International students celebrate Bengali New Year in traditional style

Women dressed in their traditional clothing enjoy the Bengali New Year’s festivities.

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This year, University of Louisiana at Lafayette students from Bangladesh, India and Pakistan celebrated one of the biggest festivals in their culture, blending Bengali culture of food, love of arts, literature and music on April 8 in Café Chi Alpha.

Pohela Boishak, or the Bengali New Year, falls on April 14 or 15 every year with regard to the Gregorian calendar. However, according to the Bengali calendar, the current year is 1424. The name itself is derived from the word “Baishakh,” which is the first month of their calendar.

Indira Kalyan, showcased the Bengali culture.

Fabiane Speyrer, a student from Brazil at UL Lafayette pursuing her master’s in geology, portrayed a bride in an event that portrayed the Bengali wedding show as a part of the Bengali New Year Celebrations. Her husband, Ryan, a Lafayette local and also an alumnus, who she married last May, said he was more than happy to be her bridegroom for the second time — this time, a traditional “Bengali.”

She was approached by John Rahat, a member of the Bangladeshi Students Association and a UL Lafayette alumnus, to perform.

“Like Fabien and Ryan that experienced this evening, we want more locals to learn and be a part of our cultural celebrations thus, creating a big family like we do back home,” Rahat added.

Suchandra Hazra, a student at UL Lafayette and a new mother to a 3-month-old Hrik, the youngest member of the audience, put together a choreography with other participants depicting traditional dances such as “Bharatnatyam” and “Odissi,” with a hint of jazz that swayed the audience. The songs sung by the participants were composed of Bengali movie songs, band music and traditional folk songs. Poetry recitations, especially those written by Rabindranath Tagore, commonly referred to as the “Bard of Bengal,” were presented as well.

Following the performances, Bengali cuisine was served to the guests. Biryani, mutton curry and ras malai, a dessert, was the highlight. The night ended with guests dancing to traditional Bengali music.