

MY DHAKA

Baishakh adventures await, are you ready?

RBR

This year's Pahela Baishakh celebrations will be lacklustre, as many pundits suggest. But I beg to differ, for I think your culture and cultural celebrations have nothing to do with religion or politics. It is a spring harvest celebration in most rice-cultivating countries in southern Asia. In each country, the name and face of the celebrations are done according to their culture and traditions.

In Myanmar, it is the ceremony of the Thingyan Water Festival. In Cambodia, the elders cleanse statues of the Buddha with perfumed water. There is Flour throwing in Laos, while Biska Jatra signifies the start of the Nepali New Year; all these celebrations fall on, or around the April 14th in the Bangla calendar. The Bangla calendar is also known as the lunisolar calendar, where days and important dates are marked by the motions or effects of the sun and moon.

I always argue that while geographical location influences your culture and traditions, it is also multifaceted and depends on many factors like economy, history, geography, and social interactions. This may be a research and thesis topic for social scientists. Let's just leave it at that. Instead, let us jot down fun things we can do this new year, joy that will cost you almost nothing.

A rickshaw ride after sundown is number one on my list. Though the



motorised ones are scary, if you are up for a bit of recklessness, then take the plunge. This rickshaw's racing speed, and the summer evening breeze together give you a small dose of adrenaline rush. But enough to lift your spirits, this rickshaw ride can be hired for an hourly fee, in all areas of the city.

Then the second must-try would be popping balloons with those rickety air guns at Baishakh mela or fairs. In fact, most open spaces in and around the city suburbs have pop-up fairs. It was installed during Eid, and it will continue till the Baishakh festivities are done.

Diya Bari in Uttara is dotted with colourful fairs. Adventurous rides like the pirate ship are a hot favourite with

kids, teens, and young adults, waiting in a long queue to enjoy the surfing experience. On a regular day, the ticket is a mere Tk 30, but on special occasions, it hikes up to Tk 80. Many get tickets for three rides at a stretch, sit at the edge, and come down all wobbly and dizzy. Besides these, there are traditional wooden nagordolas, and mechanical Ferris wheels, carousels, and bumper cars, plus more

Kulfi and Ice Gola is a must-have on a scorching Baishakhi noon, and it is third on my list. The creamy frozen dessert, kulfi is sold in big hari or pots covered with a red cloth. These vendors are found around the university campus and public spaces.

Besides the Baishakh staple snacks of batasha, murali, and coconut naru, you must try the crushed ice, charred green mango or kacha aam mocktail, the chilled lemonade from the season's

best lemon harvest, the gondhoraj lebu r shorbot, and salted lassi, but all these juice spritzers must be made at home because homemade ones are extra refreshing.

My fourth choice on the to-do list is a bit off track from the usual fun list and it requires putting in an effort, but it is so worth the try. If you are in the university area, then take a ride to Nazimuddin Road. It is the lane that leads towards the Central Jail Museum in Old Dhaka; there you have Nasu Faruker Bakorkhani Bakery. Delicious bakhorkhani or Shuka Ruti is a traditional old Dhaka savoury, and we have all had them in assorted flavours.

But the slight twist that I am hinting at here is that you eat a freshly baked, hot from the oven, melt-in-your-mouth Bakorkhani. It is a treat like no other; the salted or sweet doughs, just off the tandoor, is a notch up there in gastronomical indulgences.

If you can, add a slice of Dhaka paneer to this, then heaven is right there, even in this blistering Chaitra-Baishakh heat.

Don't forget to visit the fine arts faculty premises; the atmosphere there around this time of the year is electrifying. Masks and Baishakh crafts make for great gifts for friends who live abroad.

Baishakh lunch is mandatory, and if you are hosting one, then please shuffle the set menu this year. Opt for phena bhaat, a slack rice dish with vegetables, and try curd rice, known generally as doi panta.

Don't forget the jasmine garlands; after all, what is summer without jasmynes and frangipanis? Enjoy the colours of your culture and celebrate your cultural identity.

Army chief back home after Russia, Croatia tour

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Chief of Army Staff General Waker-uz-Zaman returned home yesterday after holding wide-ranging discussions on defence cooperation, training exchange, regional security, and joint military initiatives during his official visits to Russia and Croatia.

