

## Baishakhi breeze blows across the country

### Chhayanat's Barsho-boron: The main event in town

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

At crack of dawn on Pahela Baishakh, Chhayanat artistes began their traditional 'barsho-boron' (new year celebration) at Ramna Batomul. Since 1967, this event has been at the centre of Dhaka's Bengali New Year celebrations. Even the horrifying bomb blast in 2001 at the event could not deter people from thronging the venue from the early hours of the day.

This year, Chhayanat's celebration was sponsored by Grameenphone. A total of 120 artistes of Chhayanat, including young students, have been rehearsing for this gala over the last month. Treasurer of Chhayanat, Dr. Sarwar Ali (one of the founder members of the organisation), went over how the event became a major landmark in Pahela Baishakh celebrations.

"Chhayanat was founded in 1961, the year that marked the birth centennial of Tagore. The organisation sought to counter the fundamentalist ideologies that were forcefully imposed upon the Ben-



Since 1967, Chhayanat's 'barsho-boron' has been at the centre of Dhaka's Bengali New Year celebrations. The 'Mangal Shobhajatra' by students and teachers of Charukala (FFA).



Child artistes perform Manipuri dance at Bangla Academy premises.

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, Pabna

Cultural activists and locals celebrated 'Pahela Baishakh' (first day of the Bengali New Year), amidst festivity. Local social and cultural organisations observed the day through several programmes including bringing out 'mangal shobhajatra,' offering 'pantha-ilish,' music and dance etc. The 'mangal shobhajatra' started from Pabna Drama Circle premises at about 10 am that day.

Participants wore masks and carried vibrant festoons. The rally paraded the main streets of the district headquarter.

A discussion and cultural programme was held at Pabna Town Hall premises in the evening. 'Ekushey Book Fair Celebration Committee,' Pabna unit, organised the programme. President of the organisation, Sultan Ahmed Buro, chaired the programme while state minister for Power and Energy, Advocate Samsul Haque Tuku, spoke as the chief guest on the occasion.

Among others, lawmaker of Pabna-5 constituency, Golam Faruk Khandakar; Principal of Pabna Law College, Advocate Azizul Haque; Cultural activist Md. Abdul Aziz and secretary of Ekushey Book Fair Celebration Committee, Zakir Hossain, spoke on the occasion. Stressing on the significance of celebrating 'Pahela Baishakh,' speakers urged all to uphold the spirit of freedom and secularism.

Going over the history of the festival, speakers said that 'Baishakhi' celebrations went through some changes over the last few decades but the message of the day -- to enthuse the Bengali spirit -- remains unchanged. It's a manifestation of our identity as a nation, they said.

Later artistes of different cultural organisations presented songs, dances and poetry recitation at the programme. The repertoire included patriotic songs and tunes of yesteryears. Asraf Hossain Rabi and Nasima Ashraf conducted the programme.

Chhayanat started holding cultural programmes to celebrate the change of Bengali seasons, as the seasons are deeply connected with the lives of the masses. Beside 'Ritu Utshab' (seasonal programmes), there were programmes on Nazrul and Tagore too. In those days, celebrating Bengali New Year was limited to opening 'haal khata,' said Sarwar Ali.

"Chhayanat began celebrating the occasion with an informal arrangement at the Udayan School premises (the then English preparatory school). Waheedul Haque and Sanjida Khutun conceived and orchestrated Chhayanat's first 'barsho-boron' programme at the altar of the huge 'bot' (banyan) tree (though it's actually an 'ashwatha' tree). In 1967, with only a few artistes Chhayanat began

this tradition," he added.

The event started with "taal badon," a composition featuring 'tabla,' 'mrindanga,' 'pakhawaj' and 'pung' (a Manipuri instrument) at 6:15 am on April 14. One after another, artistes of Chhayanat performed songs of the five poets (Rabindranath, Nazrul, D.L. Roy, Atul Prasad and Rajanikant) along with folk and other traditional songs and recitation.

Bijon Chandra Mistri, Elora Ahmed Shukla, Shahed Imam, Aditi Mohsin, Mita Haque, Anindita Chowdhury, Nusrat Jahan Runa, Kabirul Anam Shakil, Biman Chandra Biswas and others performed songs at the programme. Jharna Sharika and Hassan Imam recited poems. The programme concluded with a rendition of the National Anthem.

"The aim of this event is to call upon people to unite and take pride in Bengali nationalism through music," said Sarwar Ali.

Many attending the programme said that while the strict security at the event was essential, it dampened the enthusiasm of both the artistes and audience.

#### Other celebrations in Dhaka

Another highlight of the day was the 'Mangal Shobhajatra' by students and

teachers of Faculty of Fine Arts, Dhaka University. This year three large replicas -- of a crocodile, an elephant and an owl -- were the centrepieces of the rally. The slogan of this year's 'shobhajatra' was, "Esho Rudro, Esho Shakti, Esho Mukti."

The rally started from FFA premises, went past TSC, Doyel Chathar, Shaheed Minar and ended back at FFA premises.

Wrizish Shipli Gosthi organised a cultural programme at Narikel Bithi Chittar, Shihu Park. Renowned 'Gano Sangeet' artiste Fakir Alamgir performed at the programme. The slogan of the show was, "Jago Nobo Anandey." Folk singer Malay Kumar Ganguli was honoured at the programme. Kalabharati Ballet, a troupe from India, was also honoured at the event. The programme was dedicated to the memory of Abdullah Al Mamun and poet Samudra Gupta.

Among other organisations, Shammilla Shangskritik Jote staged a cultural programme at Rabindra Sarobar. Bangla Academy, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, National Museum and other organisations also held special programme to mark the occasion.

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

'Pahela Baishakh' was celebrated in Sirajganj last Tuesday amidst festivity. Several social and cultural organisations of the district celebrated the day with rallies, discussions and cultural programmes.

In the morning, Jatiya Rabindra Sangeet Shammilan Parishad arranged a cultural function at Bokultola in the town, where singers rendered songs on Baishakh.

Udichi Shilpi Goshthi, Sirajganj unit, brought out a rally in the town and arranged a 'pitha' festival at the Renaissance Club.

Bangaal, an organisation of poets, arranged a programme offering 'chiradoi' to all at the Public Library premises.

Marking the day, district administration also arranged a cultural programme at the Circuit House in town. The deputy commissioner was present as chief guest at the event.

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