



Salma Khatun displays a finished Nakshi Kantha at Nakshi Polli in Adarshapara area of Jhenidah town.

PHOTO: STAR

Decorating lives with Nakshi Kantha

AZIBOR RAHMAN, Jhenidah

In the face of extreme poverty after marriage in 2001, Salma Khatun did not just sit back. Capitalising on her drawing skills, she started making Nakshi Kantha, hand-crafted traditional embroidered quilt, for a living.

With years of hard work and her husband, unemployed at the time, on her side, her quilt shop started paying dividends.

About 19 years later, poverty is a thing of the past for Salma and now she owns a single storey building, constructed with the earnings from her shop, named Nakshi Polli, in Adarshapara area of Jhenidah town.

Nakshi Polli is now not only a place of business, but a place of hope for women in the neighbourhood. Over 50 women now depend on the shop for some additional cash for their households.

Out of four rooms in the house, Salma designated two rooms for her shop. She lives with her husband and two young children, three and five years of age, in two other rooms.

Homemaker women usually work at the shop in their spare time, while some schoolgirls, as many as 10, also work there after school hours or on weekends only.

The schoolgirls said they find the work enjoyable and a way of earning their own pocket money without affecting their studies.

While visiting Nakshi Polli, Salma said aside from different sizes of Nakshi Kantha for different purposes, regular quilts and bed covers are also made in her shop.

During the dry season, the roof of her house is turned into a makeshift shop where the women enjoy the sun while having casual conversation with each other.

She also makes an additional income from sketching decorative designs on Nakshi Kantha or on various other embroidery items brought to her by people from nearby areas. She charges Tk 100 to Tk 200 for each item, depending on size and design.

She now makes around Tk 50,000 from the shop where nearly 10 Nakshi Kantha, 20 regular quilts, 15 bed covers and 100 Nakshi Kantha for children are made each month,

Salma said.

To make an average Nakshi Kantha, of eight feet by five and a half feet size, 13 yards of white plain cloth, three saris and silk threads are used. At least three signature pens are also used to draw designs on the materials.

Her husband Jahid Hossain helps her by procuring the raw materials from local markets, she said, adding that he buys the saris from Poradah in Kushtia.

The lowest price of the smallest Kantha sells for Tk 200 while the largest one for as much as Tk 5,000.

She said it was not just her knack for drawing that helped her succeed. In 2017, she also got a one-month training on block and boutique works from Department of Women Affairs in Jhenidah and in 2018, she got a two-month training on Nakshi Kantha stitch works from Mohila Shangstha, a non-governmental organisation in the town.

Buyers for her products come to Jhenidah from all around the country and she sends out the products via courier services too, Salma added.

CONFLICT BETWEEN HEADMASTER, COMMITTEE

Classes hampered at Ratipur Primary School in Atghoria

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Classes of Ratipur Government Primary School in Pabna's Atghoria upazila are being hampered following row over a programme of Ekushey February (February 21), between the headmaster and managing committee members.

On the day, headmaster Selina Khatun filed a case against Md Monjur Rahman, president of the school managing committee (SMC), Lutfur Rahman, vice president of the committee, two guardians' representatives at the committee, Md Sariful Islam, a teacher, and unnamed others, on charge of harassment and creating obstacle to official duty.

Earlier, the SMC members and the teachers of the school submitted separate petitions to the authorities concerned, alleging corruption and irregularities against the headmaster and an inquiry committee was formed, Md Monjur Rahman, the SMC president, told this correspondent.

On February 22, the headmaster went on leave and classes remained suspended for days.

On Thursday and Saturday, two out of five teachers and only a few students attended school.

"The headmaster ignored the opinion of the committee members, teachers, and students while observing Ekushey February. She also misbehaved with a freedom fighter. As we protested, an argument occurred. Then she filed a case with Atghoria Police

Station against me and four others," the SMC president said.

"Police arrested me and I was released after three days with bail from the court. Fearing arrest, most of the teachers and several guardians went into hiding," he said.

