

Dhaka Day by Day

The Ubiquitous Vapa Pitha

by Neil Ray

Poush parbane pitha khete 'bosey khushite bisham khye aro illas bariache moner mayer bokunt peye. The author of this beautiful verse could not be more precise in evoking the real atmosphere and mood of the occasion. But no one will be in doubt that it is a rural affair and goes well with the post-harvest festivities there. Today, the tradition is still carried on in villages but certainly on a low key. The villages are on an inexorable decline and the Poush Parban (Pitha festival) — too is giving a poor account of itself.

However, what the villages are hard-pressed to retain as a tradition, the cities are quite capable of aping. One such poor imitation of the Poush Parban is the pitha mela or festival organised by various women groups or even a few premier organisations. Much of the pomp and gaudy festive looks smacks of a sort of affection. The rustic simplicity and easy way of traditional folk culture is what is found missing here. But there is a different kind of competitive pitha culture in the cities. Already, the capital city appears to have come to terms with this new found love for the seasonal pitha.

Vapa Pitha, by which name this delicacy is known here, has become quite popular with the common people, already. Their ubiquitous presence on footpaths, in the side alleys or at the corner of the roads or right in the middle — no joking — of the streets, can be a strong guide how the temporary and innocent-looking eaters of this pitha variety has taken the city by storm. At dawn, when darkness still keeps the world still enveloped, a trail of black smoke slowly approaches the sky above through the mist and fog. One may have the wrong notion of poor people making fire to keep their bodies warm from the biting cold. But as you come closer, you know this is an arrangement for the preparation of that delicious vapa.

It does not take a lot of utensils or ingredients to prepare the item, neither is it a complex

preparation. A pot tightly fastened with a cover that also has an opening in the middle does the cooking and small round bowl-like thing is required to shape the pitha. Fine rice flour, molasses and skinned coconut are all that are needed for preparation of vapa. These ingredients are placed adeptly in the round bowl and suddenly applying a little force overturned the container to give the pitha its uniform shape. Now this single pitha is put on the big pot in which water has already been boiling. The vapour helps the pitha to get adequately boiled. Boiled, it also sends vapour steaming out of it and now it is ready for serving. In the wintry morning, steaming hot vapa adds a special taste to the palate.

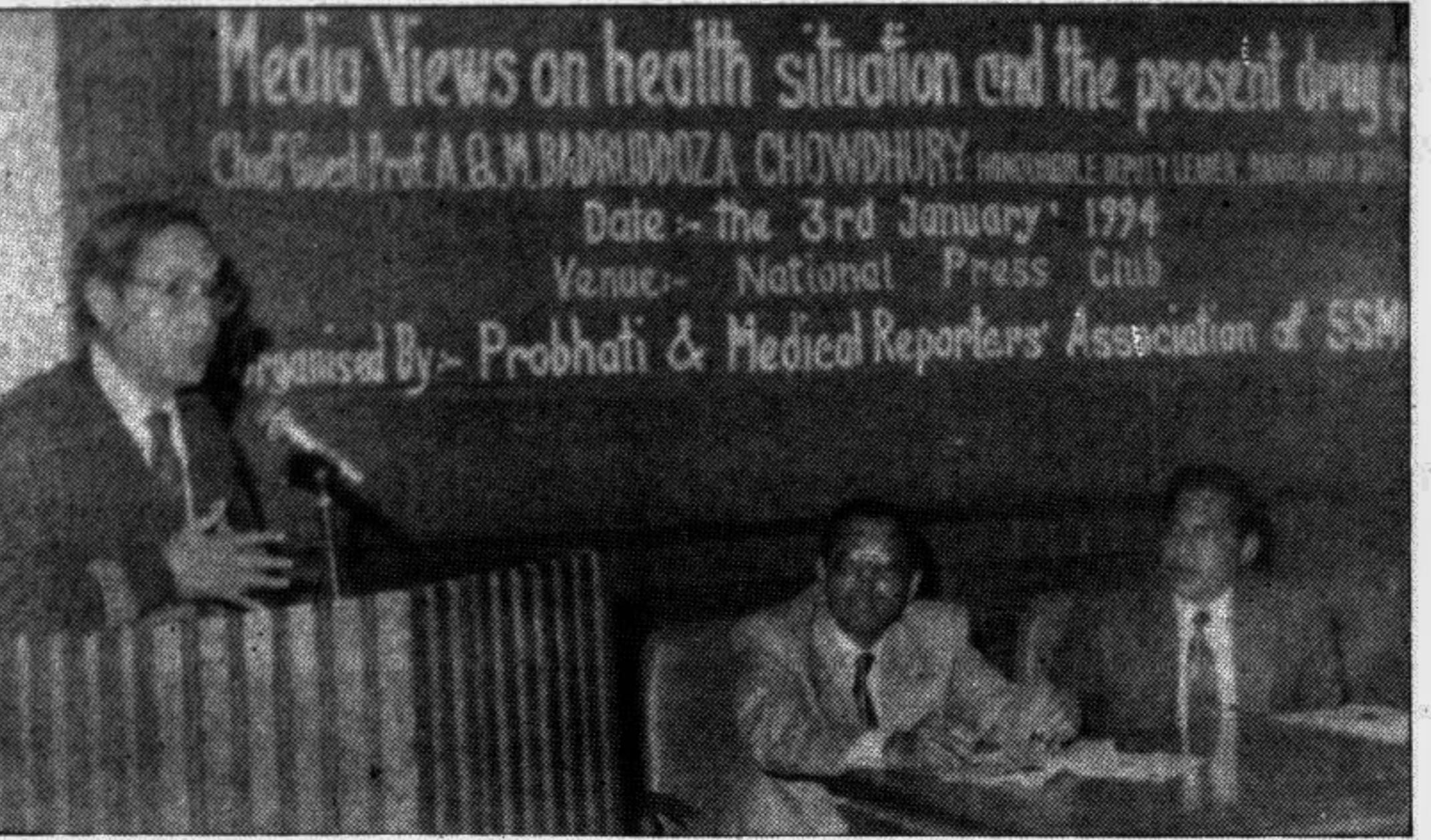
But so long the preparation of this delicate item has remained just an exclusive preserve for the lower class — mostly the slum people. They somehow manage a very small capital and start making the item anywhere they consider convenient for their unenviable enterprise. Their customer too are not very well off either. Priced at Tk one or Tk two depending on their sizes, the varieties are affordable by the poor class. This pitha can however be available at some of the most celebrated shops in the city. Although those shops have pithas as their speciality, they are yet to match their popularity with the general appeal for the footpath pithawallas.

