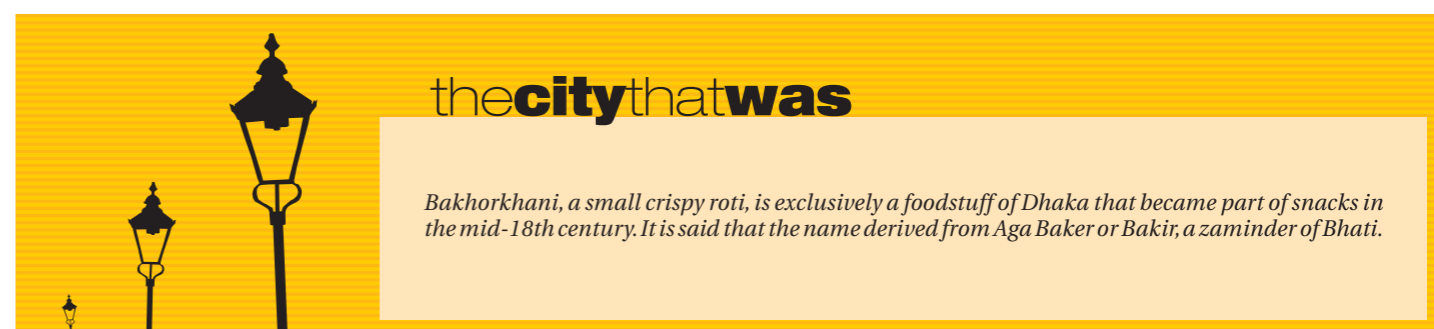




# Star city

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DHAKA WEDNESDAY APRIL 16, 2003



## Jive, glee greet Noboborsho



Students of Fine Arts Institute sing old sorrows away.

## CITY REPORT

It's the beginning of a new morning with a bold assertion of going beyond.

A celebration of a new day with serene instrumental recitals and elegant dance, choric songs and resonant poetry.

Thousands poured onto Dhaka streets, defying the blazing sun and blowing dust, to stream into the yearly carnival of Pohela Boishakh or Noboborsho on Monday. The Ramna Park, the focal point of Bangla New Year celebration, turned into a human sea dubbed by many as the biggest of Pohela Boishakh gatherings in decades. Women decked out in saris and men in punjabis were all rejoicing in unbounded animation.

People of all ages and from all walks of life came out of their homes - couples and lovers hand in hand, children tagging along with their parents,

the elderly guided by others and friends on a procession-like walk.

Security was tightened around the Ramna Batamul where *Chhayanaut*, a cultural group of the 1960s, organised a programme to welcome the Bangla year 1410 with an instrumental prelude in the early morning. The raga-based episode was followed by Tagore, Nazrul and folk-patriotic songs at the high-profile event in shadow of trees.

The road from the Shahbagh crossing to the Shishu Academy left and the Jatiya Press Club right was teeming with people carrying festoons, wearing colourful masks and dancing in small groups to the musical sounds wafting all around. A massive colourful procession by the students of Fire Arts Institute came along amid cheers of jubilant crowds only to amplify the festive mood to a joyful gala.

This year, the New Year celebration was tinged

with anti-war tempers. The Fine Arts Institute procession carried a symbolic "Statue of Liberty" with its scales lopsided, the world on one side and dollars and missiles on the other. The statue symbolises America's partial worldview and 'imperialist justice', explained Shakal Samujjal of the Fine Arts Institute.

The festivities were not concentrated in the Ramna Batamul. The Fine Arts Institute and the Teachers-Students Centre premises were cheerful with urbanites who broke free of homely confines in pursuit of fun in the open on the holiday.

The spirit of the celebration spread from house to house. The day began with city dwellers preparing special dishes, exchanging greetings and offering gifts and bouquets. The waltz of the day died down, but its spirit will remain embedded in people's minds until the next Bangla New Year's Day.



A boy buys a handmade dhol and a father, right, gives his daughter a piggyback ride at a Pohela Boishakh fair in the Ramna Park.

## A start from scratch

*Halkhata* is the ceremony of keeping a new ledger, covered in red cloth, for a new year and treating customers to sweets.

