



The Passur River finally awaits start of excavation work to maintain navigability of the important channel adjoining the Mongla Port in Khulna district after a Malaysian company got the Tk 132-crore work order as the lowest bidder in a tender, called for the fifth time for the purpose.

No time to have a breather

Handiwork artists busy as Eid nears

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

About 150 handiwork artists at a workshop in a remote village under Dashmina upazila in Patuakhali district are passing busy time ahead of the Eid ul Fitr as artistically designed clothes supplied from there is of high demand during the festival.

"I receive order for designed clothes from different shopping malls including Arong in Dhaka. We get order round the year but the demand rises ahead of different festivals like Eid ul Fitr, Eid ul Azha, Durga Puja etc," said Abdul Hai, 45, who along with his wife Shirin Begum, 38, set up the workshop at Bogi Bazar in Dashmina upazila in 2002.

"We mainly receive order both men and women's clothes including salwar, kamiz, orn, punjabi and fouta. This season we got Tk 5 lakh work order. We do works with colourful stones, chumki, pipe, and glass that makes the clothes attractive and valuable," he said.

After undergoing six-month training on handicraft in Mymensingh organ-

ised by NGO Terre Des Homes Netherlands, the couple helped their three daughters to learn the art.

Later many young girls and housewives from different villages including Bogi and Banshbari of Dashmina upazila and Dashpara and Korpurkathi of Baufal upazila area got employment at the workshop.

A piece of cloth costing Tk 200 to 800 becomes sellable for Tk 2000 to 15000,

PHOTO: STAR

A worker of this workshop at Bogi Bazar in Dashmina upazila under Patuakhali district does

artistic needle-work, setting chumki, stone, pipe, glass etc to turn otherwise ordinary clothes into attractive 'Eid dresses' as those are in great demand ahead of the festival.



depending on the quality and amount of the artwork.

They are now working long hours to deliver artistically designed clothes as per order from shopping malls at different places including capital Dhaka.

"I worked 15 hours to make this cloth beautiful with colourful designs and handiwork. Now it is worth Tk 3500. As the demand for such clothes has increased ahead of Eid, we have to work

even during the night to ensure timely delivery," said Mariom, a worker of the workshop, while tying a piece of cloth to a wooden frame.

"Normally we earn Tk 3,000 to 4,000 a month but our income doubles during the Eid season. My earning from here helps me to contribute to my family, especially for education of my children," said Rina Begum, 35, an artist working at the workshop.

Passengers suffer for roadblock by Sramik League

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

Thousands of home-bound passengers yesterday faced immense suffering as Sramik League blocked Comilla-Sylhet highway at Madhyapara under Brahmanbaria municipality, demanding release of the district unit general secretary.

MA Malek Chowdhury, general secretary of Sramik League Brahmanbaria unit, was arrested on Friday evening on charge of stabbing district Juba League Organising Secretary Mushtaque Ahmed.

Locals said a group of Sramik League men stabbed Mushtaque in the town on the day as a sequel to a rivalry between the two associate bodies of the ruling Awami League.

The workers and leaders of Sramik League barricaded the highway at 1:00pm, creating tailbacks on both sides of the road at Madhyapara point. The also burnt tyres and chanted slogans demanding release of their leader.

Law enforcers from Brahmanbaria Sadar PS rushed to the spot, pacified the agitating Sramik League men and removed the barricade from the road at around 2:30pm.

Md Kawser Ahmed, president of district Sramik League, said they will sit with the leaders of other trade unions in the district today to discuss the next course of action.

"We will declare agitation programme, demanding release of Malek Chowdhury," he said.

Contacted, Officer in-Charge (OC) of Sadar Police Station Md Abdur Rab said they arrested Malek Chowdhury following a case filed by Juba League against him.

Sources said, instead of joining the work, hundreds of workers of the steel mill

PREPARING VGF CARDS IN PABNA

Interference by AL men creates stalemate

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

The final lists of ultra-poor people for issuing VGF (Vulnerable Group Feeding) cards in nine upazilas of the district are yet to be completed due to alleged interference of the ruling party men although August 14 is the deadline for submission.

Chairmen and mayors of 72 union parishes and nine municipalities said the local AL leaders have created the stalemate in listing the ultra poor people as they are putting pressure on them to issue half of the total VGF cards to the names they recommended.

Things turned out violent on August 4 when the ruling party men vandalsised Ekdanta Union Parishad office and assaulted the UP chairman and four members who did not pay heed to the demand of local AL men.

Unable to reach a compromise with the ruling party men, the union parishad is yet to prepare the VGF list for submission

to the Project Implementation Office (PIO).

On the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr, the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management on July 25 approved special VGF cards for ultra poor people in the district to receive a single handout of 10kg rice each.

Sources in the district relief and rehabilitation office (DRRO) said a total of 2,06,795 VGF cards have been granted for Pabna ahead of Eid. This is the highest allotment of such cards in the district, they said.

If the lists are not submitted within August 14, the ultra poor people will not get the rice before Eid, the sources added.

The union parishad chairmen, most of whom belong to BNP and Jamaat, claimed that they could not make the VGF list till Friday due to lack of "understanding" with the ruling party men.

Ali Reza Kakon, chairman of Malonchi Union parishad under Pabna Sadar upazila, said he has

got 2,084 VGF cards but the ruling party leaders are asking for 50 percent share of the cards.

The chairman and members of the union said they will boycott the relief if they have to give 50 percent share of the cards to the ruling party men.

Md Amzad Hossain, chairman of Dhulauri Union Parishad in Santhia upazila, said he had to give 40 percent share of 2410 VGF cards allotted for the union to the ruling party men.

Abu Sayed, chairman of Varara UP in Sadar upazila and also the vice president of AL sadar upazila unit, said the pro-BNP, Jamaat chairmen are bargaining with the ruling party over distribution of cards.

The pro-AL chairmen in some unions have already solved the issue with the party leaders, he added.

Contacted, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Md Mostafizur Rahman said impasse over making the lists of ultra poor people will be removed soon.



PHOTO: STAR
Workers agitate for Eid bonus on the premises of Bashundhara Steel Complex Limited while their leaders hold meeting with the management at its office in Manikganj yesterday.

Workers block highway for increased Eid bonus

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Workers of Bashundhara Steel Complex Limited blocked the Dhaka-Aricha highway yesterday morning for about half an hour demanding arrears and increase of Eid bonus.

Contacted, Officer in-Charge (OC) of Sadar Police Station Md Abdur Rab said they arrested Malek Chowdhury following a case filed by Juba League against him.

Sources said, instead of joining the work, hundreds of workers of the steel mill

blocked the highway at about 8.00am, creating long tailback on both sides of the road.

The agitating workers said, with the hope of getting arrears and increased Eid bonus they had worked extra hours for the last several weeks.

They also agitated on the mill premises demanding Eid bonus equal to their next two days.

monthly wages.

However, the workers withdrew the blockade at about 8.30am resumed work at 10.30am on the assurance of the factory management of increasing the bonus money.

They also threatened to go for work abstention and road blockade again if their demands are not met within next two days.

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