

Jobberer Bolikhela today

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'Jobberer Bolikhela' (Jabber's wrestling) will be held amid traditional fervour and enthusiasm at the historic Laldighi Maidan in the port city today to sway Chittagong people with a characteristic sports event.

A two-day fair, full of pomp and grandeur, popularly known as 'Baishakhi Mela' centering the century-old wrestling competition already began yesterday reminding all of us the rich cultural heritage of Chittagong at the same time.

The pompous fair sat on a two square-km area of Laldighi, Badarpatti and Anderkilla surrounding the wrestling venue.

With spontaneous participation of 'bolies' (wrestlers) and buyers and sellers from different parts of greater Chittagong, the occasion titled 'Abdul Jabber Memorial Wrestling Competition and Baishakhi Mela', turns Laldighi and adjoining areas into a place of traditional merriment.

A prominent local merchant, Abdul Jabber Sawdagar of Badarpatti, introduced the wrestling as a traditional event in 1909 AD (Bangla year 1316), aiming at



Sellers display varieties of locally made goods like pottery and toys at the two-day Baishakhi Mela at Laldighi Maidan that began yesterday.



STAR PHOTO

organising and inspiring the youths for anti-British movement.

Since then the wrestling competition, the main component of the occasion, is being held on the 12th Baishakh every year.

Wrestlers from the far-flung coastal areas of Anwara, Banskhali and Swandip in Chittagong and Ukhia, Teknaf, Chakoria, off-shore islands of Moheshkhali and Kutubdia in Cox's Bazar, participate in

greater number in the 'Bolikhela' held on the second day of the fair.

The history of this popular sport event dates back to the Muslim and Arakan rules when aristocratic and rich families, particularly the 'Zamindars' (landlords), used to employ healthy and strong wrestlers to counter their rivals.

According to Historian Abdul

Haq Chowdhury, there were 22 families of wrestlers hailing from

20 villages on the alluvial plain between the river Karnaphuli and the Sangha in South Chittagong.

Long before the partition of this sub-continent, some two lakh people of Chittagong expatriated to Burma (Myanmar). With huge savings they used to return home to organise wrestling competition in the month of Chaitra or Baishakh every year. Beating drums or tins, they made publicity

of the competition when people from all the neighbouring localities used to come in groups and gathered at the wrestling venue with band parties along with their wrestlers.

The descendants of Abdul Jabber Sawdagar with the support of local people, particularly those from Badarpatti and Bakshirhat, have succeeded in keeping up the glorious past of wrestling through holding the

Bolikhela and Baishakhi Mela till date.

Saukat Anwar Badal, general secretary of Abdul Jabber Smriti Kusti Pratijagita and Baishakhi Mela Committee and a descendant of Abdul Jabber, said they never charged any registration fee for the competition or anything for the makeshift shops to encourage both the wrestlers and sellers to make the occasion a success.

While talking to The Daily Star, he thanked the people of Chittagong and the administration for extending cooperation and support to make the event a success.

He said this year GrameenPhone has come forward to sponsor the occasion. Like other occasions the Baishakhi Mela that duly started on the 11th Baishakh drew huge people from different parts of

greater Chittagong.

The makeshift shops are arrayed with a great variety of household items, handicrafts, nice toys and showpieces and wide collection of pottery. Home made traditional sweetmeats and seasonal fruits were also there in plenty for sale.

The sellers, however, will not be allowed to erect makeshift shops haphazardly on the roads this year and there would be no room for variety shows and circus party that often indulged in unhealthy culture and shows.

"We are not allowing the vendors or sellers to occupy the roads," said Additional DC (Special Branch) Md Mahbubur Rashid of Chittagong Metropolitan Police.

"They are allowed on the roadside places and on the huge portion of Laldighi ground that were earlier occupied by the variety show and circus parties," he said.

"We think it will not hurt the traditional sentiment or hamper appeal of the competition and the fair," he said, adding that it will rather help the occasion hold in a more orderly and disciplined way.

the week that was

Medication camp for addicts begins

A fourteen-day drug-addiction medication camp began in the port city on Wednesday.

CARE Bangladesh HIV Programme, Chittagong Narcotic Control Department (NCD) and Organisation of Bangladesh Drug Addict Rehabilitation (BODAR) jointly organised the camp for the drug addicts at the hospital of Drug Addicted Medication Centre.

Former Principal of Chittagong Medical College (CMC) and eminent gynaecologist Prof Syeda Nurjahan Bhuiyan was the chief guest in the inaugural ceremony with NCD Additional Director Khabir Uddin Ahmed in the chair.

Prof Dr Prohbat Chandra Barua, Dr Mohammed Ali, Prof Dr AQM Sirajul Islam, NCD

Chittagong Deputy Director Mohammed Shafiqul Alam, Bangladesh Diabetic Association Chittagong unit General Secretary Prof Jahangir Chowdhury and German Technology and Programme Manager Dr Nazmul Hossain were also present.

New building of Image opens

Image, a social welfare organisation, opened its new building Bashar-Champa Bhavan at North Kattali on Wednesday.

The land for the building was donated by Bashar-Champa Smriti Trust and the building was constructed for its family health clinic.

NSDP Chief of Party Dr Robert J Timmons inaugurated the building at a ceremony.

Acting mayor of Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) M Manjur Alam presided over the inaugura-

ral function while Social Welfare Department Deputy Director Syeda Ferdous Akhter, CCC acting Chief Health Officer Dr Mohammed Ali and Programme Officer Mansur Ahmed were the special guests.

