

2-century old Darwani Mela attracts thousands from far flung areas

E A M ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

Darwani Mela (fair), the prime festival of very old heritage of Nilphamari has started from February 17 with all gay and colour. Located only five km north of Nilphamari just beside Nilphamari-Dhaka Highway, this fair is one of the ancient festivity of the northern part of the country.

This festival is not only confined to Nilphamari district, but is also a centre of cultural exchange and an ideal occasion of exhibiting products of four adjoining district. The historic fair has been taking place here of over last two centuries on the eve of "Urs" of famous saint Syed Abdur Rahim alias Pagla Pir who came down from Middle East via Ajmeer Sharif to preach Islam. It is widely said that he travelled from Middle East via Ajmeer on foot and chose this particular place finding a big tamarind tree in the midst of dense forest occupied by snakes and tigers. Subsequently, he established a Dargah (holy place of worship) in this place. From here, he preached Islam.

Legend goes that by his spiritual acts, many people suffering from serious diseases were cured and the people in serious danger were also relieved.

In British India, "Darwani Mela" attracted millions of visitors from whole of India. Merchants, exhibitors from Kashmir, Delhi, Rajasthan, Allahabad, Lucknow, Kanpur and Kolkata used to participate in the fair with their exhibits. Apart from exhibiting famous Kashmiri Shawls, Carpets, "Jhar bati," the Kashmir exhibitors also used to exhibit birds, dogs, camels, horses and asses in the fair.

Although past pomp and colour are missing in the fair in recent times, it still attracts huge visitors, as typical northern rural culture remains evergreen

in their minds. Like previous year, this year too, merchants brought large-size cows, buffaloes and horses in the fair for sale. One of the key attractions of the fair is the display of "Maiposh" (A type of safe used by the wealthy people as cot and a safe box for storing valuable like gold ornaments).

Various spades, hoes, knives, scissors made locally from iron and steel, attractive designed saris and lungis made by local weavers in handlooms are also attracting large section of visitors. Moreover, there is no end to availability of huge types of delicious sweetmeats, which are being enjoyed by visitors of all ages and religion. Specially designed local made leather whip is also one of the topmost buying commodity of the visitors. For fanfare, there are also circus and doll dance. The fair premise has been illuminated with charming electric artwork. The fair committee has also strengthened security in the premises with its own security arrangement.

Darwani Mela still continues to be the attraction of rural culture against large scale practice of city based foreign culture. Local people visit this fair as part of their religious rite on the occasion of "Urs" anniversary of the aforementioned famous Muslim saint. The fair is a part of culture which is in their blood.

So, a weeping baby stops weeping when his/her mother in a frantic effort to stop the crying child assures in local language Eiber mela naigle tor baap tok batasha kini dibe, charkit chori ghouraibe which means this time when Darwani Mela starts your father will buy you batasha (a sweetmeat) and move you in chorki (a revolving game).



PHOTO: HOSSAIN SERAJ

As elsewhere in the country, traditional village fairs are also arranged every year in Magura district on some particular occasions. (Top left) Hundreds of people are seen visiting a fair at village Borolia in Mohammadpur upazila, (top right and bottom left) some children enjoying a joy ride, while (bottom right) rural women through a stall in the fair.

LP gas price up in Bogra, Netrakona

UNB, Bogra/Netrakona

Price of liquefied petroleum (LP) gas has gone up in Bogra and Netrakona districts due to shot supply inflicting sufferings on the consumers.

Market sources said LP gas is now selling here at Tk 310 to Tk 320 per

cylinder against the government rate of Tk 265.

The consumers blamed the LP gas crisis for illegal hoarding by a section of dealers, and allegation denied by the dealers.

They alleged that Basundhara, a private company, has been selling LP

gas for the last one year and they raised the gas price when they wished.

Recently, the company fixed the gas price at Tk 380, but its dealers alleged that they have to buy the gas from the company at Tk 420.

Meanwhile, 11 out of 15 dealers of

the company have applied to it for cancellation of their dealership.

In Netrakona, the acute scarcity of LP gas has been prevailing for the last three months due to its short supply.

A cylinder of LP gas is now being sold between Tk 500 and Tk 750 as against the government fixed price to Tk 340, local consumers said.