Hygiene-conscious or health-faddy people are sure to shy of taking a bite of this footpath item, but there are some others who would relish it simply because, they argue, this variety gives a special taste and flavour not found in any other — made at home or in reputed pitha shops. The argument in favour of this street variety goes still further in that a kind of special culinary skill goes into the making of this delectable item. Whatever it is, winter and vapa pitha appear to be going well together. The city should be thankful to it for the addition of the variety to its already array of rich dishes.



CHARLIE '93

Metropolitan



Deputy Leader of the Parliament Prof AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury addressing a seminar on Media Views on Health Situation and the Present Drug Policy yesterday at Jatiya Press Club. Prophati, a voluntary social and health organisation, and Medical Reporters Association of Sir Salimullah Medical College Hospital jointly organised the seminar.

— Star photo

Badruddoza for quality medicine

Deputy leader of the House Prof A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury yesterday stressed the need for production of quality medicines, reports BSS.

Addressing a seminar, 'media views on health situation and the present drug policy' jointly organised by Prophati and Reporters Association of Sir Salimullah Medical College Hospital (SSMCH) at the chief guest at Jatiya Press Club here the deputy leader said there should be no politics with it.

"Every citizen has a right to have best medicine from any source whether at home or abroad," he asserted.

Prof Chowdhury favoured

healthy competition in the country's pharmaceutical sector. He sought cooperation from all the relevant quarters to help formulate a pro-people health policy.

Referring to the proposed health policy he said the committee for formulating the health policy already had two sittings. He said views of all opposition parties and professionals would be given due considerations in formulating it.

Presided over by Prophati chief Faruq Ahmed, the function was also addressed, among others, by Monirul Islam Khan, Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin and Director General of Health Services Prof Nurunnabi.

The outgoing 1993 has been a year of successes for Bangladesh in the international arena, reports BSS.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman was elected chairman of the board of governors of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on September 30, 1993. This was a rare honour for Bangladesh and during the next 100 years no South Asian will have the scope to become the chairman of the bank and the fund having membership of 187 countries.

Bangladesh also demonstrated an outstanding success by holding the spectacular Sixth South Asian Federation Games (SAF) in the end of December of the outgoing year as subsequent to holding of the SAARC summit in April last.

Japan gave its formal approval with regard to extending of economic assistance to Bangladesh for the Jamuna Multi-purpose Bridge Project in December 1993. The Japanese commitment in this regard, during the visit of the Finance Minister to Tokyo, is considered a diplomatic success for Bangladesh.

During the same year the Bangladesh aid group, in its consortium meeting in Paris, pledged a total assistance of 215 crore dollars, the highest

amount of its kind so far. This is, in fact, a recognition by the international community of the proper economic policies adopted by Bangladesh.

Communications Minister Oli Ahmed yesterday distributed the awards among the recipients at a simple ceremony in the conference room of Railway Bhawan.

Director General and Secretary of Bangladesh Railway Dr Mashru Rahman and high officials of the railway department were present at the function.

