seen a dramatic slump, with some restaurants, including popular chains such as Mainland China and Oh! Calcutta, reporting a 50% fall in



South Asia Struggles Amid Monsoon Floods

Source- Google File Photo

business over the weekend. Delhi-NCR, Haryana, Punjab, and Pune experienced severe traffic congestion and flight delays, while in the hill states of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, more than 300 roads have been blocked by landslides. Authorities have issued orange alerts for both states, urging residents to remain indoors and avoid mountainous routes. The southern districts of Odisha have

reported high winds and storms, and states such as Telangana, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, and Uttar Pradesh are bracing for more downpours. In Bengaluru, persistent waterlogging continues under a yellow alert, disrupt-

ing both movement and daily routines. According to the IMD's latest seven-day forecast, most parts of India can expect heavy to very heavy rainfall, with orange alerts in effect for potential evacuations in vulnerable zones. Yellow alerts remain active in Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Thane.

Pakistan, Kashmir, and Nepal: Human Cost Mounts
Elsewhere in South Asia, the situation

has turned even grimmer. In Pakistan, flash floods have claimed 321 lives in just 48 hours, with entire villages in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa washed away. Among the casualties were five crew members of a relief helicopter, which crashed while delivering aid.

In Indian-administered Kashmir, 60 people are confirmed dead and at least 200 are missing in the remote village of Chashoti, where locals described the terrifying force of boulders and floodwaters crashing through homes in the dead of night.

In Nepal, authorities have reported 41 deaths and over 120 people injured, as heavy rains caused landslides and river overflows across several districts.

Warnings and Emergency Measures
Governments across the region are urging the public to stay informed through official weather bulletins and to avoid non-essential travel. Citizens are being advised to stock up on emergency supplies, especially in areas under red and orange alerts.

As rescue operations continue and predict more heavy rain ahead, millions face uncertain and extremely challenging days, united in their struggle against nature's fury. Communities rally, showing resilience amid destruction.

ENTERTAINMENT

Bollywood's golden memories shine again as nostalgia drives a re-release boom

Mrinmoyee Dey (MA Sem 1)

New Delhi : "Filmein sirf teen cheezon ki wajah se chalti hain- entertainment, entertainment, entertainment. Aur main entertainment hoon," declared actor Vidya Balan in a line that has since become emblematic of Hindi cinema's enduring appeal. Today, that spirit of sheer escapism is helping to fuel a striking new trend across India's film industry: the return of beloved classics to the big screen.

Indian cinema predates the nation's independence and has evolved through distinct eras. The 1940s to early 1960s are widely hailed as Bollywood's "Golden Era", when masterpieces such as Awaara (1951) and Mother India (1957) defined the language of popular film. By the late 1960s and 1970s, storylines grew bolder and more action-driven, culminating in the landmark Sholay (1975), still celebrated as one of the industry's most profitable ventures.

The late 1980s through the early 2000s brought sweeping changes in style and production. Romantic blockbusters like Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge (1995) and Jab We Met (2007) set new benchmarks for audience devotion, while the

early 2000s heralded technical leaps with science-fiction hits such as Koi Mil Gaya (2003) and Ra.One (2011). Each generation left an indelible mark on India's cultural imagination.

In recent years, however, nostalgia has begun to eclipse novelty. Valen-



Timeless gems of classic Bollywood cinema

Source- Google File Photo

time's Week 2024 saw packed houses for re-releases of Kal Ho Naa Ho, Rockstar, DDLJ, Jab We Met and Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani. August of the same year celebrated anniversaries of cult romances Laila Majnu and Rehnaa Hai Terre Dil Mein, while 2025 continues the trend with more classic titles returning to theatres.

Audiences, it seems, are eager to relive the magic. "Watching these films in a cinema again is like meeting old friends," says Mumbai-based film enthusiast Priya Mehta, who attended multiple re-screenings. "Streaming is convenient, but nothing matches the

thrill of a packed theatre and a collective gasp at an iconic scene." For producers and exhibitors, re-releases make sound business sense. The cost of restoring and marketing an old film is a fraction of what it takes to mount a new production, yet ticket sales can rival those of contemporary blockbusters. In an era of rising budgets and risk-

averse investors, re-screenings help fill otherwise empty auditoriums.

