

**SPECIAL FEATURE**

While you reap what you sow, the saying is taken to a completely literal meaning on Nobanno. Marking 1st Agrahayan as the day of celebration, according to the Bengali calendar, reaping crops amid November's wintry whispers and condensed dew drops is what this agricultural festival is all about. Being the season of harvest, the true essence of Nobanno is kept alive by the villagers who slave away to reap new crops on this festival. Thus, the real spirit of Nobanno resides in the villages of the country, in each farmer's household, and the smile that each sheaf of a good harvest brings to their toil-tired faces.

Of Plenty and Pitha



Every step of the harvest has 'over the millennia' been woven into the a cultural fabric that is Bangladesh, and this is despite the layers and layers of upgrades that were brought by technology.

Sure, tractors and combine harvesters have taken over rice fields now. But the festival in question has seen days when individual strands of rice were cut with wooden sickles, one after one after one. Hard labour would drive oxen to tread and thresh stacked husks of rice and the journey of a singular grain of rice would just begin.

Now a rare artifact of Bengali



culture, the koola was once used to filter out impurities and the villages' see-sawing dhenki or a domestic rice-mill to remove unwanted layers of bran and hulls. While many of these practices have been let go to make way for better techniques, like the use of pedal threshers, many still choose traditional ways of harvest. Whichever the path, an extensive process of reaping, drying and milling allows the new grain of Nobanno to finally be obtained and stored in jute bags and silos.

But the new crops don't come empty-handed. They bring with them happiness for farmers and an abun-



dance of food. This invites business and livelihood for traders and merchants and they rejoice in the face of economic solvency, as simply put a good yield of rice means more money for the farmer's coming year.

While Nobanno was deemed the Bengali New Year till the reign of Emperor Akbar, the enthusiasm behind the festival has waned much since then. Still, many villages host Nobanno fairs and display handicrafts by rural artisans. Newly harvested crops made into puffed or flattened rice also make an appearance, along with the season's delicacy-jaggery.