

Pahela Baishakh Celebrated

Photo: Anisur Rahman, Amran Hossain and PID



The nation celebrated the Pahela Baishakh, the first day of Bangla New Year, on Wednesday with much enthusiasm, festivity and fanfare. 1. Students of fine art faculty of Dhaka University take out the traditional procession in the city. 2. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina exchanges New Year greetings with President Zillur Rahman at Bangabhaban during a reception. 3. Bibi Russell performs on a truck in front of the National Press Club. 4. Artists of Gulshan Society sing at a function at Gulshan Lake Park. 5. Wrihiz Shilpi Goshthi programme. 6. Bloggers' Forum in association with the Prothom Alo organises a cultural function at Suhrawardy Uddyan. 7. A concert at TSC of Dhaka University, organised by Banglalink.

Bangalees ring in new year

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different socio-political and cultural organisations as well as educational institutions celebrated the biggest carnival of Bangalees -- Pahela Baishakh, the first day of the Bangla New Year 1417, on Wednesday with colourful programmes.

There were scores of cultural events organised by different organisations keeping the traditional celebration point of the perennial event Ramna Batamul area alive with huge rush of people.

A festive mood gripped the city and other parts of the country. Women clad in white saarees with red borders and men and children in panjabees -- the dresses decorated with Baishakhi motifs -- greeted the new year.

Youths had their cheeks painted with the country's national map and other emblems that added more colours to the celebrations.

Many had traditional panta bhat (watered rice) with fried hilsa, lentil,

green chilli and onion at home, restaurants and fair venues.

The Central Shaheed Minar, Dhanmondi and Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban areas of the city were also seen swarmed with people of all ages throughout the day.

The government took up a series of programmes across the country to mark the day. Noted citizens, who achieved Swadhinata Puraskar (independence awards) and Ekushey Padak (medals), were honoured at Bangabhaban as part of the programmes.

It also arranged folk fairs, discussions and cultural events at five divisional headquarters as well as at the district and upazila headquarters.

Awami League brought out a colourful procession in the city and arranged cultural events and Baishakhi fairs across the country to ring in the new year.

The students of Dhaka University welcomed the first day of Baishakh amid huge festivities and gaiety on the campus

where Baishakhi fairs and folk musical events and concerts were organised.

Bangla Academy organised a 10-day programme to celebrate the day, including folk festival and national poetry recitation festival.

Pizza Hut and KFC, flagship restaurant chains of Transcom Foods Limited, welcomed the Bangla New Year through various cultural events, including folk songs, a folk fair and a procession, at its respective offices and showrooms.

Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC), Nokia, Bangladesh Rifles (BDR), National Museum, Nazrul Institute, Officers Club Dhaka, Bangabandhu Sangskritik Jote, Gulshan Club, Jatiya Ganatantrik Dal Bangladesh Udichi Shilpi Goshthi, Bangladesh Nari Mukti Andolon, International Turkish Hope School, Jashim Uddin Institute, Gulshan Youth Club, National Garment Workers Federation and Glamour World also celebrated the day.

Brig Gen Jamil honoured

UNB, Dhaka

Brig Gen Shaheed Jamil Uddin Ahmad, who laid down his life while trying to save Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on August 15, 1975, has been awarded 'Bir Uttam' posthumously.

At Gonobhaban yesterday evening, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina handed over a medal of gallantry award Bir Uttam, a citation and the government notification promoting slain Col Jamil to Brigadier General to his wife Anjumand Ara Jamil.

Nasir barred from going abroad

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former state minister for civil aviation Mir Mohammad Nasir, also an adviser to BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, was barred by immigration officials from flying to Saudi Arabia yesterday.

Immigration officials said Mir Nasir reached Shahjalal International Airport around 1:30pm but was sent back after about two hours.

He was barred as he was accused in corruption cases, police said.

The BNP leader told The Daily Star that he was supposed to go to Saudi Arabia by a flight of Saudi Airlines at 4:00pm to perform Umrah.

3 accords to be signed in Thimphu summit

Climate change issue to dominate talks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three agreements for cooperation on environment, trade in services and natural disasters will be signed in the upcoming 16th Saarc Summit scheduled to be held in Bhutan on April 28-29.