During the tour, the army chief met top military and civilian officials, including Russia's deputy defence minister, the chief of the Russian army, and the chief of the Croatian armed forces, said the Inter Services Public Relations in a release.

According to the ISPR notification, Waker met Russian Deputy Defence Minister General A Fomin on April 7. They discussed matters of mutual interest, including military-to-military cooperation, training support, bilateral relations, mutual confidence-building, skilled manpower export to Russia, higher education, regional security, and prospects for joint training.

The next day, he paid a courtesy call on General Oleg Salyukov, chief of the Russian army. Their discussions focused on future plans for defence cooperation agreements, training assistance, trainee exchanges between military institutions, and joint training initiatives.

Bangladeshi man 'beaten to death by BSF' Family claims

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenaidah

A Bangladeshi man has allegedly been beaten to death by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) at the Palianpur border in Maheshpur upazila of Jhenaidah.

The deceased is Wasim Hossain, 35, a resident of Baghdadanga village in the upazila, said Faiz Uddin Mridha, officer-in-charge of Maheshpur Police Station.

Locals and family members on Friday alleged that Wasim was killed by BSF personnel and his body was dumped in the Ichhamati river.

Friday afternoon, a farmer from Hudapara village spotted a body floating in the river on the Indian side of the border and alerted authorities.

Members of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) later arrived at the scene but could not immediately identify or recover the body.

Wasim's identity was confirmed later around 10:30pm on Friday, after his companions, who had reportedly crossed into India with him on April 8, identified the body.

Wasim's elder brother, Mehedi Hasan, said, "My brother had been missing for the past three to four

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Try Israel for genocide

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Mawlana Mamunul Haque, President of Gono Odhikar Parishad Nurul Haque Nur and Chief Organiser (Southern Region) of the National Citizen Party (NCP) Hasnat Abdullah, attended the programme.

Ilias Kanchan, founder and chairman of Nirapad Sarak Chai, Chhatra Shibir President Zahedul Islam and others were present on stage.

Islamic speaker Mizanur Rahman Azhari and As-Sunnah Foundation Chairperson Sheikh Ahmadullah spoke at the programme.

Ahmadullah said people of all political stripes, ideologies, and schools of thought in Bangladesh stood in solidarity with the oppressed people of Palestine and Gaza.

"Today, by standing together, we want to show the world that although we may have differences in opinion and ideology, every person in Bangladesh, regardless of religion or ethnicity, expresses solidarity with the Palestinian people's right to freedom and ownership of their land," said Ahmadullah.

Azhari said, "Geographically, we may be far from Palestine, but today's sea of people proves that every heart here carries a Palestine, every heart carries a Gaza, every heart carries an Al-Quds."

He described the crowd as a powerful expression of Bangladesh's love for Palestine and Al-Aqsa.

In a unique protest performance near Dhaka University's Faculty of Fine Arts, a person wearing a mask of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu walked with a bowl of symbolic blood in his hands, his body covered in blood.

Beside him, another performer with a US President Donald Trump mask walked in support of Netanyahu, also stained with blood-like marks.

Meanwhile, performers dressed as Arab leaders hovered around them, kissing their hands and showing submission.

Trailing behind them were symbolic corpses wrapped in shrouds, meant to represent Palestinian victims, which were being dragged by Netanyahu, Trump, and the compliant Arab leaders.

One of the organisers said, "The occupying Israeli forces are committing genocide in Palestine with direct support from the Trump administration. The heads of Arab states remain completely indifferent despite witnessing these atrocities."

DECLARATION

The declaration called for a return to pre-1967 borders, international recognition of East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine, an end to

temporary ceasefire rhetoric in favour of concrete and a clear resolution to guarantee the security and sovereignty of Palestine.

It also called on leaders of the Muslim world to cancel all existing agreements with Israel and cut diplomatic relations, impose trade embargoes and sanctions against Israel.

The declaration urged the Muslim community across the world to launch an active diplomatic campaign to isolate Israel.

They also demanded effective diplomatic stands against the state aggression under Hindutva rule in India, especially regarding the interference in Waqf laws and the denial of Muslim rights.

