

A day of red and yellow

MATHEWS CHIRAN and HASSAN MUNHAMANNA

Dhaka is known for its festivities. Be it Eid, Puja, or Pahela Baishakh celebrations, there's at least a few occasions that are celebrated en masse every month.

And yet yesterday stood out.

As two days --- Valentine's Day and Pahela Falgun -- converged into one, it seemed it was not just the people who dressed up yesterday, but the entire city of Dhaka wore a different outlook.

Everywhere one looked, the city was painted in Valentine's red and Falgun's yellow.

It was also a day for the youth. While people from all ages came out to celebrate, it was young couples who took over the streets. Clad in yellow and red, they could be seen visiting and hanging out everywhere, as if to make sure they were the most noticeable demographic of the day.

Dating destinations were aplenty too. While some chose to go to the month-long book fair, some others chose restaurants and eateries. There were also such options as Valentine's or Falgun events or concerts, city landmarks, parks and shopping malls, or just travelling by rickshaw or seeing the day out chatting on the boulevard.

For example, newly-engaged couple Md Rafsan and Ipshita spent their time strolling at a park in Gulshan. "It's a special day, with two 'days' coinciding on the same day. But it's more special for us as we've just gotten engaged this year. Getting to go out on this beautiful day is going to be memorable," Rafsan said, smiling at his significant other. The couple were perhaps more in the spirit of Falgun than Valentine's Day as they wore matching outfits in yellow.

"We are a couple now, so we've come out wearing matching dresses. This is not new for us though, we have been doing this since our university days," Ipshita said.

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Ekushey book fair witnessed one of its highest turnouts yesterday, as people flooded Bangla Academy and Suhrawardy Udyan, marking both Pahela Falgun and Valentine's Day. Inset, families were seen donning red and yellow attires on this special day.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Two celebrations add spark

SAYED MOHMUD ULLAH

There's a book for almost everything, whether it be showing affection to a special someone, or celebrating one's tradition. But what happens if you need a book that can express both? Yesterday was such an occasion, because it welcomed the first day of spring while love was in the air, and there's no book on that as of yet.

Marking Pahela Falgun and Valentine's Day, the two venues of Amar Ekushey Grantha Mela -- Bangla Academy and Suhrawardy Udyan -- and their adjacent areas, including Teacher-Student Centre (TSC) of Dhaka University (DU), were flooded with enthusiastic book lovers dressed in red and yellow, as both occasions were celebrated together for the first time.

In the evening, couples wearing saris and panjabis, with flowers in their hands, flocked to the fair grounds. Many were seen gifting books to their loved ones.

"Books are the epitome of knowledge, and that's why we buy each other books on special days," said Nilima Jahan, a third-year student of DU's theatre and performance department.

Nilima and her boyfriend Sanwarul Haque Sony, who graduated from the same department, came to the fair after enjoying a gala concert at TSC in the afternoon.

Sales of romantic novels and poetry titles by popular writers -- including Humayun Ahmed, Syed Shamsul Haque and Nirmalendu Goon, among others -- were booming on the day, said respective publishers.

"Seeing these youngsters engrossed in books on special



MIGRANT WORKERS IN SAUDI ARABIA

102 more return home

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Saudi Arabia sent back another 102 Bangladeshi migrant workers on Thursday night amid a deportation spree.

The Gulf country has sent back 183 migrant workers including 20 female workers in two separate flights on Wednesday night and Thursday early hours.

The latest deportees arrived at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka in a Saudi Airlines flight around 11:20pm on Thursday, according to Brac Migration Programme.

After their arrival, Brac with the help of Prabashi Kalyan Desk set up by the expatriates' welfare ministry at the airport provided them with immediate support.

With them, some 4,000 Bangladeshi migrant workers including 175 female workers have returned from the Gulf country this year, Brac said.

Shariful Hasan, head of Brac Migration

Programme, said on an average about 50,000 Bangladeshi migrant workers are deported by different countries each year.

Many of the workers returned home "empty-handed", said Shariful.

He urged recruiting agencies to be more mindful while sending workers abroad so that they do not have to return home in this manner.

On the latest Saudi deportees, Shariful said the authorities concerned should collect the workers' accounts and find out the reason behind their deportation.

He also called upon the government and Bangladesh mission authorities in the Kingdom to identify the reasons.

