



Apu Biswas



Apurba



Sadia Islam Mou



Chanchal Chowdhury



Aparna Ghose

Good food, family time, new clothes Stars share their Pahela Baishakh plans

“Pahela Baishakh creates a sense of excitement and elation for me. The day starts with the beautiful seranation of ‘Esho he Baishakh’. This song holds a special place in the hearts of every Bengali.”

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Every year, the month of April brings the joy and festivities of Pahela Baishakh. Wherever you look, the vibrant colours at play tingle your senses to remind you that the Bengali New Year is upon us.

On this special day, we caught up with celebrities to find out about their plans.

Sadia Islam Mou

Pahela Baishakh is very close to my heart. It is a special occasion for Bengalis all around the world. There are many western occasions that we celebrate, but this day is always memorable for me.

That being said, I will not be going out anywhere on Pahela Baishakh this time. I will spend the day with my family, helping my son with his studies.

Even though I do not have any dance shows this year, many talented artistes who are junior to me will be performing at different events. I wish them luck.

Chanchal Chowdhury

Pahela Baishakh is a part of our heritage and identity. It belongs to all Bengalis, irrespective of their religion or caste.

On this day, all Bengalis come together, putting their differences aside. I wish that everyone washes away their sadness, sorrows, and worries with the Mongol

Shobhajatra this year.

I will not be shooting on Pahela Baishakh.

I am thinking of going to Charukola. I have beautiful childhood memories of this day, I am always reminded of the fairs and festivities in my village.

Bidya Sinha Mim

To be honest, we were not able to celebrate Pahela Baishakh properly for the last two years because of the Covid-19 pandemic. But this year, as the pandemic subsides, I will celebrate the day in a grand way. This is my first Pahela Baishakh after my wedding, so it is very special to me.

I look forward to new clothes and my mother's home-cooked food today.

Ziaul Faruq Apurba

Every year, we celebrate the Bengali New Year with various home-cooked, hearty Bengali meals. We engross ourselves in the festivities of Bengali culture and celebration.

This time, I will be celebrating Pahela Baishakh on the sets.

This New Year, we need to let go off all forms of discrimination and negativity. I

want everyone to be happy and enjoy every second with a smile.

Apu Biswas

I consider myself as a Bengali as I try to incorporate all the rituals and practices of the festivities of Pahela Baishakh whole heartedly.

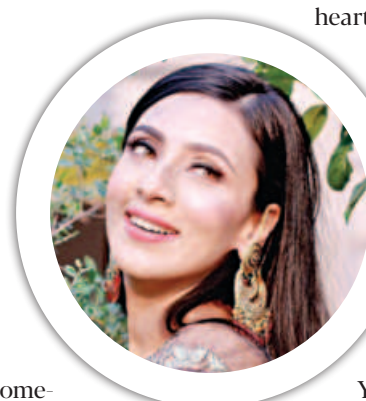
However, the absence of my mom hurts me immensely as any festivals without her is incomplete. Together, we used to cook up delicious delicacies at our home to welcome the New Year.

However, I will celebrate this year with my son Joy and together we are going to make it a wonderful day. I wish everyone a happy Bengali New Year.

Aparna Ghose

Pahela Baishakh creates a sense of excitement and elation for me. The day starts with the beautiful seranation of “Esho he Baishakh”. This song holds a special place in the hearts of every Bengali.

No matter how far away we live, one can never separate our Bengali identity from us. *Pantha bhaat, Illish, and Nagordola* are a part of our culture.



Bidya Sinha Mim

Nisho and Tanjin Tisha’s ‘Ek Baishakh’ to premiere today

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Popular on-screen pair Afran Nisho and Tanjin Tisha's special tele-fiction “Ek Baishakh” will premiere today on NTV at 2.30 pm.

The plot revolves around Polash (Nisho) who has a chance encounter with a girl named Nilima (Tisha) on Facebook. Gradually, their virtual relationship blossoms into love and they decide to meet each other for the first time on Pahela Baishakh in front of Charukola. Will they meet or will fate intervene?

Directed by Tuhin Hossain, the tele-fiction also stars Achol and Priyonti in pivotal roles.



Season 4 of ‘Stranger Things’ teases new villain

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

The fourth season of “Stranger Things” arrives on Netflix on May 27, 2022, with volume one.

It has been six months since the Battle of Starcourt, which brought terror and destruction to Hawkins. Struggling with the aftermath, our favourite characters are separated for the first time – and navigating the complexities of high school hasn't made things any easier.

