

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Getting Ready for the Celebration.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Picturing Pahela Baishakh

I Love the festivals of Bangladesh. Most of all, I look forward to Pahela Baishakh, the Bengali New Year. It is a festival of pure fun, without any baggage, accompanied by a spirit of happiness that fills the air.

For this one day, Bengalis from all walks of life shake off the troubles of their everyday existence- the daily grind of earning a living, along with 160 million others, from this tiny land- and celebrate being themselves. It is as if they look in the mirror in the morning and say, "Yes! It feels really good to be Bengali."

Exploring the milieu around Shahbag, I realise that while I was growing older abroad, Pahela Baishakh grew up too. The low-key festivities, singing and small-scale functions of my school days have metamorphosed into a gigantic, world-class party with its own colour code, music, cuisine and all-round good cheer.

Everyone wears beautiful clothes. Parents have gone through great lengths to dress up their children. Flowers grace the hair of every woman I see. Faces are painted and masks are worn.

Taking pictures, I am drawn irresistibly to the people, their dresses, and their interactions. I wander the grounds, searching for moments that may reveal a little more than the ordinary, and click away.

The camera becomes an extension of my hungry eyes. I stare intently and without embarrassment, absorbing everything voraciously. Having spent most of my life abroad, I am making up for lost time. The shutter's click becomes my way of highlighting anything or anyone that catches my eye.

Most people cooperate happily with me. Some turn away. A child looks up to see my large camera pointing at her: she unexpectedly bursts into tears and I kick myself.

Some moments tell stories. Under a banyan, a woman holds open her compact mirror for her husband to inspect his freshly painted face. A daughter rides high on daddy's shoulders while holding a red *ektara*, both wearing matching green and red. A young man tenderly wraps a jasmine garland around the *khopa* of his sweetheart. A tired vendor woman, her own child sleeping next to her on the traffic island, sells miniature *dhols* to children of the well-to-do.

Other moments hold suggestions of deeper meanings. Inside the park, a young man stands alone, a few feet apart from the crowd. He is wearing a mask which, strangely, accentuates his loneliness. A graceful middle-aged couple poses among the offerings of a flower shop, the experience of their shared years compressed into their faces.

Back home, I eagerly look through the photographs. Through experience I have found that just because I enjoyed myself does not mean good pictures will follow, and so I am prepared for disappointments. Sure enough, detached from their exuberant reality, most photos look banal, like hundreds I have seen before, here and there. But today I am lucky, because, in addition to the wonderful memories, I also caught a few moments worth preserving.

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Floating people to get help in next budget

Says Muhith

UNB, Dhaka

The government is likely to take the issue of "urban poverty reduction" seriously in the next budget to ensure better living for city's floating people including street children and beggars.

Finance Minister AMA Muhith gave the hint after a pre-budget discussion with non-government organisation (NGO) leaders at the ministry's conference room yesterday.

He said, "We've received a proposal from the NGO leaders. I urged them to let us know what can be done for them (floating people, street children and beggars). This is, however, not an easy task."

Muhith said the leaders emphasised on stopping school dropouts, increasing allocation for education sector, steps for doctors' presence at union levels and better healthcare facilities for marginal people.

Muhith said everybody expressed concern on the country's rising population. "We too are worried. I hope an initial picture on the size of population in the country will be available by next two months."

The leaders emphasised on education to

control population rise, he said. "Issues of health policy and loan disbursement for women came up in the discussion."

Muhith said the leaders also expressed their concern over the misuse of measures taken by the government for ensuring social safety.

The issue of proper utilisation of land has also come up for discussion.

Earlier, Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed said the price of compressed natural gas (CNG) should be increased to Tk 48 to control overflow of vehicles on city streets. "We're in a cordoned city for (benefit of) only 3 percent people."

Prof Sayeed also demanded sufficient allocation for the cultural sector with the fund made available to the private sector to ensure its proper utilisation.

In reply, Muhith said, "We're thinking of increasing the price of CNG."

Campaign for Popular Education Executive Director of Rasheda K Chowdhury demanded an allocation of Tk 25,000 crore for the education sector in the coming budget.