Oli Ahmed thanked the employees for their contribution to the railway. "We have taken some tough measures to regain the lost glory of railway," he said. Punitive measures have been taken to control corruption, halt misuse of money and ensure discipline in the railway. Award and appreciation have been introduced for good work.

The measures have already yielded positive results in the activities of the railway, Oli Ahmed said.

— Star photo

Bangladesh Airforce may extend training cooperation by providing flying instructors and other ground instructors, he told a four-member delegation led by Ahmed Abdulla Sultan Al-Kawari, Commander of Qatar Emiri Airforce, which called on President Biswas at Bangabhaban.

"Our relationship with Qatar is excellent. The cooperation between two airforces can be improved significantly through the Muslim brotherhood for mutual benefit," he further said.

The President conveyed his warm greetings to the Ameer of Qatar.

The visiting commander of Qatar Airforce hoped that cooperation would improve between the two airforces in the coming years. He appreciated the hospitalities extended to him and his delegation.

Secretary to the President Ataul Haq and Bangladesh Airforce chief Air Vice Marshal Alat Hossain Chowdhury were present on the occasion.

Capital to experience cold wave from mid Jan

Moderate cold wave is likely to sweep across the country during the middle of the current month with a fall of 4-6 degrees Celsius in the northern parts of the country.

Met Office Director Hamiduzzaman Khan told UNB last night that the mercury will come down to 10 degrees Celsius in the capital during the

period. The cold weather is likely to continue till the end of January with some variations, the Met Office director said, adding "after that the temperature will start rising slowly."

The "cold feeling" will continue till the middle of February, he added.

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10 January 1994

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OFFICE HOURS

8:30-11:30 am

& 3-4 pm

Friday closed

Founder-Principal

Muhammad Ashraful Hoque

Dhaka City Corporation

Zone-8 (Mirpur)

আপনার পরিবেশ সুন্দর ও পরিষ্কৃত রাস্তা
আপনার শিশুকে টিকা দিন

Re-Invitation for Quotation under Local Purchase

Dhaka City Corporation has received a loan (NR) 942-BAN (SF) from the Asian Development Bank towards the cost of Dhaka Urban Infrastructure Improvement Project (DUIIP). It is intended that part of the proceeds of this loan shall be applied to eligible payment for procurement under these contracts.

The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) now invites sealed quotation from eligible bidders for the supply of Plain Paper Copier Mode of purchase shall be Local Competitive Bidding (LCB).

Bidding document for plain paper Copier may be purchased by any interested eligible bidder from the undersigned and from all Zonal Offices of DCC on all working days during office hours on payment of a non-refundable fee of Tk 500.00 (five hundred) up to 12-01-94. No document will be sold on the date fixed for the submission of the bid.

All bids, accompanied by a bid money in the form of Pay Order in favour of 'Mayor' Dhaka City Corporation for a sum of not less than 2.5 (Two point five) per cent of total bid price, be delivered complete on or before 12-30 hours (local time) on 13-01-94. The bids shall be received by the undersigned and in all Zonal Offices of Dhaka City Corporation and the same shall be publicly opened at 13-00 hours on the same day in presence of the bidders or their representative who choose to be present.

DCC in no way shall be responsible for any costs or expenses incurred by bidders in connection with the preparation or delivery of bids.

The authority reserves the right to reject any or all the bids without assigning any reason thereof.

Executive Engineer

Zone-8 (Mirpur)

Dhaka City Corporation.

DAPMB's report submitted

A survey report on abandoned property in the metropolis was submitted yesterday to Works Minister Barrister Rafiqul Islam Mia, who is Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Works, reports UNB.

The report was submitted by the Dhaka Divisional Commissioner and Chairman of the Divisional Abandoned Property Management Board (DAPMB), Badruzzaman.

The board conducted a house-to-house survey and prepared the report to identify and solve the problems of the abandoned property in the city.

The DAPMB was constituted in 1990 at the instruction of the Works Minister.

The DAPMB's report submitted

Sealed tenders are hereby invited from reputed printing and advertising firms of Dhaka city for printing of Annual Reports of the Corporation for the year 1991-92 in Bengali and English languages separately. Each tender must accompany the following documents and be submitted to the Chief (MIS), Bangladesh Sugar & Food Industries Corporation, Adamjee Court (3rd floor), Motijheel Commercial Area, Dhaka within 12.00 Noon on the 25th January, 1994. The tender will be opened on the same day at 12.30 pm in presence of the tenderers, if any.

1. Evidence of tenderer's previous experience in offset printing of Annual Reports of Corporation/ Autonomous bodies/Banks/Large Industrial Organisation (sample copy to be enclosed).

2. Certificate of timely and satisfactory completion of such reports printed recently by the tenderer.