A new character Victor Creel is glimpsed in the latest trailer for the series. According to reports, he is a disturbed man who is imprisoned in a psychiatric hospital for a gruesome murder in the 1950s. It would seem that Creel is in some way connected to a monster for the new season.



NEWS

BB slaps credit card ban

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and an executive director of the BB, said 12 people had violated the rules of the credit card operation, which was subsequently proved by the central bank.

NBL has also been asked to stop the operation of foreign currency accounts of Rick, Ron, and Montazul.

In January, the central bank fined NBL Tk 55 lakh as it had tried to hide the loan-related information of the cardholders.

In another move, Bangladesh Bank yesterday cancelled the authorised dealer (AD) licence of NBL's West Dhanmondi branch, meaning the bank would not be able to handle any foreign exchange-related business, such as export

and import.

The BB probe found that NBL had operated a foreign currency account for ZH Sikder Women's Medical College breaching rules.

The account was opened with NBL's Dilkusha branch, which was later transferred to the West Dhanmondi branch, violating the guidelines for the Foreign Exchange Transactions 2018.

Dilkusha branch will strictly be monitored by the central bank, according to the BB letter.

Despite repeated attempts, this correspondent could not reach NBL Managing Director Md Mehmood Husain for comments.

Zainul Haque Sikder, who passed away on

February 10 last year, and his family members started to increase their influence in the board of NBL after 2009, plaguing the bank with malpractices, sources said.

Zainul served as the NBL chairman for 12 years in a row. His wife Monowara Sikder is now its chairman, while their sons Rick, Ron, and daughter Parveen Haque Sikder are in the 12-member board of directors.

NBL's default loans stood at Tk 5,955 crore in December last year, up 186 percent year-on-year, BB data showed. Non-performing loans at the bank was only Tk 388 crore in 2009. The bank also faced a capital shortfall of Tk 457 crore last year.

Govt cautious about loans for mega projects

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experts. And many projects are being implemented on the basis of foreign partnerships.

“Our main goal is to accelerate economic activities, create employment, increase resources and make the lives of people easier through infrastructure development,” she said.

The prime minister said 2022 and 2023 will be milestones for Bangladesh in terms of infrastructure development.

The much-desired Padma bridge will come into operation in just a few months. The bridge is expected to contribute 1.2 percent to the GDP, she said.

She said Metrorail will be launched on the 14km Uttara-Agargaon route by the end of this year. It is expected to bring a revolutionary change in the capital's transport system, she added.

The country's first underwater tunnel, Karnaphuli River Tunnel in Chattogram, will be opened in October next, said Hasina.

The first unit (with capacity of 1,200-megawatt) of Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant, the largest development project in the country's history at a cost of Tk 1.13 trillion, is expected to be commissioned by the end of 2023, she said.

Last month, the 1,320 megawatt Payra power plant was inaugurated ahead of the deadline. “The implementation of other mega projects is progressing fast,” she said.

She said Bangladesh's economy stood on a strong foundation in the last 13 years, which is evident in different macroeconomic indexes. The GDP was only \$102 billion in 2009, which rose to \$416 billion last

year. The per capita income was increased to \$2,591 from only \$702, she said.

She said these achievements have been made possible thanks to far-sighted political thoughts and the implementation of far-sighted economic programmes.

She said the coronavirus pandemic, Russia-Ukraine war, and the emerging situation caused by the war have led to instability in commodity prices in the world market.

Fuel prices have risen abnormally. International transport fares have also risen sharply. As a result, the prices of some products have also gone up in Bangladesh. “But we're not sitting idle. We're trying our best to bring relief to the general public,” she said.

During the holy month of Ramadan, the government is providing several essential

items at affordable prices to some 10 million families through TCB by giving subsidy, she said.

Hasina said there is an arrangement to sell meat, eggs and milk at affordable prices through 15 freezer vans every day by the Livestock Department in the capital. “So, the prices of many essential items have already come down to normal levels.”

Besides, the government has given special allocation of over 100,330 metric tonnes of rice against 10,033,054 (over 10 million) VGF cards on the occasion of upcoming Eid, she said.

“I would like to inform you clearly that there is no shortage of any commodity, including rice, in the country,” she said.

The prime minister extended Bangla New Year greetings to all. “Although many (Bangalee) traditions have been lost

due to various blows, the celebration of New Year on Pahela Baishakh still survives with its own glory,” she said.

She urged all to come forward for building Bangladesh as a happy and prosperous ‘Sonar Bangla’ where there would be no inequality or disparity among people, and no discord among religions.

“The Pahela Baishakh inspires us to adopt a liberal lifestyle by shunning all narrowness and ignorance. It gives us strength and shows a dream to live with fresh enthusiasm removing all sorts of filthiness and shabbiness from the hearts,” she said.

