

## DOWN TO EARTH

## Baisakhi Melas in City

By A S M Nurunnabi

Melas or fairs form an important element of Bengali culture. They have, however, lost much of their pristine charm and colour, because the villages which used to be the cradle of such assemblies, have undergone many changes. The villages have changed because the entire gamut of their economic activities have changed. Such changes have had their impact on the Bengali character.

There are some characteristic elements of a *melas*. Visitors find pleasure in free movement within its precincts; in getting to meet many of their acquaintances and in making small purchases of sundry items for family use. Another important element is the propensity of the visitors in letting themselves go in fulfilling their gastronomical desires by consumption of varieties of food, such as many kinds of *pithas* and sweets. These foods are not normally available in our day-to-day existence. Besides these, an atmosphere of easy relations between different classes of people in a community prevails in such places.

Nowadays such basic purposes seem to have been lost; the *melas* have now become bizarre centres of recreation and entertainment of questionable nature. We seem to have forgotten that a *melas* is not a thing dissociated from our social ethos, but a reflection of an integrated approach to life.

*Baisakhi melas* in particular is part of our rich cultural heritage. It is estimated that all over the country more than two hundred *Baisakhi melas* are held every year. The main features of such *melas* are flamboyant displays of handicrafts and products of cottage and handloom industries, varieties of household items ranging from kitchen tools and earthen wares, wooden furniture to low-priced children's toys and earthen playthings.

The village *melas* have

made an impact in urban areas also. On the occasion of the new Bengali year, *melas* are held in Dhaka as well as in other urban areas. In Dhaka, such *Baisakhi melas* have several venues such as:

(i) Mirpur *melas*: This *melas* is inaugurated on the first of Baisakhi. The visitors, buyers and sellers at this *melas* mainly come from the low-income groups of Mirpur and its adjacent areas.

(ii) Golartek *melas*: The *melas* is held for one day only on the first of Baisakhi. The main items of trade at this *melas* are, as usual, handicrafts and cottage industry products and also various food items and sweets which attract people of low financial strata in local areas. With the spread of urbanisation, the *melas* has been gradually losing much of its past lustre.

(iii) Badda *melas*: The *melas* is held in the precincts of the Badda bazaar. The process of urbanisation also has limited the area of the *melas*. Earthen wares, items of daily family necessities made from bamboo and cane, small items of wooden furniture, merry-go-rounds, circus cinema shows, glan bangles coloured spectacles for children, puffed rice, various edible items fried in oil form the main ingredients of the *melas*. No definite information is available about the time of origin of this *melas*. But some old timers of the locality are of the opinion that the *melas* had originated more than fifty years ago.

(iv) Baisakhi *melas* at Bangla Academy: The Bangla Academy authorities arrange this *melas* which lasts for seven days from the first of Baisakhi. As elsewhere, products of cottage industries and handicraft items, earthen wares of various shapes and designs painted with colour make a predominant place among the displayed items for sale. Nowadays, the city traders also participate in this

*melas*. Since most of the visitors to this *melas* are urbanites, the *melas* has acquired some aspects of urban culture. This has become a favourite spot for outings with the city dwellers and as such it draws a heavy crowd of visitors.

(v) Baisakhi *melas* on Dhanmondi playground: The *melas* is more notable for its wide range of indigenous products displayed together with other characteristic features of a *melas*. This *melas* is held for a week from the first of Baisakhi under the auspices of the BSCIC. The large-scale colourful arrangement of the displayed items and the well-decorated stalls draw huge crowds every day while the *melas* continues.

(vi) A *Baisakhi melas* has been held in Gulshan-2 on 1st Baisakhi for three days by the sponsor of the children's park known as wonderland.

The role of Baisakhi *melas* in the enrichment of Bengali culture and in the promotion of our handicrafts and cottage industries has been undoubtedly great. This is evidenced by the interest taken by the BSCIC and the Bangla Academy in organising two separate *melas* in the city. Apart from the contribution of these *melas* to the cause of socio-economic progress by virtue of their creation of innovative styles in the products of our indigenous enterprises, they serve as popular venues as recreational outlets for large numbers of different classes of city dwellers suffering from deficiency of recreational facilities. Thus notwithstanding the commercial considerations, the impact of these *melas* in promoting social intercourse in the community is no less important. So it behoves the authorities concerned to see that adequate incentives are made available to the promoters of these *melas* so that the latter can play effective roles in the social, cultural and economic life of our people.