"Through the summit, we expect more regional integration to accelerate the common goals of poverty reduction, connectivity and sharing of water resources," said Bhutanese Ambassador Dasho Bap Kesang.

The envoy said this while briefing newsmen on the summit at a press conference at Bhutanese embassy in the city.

The permanent secretariat of Saarc Development Fund (SDF) with initial fund of \$300 million will also be inaugurated during the

summit, which is expected to embrace around 500 delegates, he added.

Expressing warmth of the Bhutanese people because of the fact that it is arranging the Saarc summit for the first time and that they were completely prepared with foolproof security, he said the central theme of the summit is climate change.

On SDF, Kesang said it would serve as the umbrella financial institution for all Saarc projects and programmes and address administrative, financial and operational difficulties arising out of the proliferation of financing mechanisms under Saarc.

The pre-summit will be held from April 24 to 27 that will include official and minister-level sessions. Heads of the state and government will meet from April 28 to 29.

Call for increase in tobacco tax

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A unified step including increasing taxes on tobacco products should be taken to reduce their use in the country, Akbar Ali Khan, former adviser to caretaker government, said yesterday.

He was speaking as the chief guest at the concluding session of a workshop titled 'National Budget 2010-2011: Importance of Increasing Taxes to Control Tobacco' organised by Unnayan Shamannay at a city hotel.

Prof Taiyebur Rahman, research director of

Unnayan Shamannay, chaired the workshop inaugurated by M Hafiz Uddin Khan, the chairman of Transparency International Bangladesh, inaugurated the workshop.

At least 57,000 people died and 3.82 lakh people became physically disabled due to tobacco use in the country, and the cigarette and bidi are most used tobacco. The main cause of increasing tobacco use is its cheap price, and easy availability to consumers. About two crore people now consume tobacco in smoking form while the number of total users is three crore.



Banned Islamist outfit Hizb-ut Tahrir takes out a procession from Cheragi Hill in the port city of Chittagong yesterday protesting the US military exercises here.

Tahrir men stage demonstration in Chittagong

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The banned Islamist outfit Hizb ut-Tahrir Bangladesh yesterday brought out a procession in the city protesting US military exercise in Chittagong.

About 40 to 50 Tahrir men, most resembling college and university students, gathered at Cheragi Pahar intersection at around 12.30pm.

The procession terminated at Chittagong Press Club.

The banners they carried urged the Muslims working in the army to topple Sheikh Hasina and her government and help Hizb ut-Tahrir.

The government of Hasina is subservient to American imperialists. The US and India will not be allowed to set up their base in Bangladesh, the banners read.

The Tahrir men also burnt a US flag in front of Pacific Bhaban, a few yards off Cheragi Pahar.

Assistant Commissioner Jahangir Alam of Detective Branch (DB) of Chittagong Metropolitan Police said they did not know anything about the procession and they had no information about it. "I am looking into the matter," he said.

Kotwali Police Station Officer in-Charge Mohiuddin Mahmud said a vested quarter might have backed up them in a bid to keep the law enforcers busy and create anarchy.

The government slapped a ban on Hizb ut-Tahrir Bangladesh on October 22 last year.

Edn policy sent for PM's nod

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The education ministry sent the much-awaited National Education Policy to the prime minister's office yesterday for approval.

"After finalising the policy at the ministry level, we have sent it to the prime minister's office yesterday noon seeking permission of the prime minister to place it before the cabinet. We hope the policy would soon be placed in the cabinet," Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid told The Daily Star yesterday.

considered opinions of all and people would accept the policy warmly.

He also said they would definitely go for implementation this year.

The National Education Formulation Committee, headed by National Professor Kabir Chowdhury, on September 2 submitted the draft of the policy to the education minister.

The ministry, however, took three months for analysing and reviewing the policy as some religion-based political parties raised objections about few things in the policy.

Soon after getting the draft the ministry put the draft online, asking people to post their opinions. It also invited opinions from the academicians and professional bodies.

The draft was also sent to 22 ministries concerned and the ministry held many discussions with various organisations, including Muslim religious leaders in this regard.

Eight education commissions and committees have been formed since the independence but not a single recommendation of them has been implemented because of lack of political will.

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