Hasina urged all to join the Pahela Baishakh celebration programmes and enjoy the joy of the Bangla New Year, maintaining health protocol as the coronavirus has not gone completely.

WB rings alarm on reserve use

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The use of reserves for funding development projects is “something to be careful about” as “there are strong limits” on their use, he said.

“All these problems can be traced to too much spending in the country, too much spending by the government. That is another issue that has to be addressed, mainly through an increase in revenues for the government,” Timmer added.

Otherwise, the country can find itself in a currency crisis like Sri Lanka is battling.

Meanwhile, the WB maintained its growth projection for this fiscal year at 6.4 percent and downsized its earlier projection for the next fiscal year by 2 percentage points to 6.7 percent.

The pared-back growth projection comes in light of the jump in global commodity prices increase amid the uncertainty created by

the war in Ukraine and slower manufacturing sector growth as pent-up consumption demand subsides.

The WB projected inflation to remain above BB's target of 5.3 percent. “Going forward, close monitoring of inflation and the potential impacts of the war in Ukraine will be important for the country's sustainable and inclusive growth,” said Mercy Tembon, the WB's country director for Bangladesh and Bhutan.

The Rooppur Power Plant project may face setbacks due to the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the report said.

“As a result of the war in Ukraine, implementation of \$12.7 billion Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant could be affected by sanctions,” it said.

The report also raised questions about the budget's credibility.

“The gap between the original and executed budgets has grown substantially in recent

years.”

For instance, in fiscal 2019-20, only 70.3 percent of revenue and 80.3 percent of expenditure in the original budget were executed.

“Accurate revenue and expenditure forecasts are a key input to the preparation of a credible budget. In Bangladesh, overly optimistic expenditure allocations are presented with aspirational revenue targets.”

The large gap between budget and execution limits the ability to enforce accountability in public finances and weakens the credibility of the budget.

“It also reduces effective implementation of public investment and service delivery, affecting the overall development outcomes of government programmes.”

The report also said estimated poverty declined last fiscal year to 11.9 percent from 12.5 percent the previous year following stronger economic recovery from the pandemic slump.

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primarily from anti-government propaganda machines, terming it wrong, a lie and far from reality.

“We are studying the report thoroughly and will share in detail with the press on Sunday,” he told journalists at the foreign ministry, reports UNB.

According to the US report, there were numerous reports that the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings.

For example, it said, Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) reported at least 80 individuals died in extrajudicial killings in 2021, including 51 in so-called shootouts or crossfires with law enforcement agencies.

Between May 2018 and June, ASK reported a total of 606 incidents of alleged

extrajudicial executions.

Although policy requires internal investigations of all significant uses of force by police, usually by a professional standards unit that reports directly to the inspector general of police, the government neither released statistics on total killings by security personnel nor took comprehensive measures to investigate cases, the report added.

Human rights groups and media reported that disappearances and kidnappings, allegedly by security services, have continued. Between January and September 30, 2021, local human rights organisations reported 18 persons became victims of enforced disappearances.

Numerous organisations also claimed security forces were involved in widespread and routine commission of torture, occasionally resulting in death, for the purpose of soliciting payment of bribes or obtaining confessions,” the report adds.

The report said human rights observers maintained that magistrates, attorneys, and court officials demanded bribes from defendants in many cases, or courts ruled under influence of political patronage networks.

It said the law provides criminal penalties for conviction of corrupt government officials, but the government did not implement the law effectively.

The report said police jailed opposition party activists throughout the year for criticising the government regarding its actions in managing

Covid-19.

It also said that throughout the year the government widely used the Digital Security Act (DSA) against persons criticising the government.

On December 31, 2021, ASK reported at least 210 journalists faced harassment, physical torture, assault, threats, and lawsuits, including cases filed under the DSA. The organisation stated there were at least 1,134 DSA cases during the year.

The report also highlighted the rights violations of women, minorities, children, workers and socio-economic discrimination.

“Working together, we must commit ourselves to promoting respect for human rights. We must speak honestly about the challenges we face.

Progress on human rights begins with the facts,” said US Ambassador to Bangladesh Peter Haas in a statement.

Hriday Mondal

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“As I went out, those people threatened us. It like we are under house arrest. How long can anyone live in fear this way?”

Abdul Hai Talukder, principal of Government Haranganga College in Munshiganj, who is leading the investigation committee, said the secondary and higher education department has asked them to submit a report after investigating allegations against Hriday within five working days.

Hriday was sued recently for “hurting people's religious sentiments”. He was sent to jail and released 19 days later.