Bangladesh Bank Governor Dr Atiur Rahman and National Board of Revenue Chairman Dr Nasir Uddin Ahmed were also present.



Two girls flying kites at the kite flying festival at Dhaka University playground organised by Dhakabashi yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Death anniversary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Today is the 27th death anniversary of Justice Abdul Jabbar Khan,

a former speaker of the Pakistan National Assembly, says a press release.

On the occasion, fateha will be offered at his graveyard in the city and *doa mahfil* will be held at his village at Baherchar of Barisal.

Abdul Jabbar Khan severed as a justice of Pakistan High Court. Later, he joined politics and he was elected the president of the East Pakistan Muslim League.

Mahmood Al Noor Tarek

METRO DESK



Today is the second death anniversary of Advocate Mahmood Al Noor Tarek, former mayor of Mymensingh pourasava, says a press release.

On the occasion, different programmes will be held at Zila School Jam-e-Masjid, Mymensingh and *milad mahfil* and *doa* will be held after *Asr* prayers at his residence.

Doa mahfil will also be held at Aostradhar orphanage in Mymensingh.

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Sattaranjan Dasgupta

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Today is the 8th death anniversary of Sattaranjan Dasgupta, an organiser of Liberation War, says a press release.

On the occasion, a special prayer and lunch will be held at the residence of Goila Das at Agailjhara of Barisal.

Relatives, friends and well-wishers are requested to pray for salvation of the departed soul.

'Punishment alone won't stop martial law'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Including provision of stringent punishment in constitution for grabbing state power will not stop future threats of martial law promulgation if political culture and mindset are not changed, said speakers at a discussion yesterday.

Centre for National Studies, a pro-BNP think tank, organised the discussion titled "Bangladesh constitution: issues and challenges," at Brac Centre Inn in the city's Mohakhali attended by political leaders, lawmakers, jurists, constitutional experts, educationalists and journalists.

Barrister Rafique-ul Haque in his speech, suggested introducing upper House of Parliament, which was instantly opposed by BNP senior lawmakers Moudud Ahmed and MK Anwar and Jatiya Party lawmaker Anisul Islam Mahmud.

DHAKA TODAY

Human Chain
Ananna Social Foundation will organise a human chain; Venue: in front of Jatiya Press Club; Time: 10:30am.

Meeting
Rotary Club of Dhaka Central will organise a regular meeting; Venue: Dhaka Club; Time: 1:30pm.

Ceremony
Dhaka Ahsania Mission will hold an awarding ceremony; Venue: Mission Bhaban auditorium, Dhanmondi; Time: 10:30am.

Policy dialogue
The Daily Star will hold a policy dialogue; Venue: conference room, The Daily Star; Time: 10:00am.

Seminar
Dev Centre for Philosophical Studies will hold a seminar; Venue: RC Majumder auditorium, DU; Time: 10:00am.

Rally
Shikkhak Karmachari Oikya Jote will organise a rally; Venue: in front of Jatiya Press Club; Time: 10:00am.

Human chain
Jatiya Matsajibi Samity will hold a human chain; Venue: Muktangan; Time: 12:00noon.

NEWS IN brief

Stand by tsunami-hit Japan

METRO DESK

Speakers at a charity film festival launching yesterday said it is Bangladesh's imperative duty to stand by tsunami-hit Japan, as it immensely contributed to Bangladesh's infrastructure development.

The festival titled "Let's stand together for Japan keeping hand-in-hand" was held at Russian Centre of Science and Culture in the city. Social Welfare Club of Institute of Business Administration (IBA) of Jahangirnagar University (JU) organised the event.

JU Vice Chancellor Dr Shariff Enamul Kabir inaugurated the programme as the chief guest. Dr Md Bakhtiar Rana, JU IBA director, and Dr Mehdi Ahmed Ansary, director of Buet-Japan Institute of Disaster Prevention & Urban Safety, attended as the special guests.

Ansary, on his presentation on earthquake probabilities in Bangladesh, said if an additional Tk 10 per square feet was spent, Bangladesh could easily have earthquake resistant buildings. The money raised from the film festival would be handed to Dr Takao TODA, chief representative of Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica) Bangladesh, says a press release.