Local traders said the crisis is turning acute due to decrease in its production in Chittagong Refinery. The supply of LP gas has come down further during the last two months, they added.

Besides, most of the traders of Netrakona do not lift their allotted gas cylinders for sale due to its price spiral.

In many cases, it is alleged that most of the dealers sell their allotment letters to others instead of taking the cylinders to the district.

The local consumers urged the government to look into the matter

Water in Gopalganj arsenic contaminated

BSS, Gopalganj

Drinking water in Gopalganj district contains more than the acceptable limit of arsenic, iron manganese, alkali and other insoluble scum causing various intestinal and skin ailments among the people.

Some physicians said gastrointestinal maladies like hepatitis, diarrhoea, gall-bladder stone and dysentery are widely seen among the people of the area.

According to Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE), drinking water of this region assumed red or purple colour owing to over acceptable limit of iron in it.

In Tungipara, Kotalipara, Maksudpur, Kashiani and Gopalganj Upazilas the amount of soluble iron per litre in 0.51 mg respectively as against the acceptable limited of 0.31 mg.

According to the standard of World Health Organization (WHO), human body can consume 100 mg of Alkali per liter in water, but the town-dwellers of Gopalganj are being forced to take 250 mg of alkali per litre of water which is posing threat to their health.

The alkali content in water is 250 mg per litre in Kashiani Upazila 310

mg in Maksudpur Upazila, 292 mg in Kotalipara Upazila, the source said, adding that in take of excess alkali may cause serious stomach inflammation hyperacidity indigestion and other intestinal disorders.

The manganese content in water in Gopalganj is 0.7 mg per litre while the standard is 0.05 mg. It is 0.8 mg in Tungipara, 0.9 in Gopalganj which are 15 times higher than the normal limit.

Caliform bacteria, and infamous agent responsible for causing intestinal diseases is also existing at higher percentage in drinking water in Tungipara, Kotalipara and Gopalganj Sadar Upazila.

In addition, the harmful presence of arsenic in water in Gopalganj, Kotalipara, Maksudpur and Kashiani has been causing various skin diseases and even cancer to the people of the areas.

DPHE has taken up a Taka 20-crore water treatment plant, but it is still far from being completed as the authorities are yet to receive the full fund.

The price of molasses has also shot up here this season and each kg is being sold between Tk 22 and 25.

CHTDB takes up Tk 60.37cr afforestation project

UNB, Rangamati

Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board (CHTDB) has taken up a Tk 60.37 crore afforestation project in a bid to develop the environment of the three districts.

The board will implement the project, "Social Afforestation on Private Land of the Chittagong Hill Tracts" on 6,075 hectares of land.

CHTDB officials said saplings will be planted on the land of 3,000 selected farmers of Rangamati, Khagrachhari and Bandarban on different terms with a target to grow 60 lakh three worth Tk 12 crore.

Another report from Khagrachhari says: Aiming to develop the socioeconomic condition of the hill people, Khagrachhari Hill District Council is implementing 94 projects costing over Tk 2.80 crore.

Of the projects works on 47, involving Tk 1.28 crore, are progressing fast while the process to start work on 22 projects, costing Tk

67.23 lakh, is underway.

The projects include infrastructure development, support to weaving factories, construction and renovation of primary schools and repairing of worship places in eight upazilas.

Apart from these schemes, nine projects have been undertaken, involving Tk 45.57 lakh, to develop the road communication network in the district.

Besides, 10 irrigation canals are being excavated at a cost of Tk 28.5 lakh for the development of agriculture system while Tk 4 lakh has been earmarked for pond excavation and dam construction for fish farming.

Another project, involving Tk 4.5 lakh, is being implemented in Rupchandrapur Mahajanpara under Dighinala and Maishchhari in Mabalchhari upazila for the development of small cottage industry, and take immediate measure to ensure smooth supply of the LP gas as per the government rate.

Massive vegetable farming scheme taken up

UNB, Kishoreganj

A massive programme has been taken up to bring 3.25 lakh hectares land in all the 64 districts of the country under vegetable farming with an output target of 65 lakh metric tons.

