

# PAHOLA BAISHAKH THE INDUSTRY THAT COLOURS THE CELEBRATION

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PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Next Sunday, this dusty grey city will transform into a sea of colours, momentarily giving its residents a break from their monotonous routines. Dhaka will come alive for Pahela Baishakh -- a festival that transcends class, religion and social status.

In the past few years, the scale and scope of celebrating the Bangla new year has grown leaps and bounds, and an entire industry has contributed towards it. From designers to tailors, the fashion industry is perhaps the busiest during this time.

Biplab Saha, owner of fashion house Bishwa Rong, said, "Pahela Baishakh is incomparable to any other festival; it is quintessentially Bengali. People are spontaneous in its celebration."

Saha observed how celebration of this festival has grown bigger in the last ten years. "In terms of sales, Eid-ul-Fitr is still the biggest

festival. But there is a large quantity of items sold during Noboborsho," he said, also mentioning some interesting buying trends. "People love to wear similar clothes for the occasion. A group of friends buy the same saree, father and son come to buy the same panjabi; during other festivals everyone wants a unique outfit."

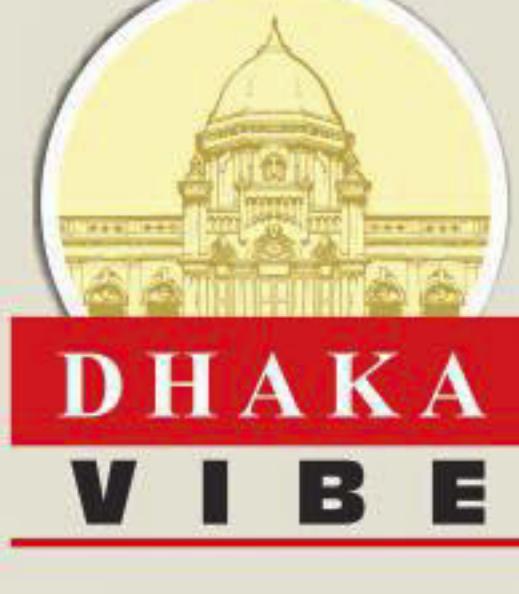
Ishrat Hossain, proprietor and designer of Deshal, echoes Saha's observation. "Volume of sales for Pahela Baishakh probably comes second only to Eid-ul-Fitr. Saree sales are just as big as Eid during this time of the year, and customers love getting similar outfits for their entire family."

"Eid-ul-Fitr sales surge on the last ten days of Ramadan. For Pahela Baishakh, the shopping craze starts five or six days before the festival," she added.

There is heavy demand for new clothes during major festivals, but often that demand is for Indian or Pakistani clothing. Both Saha and Jahan observed that people generally buy more Bangladeshi products for Noboborsho.

"Even those who wear Indian and Pakistani apparel all year round, prefer Bangladeshi clothes for Pahela Baishakh. Perhaps, the reason is purely cultural," said Jahan. Saha emphasised that it's important to support Bangladeshi businesses. "Ultimately, the customers have a responsibility to keep traditions alive," he said.

Big fashion houses are not the only ones keeping desi fashion alive. Small and medium entrepreneurs organise fairs all around town, often bringing their online businesses to the venues. Rangtaa is one such initiative that solely promotes Bangladeshi goods.



"Customers' dependence on foreign products is unsustainable and unprofitable for the local industry and economy in the long run. We were also motivated by some unpleasant experiences our entrepreneur friends were facing at commercial fairs back in 2013. In a market flooded with Pakistani lawn (dresses), buyers would ignore local clothes," according to the Rangtaa team.

Rangtaa is an initiative of Meye Network to bring together female entrepreneurs in a fair business ecosystem, said the organisers. Rangtaa's message of inclusivity and patriotism has reached many. People in droves attended the two-day (April 5-6) fair.

Forty-nine entrepreneurs were present at this year's 'Rangtaa Mela' at Midas Centre, with handmade jewellery, clothes, bags, baked goods and more. Card transactions varied between Tk 3 and 7 lakh; cash transactions are manifold to that number, the organisers said. More than a thousand people attended the fair.

This season is highly profitable for SMEs as well as big brands. Fashion giant Aarong earns approximately Tk 17-20 crore, selling their huge range of apparel, home decor, accessories and more on the days leading up to April 14. Saree sales alone can account up to Tk 5 crore, said an Aarong designer.

As we gear up for Pahela Baishakh, buying new clothes and planning get-togethers, we should remember that an entire Bangladeshi industry is working hard to make the celebration memorable. If there is demand, there will be supply -- so it's important to be a responsible customer and place that demand in the right place.



