



ECHOES BY
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People have celebrated New Year either at the beginning of their solar or lunar calendar; or when nature sent fresh air. That fresh air is the beginning of spring or autumn.

Ancient Persians (Iran) celebrated New Year with the beginning of spring. They called it Nowruz (New Day). As the winter ends the snow starts to melt. Flowers start to bloom. The rivers start to flow. Nature wakes up. People are happy to celebrate. Before the Roman colonisation of Europe that saw January becoming the first month of the Gregorian solar calendar, the ancient Europeans used to celebrate their New Year on the first day of spring (the spring equinox). That festival still survives today as Easter.

Since antiquity, Bengal welcomed a New Year with the fresh air of late autumn (Hemanta) when the majority of the people, the farmers, had food to celebrate from the Aman harvest. The festival was aptly named 'Nobanno' (new food). When the Bangla calendar (Panjika) started, all the months



of the year were named after a star or a constellation. There was once exception. That was Agrahayan. Literally, Agrahayan means the leader. Pahela Agrahayan celebrated Nobanno and the New Year. For centuries this was the situation. Emperor Abul Fath Jalal Uddin Muhammad Akbar, or Akbar the Great, abandoned the lunar calendar for convenience of tax collection to run the Mughal Empire. He started the New Year on the first day of Baishakh. Pahela Agrahayan lost its prominence as the New Year forever, but the celebrations of Nobanno survived.

The Aman harvest of Kartik would determine a farmer's fate. A good harvest meant the family was safe for one more year. The family and the village would celebrate Nobanno with pitha, khoi, muri, mowa, and firni. Hemanta would turn the green fields and the banks of the rivers white with Kash flowers. Singers would sing. Dancers would dance. Kites would decorate the autumn skies. Rural Bengal would over-spill in festivities and the squeaking noise

in One Calendar



of the Nagordola. Women would immortalise Nobanno with tapestries (Nakshi Kantha) like the ancient Egyptians did with their Hieroglyphs or the cavemen of Altamira in Spain did thousands of years earlier.

The fate of the farmer depended on the weather. If the weather wasn't kind, there would be no crops to harvest. The rural economy of Bengal didn't have safety nets like today. The farmer would end up entering an inescapable bond with the moneylender (Mahajan).

The rural landscape of Bangladesh has changed. Bangladesh is now in the top tier of countries with the highest economic growth rates. Growth rates, how-

ever, haven't changed the urge to find an excuse to celebrate a festival. As the old saying goes, in Bengal there's a parban (festival) for every occasion.

Not too many calendars can boast two New Years. The Bangla calendar has Pahela Baishakh and Pahela Agrahayan. Off to Charukala. The Feedback song, *Melai Jaire* is not only for Pahela Baishakh but all the festivals in Bangladesh.

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BUET ADVANCES TO THE SEMI-FINALS OF THE HULT PRIZE

MUNTASEER BUNIAN

A bunch of innovative young minds from team "Little Wins" from Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) are ready to change the world with their unique idea to solve the problem of crowded urban spaces, with a promise to double the income of 10 million people living in it by 2022. In case you are wondering, team "Little Wins" is the winner of the Quarter-Final round of the Hult Prize 2016 at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET).

Under the leadership of Nazmus Sadat, Campus Director of Hult Prize Foundation, the Hult Prize at BUET started its journey for the year 2016 with a Primary Grooming Workshop for a record number of 800 registered participants, one of the largest student engaging programmes that BUET has ever seen. In the workshop several designated speakers enlightened the students on the concepts of social entrepreneurship, business related issues and crowded urban spaces. After that participants submitted their executive summaries of the social business plan solving the challenge of "Urban Crowded Spaces" set by former US President Bill Clinton. Thirty-two teams



were selected on the basis of their executive summaries and asked to present their ideas in the Primary Pitch-Off round held on October 20, 2015. Twelve teams were selected to present their ideas in Secondary Pitch-Off held on October 29, 2015, from which finally top 6 teams were selected to present in the Grand Finale.

Organised by BUET Career Club, the Grand Finale of Hult Prize Quarter-Finals

Group; Mahmudul Hasan Sohag, Chairman of Onnorokom Group and Naveed Mahbub, Founder and CEO of Naveed Mahbub Inc. Dr. Md. Rafi Uddin, Associate Professor, Department of Physics acted as the Chair of the programme. After watching the presentations of the unique ideas, the judges finally announced team "Little Wins" as the winner of Hult Prize at BUET 2016. Teams "Elixir" and "Aguntuk" were announced as the first and second runners-up respectively.

The Hult Prize, world's largest student case competition, is organised by Hult Prize Foundation in partnership with former US President Bill Clinton and Clinton Global Initiative every year. The winning team receives one million US dollars in seed capital to launch and scale-up their company. It is open to undergraduates, graduate and PhD students from around the world and its global final is hosted at the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) annual meeting in New York, every September.

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