According to Agricultural Extension Department the districts have been divided into nine zones. These are Dhaka Zone comprising seven districts, Mymensingh zone five districts, Comilla zone seven districts, Chittagong zone five districts, Rangamati zone three districts, Barisal Zone 11 districts, Rajshahi zone eight districts, Jessore zone 10 districts and Rangpur zone eight districts.

Zone wise break-up of production and cultivation are: 8.82 lakh metric tons from 44,100 hectares in Dhaka 5.14 lakh mt from 25,700 hectares in Mymensingh, 8.12 lakh mt from 40,600 hectares in Comilla and 5.62 lakh mt from 28,100 hectares in Chittagong.

Besides, 2.60 lakh mt from 13,000 hectares in Rangamati, 7.88 lakh mt from 39,400 hectares in Barisal 8.06 lakh mt from 40,300 hectares in Rajshahi, 11.24 lakh mt from 56,200 hectares in Jessore and 7.52 lakh mt from 37,600 hectares in Rangpur zone.

AED also has set up several demonstration plots to acquaint the farmers with the modern methods of cultivation.

Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation has also supplied quality seeds and other necessary inputs among the growers at fair prices to make the ambitious programme a success.

Another report from Kishoreganj says: Some 55,000 hectares of land in 47 districts of nine agricultural zones will be brought under groundnut cultivation in the current Rabi season with an output target of 82,500 mts.

The agricultural zones are Dhaka, Mymensingh, Comilla, Chittagong, Rangamati, Barisal, Rajshahi, Jessore and Rangpur.

Of the total land, groundnut will be cultivated on some 5,000 hectares in Dhaka, 5,500 in Mymensingh, 3,300 in Comilla, 16,500 in Chittagong, 500 in Rangamati, 12,700 in Barisal, 5,300 in Rajshahi, 1,900 in Jessore and 4,300 hectares in Rangpur regions.

Meanwhile, BADC has started supplying quality seeds and other agri-inputs to the growers to make the programme a success.

Besides, Agriculture Extension Department has set up a number of exhibition plots to make the growers familiar with modern methods of cultivation.

NEWS SNAPS

Attack on foreign tourist: 3 held

UNB, Cox's Bazar
Three people were arrested Sunday in connection with Saturday's attack on a Japanese tourist. Police said they arrested three people Muhammad Hassan, Aminul Huq and Deen Mohammad in connection with attack on Japanese tourist Kimihito, 29. Kimihito, an engineer, fell prey to the muggers while he was strolling in the seashore Saturday evening. The muggers, according to the police, indiscriminately slashed Kimihito and snatched pound 250, yen 60,000, Indian rupees 5,000 and a camera from him. In another incident on the same day, muggers snatched Tk 8 lakh from the office of British-American Tobacco Company agent in front of local Fire Service station. Five suspected people Mohammad Nabi, Syed Munshi, Kamal, Sultan and Jewel Abedin were detained in this connection.

Tyouth killed in road accident

UNB, Brahmanbaria
A young man was killed in a road accident at Chalisa on Kosba-Akhaura road in Brahmanbaria Saturday night. Police said Moli Miah, 30, of Itra upazila in Kishoreganj district fell down from a running truck and was crushed under its wheels. Police seized the truck, but the driver fled the scene. A case was filed.

University student commits suicide

UNB, Jamalpur
A girl student of Rajshahi University allegedly hanged herself in her house at Maspara in Jamalpur town Sunday. Police said Moni, 22, daughter of Nurul Alam of Maspara, killed herself following a family feud. She came home from the university to celebrate Eid. A case was filed.

Strike observed in Patuakhali

UNB, Patuakhali
A daylong strike was observed at Kalyati Bazar in Baufol upazila in Patuakhali district Sunday protesting irregularities in leasing out the bazaar. A local group of people, led one Razaul Karim, enforced the shutdown. Atense situation was prevailing in the area.

Five sentenced for robbery

UNB, Khulna
A court in Khulna has sentenced five people to 14 years rigorous imprisonment in a highway robbery case. The court also fined the convicts M Khalil of Jhalakati, Aminur Rahman alias Lipon of Jessore, M Hasan Ali Sekh of Bagherhat, Nasir of Khulna and Ashiqur Rahman of Jhendaid. Tk one lakh each, in default, to suffer one year more R. According to the prosecution, the accused looted cash and valuables from a fish trader, Sheikh Habibur Rahman, on Khulna-Satkhira highway on July 24, 2000. After examining the police records and witnesses, the judge pronounced the verdict Sunday.

