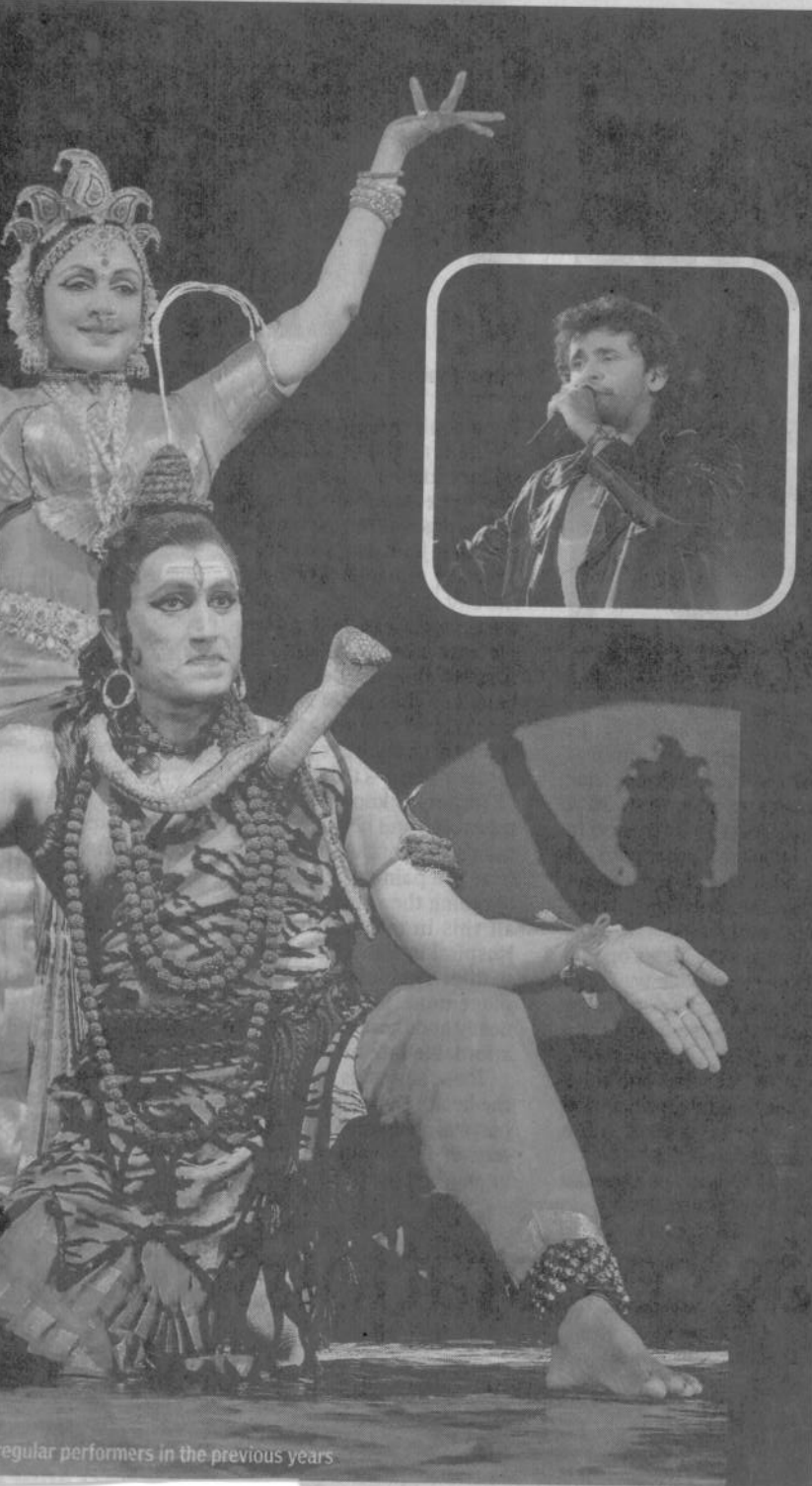


Added cultural events lined Durga Puja

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regular performers in the previous years

Srishti Shinde

One of the biggest festivals of the Bengalis, Durga puja, is just round the corner, and associated festivities have already begun.

Apart from the joy of being able to see Goddess Durga after a year, people are also excited about all the small and big things associated with the festival. The rituals, the importance of each day, new clothes, and top class entertainment programmes that they will get to see during those four days.

This year too each and every association has planned their best to make sure that their people have the best Durga Puja. All of them have lined up great cultural extravaganzas for those days. Starting with one of the biggest Durga Pujas in Navi Mumbai, that is the Sarvajanic Vashi Durga Puja done by Asit Ghosh and his committee members.

He has lined up star performers who will be performing at this year's puja, and people are looking forward to watching them. "We have a very simple yet attractive line-up of cultural events starting with well-known Bengali Adhunik singer Prateik Choudhury on Shashti, Kavita Krishnamurty on Saptami, Shanklar Mahadevan on Maha Ashtami and Shaan on Nabami. Everyone is welcome to get a glimpse of these stars at our Durga Puja and have a great time," said Ghosh.

Subhash Talukdar, cultural committee convenor of Vashi Cultural Association (VCA) said that his organisation always tries to uphold Bengali traditions during Durga Puja. Hence, all their programmes have this Bangla touch and feel to it. "On the first day, that is Shashti, a local drama troupe will perform a play called 'Gorur Gadir Headlight'. On Saptami, there will be an entertaining performance by an upcoming Bengali folk band called 'Ujaniya' from Kolkata. On the

main day, that is Ashtami, we have Ayan Bannerjee, another famous singer from Kolkata, performing at our fest. Our prime attraction is Rabindranath's Valmiki, which will be performed by 70 prison inmates from Kolkata. This programme is a rehabilitation initiative for prison inmates taken up by the West Bengal government and Alokandanda Roy, a famous Odissi dancer. On Nabami, we will have Jayati Chakroborty, renowned Rabindra Sangeet singer and Crosswindz, a premier folk rock fusion band."

To make the Puja last longer, Bengali Cultural Association of Kharghar (BCAK) has planned its cultural extravaganza right from Panchami, when the idols of the Goddess are brought to the pandals. Along with folk songs, dramas and other dance performances, one special programme that the association has scheduled is a adhunik song performance by Sriradha Bandopadhyay, who is an extremely well-known singer from West Bengal. "Every year, we mostly have performances by local talents and members of our association, since it gives a rather homely feel to the puja. However, this year's special attraction is Sriradha Bandopadhyay," said Pradip Sinharoy, secretary of BCAK.

Milantirtha in New Panvel too planned a grand cultural programme from Panchami. "Every day, we'll have something with a local flavour. We will have some well-known artists from Kolkata and Bollywood. Kolkata-based band, Mahul, will perform on Panchami. On Shashti, we will have Sriradha Bandopadhyay. On Saptami, there will be local performances by Milantirtha members. On Ashtami, Prateik Choudhury will perform and on Nabami, Mohd. Aziz and company will entertain the audience," said Dipankar Chakroborty, a member of the club. In fact, Milantirtha has a programme on Bijoya Dashami too, a performance by hit singer Subhomita.