

A new day beckons

Baishakhi celebrations in the city



Mongol Shobhajatra (left and right) at DU campus, (C) students of Chhayanat perform at Ramna Botomul

MAINUL HASSAN

As the first rays of sun heralded a new day, people from all walks of life welcomed *Pahela Baishakh* on April 14 (first day of the Bengali year 1414). A festive spirit gripped the capital city as women in red and white saris and men in *panjabi* or *fatua*, thronged cultural programmes at different venues.

People, irrespective of religion, age and social background went around *Baishakhi mela* -- showcasing local handicrafts and artefacts -- in the city. Colourful rallies, music programmes, and *pitha* festivals were part of the celebration.

Thousands gathered at Ramna Park, Suhrawardy Uddyan, Central Shaheed Minar, Dhaka University, Shahbag, Dhanmondi Lake and other venues where mass celebrations took place.

Like every year, *Baishakhi* celebrations kicked off in the city with Chhayanat's *Nabobarsho Boron* programme starting at 6:45am at Ramna Botomul. Thousands of men, women and children attended

the event. Young students of Chhayanat started the programme with group presentation of the Tagore song -- *Antoro momo bikashito koro*. Nirjhor Chowdhury rendered *Monohom gohon jami*, followed by Azizur Rahman Tuhin singing *Morey dekeye loye jao*. Among other artistes Nasima Shaheen, Shahed Imam, Aditi Mohsin, Anup Baruwa, Iffat Ara Dewan, Chompa Bonik and Laila Afroz performed at the programme.

The event mainly featured Tagore and Nazrul songs, along with a few folk songs. The celebration ended with a group rendition of the National Anthem.

Another big event on *Pahela Baishakh* was *Mongol Shobhajatra*, the colourful rally brought out by the students of Institute of Fine Arts (IFA) Dhaka University. "The main purpose of the rally is to introduce our youth to our rural traditions," said Md. Kaosar Hassan (Togor), lecturer, Department of Sculpture, IFA.

The rally started from IFA, passed TSC, Doyer Chattar, Matsho Bhaban and Hotel Sheraton and returned to DU campus.

Wrishtil Shilpi Gosthi organised a

cultural programme at Shishu Park premises. Veteran artiste Fakir Alamgir performed some of his familiar numbers including *Antorey gram*, *O Sokhina*, *Ma-er ekhader dudher daam* and *Bhalobashi* Dhaka. The programme was dedicated to the memory of cultural personalities Waheedul Haque, Abdul Halim Boyati, Hazera Bibi and Shefali Ghosh.

Around the DU campus and in other parts of the city several organisations held special programmes to mark the occasion. Sammitito Sangskritik Jote staged a cultural programme at Rabindra Sarobar. National Museum organised a cultural programme featuring folk songs by artistes from all over the country.

Among other events on the day, *Achin Pakhi*, a film on Lalon by Tanvir Mokammel was screened at Shaukat Osman Auditorium, Central Public Library, Bangla Academy, Shilpakala Academy and Bulbul Academy of Fine Arts (BAFA) also organised special programmes to mark the day.



Folk artistes perform at National Museum (left), artistes of Wrishtil at Shishu Park



PHOTO: ISHTIAQUE BIN QASHEM

Choitro Shonkranti celebration by BGTF



Ataur Rahman and Aupi Karim in a scene from *Rakto Karobi*

Dulal discussed on the tradition of celebrating Choitro Shonkranti.

Several theatre groups of the country -- Aranyak Natya Dal, Padatik Natya Sangsod (Bangladesh), Theatre Art Unit, Prachyanaut and Natyajan -- performed songs from their plays.

Nagarik Natyasaampradaya, Dhaka Theatre, Theatre (Arambagh), Natyachakra, Loko Natya Dal, Dhaka Padatik, Shobochan Natya Sangsod and Desh Natok staged selected episodes from their popular plays.