Referring to BNP's five years rule, the Awami League chief said the rural economy and agriculture were destroyed during that period due to rampant corruption by the BNP leaders and workers.

The programme is being held marking the founding anniversary of the Bangladesh Krishak League which was established by country's founding father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman 24 years ago while inaugurating a month-long member collection drive of the Bangladesh Krishak League at the party's Dhanmondi office.

The programme is being

held marking the founding anniversary of the Bangladesh Krishak League which was established by country's founding father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman 24 years ago while inaugurating a month-long member collection drive of the Bangladesh Krishak League at the party's Dhanmondi office.

to the landless and establishment of agriculture-based industries to reduce the gap between rural and urban life. "With all these measures, the rural economy will be placed on a solid footing, thus empowering the rural folk to earn their bread and support other needs which they have been dreaming for long," she said.

We will also provide agricultural loans on easy terms under specific policy guidelines to the farmers who are the main players in the national economy," she said while inaugurating a month-long member collection drive of the Bangladesh Krishak League at the party's Dhanmondi office.

Unbridled corruption and looting by the BNP government has completely shattered the hopes and aspirations of the farmers, she said adding that a number of farmers had to give up their lives in gunfire when they demanded fertiliser.

The programme is being held marking the founding anniversary of the Bangladesh Krishak League which was established by country's founding father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman 24 years ago while inaugurating a month-long member collection drive of the Bangladesh Krishak League at the party's Dhanmondi office.

The programme is being held marking the founding anniversary of the Bangladesh Krishak League which was established by country's founding father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman 24 years ago while inaugurating a month-long member collection drive of the Bangladesh Krishak League at the party's Dhanmondi office.

Sheikh Hasina described the fertiliser scandal during the BNP rule as the most heinous incident which took the toll of farmers' life and led the country towards acute food crisis instead of self-sufficiency.

The Awami League chief said the BNP's inefficiency, corruption, politicisation and looting of government money had destabilised the administration, democratic institutions and the national life for the last five years.

No institution could function democratically due to the unwanted interference of the BNP leaders and workers during the period, she added.

She said, farmers are contributing a larger part to the national economy and the Awami League will do its best for providing all possible support to this section of the people in the greater interest of the nation.

Sheikh Hasina said, the main objective of the Bangladesh Awami League is to ensure development of farmers in all respects including education, health, providing land

to the landless and establishment of agriculture-based industries to reduce the gap between rural and urban life. "With all these measures, the rural economy will be placed on a solid footing, thus empowering the rural folk to earn their bread and support other needs which they have been dreaming for long," she said.

We will also provide agricultural loans on easy terms under specific policy guidelines to the farmers who are the main players in the national economy," she said while inaugurating a month-long member collection drive of the Bangladesh Krishak League at the party's Dhanmondi office.

Unbridled corruption and looting by the BNP government has completely shattered the hopes and aspirations of the farmers, she said adding that a number of farmers had to give up their lives in gunfire when they demanded fertiliser.

The programme is being held marking the founding anniversary of the Bangladesh Krishak League which was established by country's founding father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman 24 years ago while inaugurating a month-long member collection drive of the Bangladesh Krishak League at the party's Dhanmondi office.

Sheikh Hasina described the fertiliser scandal during the BNP rule as the most heinous incident which took the toll of farmers' life and led the country towards acute food crisis instead of self-sufficiency.

The programme is being held marking the founding anniversary of the Bangladesh Krishak League which was established by country's founding father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman 24 years ago while inaugurating a month-long member collection drive of the Bangladesh Krishak League at the party's Dhanmondi office.

Sheikh Hasina described the fertiliser scandal during the BNP rule as the most heinous incident which took the toll of farmers' life and led the country towards acute food crisis instead of self-sufficiency.

The programme is being held marking the founding anniversary of the Bangladesh Krishak League which was established by country's founding father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman 24 years ago while inaugurating a month-long member collection drive of the Bangladesh Krishak League at the party's Dhanmondi office.

Sheikh Hasina described the fertiliser scandal during the BNP rule as the most heinous incident which took the toll of farmers' life and led the country towards acute food crisis instead of self-sufficiency.

The programme is being held marking the founding anniversary of the Bangladesh Krishak League which was established by country's founding father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman 24 years ago while inaugurating a month-long member collection drive of the Bangladesh Krishak League at the party's Dhanmondi office.