PHOTO COURTESY: SHOLEE

## Farmers need help with climate change adaptation

**Speakers say at MJF workshop**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Change in climatic variables like excessive rainfall and salinity intrusion caused about half the damage to agricultural, fisheries and livestock production in some parts of the country's coastal belt, says a Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) commissioned report.

On the other hand, flood causes damage to about half of Aman rice production in some northern areas each year, it says.

Findings of the report, "Climate Resilient Agriculture in Coastal and Flood-plain Regions of Bangladesh", were disclosed yesterday at a workshop arranged by MJF at the city's Krishibid Institution Bangladesh.

The qualitative research was part of an ongoing five-year project of MJF. It was conducted in eight upazilas under five coastal districts -- Bhola, Patuakhali, Bagerhat, Satkhira and Barguna -- and two flood-prone northern districts, Gaibandha and Kurigram.

A research team collected data for the report through focus group discussion (285 participants), key informant interviews (66 participants), case studies, and literature review between May and November, 2018.

The report says in coastal areas, frequency and intensity of storms have increased in the last few years while erratic rainfall has affected agriculture production.

Due to excessive rainfall, farmers faced new types of pest infestation, it says.

Salinity caused foot disease of cows and fever of chicken and duck. Lack of forage reduced milk production, it adds.



From left, Dr Abu Wali Raghib Hassan, Shaheen Anam, Mir Nurul Alam, Prof Ainun Nishat and Md Mahbubur Rahman at the programme.

PHOTO: STAR

Moreover, salinity induced an average of 30 percent production loss in fisheries, it mentions.

The report also says thunderstorms increased in the past four to five years, causing deaths of livestock and humans in three Gaibandha and Kurigram upazilas.

Besides, heavy rainfall hampered post-harvest activities and vegetable production, it says.

The research found lack of accountability and political interferences as barriers to effective functioning of Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE).

According to the report, more than 80 percent farmers in Barguna use local rice variety while farmers of other coastal districts use high yield varieties. Limited cultivation of rice was noticed

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## Secretariat at no risk of electrical fire: Cabinet secy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh's secretariat has "foolproof security" in terms of fire hazard from electrical short circuits, Cabinet Secretary M Shafiq Alam said yesterday.

"We have circuit breakers everywhere. There's almost no chance of fire breaking out from a short circuit," he told reporters at Cabinet Division after a cabinet meeting held at Prime Minister's Office.

"This is a specialty of buildings constructed by Public Works Department (PWD). All the buildings have circuit breakers. It prevents electrical fire," he said.

The top bureaucrat made the comments at a time when fire safety has become a much talked about issue in the country following the tragedy at Banani's FR Tower.

The secretary said PWD has been taking different measures including changing expired fire extinguishers.

He said they will hold a meeting with all authorities concerned on whether there are any loopholes, and will take necessary action following scrutiny.

They will construct another 20-storey building on secretariat premises, he added.

### CABINET DIVISION BUILDING AT EARTHQUAKE RISK

The secretary, however, said the Cabinet

Division building is not out of earthquake risk.

"It is a 60 or 70-year-old building. The base of this building is weak. We have a standing alert on earthquake," he told reporters.

That's why prime minister has stopped attending office at the building and she attends meetings at other venue."

About the risk of officials working in Cabinet Division building, he said if the tectonic plate at Dawki -- near Sylhet -- moves, it would take two minutes to reach Dhaka.

"We have a mechanism of an alert. If we are alerted on time, we can evacuate," he said.

### 66 PERCENT DECISIONS IMPLEMENTED

In the first quarter of this year, a total of 36 decisions were taken in five cabinet meetings, he said.

Of them, 24 decisions -- or 66.67 percent -- have been implemented while the others are at implementation stage, he said.

In the same period last year, the cabinet took 63 decisions in seven meetings and implementation rate was 68.25 percent.

"Our performance was relatively better last year," he said.

## DHAKA TODAY

### MUSIC

Taraga - Season.Spring

Episode.On

Venue: 3rd space,

Dhanmondi

Time: 6:30pm

### FAIR

Baishakhi Haat

Organiser: Triangle Even

Solution

Venue: WVA, Dhanmondi

Time: 10am

### BOOK LAUNCHING

Wreetu Comic Book

Organiser: Wreetu

Venue: EMK Centre

Time: 3pm



### CELEBRATION

Rokonuzzaman Khan

Dadabhai's 94th birth

anniversary

Organiser: Kryolan

Bangladesh

Venue: Baton Rouge

Restaurant

Time: 9am

### EXHIBITION

Unsettled

By Kazi Tahsin Agaz Apurbo

Venue: Jatra Biroti, Banani

Time: 11am

### SEMINAR

Construction Technology

Venue: The InterContinental

Time: 9:30am

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