The declaration called upon the Bangladesh government to reinstate the 'Except Israel' clause in Bangladeshi passports and affirm the state's position of not recognising Israel as a state.

It also urged the government to revoke the agreements signed with all Israeli organisations.

"As a democratic state, the government has a responsibility to honour the moral convictions and aspirations of its people," it said, adding, "The people of Bangladesh have pledged solidarity with Gaza."

The declaration also called for implementing effective state-level measures to deliver humanitarian and medical assistance to Gaza.

It demanded that the government instruct all government institutions and import authorities to avoid products from Israel-affiliated companies.

The declaration urged the government to officially protest the persecution of Muslims and other minorities in India, alleging its alignment with the global Zionist agenda.

It also called for ensuring that the textbooks and national curricula include the history of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Palestinian resistance.

After the declaration, the event was concluded through a special prayer session led by Mufti Abdul Malek, Khatib of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque.

Since October 7, 2023, when Israel launched its offensive in Gaza, at least 50,933 Palestinians, mostly civilians, have been killed in the tiny territory.

According to the United Nations, the offensive has left Gaza in ruins. It destroyed or damaged 69 percent of all structures in Gaza. At least 68 percent of the road network in the strip had been damaged or destroyed.

Adani plant

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Vietnam. This pricing dynamic, while attracting bulk orders, has also forced many Bangladeshi exporters to operate on razor-thin margins. A Fair Wear Foundation study found that up to 39 percent of Bangladeshi garment exporters accept prices below production cost, often in hopes of maintaining long-term relationships with international buyers.

This lopsided pricing dynamic benefits international brands, which routinely sell Bangladeshi-sourced garments at a markup of as much as 400 percent, sometimes fetching \$25 per piece in Western markets despite sourcing them for \$5. Local representatives for these brands have acknowledged this profit margin.

The structural disadvantages facing Bangladesh, such as long lead times, inefficient production processes, inadequate infrastructure and logistics, and weak bargaining power, further constrain its ability to resist price suppression. Intense competition among too many domestic suppliers compounds the issue, as exporters underbid each other in saturated markets.

According to AK Azad, managing director of Ha Meem Group, which exports 90 percent of its production to the US, Bangladesh's average tariff

"To cover the shortfall, additional power is being generated from oil-based plants. If fuel supply is ensured, production can meet demand," said one of the officials.

Besides, the PDB has requested Petrobangla for additional gas supply to make up for the shortfall. In response, Petrobangla diverted gas supply from the fertiliser factories to the power sector.

Since Friday morning, the state-owned Chittagong Urea Fertiliser (CUFL) halted production as their gas supply was by the distributor company.

"We were informed that the gas supply would be suspended from Friday. So, we have shut down the plant accordingly," said CUFL's Managing Director Mizanur Rahman.

The ministry has instructed the suspension of gas supply to fertiliser factories for gas load management, said Shafiu Azam, general manager of Karnaphuli Gas Distribution Company.

"That is why the gas supply to CUFL has been stopped," he added.

The demand for fertiliser is currently low but is expected to rise from July, said CUFL officials. At present, CUFL has a stock of 100,000 tonnes of urea fertiliser.

Bangladesh has a 25-year agreement signed in 2017 to purchase electricity generated from the Adani plant.

The plant started commercial production in April 2023. A committee by the interim government is currently reviewing the agreement with Adani.

No arrest without evidence

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investigating officers are authorised to arrest an accused.

After the fall of the Awami League government amid a mass uprising on August 5 last year, hundreds of murder cases were filed in different parts of the country.

Rights activists and lawyers pointed out at the time that the complaints were designed more to harass the accused than to ensure justice for the atrocities.

Officers found in preliminary investigations that many of the accused had nothing to do with the crimes.

So far, more than 1,500 such dubious cases have been filed across the country, according to police data.

On September 10, police headquarters issued a separate directive stating that no government official or employee can be arrested unless there was concrete evidence.

Exporters fear a race to the bottom

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rate remains high at 26 percent, with a 10 percent baseline, which is still steeper than those faced by India or Pakistan. This differential gives regional competitors an edge, especially in a price-sensitive environment.

