

SNAPSHOT

PHOTO: PR

Hello Boishakh! Thousands of people beat the heat to join the Mongol Shobha Jatra, which commenced from the Department of Fine Arts in Dhaka University, to welcome the New Year 1421.

Strange History

The Beer Flood

Meux's Brewery Co Ltd, established in 1764, was a London brewery owned by Sir Henry Meux. Among the number of smaller breweries Meux's purchased, there was Horse Shoe Brewery, and in the brewery's cellar stood several large vats of beer, the largest of which was a 22-foot high vat which held 511,920 litres of beer, held together by 29 large iron hoops. On the evening of October 17, 1814, the beer had been fermenting for months, and the metal and wood of the vat was beginning to show the strain of holding back. By six in the evening, the vat burst open and released a tidal wave of 3555 barrels worth of strong beer. The beer that burst forth crushed several vats, bringing the wave up to around 9000 barrels in total. One wall of the



PHOTO: SECONDSFROMNOWHERE

brewery, which was around 25 feet in height, was instantly destroyed by the deluge, while a large section of the roof of the building eventually collapsed. Thus the crushing beer wave was carrying with it harmful debris as it rushed past the brewery and into the streets. Two houses that were next to the brewery were totally demolished. A mother and daughter were drinking tea when the "flood" hit them; the mother was killed on the spot and the daughter was swept away and was later found in pieces. The area around the brewery was quite flat and so the beer quickly filled cellars of other buildings instead of draining away. At least seven people drowned in the beer flood or died from incurred injuries. The brewery was eventually taken to court but the judge and jury ruled the disaster to be an act of god, and no one was held responsible. Instead of being punished by law, the brewery owners successfully applied to the parliament reclaiming duty which allowed them to continue trading. The brewery was demolished in 1922 with the Dominion Theatre occupying a part of the site.