

To a new beginning

Baishakh gets its colours back after two years

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After a gap of two years due to the pandemic, the country's people celebrated Pahela Baishakh, the first day of the Bangla new year, with due fervour on Thursday. Sanctity of the holy month of Ramadan and security arrangements were maintained in the celebrations as well.

Celebrations to welcome the new year -- organised by Chhayanaut -- started at the capital's Ramna Batamul, just as the first rays of the sun came shining through.

Eighty-five Chhayanaut artists of different ages performed at the programme this year, which ended with Chhayanaut's Executive President Sarwar Ali's speech.

"We were under 'house arrest' for the last two years, along with financial and social setbacks, and the pain of losing our close ones. After getting through the difficult times, this arrangement is to wake everyone up with a renewed sense of joy," he said.

Mangal Shobhajatra was also brought out after two years at Dhaka University.

For the first time, the procession was brought out from TSC rather than DU's Faculty of Fine Arts. It was set to return to TSC after passing by the area surrounding the vice chancellor's residence, due to the ongoing construction work of the metro rail.

State Minister for Cultural Affairs KM Khalid, DU Vice Chancellor Prof Akhtaruzzaman, dean of DU's fine arts faculty Nisar Hossain, teachers and students of the

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After a two-year gap due to the pandemic, Pahela Baishakh made a colourful comeback in the lives of the country's people. The traditional Mangal Shobhajatra was brought out at Dhaka University, with the hopes to purify life and make it better by erasing gloom and negativity of all sorts.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Mega projects, construction to blame: Atiqul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Various development works, such as the ongoing mega projects, construction and work by utility service providers are the main reasons behind Dhaka's dust pollution, said Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) Mayor Md Atiqul Islam.

"Huge development works, including construction work for mega projects, are going on in the city, generating dust. We can fine them through mobile courts for not following rules, but we have a lack of magistrates. As long as people are not aware, it is not possible to control air pollution," he said.

The mayor also admitted that DNCC's continuous efforts are not enough in this regard.

Asked about measures taken by DNCC to reduce dust, Atiqul said they the corporation already purchased a cannon machine to spray water, which is being used every day. Apart from that, it is also spraying water through old methods.

Regarding allegations of DNCC contractors violation rules, the mayor said they have already instructed contractors to take necessary steps to reduce dust.

He also said the construction work of metro rail from Kamal Ataturk crossing to the airport is generating a huge amount of dust.

"It's really tough to monitor these activities, as we are also busy with other issues, such as freeing canals from illegal occupiers and cleaning them," he said.

Atiqul said they may have to start imposing strict fines to reduce dust pollution.

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The city corporation alone can't control it [air pollution], we have to do it in a collective and coordinated way.

MD ATIQUUL ISLAM
DNCC Mayor

Dhaka air DUSTY AND DEADLY



HELEMUL ALAM

For the last couple of weeks, Anowar Hossain, a resident of Sarafatganj Lane in Gandaria, has been suffering from nasal allergy. Anowar, who had no such problem earlier, started to face this issue after construction works for two establishments started in his area recently.

Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) has started development work of Dhupkhola playground in September last year, while Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) is replacing pipelines in parts of Old Dhaka.

"But they are not taking any measures like spraying water to stop the dust from spreading. As a result, residents are suffering," said Anowar.

The capital's air remains thick with dust due to construction of residential buildings, a number of mega projects and digging of roads for installing utility lines. Locals in different areas alleged that most of these development works are going on without authorities taking any measure to reduce the dust menace.

Though the government on January 17, 2021 issued a gazette notification amending the rules of Bangladesh Environment Conservation Act 1995, making some measures mandatory like spraying water at construction sites at least twice a day.

According to rules, authorities will have to

set up makeshift sheds or boundaries during construction work and cover up trucks and vans while carrying construction materials like bricks, cement and sands. They also have to keep all construction materials covered and refrain from keeping materials like sand, bricks and dug-up earth on roads or footpaths.

But most government organisations and individuals do not follow the instructions. As a result, residents continue to suffer.

HM Shazahan, a resident of Ibrahimpur who was undergoing treatment at National Institute of Diseases of Chest and Hospital (NIDCH), recently said come winter, he suffers from breathing complications as the amount of dust increases.

"Prolonged exposure to dusty air may lead to lung cancer or interstitial lung disease [ILD]," said Kazi Saifuddin Bennoor, assistant professor (respiratory medicine) at NIDCH.

ILD reduces the amount of oxygen in the body, and can cause death, said Bennoor, also joint secretary of Bangladesh Lung Foundation.

"Both the toxic air and dust pollution can cause diseases like asthma, bronchitis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, nasal allergy and rhinitis," he said, adding that two more diseases -- silicosis and asbestosis -- have also increased recently.

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Coordination needed to curb air pollution: Taposh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

"Dust is being generated due to construction and development work of both private and government agencies. However, it hasn't reached an intolerable level," said Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh.

"Due to a lack of coordination, construction works are continuing haphazardly. This has been going on for a long time. Now, no government organisation can do digging work as per its whim. Coordination among service providing agencies is more effective when compared to the past," he said. "I hope conditions will improve significantly within the next two years."

Asked about the Environment Protection Act 1995, the mayor said the city corporation is not the only stakeholder here. Other government agencies will also have to come forward to implement it.

"The work that the city corporation does is related to roads, and for that, it is not necessary to set up boundary sheds to control dust pollution. We make sure that the transport vehicles that carry construction materials are covered," he said.

"We are trying our best. For any gap or miscommunication, we have taken action against it."

Taposh said one of the main reasons behind air pollution is the use of fossil fuels and harmful substances emitted by industries.

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We are spraying water regularly on roads and have given emphasis on planting trees. Hopefully, other government agencies will also pay more attention to reducing air pollution.

SHEIKH FAZLE NOOR TAPOSH
DSCC Mayor

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They want to see 'famine' in country Says agri minister about anti-liberation forces

UNB, Dhaka

Some anti-liberation forces and so-called intellectuals want to see famine in Bangladesh, said Agriculture Minister Abdur Razzaque yesterday.

"Those people will be disappointed, as there will be no famine nor any food shortage in the country," he said.

The minister said this while distributing food and clothes among the destitute ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr at Shyampur Model School premises in the capital.

Awami League's Dhaka South unit organised the event.

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As Eid shopping is picking up, the area in front of New Market was seen jam-packed with vehicles yesterday. Heavy traffic clogged the main roads in the hot summer afternoon, leaving commuters waiting for a long time at the same location.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

DU campus journo 'beaten by BCL activist'

DU CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka University campus journalist was allegedly beaten up by an activist of Chhatra League's Sir AF Rahman hall unit.

A written complaint was submitted on Thursday night to the hall authority in this regard.

Hall Provost Prof Saiful Islam confirmed to this correspondent that he got the complaint letter and will take immediate action as per university rules, if proof of the allegation is found.

The accused is Farhan Tanveer alias Nasif, a linguistics student of 2019-2020 academic session.

Rifat Haque is a mass communication and journalism student, who works as the DU correspondent at an online portal.

Rifat alleged that Farhan beat him up, as he did not file a positive story of Chhatra League President Reazul Islam, president of BCL's Sir AF Rahman Hall unit, and Al Nahean Khan Joy, central committee president of the organisation.

However, Farhan denied the allegation when contacted.

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