While the full impact of the tariff regime will become clearer over the next two to three months, exporters are already grappling with heightened price pressure, Azad said. Buyers are beginning to demand that Bangladeshi suppliers absorb part of the new US tariffs, cutting further into already tight margins.

Faruque Hassan, managing director of Giant Group and former president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), said buyers are asking suppliers to share the cost burden of the 10 percent universal tariff. He warned that rising retail prices in the US may depress consumption, which would again reverberate down the supply chain.

Former BGMEA president Rubana Huq echoed these concerns, saying US buyers are most likely going to ask the suppliers to share the extra cost that will fall on the American consumers.

"There may be serious undercutting among ourselves as all US suppliers will try and secure their exports to the US, the fastest growing market," she said.

"There may also be Cambodia and

Vietnam dropping their prices for not only the US but also the EU, as they too will need to fill their capacities," she said. Additionally, India, Pakistan, and Turkey enjoy an advantage in the imposing and pausing of tariffs by the US.

Exporters have reported that retailers are rushing to ship goods within the 90-day pause in the tariff schedule, using the window to push through orders at reduced prices. One exporter, who ships 60 percent of his production to the US, confirmed that brands are pressuring factories to agree to lower rates under the current uncertainty.

Some exporters remain cautiously optimistic that Bangladesh could capture a portion of the orders shifting away from China due to the US tariff hikes.

"Trump mainly targeted China with the tariff increase, so there's a window of opportunity for Bangladesh," said one exporter, speaking on condition of anonymity. "But we must act quickly and negotiate better terms."

However, any opportunity that arises is likely to come with reduced prices. Buyers are already signalling that while they may shift sourcing to Bangladesh, they expect deeper discounts to offset tariff-related costs, undermining any potential gains.

CCTV shows man torching 'portrait of fascism'

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more footage and conduct forensic analysis to identify him, he said.

Pointing out that one of the burnt motifs depicted deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina, he said, "It seems that, while burning that one, part of the dove motif also got burned. So, those who dislike that particular representation [Portrait of Fascism] may have done it."

"If we can detect the individual who started the fire, we will then be able to determine the masterminds and other people involved," he said.

Responding to another question about the security of the faculty premises after a visit to the scene, Nazrul said that with Dhaka University's proctorial team, usually 10 policemen are posted there – some at the gate, and three others inside the premises.

"Two members of that team may have gone to the mosque for prayers around 5:00am," he said, adding that the policemen would be questioned to know more details about their movement.

Nazrul also said that an investigation committee would "definitely" be formed.

In a Facebook post yesterday, Cultural Affairs Adviser Mostofa Sarwar Farooki blamed Hasina's

"acolytes" for the fire and warned of consequences, vowing broader participation in the procession.

"Whether it is the soft Awami League or their B Team – they will have to face justice soon," Farooki said.



"Hasina's associates have made it clear that they do not want to see the people of Bangladesh come together in celebration. We are now more determined than ever, and we will participate in even greater numbers," he added.

Farooki also said many supporters of the July uprising told him recently that they felt this year's Anondo Shobhajatra procession is going to be "the most inclusive and distinct so far".

"Some also believed it would be better to exclude that grotesque face of fascism. We were weighing all

viewpoints and trying to gauge the university's stance."

"But after last night's attack, the presence of that monster has become all the more inevitable," he added.

Dr Md Azharul Islam Sheikh, member secretary of the central coordination committee of Nababarsha 1432 celebration, said that students have already started rebuilding the "Dove of Peace" motif.

However, the motif depicting a monstrous fascist figure was completely destroyed, making it nearly impossible to reconstruct in a single day, Azharul told The Daily Star, adding that discussions were still ongoing regarding its reconstruction.

The DU administration has formed a five-member committee headed by Prof Dr Mohammad Siddiqui Rahman Khan, dean of the Faculty of Arts, to investigate the incident.

Other members include Prof Dr Mohammad Ekramul Haque, acting dean of the Faculty of Law; Prof Dr Mosadddek Hossain Kamal, director of the ICT Cell; and assistant proctors Md Israfil and Dr AKM Nur Alam Siddiqui.

Khaled Mansur, officer-in-charge of Shabbagh Police Station, said the university administration filed a case against unidentified accused over the incident. "We're investigating it," he said.