Sheikh Hasina described the fertiliser scandal during the BNP rule as the most heinous incident which took the toll of farmers' life and led the country towards acute food crisis instead of self-sufficiency.

The programme is being held marking the founding anniversary of the Bangladesh Krishak League which was established by country's founding father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman 24 years ago while inaugurating a month-long member collection drive of the Bangladesh Krishak League at the party's Dhanmondi office.

Sheikh Hasina described the fertiliser scandal during the BNP rule as the most heinous incident which took the toll of farmers' life and led the country towards acute food crisis instead of self-sufficiency.

The programme is being held marking the founding anniversary of the Bangladesh Krishak League which was established by country's founding father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman 24 years ago while inaugurating a month-long member collection drive of the Bangladesh Krishak League at the party's Dhanmondi office.

Sheikh Hasina described the fertiliser scandal during the BNP rule as the most heinous incident which took the toll of farmers' life and led the country towards acute food crisis instead of self-sufficiency.

The programme is being held marking the founding anniversary of the Bangladesh Krishak League which was established by country's founding father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman 24 years ago while inaugurating a month-long member collection drive of the Bangladesh Krishak League at the party's Dhanmondi office.

Sheikh Hasina described the fertiliser scandal during the BNP rule as the most heinous incident which took the toll of farmers' life and led the country towards acute food crisis instead of self-sufficiency.

The programme is being held marking the founding anniversary of the Bangladesh Krishak League which was established by country's founding father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman 24 years ago while inaugurating a month-long member collection drive of the Bangladesh Krishak League at the party's Dhanmondi office.

Sheikh Hasina described the fertiliser scandal during the BNP rule as the most heinous incident which took the toll of farmers' life and led the country towards acute food crisis instead of self-sufficiency.

The programme is being held marking the founding anniversary of the Bangladesh Krishak League which was established by country's founding father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman 24 years ago while inaugurating a month-long member collection drive of the Bangladesh Krishak League at the party's Dhanmondi office.

Sheikh Hasina described the fertiliser scandal during the BNP rule as the most heinous incident which took the toll of farmers' life and led the country towards acute food crisis instead of self-sufficiency.

The programme is being held marking the founding anniversary of the Bangladesh Krishak League which was established by country's founding father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman 24 years ago while inaugurating a month-long member collection drive of the Bangladesh Krishak League at the party's Dhanmondi office.

Sheikh Hasina described the fertiliser scandal during the BNP rule as the most heinous incident which took the toll of farmers' life and led the country towards acute food crisis instead of self-sufficiency.

The programme is being held marking the founding anniversary of the Bangladesh Krishak League which was established by country's founding father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman 24 years ago while inaugurating a month-long member collection drive of the Bangladesh Krishak League at the party's Dhanmondi office.

Sheikh Hasina described the fertiliser scandal during the BNP rule as the most heinous incident which took the toll of farmers' life and led the country towards acute food crisis instead of self-sufficiency.

The programme is being held marking the founding anniversary of the Bangladesh Krishak League which was established by country's founding father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman 24 years ago while inaugurating a month-long member collection drive of the Bangladesh Krishak League at the party's Dhanmondi office.

Sheikh Hasina described the fertiliser scandal during the BNP rule as the most heinous incident which took the toll of farmers' life and led the country towards acute food crisis instead of self-sufficiency.

The programme is being held marking the founding anniversary of the Bangladesh Krishak League which was established by country's founding father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman 24 years ago while inaugurating a month-long member collection drive of the Bangladesh Krishak League at the party's Dhanmondi office.

Sheikh Hasina described the fertiliser scandal during the BNP rule as the most heinous incident which took the toll of farmers' life and led the country towards acute food crisis instead of self-sufficiency.

The programme is being held marking the founding anniversary of the Bangladesh Krishak League which was established by country's founding father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman 24 years ago while inaugurating a month-long member collection drive of the Bangladesh Krishak League at the party's Dhanmondi office.

Sheikh Hasina described the fertiliser scandal during the BNP rule as the most heinous incident which took the toll of farmers' life and led the country towards acute food crisis instead of self-sufficiency.

The programme is being held marking the founding anniversary of the Bangladesh Krishak League which was established by country's founding father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman 24 years ago while inaugurating a month-long member collection drive of the Bangladesh Krishak League at the party's Dhanmondi office.

Sheikh Hasina described the fertiliser scandal during the BNP rule as the most heinous incident which took the toll of farmers' life and led the country towards acute food crisis instead of self-sufficiency.

