



BAISHAKH AGAIN

Pahela Baishakh, the first day of Bangla calendar, marks a new beginning -- a new hope -- for Bangalees.

It is the biggest secular festival of Bangladesh. Regardless of class and religion, every Bangalee gears up on this day to usher in a new year. The city explodes in vibrant festivity and jives to the tune of folk instruments. Streets remain doused by revellers in masks of kings and queens, carrying festoons. *Gajir* pot, graffiti and street paints add colour to the carnival.

Women wearing red-white saris and adorned in glass bangles, and men in *punjabi*, *lungi* and *dhoti* partake gleefully in the daylong celebration and roam around in jovial mood.

Panta Vath (watery rice) with national fish *hilsa*, an exclusive menu for the day, is an additional attraction for city dwellers.

Traders open new book of accounting called *Halkhata* ceremoniously by offering sweets to customers, who on the other hand, are expected to clear up all their dues to renew the business in the New Year.

Pahela Baishakh, indeed, is the chance to start life afresh.

Photo: SHAWKAT JAMIL

