



A student of Institute of Fine Arts painting an earthen for Pahela Boishakh celebration.

WELCOMING PAHELA BAISHAKH

Preparation on in full swing

NOVRA DEEPIKA

It's time for getting into the festive mood. City dwellers are preparing to welcome Pahela Boishakh the first day of Bangla New Year, the biggest festival of Bengalis, with much fanfare and festivity.

One part of the celebrations concentrated within the Dhaka University (DU) campus, has been taking place since 1989. Students of the Institute of Fine Arts initiated a trend of bringing out a colourful rally with festoons, masks and banners in the morning of Pahela Boishakh.

They begin their work at least two weeks before. Working day and night, mainly the first year students make the festoons, masks under the supervision of the teachers. Ratneshwar Sutradhar, a student of Drawing and Painting department, said: "It is a great pleasure and honour for us."

Till now, the celebration has been a sponsored event. But this year the institute decided to make the arrangements without a sponsor.

"The students came up with the brilliant idea of generating money by selling paintings and wall hangings made both by the students and teachers of the institute. We have already earned Tk 39,000 in last four days," said Ratneshwar.

"Our teachers, famous artists including Qayyum Chowdhury and Rafiqun Nabi have promised to donate their paintings towards the fund raising programme," said Ujjal Ghosh, another student.

He also said that if sales continue in this manner, there would be a possibility of raising up to Tk 2,00,000 which would be more than enough to bear the expenses for the celebration.

Bitop Shobbon Bashar, another student said: "This year even former and senior and teachers, who are good in making the materials, have joined us. Everybody is working with a festive spirit, putting their heart and soul to work."

The programme at the institute will include songs, dances, Jatra Pala and face painting by the students of the institute.

The other part of the celebration that takes place at the Batamul of Ramna Park witnesses the largest gathering of people in festive mood. Chhayanaut, a cultural organisation has been organising programmes at the venue since 1967 to celebrate Pahela Boishakh. Khayrul Anam Shakil, Secretary of Chhayanaut, said that like every year the programme will start at 6:15am with about 50 artistes including 35 children - students of Chhayanaut, who will perform 33 items including

songs and poetry recitals.

The two and a half hour programme will be telecast live via satellite on Channel 1. Preparations have already been completed and artistes are going through the final rehearsals.

Visiting the Ramna Batamul early in the morning of the first day of Bangla Nababarsha, became a significant event for the city dwellers especially after the bomb attacks at the venue in 2001.

Shakil said: "The bomb attack on the 2001 celebrations turned the event into a gory tale of deaths at Ramna Batamul in the city. Although we had feared that the number of audience would decrease the following year, we were stunned when we saw thousands of people turned up to celebrate with us and with each other defying all negativity."

Naturally authority takes special security arrangements in and around Ramna Park on the day. SM Mizanur Rahman, Commissioner, Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP), told Star City: "We will take tighter and stronger security measures this time. Like every year we will deploy a good number of armed forces to ensure no mishap take place this time."

the

city that was

The 2nd half of the 16th century, Catholics were prominent in Hosehepur in Mymensingh and Sripur near Sonargaon. Among the churches erected by the Augustinians were at Nagori (1675) and Tejaon (1677). In 1834, the Vicariate Apostolic was created under the jurisdiction of the Sacred Congregation for Propaganda Fide. In 1850 it was divided to the Vicariates Apostolic of Eastern and Western Bengal. Western Bengal's headquarters were in Dhaka.

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city express

The latest crop of quotes from the city's press -- words worth repeating, we feel, for their humour, insight or sheer outrageousness. Star City does not necessarily support the opinions expressed in this column.

"We did not know they were there. After the August 17 bomb blasts, we knew. And we cracked down on them"

-- Khaleda Zia
Prime Minister

Told in an interview with the Time Magazine, on Monday.
Source: The Daily Star

"These terror groups are protected by the government. This is their baby"

-- Sheikh Hasina
Leader of main opposition and president of Awami League

Told in an interview with the Time Magazine, on Monday.
Source: The Daily Star

"India is going to earn over \$30 billion through outsourcing in IT sector in just a one-year period while we are far behind earning even one billion dollars from the sector"

-- Prof Muhammad Yunus
Managing Director, Grameen Bank

Said at the inaugural ceremony of Daffodil Grameen IT Education Limited (DIGTEL) regretting the non-utilisation of VoIP and the submarine cable system, on Tuesday.
Source: The Daily Star

"Right now my friend is using my Lexus"

-- Zahiruddin Swapan
BNP MP, Barisal-1

Told reporters after it was known that most of the cars imported for MPs ended up in the hands of businessmen, on Tuesday.
Source: Prothom Alo

"It is not a problem even if call money rate is 1000 percent, it shot to 2000 percent in Ireland"

-- M Saifur Rahman
Finance Minister

Said after the meeting on budget, on Monday.
Source: Rayer Kago

"The problem of politicisation of the administration cannot be resolved overnight"

-- ASM Abdul Halim
Cabinet Secretary

Said in his concluding remarks of a three-day conference of deputy commissioners at the Bangladesh Secretariat, on Tuesday.
Source: New Age

"It is quite unethical and shameful. He did not take permission from Dhaka University for the part-time job"

-- Prof M Asaduzzaman
Chairman, University Grants Commission

Told reporters about National University Vice-Chancellor's part-time teaching position at a private university, without the permission of his parent organisation Dhaka University, on Sunday. Source: New Age

Waterlogging before rainy season!