The convenor of the event, Liaquat Ali Lucky, presidium member of BGTF, said, "Though *Choitro Shonkranti* is not celebrated through colourful events like *Pahela Baishakh* in Dhaka or other urban areas, it is a part of our rural heritage. *Mela* (fair) and social gatherings are arranged in the rural areas to celebrate the day. Since 2002, BGTF has been regularly arranging programmes to celebrate *Choitro Shonkranti* at Mahila Samiti Stage to connect the metro dwellers with their heritage."

Ahkmullah, Laila Afroz and Rafiqul Islam recited poetry at the programme. Cultural organisation Dhrubotra rendered Tagore songs, Tamanna Rahman and her troupe performed group dance. A sardoi recital by Shahadat Hossain Khan was also a part of the programme.

Charity concert by HSBC

MAHMUDA AFROZ

The Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Ltd (HSBC) in Bangladesh held its fourth charity concert at the Dhaka Sheraton Hotel on April 13, 2007.

In his brief welcome speech Mustafizur R Khan, Head of Marketing and Public Relations, HSBC said, "HSBC believes that while it has responsibilities to its shareholders, customers, employees and regulators, it also

has a responsibility to give back to the community at large. Co-sponsored by Dhaka Sheraton Hotel, this is one of the bank's major fundraising events. Last year the charity raised twelve lakh taka which was donated to the School of Hope, Scholars Special School, Bangladesh Pratibondhi Foundation and others."

Souls started the concert with Partho Barua singing their all-time popular number *E mon porichoy*. Nasim Ali Khan performed Souls'



An engrossed James



Lucky Akhand during his performance

claim to fame -- *Mon shudhu mon chuyeche*. Back-to-back the band performed *Mukhrito jyotsnayee*, *Brishti dekhey onek kedechi*, *Dekha hobey bondhu*, *Byastota*, *Jhamela*, *Banshi shuney ar kaaj nei*, *Keno ei niishongota* and more.

Next on stage was Shankar Ali Imon. His first ever album was released the day before. The newcomer sang a few songs from his debut album *Ekhono Khuji*.

Seasoned artiste Lucky Akhand performed songs requested by the audience -- *Amaye deko na*, *Ei prithibi amar*, *Agey jodi jantam*, *Tumi ki dekhecho pahari jhorna*, *Ei neel monihar* and *Abar elo je shondhya*. Kumar Bishwajit took the stage and rendered *Jekhaney sheemanto tomar*, *O daktar*, *Tumi roj bikeley*, *Boshonto*, *Putul* and *Ektara*.

Nagar Baul wrapped up the concert. As soon as James took the

stage requests from the audience poured in. James performed his Hindi number *Chal chale apni ghar* from the much acclaimed film *Woh Lamhe*. He also sang popular Nagar Baul songs including *Lace fita*, *Deewana* and *Bedermeye*.

A Raffle draw was held during the concert. A couple won the first prize, which included a return trip to any country, sponsored by Gulf Air.

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

Like previous years, Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation (BGTF) organised a special programme at the Mahila Samiti Mancha to observe Choitro Shonkranti -- last day of the Bangla Year 1413 (April 13). Inaugurated by folklore

exponent Shamsuzzaman Khan, the programme featured music, dance, recitation and staging of selected episodes from plays.

The event was presided over by M Hamid, president of BGTF. Theatre personalities including Mamunur Rashid, Selim Al Deen, Asaduzzaman Noor and Shah Alam



Students and teachers of Heping Li No. 1 Primary School took part in Pahela Baishakh celebrations at the Bangladesh Embassy in Beijing on April 14. The school has been designated by the Chinese Government to tie up with a school in Bangladesh as part of the world wide "One-Heart Knot" programme leading up to Beijing Olympic Games 2008



A three-day Baishakhi Photo Exhibition was inaugurated at Cox's Bazar Public Library on April 12. Cox's Bazar Open Art School organised the event. Mohammed Aminul Islam, Deputy Commissioner of Cox's Bazar inaugurated the exhibition



Pahela Baishakh was observed in Rajshahi with enthusiasm and festivity. Fine Arts Department of Rajshahi University and Rajshahi Sammitito Sangskritik Jote brought out two massive rallies in the city. Beautiful masks and colourful posters were the main attraction at the celebration

PHOTO: STAR