Social media has amplified the effect. Viral reels, fan edits and memes breathe new life into older titles, introducing them to younger viewers who may never have experienced them in cinemas. "A single trending clip on Instagram can reignite demand for a film made twenty years ago," notes trade analyst Komal Nahta.

Industry insiders also see the re-release boom as a quiet critique of current filmmaking. Many recent high-budget projects have faltered, hampered by weak scripts, formulaic remakes and a reliance on star power over storytelling. "Audiences crave compelling narratives and emotional resonance," says screenwriter Anjali Menon. "If newer films fail to provide that, people will naturally gravitate back to the classics."

Shifting tastes and economic pressures, the widespread embrace of nostalgia shows no sign of waning. Re-releases revive timeless cinema classics worldwide, blending nostalgia with enduring fan excitement, renewed appreciation, global enthusiasm, and lasting box office success.

SPORTS

Calafiori's strike secures Arsenal victory over Manchester United

Supratik Sengupta (MA Sem 1)

Manchester : Arsenal began their Premier League campaign with a narrow yet crucial 1-0 triumph over Manchester United at Old Trafford on Sunday, in a match that showcased both tactical discipline and tense drama. Riccardo Calafiori emerged as the hero for the visitors, scoring an early header that ultimately decided the contest, leaving the home side frustrated despite dominating possession and creating numerous chances. The breakthrough came in the 13th minute when United goalkeeper Altay Bayindir misjudged a corner delivery, allowing Calafiori to react first and powerfully nod the ball into the net. The early strike set the tone for a tight encounter, with Arsenal then sitting deep and maintaining their defensive shape, forcing United to chase the game. Manchester United responded immediately, ramping up their attacking efforts with impressive spells of possession. They registered 22 shots in total and controlled 62% of the ball, with players like Matheus Cunha, Bryan Mbeumo, and Patrick Dorgu repeat-

edly testing Arsenal's defence. Dorgu struck the post in the second half, while a late penalty appeal for a foul on Cunha was dismissed, adding to the home side's mounting frustration.



Calafiori's early header stuns United

Source- ESPN

Despite the attacking pressure, Arsenal's defensive resilience proved pivotal. David Raya, in goal for the visitors, produced several key saves to preserve the clean sheet, while Calafiori not only contributed with the match-winning goal but also organised the back line with composure and authority. The

visitors' discipline frustrated United throughout, leaving the hosts unable to convert their dominance into goals. New signing Viktor Gyökeres had limited involvement on his Arsenal debut,

but the team's collective defensive focus ensured that United's attacking threats were contained. The match also highlighted Arsenal's strength in set pieces, a factor that could play a major role in their season ahead. For Manchester United, the result offered mixed signals. While there were

glimpses of attacking promise under new manager Rúben Amorim, sloppy defensive errors and a lack of clinical finishing proved costly. The frustration was evident among the home crowd as their team struggled to break down a well-organised Arsenal side. The victory provides a significant confidence boost for Mikel Arteta's men as they kick off their campaign, underlining their tactical discipline, defensive organisation, and ability to capitalise on key moments. At the final whistle, Arsenal celebrated a hard-fought away win, while Manchester United were left to reflect on missed opportunities and what might have been in a frustrating start to their season. Looking ahead, Arsenal will take confidence from their ability to manage pressure and grind out results consistently on the road, a key trait for any serious title-contending side. Arsenal's set-piece strength and discipline make them a tough opponent, while United's defensive flaws raise concerns for Amorim. Both sides now look to refine tactics and build momentum in the season ahead.

PHOTO GALLERY



Divyansh Jhunjhunwala, MA (Sem 1)

Whispers of Light



Divyansh Jhunjhunwala, MA (Sem 1)

One gentle giant



Yamisha Singh, MA (Sem 1)

Little lives



Anthony Suman Britto, MA (Sem 1)

Bringing one Goddesses to life



Krittika Roy, MA (Sem 1)

The essential element of our faith



Divyansh Jhunjhunwala, MA (Sem 1)

Divine feet



Sneha Barua, MA(Sem 1)

City of Joy in silhouette



Sagnik Ghosh, MA (Sem 1)

A royal sunset over Kolkata's crown



Mrinmoyee Dey, MA (Sem 1)

Intricate details, timeless devotion

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