

Dhaka Day by Day

The Ubiquitous Vapa Pitha

by Neil Ray

Poush parbane pitha khete besev khushite bisham kheyte aro ullas bariache mone mayer bokunt pege. 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 limitation 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 affectation. The rustic simplicity and easy way of traditional folk culture is what is found missing here. But there is a different kind of compensatory 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 caterers 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.



CARTOON '93

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 Probhati 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 Probhati 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.

'93 a year of success for Bangladesh

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.

Five rly-men awarded

Five railway employees have been given Communications Minister Award '93 in recognition of their outstanding performance, reports UNB.

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 Mashur 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.



AKM Nurul Islam, president of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, speaking at a function organised to mark the 42nd founding anniversary of the society at its auditorium yesterday afternoon. Also seen in the picture seated are Professor Sardar Fazlul Karim (C) and society's General Secretary Dr Hasna Begum. — Star photo

Weather

Dry weather likely

By Staff Correspondent

Dry weather with partly cloudy sky is likely over Bangladesh.

Met office forecasts, no appreciable change in night temperature is expected over the country.

The country's highest temperature of 29.5 degrees Celsius was recorded in Takaif and lowest of 10.6 degrees Celsius was recorded in Iswardi yesterday.

The sun sets today (Tuesday) at 5:25pm and rises tomorrow (Wednesday) at 6:43am.

The maximum and the minimum temperatures and relative humidity recorded in some major cities and towns of the country yesterday are:

Cities/Towns	Temperatures in degrees Celsius	Humidity in Percentage
	Max	Min
Dhaka	26.8	13.6
Cittagong	27.0	14.5
Bajshahi	26.1	11.6
Mohina	26.7	12.0
Barisal	26.2	11.6
Sylhet	27.2	16.6
Dinajpur	26.0	11.4
Cox's Bazar	28.2	16.0
	9am	6pm
	77	72
	77	66
	93	79
	89	75
	92	80
	71	65
	89	83
	78	74

Biswas, Khalela greet Gen Than of Myanmar

President Abdur Rahman Biswas yesterday greeted Senior General Than Shwe, Chairman of the State Law and Order Restoration Council of the Union of Myanmar, on the occasion of its Independence Day, reports UNB.

Conveying his warmest felicitations on the occasion the President in a message said 'I am confident that the friendly ties binding our two countries will be further strengthened and consolidated in the coming years'.

He wished General Than personal well being and his countrymen progress and prosperity.

In a separate message Prime Minister Begum Zia also congratulated Senior General Than Shwe on the occasion.

She said the existing bonds of fraternal relations and cooperation between the two neighbouring countries will be further strengthened in the years ahead.

Begum Zia wished General Than good health, happiness and long life and his people peace, progress and prosperity.

Qatar Emiri Airforce team meets Biswas

President Abdur Rahman Biswas yesterday indicated that cooperation between the air forces of Bangladesh and Qatar might further be strengthened through deputation of officers and airmen of Bangladesh Airforce as well as exchange of visits, reports UNB.

Bangladesh Airforce may extend training cooperation by providing flying instructors and other ground instructors, he told a four-member delegation led by Ahmed Abdullah 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 Emir 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 Altaf 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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Afternoon: Batch 3:30-5:30 Pm Evening: Batch 5:30-7:30 Pm	

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OFFICE HOURS

8:30 - 11:30 am

& 3 - 4 pm

Friday closed

Founder-Principal

Muhammad Ashraf Hoque

Bangladesh Sugar & Food Industries Corporation Re-Tender Notice

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.
3. Confirmation of a reputed offset printing press, having complete facilities, to design and print the Annual Report satisfactorily and timely if the tenderer is awarded Work Order.

Tender schedule will be available from the office of the Additional Chief Accountant (Cash) of the Corporation, Adamjee Court (4th floor), Motijheel C/A, Dhaka from 10-1-1994 to 24-1-1994 on all working days (9.00 am to 2.00 pm) at a cost of Taka 100/- (Taka one hundred) only per set. The authority reserves the right to accept any or reject all tenders without assigning any reason whatsoever & is not bound to accept the lowest tender.

S. F. 269

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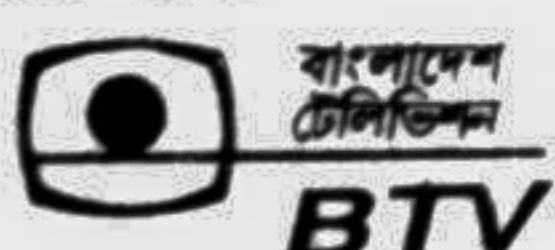
DAPMB's report submitted

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), Badrur Rahman.

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.



Tuesday

4:30	Opening announcement.
4:35	Al-Quran Programme summary
4:45	News in Bangla
4:45	Mass education programme
4:50	Esho Para Shikhi
5:20	Cartoon show: Captain Planet
5:55	National TV school debate competition
6:50	Open University
7:20	Malancha
8:00	News in Bangla
8:30	Fortnight drama serial: Rupnagar (5th episode)
10:00	News in English
10:30	Film show: Northern Exposure
11:30	Khabar/The News
11:40	Tomorrow's programme summary
11:45	Closing