Md Sariful Islam, an assistant teacher of the school, said, "As an inquiry was likely to start, the headmaster created a scene and remained absent from school since February 22."

Teachers, parents, students and villagers staged demonstration demanding removal of the headmaster and withdrawal of the false case, he said.

"Many parents are still too worried to send their children to school," said Lutfur Rahman, vice president of the SMC.

Bithi, Asha and a few other students alleged that the headmaster often forced them to wash dishes and clean the school ground and bathroom during the school hours.

Contacted, headmaster Selina Khatun said, "The allegations against me are false. There is conspiracy against me. I am very sick and on medical leave now."

Atghoria Upazila Primary Education Officer Sirajum Munira said, "Following allegations against Selina Khatun, an inquiry committee was formed. But the situation turned odd before the start of investigation. She sent a registered letter to me seeking one month's medical leave. We have taken initiative to resume academic activities in the school."



Ratipur Government Primary School in Pabna's Atghoria upazila gives a deserted look due to a stalemate following a row over a programme of Ekushey February, between the headmaster and managing committee members.

PHOTO: STAR

Khaleda's

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night and she couldn't breathe. "Her left hand got bent completely while the right hand was also getting bent. She couldn't stand up on her own. She also couldn't eat."

Shamsuddin Didar, a member of the BNP chairperson's media wing, said Selima, along with four other family members of Khaleda, went to the BSMMU around 3:30pm to meet the party chief. Among the others were Khaleda's younger brother Shamim Eskandar, his wife Kaniz Fatema and their son Ovik Eskandar. They stayed at the hospital for about an hour.

Selima expressed worries that anything bad could happen to her sister if she was not provided with an advanced treatment immediately.

Khaleda, aged about 75, has been behind bars since February 8, 2018, when she was convicted by a Dhaka court in the Zia Orphanage Trust corruption case. Later that year, she was found guilty in another graft case.

However, her party claims both the cases are politically motivated. The BNP chief has been receiving treatment at the BSMMU since April 1 last year.

Earlier on January 24 this year, Selima had expressed grave concern over Khaleda's deteriorating health.

7-year-old

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Station, said, "The child was bleeding and we came to know that she had surgery at the hospital."

"Filing of a case is underway. We are trying to arrest the culprit(s)," he said.

In Joypurhat, a court yesterday sent a man to jail on charge of raping a partially blind woman in Akkelpur upazila.

The accused is Mahub Sultan, 40, a resident of Kola village of the upazila.

Police said the woman was returning home from her brother's house at around 8:00pm on Friday night when Mahub intercepted her, forcibly took her to a nearby deserted area and raped her.

Hearing the woman's screams, locals rushed there and rescued her. But Mahub managed to flee the scene, said police.

Later, in the early hours of Saturday, villagers of the area caught Mahub and handed him over to police. Following that, the victim's brother filed a case against Mahub, said Abu Obayed, officer-in-charge (OC) of Akkelpur police station.

The accused was sent to jail through a court and the victim was sent to Joypurhat Modern Hospital, for medical tests.

Helping the helpless

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"Since my brush with death, I feel like I have been awarded with a bonus life. Thus, I want to dedicate myself to the welfare of people," said Forkan, who lives in the Fakir Market area of Board Bazar in Gazipur with his wife and two sons.

Forkan used to own a car and earned his living carrying passengers on long trips. But an accident changed everything.

A few days after Eid-ul-Azha in 2011, while on a trip to Mymensingh, he suffered serious injuries on his head and other parts of his body in a road accident near Hotapara area of Gazipur.

Locals rushed him to the then Gazipur Sadar Hospital, where doctors declared him dead. Later, his relatives took him to four different private hospitals in Dhaka, all in "vain".

Later, he learned from his relatives that when they brought him home and was preparing for his burial, he suddenly regained consciousness. "They took me back to a hospital and I slowly recovered," Forkan reminisced.

This motivated him to hire a CNG-run autorickshaw on November 21, 2011 and use it to carry poor and helpless patients to hospitals "free of cost".