TAWFIQUE ALI

Though Dhaka Wasa and DCC undertake installation of sewerage line some time or other round the year, causing sufferings to pedestrians and commuters, it has left hardly any impact on the drainage system.

"It took me about 40 minutes to pass the Gulshan link road due to knee-deep rainwater in the evening of April 5," said Shaila Nasir, a schoolteacher. "It was so tormenting for me, as I was on my way to see my ailing mother at a hospital in Dhanmondi."

Traffic in many areas like Shantinagar, Mouchak, Purana Paltan, Motijheel, Jhigatala Badda and major thoroughfares came to a standstill because of waterlogging. It took at least two to three hours to recede the rainwater.

The potholes on the water-

logged roads became death traps for pedestrians.

One major reason behind waterlogging caused by rain is the absence of open space in the city heavily congested with high-rises and other infrastructures, said Prof Nazrul Islam, president of the Centre for Urban Studies and vice-president of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolok.

"Rainwater cannot easily percolate down the ground in absence of open space," he said. So the rainwater is drained out only through underground and open drainage systems.

Many underground and open drains and natural canals cannot carry rainwater to big canals or rivers as most of the water bodies have been filled up while land grabbers have shrunk rivers around Dhaka City like Buriganga,

Turag, Balu and Shitalakhy used as natural reservoirs, Prof Islam said.

"All but eight to ten canals in the city out of 43 have been either encroached by land grabbers or filled up by developers," he said.

Experts and environmentalists also blame the construction of illegal structures on water outlets, faulty drainage system and its poor maintenance for the situation.

The surface drains, storm sewerage and canals, through which rainwater is supposed to flow to the retention ponds, are clogged with household or industrial wastes or blocked by encroachers, they said.

However, DCC and Dhaka Wasa blame each other for the crisis. Wasa has the responsibility of dealing with draining out water

while DCC clears the surface drains.

Underground and surface drainage systems together cover only 40 percent of the city area, according to Dhaka Wasa.

"Lack of co-ordination among the agencies concerned is another reason. Sometimes roads are built creating blockage on drainage system," said an Wasa official.

The Wasa maintains 242 kilometres of underground drains, 56 kilometres of canals and 12 kilometres of box culvert drains to drain out storm and rainwater.

DCC Chief Engineer Idris Mian said: "The drains are blocked as people tend to throw wastes into the drains due to lack of awareness." DCC maintains about 1,200 kilometres of drainage system, he added.

Rayerbazar, Mohammadpur, Islambagh, Nawabganj, Maniknagar, Manda, Shantinagar, Arambagh, Fakirpur, Motijheel and Dilkusha areas suffer from waterlogging due to encroachments on the Katasur, Ramchandpur, Dholai Khal and Segunbagicha canals.

Filling up of Jirani Khal and clogging up of Shahjahanpur Khal are responsible for waterlogging in Malibagh, Mouchak and Shantinagar areas, the experts said.

Despite repeated attempts yesterday, Wasa Managing Director Dr Kazi Ali Azam could not be contacted for his comments on the issue. His personal assistant said that he was busy with meetings. When contacted again, he said he went to the ministry.

SEIZURE OF EXPIRED MEDICINES

Are we safe at the hospitals?

SYED TASHFIN CHOWDHURY

He vowed never to bring any other members of his family to this hospital for treatment.

Another patient in the 'Kidney Ward' of the hospital, voiced his anger over the dishonesty and inefficiency of the hospital staff and authority.

"They are always looking for a way to give the patients less than what they are supposed to, so that they can put some of the government's money into their own pockets," he said.

He also alleged that ever since his admission as a 'non-paying' patient a week back, he had to pay for his own medicines and other necessary details.

"The date expired fluid and blood sugar tube were found in the non-paying ward. This is the biggest proof of how we, non-paying patients are constantly ignored by the authority," he said.

The hospital authorities said

that it has around 118 beds. Out of this, 60 are non-paying beds, 40 are paying beds and the rest are paid cabins.

"As this is a public hospital, we provide free medical treatment, facilities and medicine to patients occupying our 'non-paying' beds," said Dr. Jahangir Kabir, Director, NIKDU.

But most of the non-paying patients, like Ahmed, protested that besides the treatment, they have to pay for their medicines, saline, syringes etc.

"Before last week's incident, doctors, nurses and staff used syringes, salines, blood sugar tubes etc. from the medical supply for which we did not have to pay. But as soon as the incident occurred, they have asked us to buy these items with our own money," said another patient from Netrakona.

"Patients will now find a problem in each and every thing done

by our doctors, staff and nurses. We never discriminate and always try to ensure that the best treatment is provided to both non-paying and paying patients. We are hoping that these allegations were just a mistake."

"This is once in a million case and never happened in this hospital before. We have formed an enquiry committee who are currently probing this matter," he said.

He also denied the patients' allegations that medicines are not being provided free to the non-paying patients.

"At times our supply runs out and this occurs in the case of expensive medicines. That is when we ask the family of the patients to make quick arrangements in acquiring the necessary medicine," Dr Kabir said.

"Patients will now find a problem in each and every thing done



Expired fluid and sugar tubes were seized by a mobile court at National Institute of Kidney Dialysis and Urology in Dhaka last week.

STAR PHOTO