## CITY CORRESPONDENT

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The Bangla New Year's day was a public holiday, city markets remained open because of *halkhata*.

The business community observes *halkhata* as a mark of good relations between sellers and customers, on which every business thrives. *Halkhata* is the ceremony of keeping a new ledger, covered in red cloth, for a new year and treating customers to sweets. The customers pay their dues and buy new items from shops for family members.

The festive mood of *halkhata*

is observed everywhere especially at big markets. Jewellery shops at the Baitul Mukarram market had a special seating arrangement for their customers. "We sent invitation cards to our customers for the New Year... *Halkhata* is also a marketing policy," said Suman Dash of Sananda Jeweller's.

Delwar Hossain, a businessman from Tikatuli, was among the invited customers who congregated at the market. Delwar took the delivery of his wife's ring. "The jewellery shop also gives handbags and sweets packs as gifts," he said.

"We have been observing

*halkhata* for long... it was a big event for my ancestors," said Partha of a musical instrument shop.

Hindu businessmen and some Muslims observed *halkhata* yesterday according to the Loknath Panjika (calendar) that differs with Dr Qudrat-e-Khuda's.

"Next year, all Bangalees will be able to observe *halkhata* together if the Loknath Panjika counts the same number of days as in the Qudrat-e-Khuda calendar," says Sukamal, a musician.



SK ENAMUL HAQ

## SIDEWALK DELICACIES

## Feel the fluffy floss

## CITY CORRESPONDENT

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Their faces glisten, their eyes sparkle, as they notice the man put a handful of sugar and a pinch of colour in the machine. Then he spins it round and round.

Patience is not the word that suits these children. It doesn't take much time, though. Once the man is finished, they pay him Tk 5, then grab the sticks of 'Hawai Mithai' or candyfloss and start enjoying themselves.

Candyfloss always adds a striking colour to the childhood. Even for adults, the fluffy sweetened wayside treat of melted sugar always evokes the sweet memories of their childhood.



SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

"It is nothing but sugar and colour," notes Muslimuddin, Hawai-Mithaiwala, in front of the Dhanmondi Lake. "We get the colour from Chawkbazar that is used in making lozenges," he adds. Apart from sugar and colour, only a machine and some sticks are needed for the business, says Muslimuddin. The machine costs about Tk5000.

The Hawai-Mithaiwala earns Tk3000 a month. Moreover, kids like Humayun

Kabir and Mamun gets some money when they sell candyfloss at traffic signals and in front of school gate.

"We get a commission of Tk 1 for selling one candy-floss," Humayun gleefully divulges. Humayun and his friends feast on four to five Hawai Mithai everyday.

Children are the biggest buyers of candyfloss. "Despite all my scolding and dentist's frown, my son literally gorges himself on it," broods Nasreen Haque,

mother of a five-year-old. "I know he should not have it since it is bad for his teeth but I've to give in to his tears," she adds.

"It is so sweet," says Nowsheen, a four-year-old when asked why she loves candyfloss. "I don't like the white one, only pink," she goes on saying while nibbling a Hawai Mithai.

Some adults also find it hard to resist the temptation to savour one, said most of the candy floss sellers. "I always

drooled for Hawai Mithai while I was a kid," recalls Syed Subeh Ashraf, a student of Dhaka University. "Even now I take a look around to see if somebody is noticing me before buying one. You know, I'm too old and too fatty for that," he continues.

Winter is the season for Hawai Mithai. Summer sees a slump in the sales since people do not like having much sweet during the blistering heat, the sellers say.

hello  
dhaka

## Markets &amp; museums closed

Gulshan 1, 2 markets- Friday  
Elephant Road- Friday  
Bishal Center- Friday  
Neelkhet Hawkers Market- Friday  
Baitul Mukarram Market- Friday  
Gulistan Hawkers Market- Friday  
Polwell Market- Friday  
BCS Computer City- Friday  
Isha Khan Shopping Comp.- Friday  
Rajlaxmi Complex- Friday  
Stadium Market- Friday  
Bangabazar Market- Friday  
National Museum- Thursday  
Ahsan Manzil- Thursday  
Sonargaon Jadughar- Wednesday