"Allah said, 'Love my creations to

find me'. Human being is the best of His creations. When they fall sick, I take them to hospitals free of cost," Forkan explained, adding that he mainly helps those patients who cannot afford to pay the fare.

Six years ago, he borrowed six lakh taka from his cousin and bought a CNG-run autorickshaw.

He also installed special signal lights and siren, like that of an ambulance, in the vehicle to help clear the road when carrying a critical patient or an accident victim.

"Often, traffic police stop me and question me about using such special signal light and siren. When I tell them about my mission, they let me go," he said.

Since 2018, Forkan has been maintaining a register of patients whom he provides free transportation to. According to the register, he has served 89 poor patients and accident victims.

Forkan also purchased medicine for 27 out of the 89 passengers with money he collected from a donation box, kept inside his vehicle to help the needy.

Zakir Hossain, a physically-challenged person, who lives at Kunia Borobari in Gazipur, told The Daily Star, "I have travelled to CRP [Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralysed] in Savar and Pangu [The

National Institute of Traumatology & Orthopedic Rehabilitation] in Dhaka multiple times in the last four years in Forkan's auto rickshaw, but he never took any money from me."

Road accident survivor Munni Akhter, a resident of Kunia Chowdhury Market area, said, "I have been suffering from physical ailment since I had a road accident around three years ago. From then on, I travelled in Forkan's CNG-run auto rickshaw multiple times free of cost."

Forkan also rushes to accident sites with his vehicle if he hears of any accident in Gazipur to help carry the victims to a hospital. He pays for the fuel out of his own pocket with money he earns from regular trips.

"I like doing this work," he said, adding that he only faces problem while returning from Dhaka after dropping a patient in a hospital there. His vehicle having Gazipur's registration is not allowed to run in the capital.

"When there is a patient inside, I don't face any problem. But once I drop the patient in the hospital, and return to Gazipur with a vacant autorickshaw, the administrative problem occurs," he explained.

"I earnestly request the administration to cooperate with me in this issue," the good Samaritan beseeched.

Stop migrants

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deal, and the bloc claiming Ankara was using the migrants as political pawns.

During a tense hours-long stand-off yesterday, Greek police used tear gas and water cannons on migrants trying to break fences in the border province of Edirne, according to AFP journalists at the scene.

OPEN THE GATES
The migrants responded by throwing stones and also shouted "Open the gates". Turkish security forces also responded by using tear gas.

Many migrants have been stranded in biting cold for days at the Pazarkule border, known as Kastanies on the Greek side.

The Turkish coastguard said 97

migrants were rescued on Thursday after "the Greek side flattened three boats and left them in a half-sinking state in the middle of the (Aegean) sea".

Greek authorities deny using force or acting illegally.

"We have not used any sort of excessive force and we're always reacting, we're never initiating, in terms of responding to the provocations that have taken place on the border," Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis told CNN.

He also accused Ankara of helping people, both at land and at sea, to cross into Greece.

Erdogan's communications director Fahrettin Altun said Turkey "categorically" rejected Mitsotakis'

claims. **DOUBLE STANDARDS**

As part of the 2016 agreement, Turkey agreed to stop the flow of migrants to Europe in exchange for billions of euros, but Ankara accused the European Union of failing to fulfil its pledges.

Altun listed how the bloc had failed to keep its promises, including taking in refugees from Turkey.

"As a result, Turkey had to divert its resources away from stopping the refugee flow to Europe and instead prepare for a potential influx from Idlib" the last major rebel-held bastion in in Syria, Altun said.

The Turkish foreign ministry meanwhile accused the EU of double standards.

Rare orangutan spotted in Borneo

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survive in the forest," said Indra Exploitasia, the environment ministry's director of biodiversity conservation.

When first discovered by the foundation, Alba was severely underweight from lack of food, riddled with parasites and suffering

from dehydration.

At the time, she could not immediately return to the wild because of health issues relating to her albinism, which could have made her vulnerable to hunters.