Founder and Chief Executive of Image Prof Iftekhar Uddin Chowdhury, Image President Prasun Kumar Barua, executive committee member Mohammed Kibria, former general manager of Janata Bank Gias Uddin Chowdhury and former chairman of Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) Captain Zahir Uddin Mahmud also spoke.

'Record of Discussion' signed

Chittagong Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) and Korean International Cooperation (KOICA) signed a record of discus-

sion for a master plan study here on Thursday. Chittagong Wasa Chairman Moksumul Hakim Chowdhury and KOICA representative Kim Chang Sup signed the record of discussion on behalf of their respective organisations.

Adviser for LGRD Ministry Anwarul Iqbal and Secretary Safer Raj Hossain and other high officials were present at the signing ceremony.

The master plan included identification of prior projects which can be implemented immediately conducting a feasibility study and design and expenditure fixing.

The total expenditure of the project is 1.5 million US dollar. Of the cost, Korean government will give 14,75,000 dollar while Bangladesh government will spend rest 25,000 dollar, said sources.

1700 children get Bishwa Sahitya Kendra prizes

Prize giving ceremony of Bishwa Sahitya Kendra was held on Municipal Model High School premises in the port on Friday.

Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) acting mayor M Manjur Alam was the chief guest at the function with the organisation President Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed in the chair.

Speakers at the ceremony called upon the students to read more books to develop their knowledge and the country as well.

A total of 7,000 students of 45 schools took part in the 'book reading programme' where they read 16 books.

The students of class six to ten participated in the programme while 1,700 of them received prizes.

Child Litterateur Ali Imam, The Daily Prothom Alo Associate Editor Biswajit Chowdhury, GrameenPhone Regional Customer Manager Mohammed Shahidullah and the organisation Coordinator Sumi Khan were present at the function.

Later, the guests handed over prizes among the winners.

CCCI hails CG

Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industries (CCCI) hailed the caretaker government for improvement and dynamism in the activities of Chittagong port.

In a fax-message to Chief Adviser Fakhrudin Ahmed, CCCI President Saifuzzaman Chowdhury thanked the CG for engaging task force to bring down operational cost and raise efficiency in the country's premier seaport on Tuesday.

The CCCI president in the message said the task force through bringing in dynamism in container and cargo handling helped bring down the turn-around-time of the vessels remarkably and helped ease both the container and vessel congestion at the port.

The task force succeeded in putting an end to different corrupt practices like bribing, realisation of higher charges, forcible deployment of additional workers and staffs in cargo and container handling that kept the port hostage since long, said the fax message.

The manifold steps by the task force succeeded in reducing handling charges by 30 per cent and raising the efficiency of the port by 40 per cent, observed the CCCI president.

DIIT orientation held

Orientation programme of December-March session of Daffodil Institute of Information Technology (DIIT) was held on Saturday.

DIIT Executive Director Mohammed Nuruzzaman was the chief guest at the programme with its Deputy Director Mohammed Faruk Islam in the chair.

The chief guest emphasised the need for regular attendance of the students in the classroom for better result.

Later, the guests handed over prizes among the students of the December session.

Teachers and students of different sessions were present in the programme.



The makeshift shops at Patenga Sea Beach.

Vendors return to Patenga Sea Beach after 2 months of eviction

DWAIPAYAN BARUA

The vendors have returned to the Patenga Sea Beach again only after two and a half months of their eviction.

The authorities rescued the scenic spot on the bank of the Bay of Bengal from illegal occupants in an eviction drive.

The Water Development Board (WDB) demolished over 400 makeshift shops, including over 60 permanent structures during its drive that started on February 11.

The vendors, mostly backed by the cadres of local Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and its student wing Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), erected the makeshift shops illegally on around one and half kilometres stretch of the 2.6 kilometres long sea beach immediately after the BNP-led four party alliance assumed power in 2001, said the sources.

They rented out the shops as lessee with necessary approval from the authorities concerned.

The evicted shops also include some 30 permanent structures set up illegally on the WDB land on the eastern portion of the embankment.

The eviction drive was lauded as the shops blocked view of the vast sea.

But, the evicted vendors have once again erected makeshift shops with bamboo and curtains on the rescued land to run their business.

This time, they have encroached on the beach.

It has left no place for the visitors to take a stroll on the beach or view the sea from the embankments.

Ali Ashraf, a visitor, said during the high tide when the waves reach near the shoreline the visitors have nothing to do other than sitting idle or walking on the stones at the bottom of the embankment as the vendors have encroached on almost the entire sea beach.

The shops that appear as a huge slum on the beach cause trouble among thousands of visitors and nature-loving people, thronging the beach to breathe a sigh of relief from the monotonous life and pass some time amid the tranquil atmosphere of nature.

Over 500 makeshift shops have been erected on the sea-shore and along both sides of the embankment of Patenga Sea beach.

"We have to return here as we have no alternative to livelihood," said Selim, a young vendor.

Md Kamal, a vendor, said 15 of them have taken lease of the land from the WDB recently to erect shops on the land.

However, Mashirul Rahman, Sub-Divisional Engineer of WDB, Chittagong termed the claim false. None was given any permission or lease to erect shop on the land, he said, adding that they would launch a fresh drive against the illegal occupants soon.

The makeshift shops with many of the vendors engaged in selling contraband liquor are giving rise to different criminal activities as well as creating embarrassing situation for the visitors frequently, sources said.

A team of Narcotics Control Department on Sunday at the beach area recovered a number of foreign cans of beer and other liquor hidden beneath the ground or the big chunk of stones alongside the beach.

Md Ibrahim, an inspector of the department, said they launch drive against contraband liquor regularly but could not be stopped for lack of cooperation of the shop owners.



Prama Abanti and her group perform at a dance programme in Chittagong Institute auditorium on Saturday.