



Baishakh in Chittagong

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IMAGINE you wake up from your sleep hearing the sweet and melodious voice of soulful singers welcoming Bengali New Year, rendering the heart-touching Rabindra Sangeet "Esho Hey Baishakh Esho Esho"...how would you feel? I know, it sounds like a dream for most of the people but I am one of the luckiest persons to be residing in an area just 2 minutes walk from DC Hill in Chittagong. So I don't miss out anything, starting from sunrise till the programme ends!

The Dhakaites might think that they are the luckiest persons to have "Ramna Botomul", to be able to join the "Mongol Shobhajatra". Well, there are not so many theme parks or food courts in Chittagong like Dhaka has, neither Chittagong gets that extra-special attention from the sprouting electronic and print medias of the country, but we have naturally one of the most beautiful cities of Bangladesh which has produced famous artists/artistes for the nation, which has deep-rooted culture in its origin and which knows to celebrate in its own style.

In Chittagong, the largest programme on Pahela Baishakh is held on DC Hill premises, which has a spectacular view of hills and mountains overlooking the stage. All day long the performers of almost all the cultural organizations of Chittagong welcome the New Year with songs, poetry recitation, drama, and many more. Women and young girls like to be ornamented in beautiful red and white sari, with flowers tucked in the hair and bindi in the forehead, and men in colorful Panjabi.

As the host of the largest celebrations to welcome the Bangla Noboborsho in Chittagong, DC Hill gets its best facelift of the year, completely geared up to host the largest festival of the Bengali ethnicity. With all the cultural programmes, the place turns vibrant with people enjoying every bit of Bengali Noboborsho. Exploring the fair, one gets to walk around Baishakhi tradition, heritage and culture. This fair showcases the rich diversity of local handicraft items of our country. And of course, there are our very own Panta-Ilish, besides many other traditional Pithas and other food items for the foodies. This event is so full of diversities, that I sometimes find it quite interesting when I go through some traditional toys, handicrafts and different dry foods, the name of which I don't even know! If you like diversity, then this celebration is the one to make you happy. Moreover, to add even more colour to the celebrations, you can get your face painted by the artists while entering this venue, which is the chance one will not want to and should not miss!

For the school-going young girls and boys, Pahela Baishakh seems to be the festival when they can actually get dressed up like the elders and for them, nothing can beat their desire to be in their school for Baishakhi programmes. With almost all the schools organizing Meena Bazaar, cultural shows, fairs and many more, schools in Chittagong become more colourful on the eve of Pahela Baishakh. Dances, dramas, songs, poetry recitation by the kids show how these youngsters

feel about Baishakh. I personally will miss my school as I am going to start college this year, because every year I hosted the colourful cultural programme of Pahela Baishakh of my school. We used to have the ever beautiful poetry recitals, the perfectly choreographed dance, the rendering of soulful songs. And last but not least the food... Ah! The mouth-watering delicacies of our country!

Those of you who don't want to get intimidated by this sweltering heat, you can celebrate the day in popular clubs, hotels or where Panta Bhat and Padmar Ilish along with many other deshi delicacies are available. Besides DC hill, there is Shilpakala Academy, Shishu Academy, Art College and many other places where people from different walks of life enjoy the festival with the same spirit and enthusiasm. Besides, for the last couple of years University of Chittagong also welcomes the Bengali New Year in its own way.

In Chittagong, on the last day of Chaitra, in all the vegetable markets one will get Bioscope, a mixture of at least 30 vegetables from all over Bangladesh which is really complicated to cook but great to eat! Well, I don't really know why on earth this bucket full of mixture of different vegetables are called Bioscope, but trust me, it tastes really good. After all, what's the harm in welcoming a brand new year with some fresh vegetables dishes?

The recent trend in Chittagong is the craze of concerts during Pahela Baishakh! So concerts are a must in Chittagong. Popular bands perform mostly in Foy's lake. And joining the race is popular underground bands, which generally perform in Muslim hall, Shilpakala Academy and Well food centre etc.