Alba's rescue was some rare positive news for the critically endangered species, which has seen its habitat

shrink drastically over the past few decades largely due to the destruction of forests for logging, paper, palm oil and mining.

Plantation workers and villagers are sometimes known to attack the animals because they see them as a pest, while poachers also capture them to sell as pets.

Fresh elections

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development, all allotment of residential and commercial plots of DIT, CDA and KDA in the urban areas of Dhaka, Chittagong and Khulna between March 26, 1971 and March 8, 1972 get cancelled.

OUTBREAK OF MALARIA

Large number of malaria cases are being detected among the returnees from India. All returnees are requested to report to the nearest Malaria detection post or contact the local Malaria supervisor to get their blood examined and receive proper treatment.

RELIEF AND REHABILITATION BOARD FORMED

The government forms a 20-member Relief and Rehabilitation Board to deal with problems of relief and rehabilitation of Bangladeshi refugees returning from India and the affected persons inside Bangladesh. The board would collect information about problems related to resettlement of refugees and displaced persons, assess relief requirement and suggest ways to solve the problems.

OVER Tk 3.64CR LOST TO BUILDINGS

According to an official estimate, the building directorate of the government alone had suffered an estimated loss of over Tk 3.64 cr because of damages to its establishment and equipment during the Liberation War.

EXCHANGE VALUE OF DEMONITISED NOTES

The government decides to pay the exchange value of demonitised fifty-Rupee notes. Exchange value of individual tenderers up to Rupees five hundred will be released in full with effect from March 13.

NEW GREATER DHAKA PLAN

With the emergence of Dhaka as the capital of the sovereign state of Bangladesh, efforts are made to prepare a new greater Dhaka plan to meet requirements of the fast-growing city. The revised plan of the government is intended to change the concept of urban planning with greater emphasis on the wellbeing of slum dwellers. Under the proposed scheme, the existing Dhaka secretariat building will form the nucleus of the plan extending on all sides. Opposite to the Abdul Gani Road a national mausoleum will be constructed in memory of those who laid their lives for the glory of Bangladesh. The new plan covering the entire areas of Dhaka, Narayanganj and Savar will make special provisions for the amenities of the residents of Old Dhaka who have always suffered from neglect and apathy.

SOURCES: March 9, 1972 issues of Dainik Bangla, The Daily Ittefaq, Azad, Morning News, The Bangladesh Observer and Purbodesh.

Saudi detains

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as princes and business elites.

Prince Mohammed has also faced a torrent of international condemnation over the murder of critic Jamal Khashoggi inside the kingdom's Istanbul consulate in October 2018.

Already viewed as the de facto ruler controlling all the major levers of government, from defence to the economy, the prince is widely seen to be stamping out traces of internal dissent before a formal transfer of power from his 84-year-old father King Salman.

"Prince Mohammed is emboldened -- he has already ousted any threats to his rise and jailed or murdered critics of his regime without any repercussion," Becca Wasser, a policy analyst at the US-based RAND Corporation, said of the latest crackdown.

"This is a further step to shore up his power and a message to anyone -- including royals -- not to cross him."

RIVALS OUSTED

Prince Ahmed, said to be in his 70s, had returned to the kingdom from his base in London in the aftermath of the Khashoggi scandal, in what some saw as an effort to shore up support for the monarchy.

Just before his return in October 2018, the prince had courted

controversy over remarks he made to protesters in London chanting against Saudi royals over the kingdom's involvement in the ongoing conflict in Yemen.

"What does the family have to do with it? Certain individuals are responsible... the king and the crown prince," he said, according to a widely-circulated online video of the incident.

The comment was seen by many as rare criticism of the kingdom's leadership and its role in Yemen, but Prince Ahmed dismissed that interpretation as "inaccurate".

Prince Mohammed had edged out Prince Nayef, the former crown prince and interior minister, in 2017 to become heir to the Arab world's most powerful throne.

Torrential rain

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The National Disaster Management Authority confirmed those deaths, adding that three more people had died in southwest Balochistan province.

In the worst single incident, five children were killed when the roof of their home collapsed in northern Dargai town.