'Take action against unlicensed diagnostic centres'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The inhabitants of Ramganj upazila of Laxmipur yesterday urged the authorities concerned to take stern legal action against the unlicensed diagnostic centres.

They alleged some profit-mongering people are running diagnostic business without any lab technicians. As a result, they provided false report.

They are just swindling the people in the name of treatment, said a statement that accused Ramganj Adhunik Hospital, New Life General Hospital, Modern Diagnostic Centre, Seba Doctors Point, Popular Diagnostic Centre, Medinova Diagnostic Centre, Uposoma General Hospital, Manik X-Ray and Al-Helaljun Hospital.

Cement-laden boat sinks in Jamuna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

An engine-driven boat loaded with 1,200 bags of cement, worth around Tk 5 lakh, sank during a storm at Natokhola point of the river Jamuna on Thursday evening.

At least 12 onboard managed to swim to safety, said police, adding that salvage operation began yesterday.

Glaxose WEATHER TODAY

100% GLUCOSE

Rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at one or two places over Rajshahi, Rangpur, Dhaka, Khulna, Barisal, Chittagong and Sylhet divisions in 12 hours as of 6:00pm today.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:23pm today and rises at 5:31am tomorrow.

Country's highest temperature 35.5 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Patuakhali and lowest 19.5 degrees Celsius at Mongla.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	32.9	23.4	67	57
Chittagong	32.6	25.8	89	73
Rajshahi	34.3	23.5	68	60
Rangpur	32.2	21.7	64	63
Khulna	32.5	23.2	72	65
Barisal	33.2	24.4	69	79
Sylhet	33.4	21.9	74	65
Cox's Bazar	34.7	26.5	75	74

Instant energy, Instant recharge

SHIP-BREAKING POLICY

JS body report in 15 days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chairman of Parliamentary Standing Committee on labour and employment ministry Md Israfil Alam here yesterday said they would submit a comprehensive report comprising recommendations on ship-breaking industry to the government within 15 days.

The government would formulate a ship-breaking policy based on that report and also form a wage board for workers at ship-breaking yards, he said.

Israfil said this at the residence of local MP Abul Kashem Master after the committee led a 21-member team on an inspection at four ship-breaking yards at Sitakunda upazila.

The team comprised of State Minister Munnujam Sufian of the ministry and the committee members Zakir Hossain and Noni Gopal Mandal, also lawmakers.

The yards are Mabiya Ship Yard; Unique Traders Ship Yard, owned by Kashem's son; and Seiko Ship Yard, situated at Baro Aulia, and SN Corporation in Shitalpur.

Indian commerce minister due in city today

UNB, Dhaka

Dhaka is eyeing for meaningful settlement of a number of issues with New Delhi including duty-free access of 61 Bangladesh products to the Indian market during the visit of Indian Commerce Minister Anand Sharma.

Sharma will arrive here today on a two-day visit to strengthen economic ties between the two close neighbors. He is scheduled to have meetings with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Commerce Minister Faruk Khan.

Noise pollution in city threat to public health

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Four green organisations yesterday demanded of the government to implement the Noise Pollution Control Act.

The leaders of the organisations at a rally held in front of the Jatiya Press Club said though according to the World Health Organisation the permissible level of noise is 40 to 50 decibel but the rate of noise pollution in Dhaka is 86 to 110 decibel.

The public health of Dhaka city under huge threat due to the noise pollution, they said.

Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa), WBB Trust, Green Voice and Sundor Jibon jointly organised the rally. The leaders of the organisations said though government enacted a law in 2006 against noise pollution but it is yet to be implemented.

Their demands include restriction on entering bus and truck in the residential areas, permission of filing case by the victims of noise pollution and ban on use of hydraulic horn in the city.

Joint Secretary of Bapa JK Boral presided over the rally while Chairman of Sundor Jibon Sirajul Islam Molla, Executive Director of Seba Nuruddin and Coordinator of Green Voice Alamgir Kabir also spoke.

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Mobile : +88- 01926666105, 01926666102
01926666103, 01926666100, 01926666104
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