Digital phone project work on

UNB, Panchagarh
Work on the digital telephone project is likely to be completed soon in Panchagarh. Officials said some 5,000 digital lines would be installed under the project. State Minister for Post and Telecommunications M Abdur Rouf has directed the officials concerned to complete the work in due time. According to the officials, the existing 400 analogue telephone lines in the district will also be converted into digital ones.

Ten tempo drivers attacked

UNB, Laxmipur
Ten tempo drivers were injured in an attack by extortionists at Alexander Bazar in Rangati upazila in Laxmipur Sunday. Witnesses said the terrorists swooped on the tempo drivers and ransacked three tempoz as they refused to give them toll. The extortionists had demanded Tk 25 from each tempo driver of the bazaar. Four of the injured were identified as Selim, Bahar, Farooque and Liton.

Three mug'gers held

UNB, Kishoreganj
Police arrested three alleged muggers along with a foreign-made gun and a stolen motorbike from near Chhoisuli Bailey Bridge in Kuliarchar upazila in Kishoreganj on Wednesday. The arrested were identified as Abdul Qayyum, 27, Maznu Mia, 28, and Qamrul, 29, of Netrakona district. A patrol team of police challenged the young men and caught them red handed while they were trying to flee the scene. Later police seized the gun with three rounds of bullet and stolen bike from their possession. A case was filed.

Livestock development schemes

UNB, Bandarban
Local Livestock Department has been implementing massive development schemes under poverty alleviation programme to make the hill people in Bandarban self-reliant. It disbursed credit over Tk 5.45 lakh among its 50 beneficiaries since 1996-97 fiscal, sources said. Of the total, sources said, Tk 2.4 lakh was given to eight people for cow farming, Tk 1.37 lakh to 11 for beef fattening, Tk 94,500 to 25 for goat farming, Tk 57,000 to three people for poultry farming projects and Tk 16,300 to 13 people as loan.

Workshop on women rights

UNB, Magura
A daylong workshop for creating mass-awareness in establishing women rights was held in Magura Thursday. District Information Office in collaboration with Unicef organised the workshop. A total of 22 representatives of local mass media, news agencies and national dailies took part in the workshop. The journalists were given training on various issues, including development to children and women, child and women rights, and ways to prevent polygamy, early marriage and child labour. Presided over by District Information Officer Javed Iqbal, the workshop was addressed, among others, by Aminul Hasan, Adv Azru Siddiqui, Deepak Roy Chowdhury, Shamim Ahmed Khan and Khan Sharafat Hossain.

Eye camp

UNB, Faridpur
Some 67 poor cataract patients were operated upon and 360 others provided with foods, medicine and spectacles free of cost in a weeklong free eye camp in Faridpur. BNSB organised the camp and doctors of its local unit conducted the operations and treatment in the camp that ended recently in Andha Kalyan Eye Hospital premises. Civil Surgeon Dr SM Abul Khair Mia was present as chief guest on the concluding day of the camp.

Science Week concludes

UNB, Sherpur
A three-day National Science and Technology week concluded at local Model Girls' Institute recently. Atiar Rahman Alique MP inaugurated the week, which was attended by Pro Vice Chancellor of Dhaka University Dr Muhammad Shahadat Ali as special guest. Some 70 projects of science clubs of the different schools and colleges had been put on display at the fair highlighting the importance of science and technology in the day to day life. Acting chairman of the local municipality, political leaders and other elite addressed the occasion with Deputy Commissioner Sheikh Abdul Kalam in the chair.

Tk 1cr touchstone recovered

UNB, Thakurgaon
Bangladesh Rifles recovered a touchstone worth over Tk 1 crore from Sukanpukuri village in Sadar upazila in Thakurgaon on Saturday. Acting on a tip, a patrol team of BDR raided the village and recovered the one-meter high and 43-centimeter wide stone from under the ground of a house. The touchstone was sent to Dhaka for preserving in the National Museum.