The programme is being held marking the founding anniversary of the Bangladesh Krishak League which was established by country's founding father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman 24 years ago while inaugurating a month-long member collection drive of the Bangladesh Krishak League at the party's Dhanmondi office.

Sheikh Hasina described the fertiliser scandal during the BNP rule as the most heinous incident which took the toll of farmers' life and led the country towards acute food crisis instead of self-sufficiency.

The programme is being held marking the founding anniversary of the Bangladesh Krishak League which was established by country's founding father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman 24 years ago while inaugurating a month-long member collection drive of the Bangladesh Krishak League at the party's Dhanmondi office.

Sheikh Hasina described the fertiliser scandal during the BNP rule as the most heinous incident which took the toll of farmers' life and led the country towards acute food crisis instead of self-sufficiency.

The programme is being held marking the founding anniversary of the Bangladesh Krishak League which was established by country's founding father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman 24 years ago while inaugurating a month-long member collection drive of the Bangladesh Krishak League at the party's Dhanmondi office.

Sheikh Hasina described the fertiliser scandal during the BNP rule as the most heinous incident which took the toll of farmers' life and led the country towards acute food crisis instead of self-sufficiency.

The programme is being held marking the founding anniversary of the Bangladesh Krishak League which was established by country's founding father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman 24 years ago while inaugurating a month-long member collection drive of the Bangladesh Krishak League at the party's Dhanmondi office.

Sheikh Hasina described the fertiliser scandal during the BNP rule as the most heinous incident which took the toll of farmers' life and led the country towards acute food crisis instead of self-sufficiency.

The programme is being held marking the founding anniversary of the Bangladesh Krishak League which was established by country's founding father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman 24 years ago while inaugurating a month-long member collection drive of the Bangladesh Krishak League at the party's Dhanmondi office.

Sheikh Hasina described the fertiliser scandal during the BNP rule as the most heinous incident which took the toll of farmers' life and led the country towards acute food crisis instead of self-sufficiency.

The programme is being held marking the founding anniversary of the Bangladesh Krishak League which was established by country's founding father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman 24 years ago while inaugurating a month-long member collection drive of the Bangladesh Krishak League at the party's Dhanmondi office.

Sheikh Hasina described the fertiliser scandal during the BNP rule as the most heinous incident which took the toll of farmers' life and led the country towards acute food crisis instead of self-sufficiency.

The programme is being held marking the founding anniversary of the Bangladesh Krishak League which was established by country's founding father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman 24 years ago while inaugurating a month-long member collection drive of the Bangladesh Krishak League at the party's Dhanmondi office.

Sheikh Hasina described the fertiliser scandal during the BNP rule as the most heinous incident which took the toll of farmers' life and led the country towards acute food crisis instead of self-sufficiency.

The programme is being held marking the founding anniversary of the Bangladesh Krishak League which was established by country's founding father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman 24 years ago while inaugurating a month-long member collection drive of the Bangladesh Krishak League at the party's Dhanmondi office.

Sheikh Hasina described the fertiliser scandal during the BNP rule as the most heinous incident which took the toll of farmers' life and led the country towards acute food crisis instead of self-sufficiency.

The programme is being held marking the founding anniversary of the Bangladesh Krishak League which was established by country's founding father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman 24 years ago while inaugurating a month-long member collection drive of the Bangladesh Krishak League at the party's Dhanmondi office.

Sheikh Hasina described the fertiliser scandal during the BNP rule as the most heinous incident which took the toll of farmers' life and led the country towards acute food crisis instead of self-sufficiency.

The programme is being held marking the founding anniversary of the Bangladesh Krishak League which was established by country's founding father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman 24 years ago while inaugurating a month-long member collection drive of the Bangladesh Krishak League at the party's Dhanmondi office.

Sheikh Hasina described the fertiliser scandal during the BNP rule as the most heinous incident which took the toll of farmers' life and led the country towards acute food crisis instead of self-sufficiency.

The programme is being held marking the founding anniversary of the Bangladesh Krishak League which was established by country's founding father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman 24 years ago while inaugurating a month-long member collection drive of the Bangladesh Krishak League at the party's Dhanmondi office.

Sheikh Hasina described the fertiliser scandal during the BNP rule as the most heinous incident which took the toll of farmers' life and led the country towards acute food crisis instead of self-sufficiency.