

| SHUTTERSTORIES |



DIARY OF A CLOUD FANATIC

PHOTOS : BIR AZAM

They are omnipresent, always over our head. They are ever changing and never the same. They offer you an array of colours- changing through dawn to dusk, in rain and sun. They are ordinary yet spectacular. Looking up at the sky for a cloud hunt- some would find it a waste of time and some would call you crazy. But the truth is, anyone who has not spent a day, quietly gazing at the ever shifting clouds, has not lived fully.

— FAYEKA ZABEEN SIDDIQUA



| STRIKING A CHORD |



THE DAY IS NEAR

ELITA KARIM

PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

It is just a week away from Pahela Baishakh, the Bengali new year (also celebrated in many parts of Asia), and preparations are already underway to make this the best Mongol Shobha Jatra ever, by the students of Charukala.

The elephant in the room has been addressed however. Darkness looks over the celebrations, as the culprits, the sexual harassers, the assaulters, the molesters and the perpetrators are still on the run. Last year, a number of women and young girls were groped, gang-molested and even stripped off of their saris at one point, despite the area being under tight security – there were policemen nearby and at least 27 CCTV cameras were installed.

To date, not a single culprit has been identified and arrested – which is strange since many media organisations and concerned individuals on social media went to the trouble of 'deciphering' the 'unrecognisable' (as termed by the authorities) footages and published the faces of the culprits for the public. In fact, at least one in the ruling party even wondered out loud as to why the media and the public were making a big deal out of the whole incident. "These things happen," his statement roughly translated.

Recently, the government has asked everyone to finish off with their Pahela Baishakh celebrations by 5:00 pm, in Dhaka and in other parts of the country as well. Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal made the statement in a media briefing at the secretariat in Dhaka last

week. "All kinds of outdoor public gathering will be prohibited after 5:00pm on the day," the minister said after a meeting with the top officials of the law enforcement agencies.

Pahela Baishakh is a day when people from all walks of life come together to celebrate dance, music, theatre, colours and flowers. It indeed is sad when this very day will be treated the same way the English New Year is treated by the law enforcers in the capital – closing down businesses by 5:00 pm and making life hell for people returning home from office after 7:00 pm.

The government also banned the use of the vuvuzelas, match sticks and lighters, during the Boishakh celebration, which is of course highly appreciated.

People say that the authorities have adapted the habit of 'chopping off the head' instead of actually getting into crux of it all and solving the problem. Cutting short the Pahela Baishakh celebrations might ensure security to a level, however, it will not make the fact disappear, that there are rapists and molesters walking the streets of Bangladesh, amongst us. If the authorities do not come up with an advanced level scheme to arrest them and punish them accordingly, our problems will never be solved. As Begum Rokeya's 'Sultana's Dreams' would summarise – it makes more sense to lock up the wild creatures behind bars, as opposed to letting them roam about free while we lock ourselves up behind walls, out of fear. ■



PHOTO: STAR FILE

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NUMBERS

The number of women who were honored for the significant role that they played in the Liberation War and implementing its spirits afterwards by 71 foundation at Bangladesh Shishu Academy. They are Begum Fazilatunnesa Mujib (posthumous); Prof Panna Kaisar; Valerie Ann Taylor, and freedom fighters Ferdousi Priyabhashini; Momtaz Begum; Rokeya Kabir; Lubna Mariam; Shila Momen; Sultana Kamal; Hannana Begum; and Ayesha Khanam.