Chalking out a work plan to support the returning migrant workers is necessary, he said, adding that Brac has initiatives to provide such deported workers with counselling, skill training and financial support.

Bringing discipline in media a must

Says info minister

AGENCIES

Information Minister Dr Hasan Mahmud yesterday stressed the need for bringing discipline in the media as the country saw an exponential growth in the sector in last 10 years.

"Today, media does not mean newspaper only. It includes newspapers, televisions, radios and online news portals... the canvas has changed in last 10 years," he told a meeting, reports BSS. Bangladesh Press Council (BPC) arranged the event at its office, marking Press Council Day.

Speaking as chief guest, the minister said many challenges are now added to media as it has seen a rapid growth. He also observed that if any fake news is published, it may cause harm to the society and state.

The minister said social media is an unedited platform and it is not a medium even though many consider it as such. Some also start to introduce themselves as journalists through showing cards of online portals but they are not actual journalists, he added.

Hasan, also the Awami League joint general secretary,

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'It's a matter of court'

Quader about releasing Khaleda on parole

AGENCIES

Releasing BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia on parole is a matter of the court, said Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday.

"It's a matter of the court. She [Khaleda] is in jail in corruption cases. The government would have considered releasing her if it was a political case," he told reporters at Awami League president's political office in Dhanmondi, reports UNB.

Parole is a conditional release of an inmate before completion of the sentence.

Quader said BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir asked him over phone to inform Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina about Khaleda's release on parole.

"He [Fakhru] called me and requested to place the issue before the prime minister. I've discussed it with the home and law ministers. They didn't receive any

application in this regard," Quader said.

The minister also urged BNP to shun negativity and avoid politics of conflict, violence and revenge. If they do so, Quader said, public support for BNP will increase, reports BSS.

Replying to a query, he said the graft case against the BNP chief was filed during the caretaker government. So, the case is not political and the government has nothing to do with it.

He, however, told journalist that the government is providing better treatment to Begum Zia as they are quite sincere about it.

Quader said the statement made by BNP leaders about Khaleda's health condition did not match the report provided by physicians.

Khaleda Zia, a former prime minister, has been in jail since February 8, 2018. She was convicted in two corruption cases. Her

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DHAKA TODAY

LECTURE

From Bangabandhu to
Viswabandhu: Towards Global
Liberation Through Public
Reasoning
Organiser: Bangladesh
Economic Association
Venue: National Academy for
Planning and Development,
Kataban
Time: 3:30pm

AWARD CEREMONY

Six teachers will be honoured and
recognised for their contributions
towards society.
Organiser: Ethics Club of
Bangladesh
Venue: Bangladesh National
Museum
Time: 4pm

SEMINAR

Career in Animation and Digital

Marketing

Venue: EndingScene
Studio, Banani
Time: 10am

MUSIC

With Bay of Bengal
Venue: EMK Center
Time: 5:30pm

EXHIBITION

Whiny Women
Organiser: Women in Arts
Venue: SAVVA, Gulshan-2
Time: 12pm

WORKSHOP

Zine With Us
The event will centre around
self-publishing and magazines.
Organiser: Goethe-Institut and
HerStory Foundation,
Venue: Goethe-Institut
Bangladesh
Time: 10am

NID reg for expats in UK, Ireland begins

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh High Commission in London has started the formal registration of Bangladeshi expatriates in the UK and Ireland to provide them with the national identity (NID) cards.

The inaugural event was held at the high commission in London on Wednesday in presence of Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) KM Nural Huda, the High Commission said in a statement yesterday.

The UK is the first among western countries from where Bangladeshi expatriates can have their registration done online to get NID cards.

Bangladesh High Commissioner to UK and Ireland Saida Muna Tasneem thanked the CEC and the Election Commission for their support to bring this service to the doorsteps of the Bangladeshi expatriates in the UK.

CEC Huda said Bangladeshi-British nationals can now be registered online for NID cards from their homes. Upon verification of their information, the applicants will be advised to come to the help desk at the high commission or embassy to provide their finger prints.

Subsequently, NID cards will be given to eligible applicants through the help desk of their respective country, which will be opened in due course.

Tasneem said in London they will be observing a "Mujib Borsho Special Consular Week" from March 23 when they are planning to handover the first batch of NID cards.