



পহেলা বাইশাখ ১৪২০

PAHELA BAISHAKH

Pahela Baishakh, the first day of the Bangla Calendar, is a universal, secular and the biggest festival of the Bangladesh, celebrated amid lively pageantry, leaving behind the gloom of the past and pledging to uphold the nation's cultural heritage. Bangladesh becomes the hub of red-white colours, celebrations and festivity on Pahela Baishakh. This celebration coincides with the new year celebrations around the world, especially in many South Asian countries. Bangla New Year or Pahela Baishakh connects all the indigenous Bangladeshers, irrespective of their religions, races and cultural identities. Bangladeshers from all walks of life across the world unite to celebrate the time-honoured popular festival. It is the occasion to welcome the Bengali New Year with new hope of peace, prosperity and happiness. In Bangladesh, it is a national holiday and celebrated on 14th April according to the official calendar designed by the Bangla Academy.

Baishakh Weather

Scorching heat prevails everywhere in Baishakh. Mango, jackfruit, lichi get to ripen in this month. Sometimes the weather turns stormy with Kal-Baishakhi that sweeps across the country. Yet great enthusiasm is noticed among the Bangladeshers in welcoming Pahela Baishakh.

Baishakhi Fair

Baishakhi Mela (Fair) is organised in many parts of Bangladesh and beyond wherever Bangladeshers are present. The lifestyle of rural Bengal is showcased in almost all the fairs. Various traditional handicrafts, toys, crockery, household utensils, agricultural products, as well as various kinds of food and sweets are sold at these fairs.

Shobhajatra

Dhaka's Pahela Baishakh celebrations remain incomplete without the Shobhajatra. Students and teachers of Dhaka University's Faculty of Fine Arts take out a colorful procession (known as Shobhajatra) and parade through different streets and finally return to the Fine Arts Institute. This procession mainly consists of arts and craft, including cut-outs of tigers, owls, dragon fly, etc., and different types of masks. These colorful pieces of art display the elements of Bengali culture and resemble lifestyle of rural and modern Bangladesh. People of all ages irrespective of class and profession take part in this procession. Since 1989 this procession (Shobhajatra) has become an important event and also a major tourist attraction.

Chhayanaut's Melodic Welcoming

Chhayanaut, one of the leading cultural organisations of the country, has been organising their barishabaron (welcoming new year) programme since 1967. On every Pahela Baishakh, Chhayanaut's celebration begins at Ramna Batamul generally with a morning raga recited on instruments. The melody seems to stir the senses as the sun slowly emerges. Teachers, alumni and students of Chhayanaut present solo and group renditions at the event.

Baishakhi Dressing

People from all walks of life dressed in traditional Bengali attire: men wearing dhuti/panjabi and women wearing white saris with red borders, adorn themselves with tip (bindis), churi (bangles) and phul (flowers).

Baishakhi Food

It has become a custom to start the day with a traditional breakfast of panta-bhat, bhaja-lish machh, different bhortas, onion, kancha lonka, achar, dal, muri-murki, water melon, bangi, juice of various tropical fruits and various traditional cakes.

Baishakhi Literature and Folk Performing Art

The festivity of Pahela Baishakh is also a pure source of entertainment with singers and dancers performing staging of jatra (traditional plays), pala gaan, kobigan, jarigan, gambhira, gazir gan and alkaap song. Traditional artists present folk songs, including baul, marfati, murshidi and bhatali genres. Narrative plays like Laila-Majnu, Yusuf-Zulekha and Radha-Krishna are staged. Among other attractions of the fairs, puppet shows, merry-go-rounds and giant wheels are especially enjoyed by children.

Pahela Baishakh in History

Bangla Term	Origin Sanskrit	Word Formation	Meaning
নববর্ষ (Nababors)	नव (Nav) = New वर्ष (Vars) = Year	नव + वर्ष = नववर्ष (Nababors)	New Year
পহেলা বৈশাখ (Pahela Baishakh)	পহেলা (Pahela) = First বৈশাখ (Baishakh) = Month of the year	পহেলা + বৈশাখ = পহেলা বৈশাখ (Pahela Baishakh)	First day of the month of Baishakh

Pahela Baishakh celebration dates back to Mughal Emperor Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbar's reign. In order to ease tax collection, Akbar-e-Azam changed the tradition of agricultural tax collection according to Hijri calendar and ordered a reform of the calendar because the Hijri calendar, being a lunar one did not coincide with the harvest seasons and thus the farmers faced severe difficulties in paying taxes out of season.

Initially this calendar was named as "Fasli San" (agricultural year) and then Bônggabo or Bangla Year was introduced on 10/11 March 1584, but was dated from 5th November 1556 or 963 Hijri. This was the day that Akbar defeated Himu in the second Battle of Panipat to ascend the throne. This not only glorified his victory but also streamlined revenue collection into an orderly process.

It was Akbar-e-Azam's directive to settle all dues on the last day of Chaitro. The next day was the first day of the New Year (Poyela Baishakh), the day for a new beginning: landlords would distribute sweets among their tenants, and businessmen would open a "Halkhata" (new accounts book) and close their old ones. Businessmen used to invite their customers to share sweets and renew their business relationship with them. There were fairs and festivities all over and gradually Poyela Baishakh became a day of celebration.



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