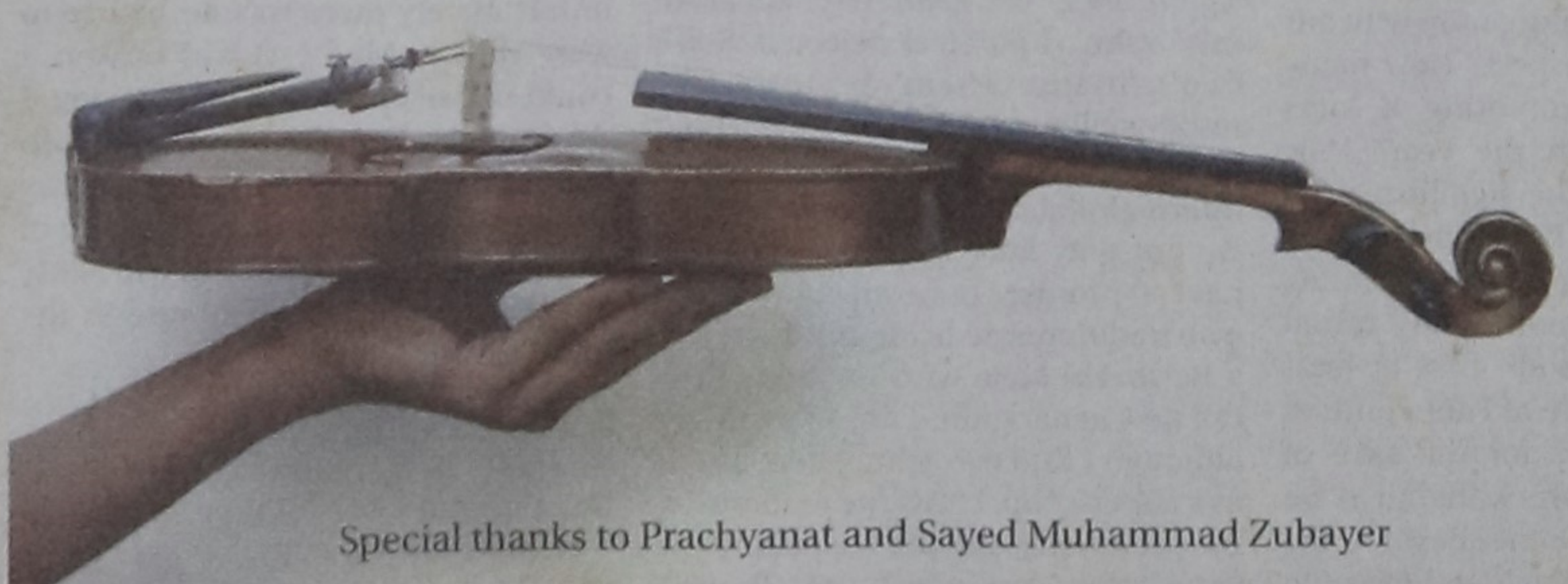
The business houses open new accounts on Pahela Baishakh. This account book, popularly known as Halkhata, is used by almost every business house in Chittagong. And if you are one of the luckiest people to visit the shops on Pahela Baishakh, then get ready to be showered with gifts and having great sweets! Some also send beautifully designed cards to their clients.

The fashion houses and boutique shops in Chittagong are not behind in the race! From the 1st of April, these stores introduce new line for Baishakh. Designed exquisitely, with splash of flamboyant colours, the clothes include saris, panjabis, kameeze, fotua, t-shirt, shirt and matching accessories.

With the grace of satellite channels, one can easily sit back at home and relax while watching the TV. Though one is able to watch programmes of different part of our country with just a mere press in the remote control, but who can beat the fun and joy of watching the whole programme live? With friends and family, munching the jhalmuri and chinabadam and singing at the top of your lungs, the delight is somewhat special.

These are the ways we Chittagonians welcome Pahela Baishakh. If you have never been to Chittagong, then come on this very special day and enjoy the hospitality of us, the Chittagonians, where celebration touches millions of hearts, where celebration touches the souls.

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Mahjabeen is a contributor to Star Campus.



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