

Three in one

Cost effective agricultural tool made in Dinajpur

KONGKON KARMAKAR, Dinajpur

A locally manufactured harvester in Dinajpur proves to be an all-in-one device, while the cost is relatively low.

Anwar Hossain, a 51-year old quack at Dakkhin Basudevpur village under Phulbari upazila, designed the machine that can harvest, thresh and pack paddy or wheat simultaneously.

The machine, which requires only a driver and an operator, can harvest at the rate of one acre per hour, cutting labour costs significantly and outperforming the imported models.

Anwar said: "An imported harvester costs at least Tk 30 lakh, whereas the one I have developed costs only Tk 7 lakh."

Besides, the engine consumes only three litres of diesel per acre while imported ones consume around 8 litres, he said.

Local farmer Md Sirajul Islam, who rented the machine, said he used to spend Tk 6,500 per acre for harvesting paddy, but the cost had come down to around Tk 3,500 with the use of the new device.

"This machine can save both the labour cost and time," he told The Daily Star.

Anwar, who passed the HSC in 1983 from Phulbari Government College before

receiving a one-year diploma in medicine, said the idea of the harvester came when he faced problems with a Korean harvester he purchased for commercial use in 2006.

He found the harvester wasting a good amount of paddy, and it was expensive to operate. Moreover, there were difficulties in repairing it locally.

After four years of perseverance, Anwar devised his harvester in 2012.

"I used shallow machine engine, a gear-box, and specially-designed tyres from China. Other parts were manufactured in a workshop in the upazila," he said.

Experts from Denmark, Australia and Vietnam have already visited him and praised his efforts. In the meantime, he made an improved second harvester and has been working on a third.

Atiqul Islam, professor of Hajee Danesh Science and Technology University in Dinajpur, said the huge amount of money currently spent on importing such harvesters could be saved if Anwar's harvester is promoted.

Anwar said: "I am now trying to add a ploughing device to the harvester. If successful, this can be a very comprehensive machine."

He has sought government help for the expansion of his project.



The locally made machine, which can harvest one acre per hour, is in operation in a paddy field of Dinajpur. Inset, Anwar Hossain, the designer of the machine, and his assistants are busy developing a new device at his workshop.

PHOTO: STAR



Drive against illegal gas lines from Feb 17

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company will begin a major drive from next week against illegal gas connections to households after its previous effort went into vain, officials said yesterday.

The state-run company has instructed the households with illegal connections to sever their gas lines by February 16.

Soon as the deadline passes, the crack-down would begin, said Titas spokesperson M Shahjahan, adding that punitive measures would be taken against the wrongdoers while disconnecting their lines.

Nowshad Islam, managing director of Titas Gas, said: "Our stance is pretty clear. We will go on with our effort to disconnect the illegal connections."

The decision came at a board meeting of the utility service provider held in the energy ministry with energy secretary Mozammel

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Big buy and sale, but goal missing

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display their products to international buyers.

In reality, the presence of local small-scale producers was confined only to three pavilions.

The pavilion of Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation allowed 18 small companies to set up stalls for selling paper products, garments, handicrafts, herbal items, jute products, leather items and home textiles.

Seven Hazaribagh-based leather product manufacturers set up eight stalls at the pavilion owned by Business Promotion Council of the commerce ministry.

About 20 jute product-makers displayed items made of the natural fibre at the pavilion of Jute Diversification Promotion Centre.

Seven cash-strapped women entrepreneurs took part in the fair in the same stall under the banner of Grassroots Women Entrepreneurs Society, as they could not afford to

rent the space alone.

Shahnaz Begum, a woman entrepreneur, said she and several other small entrepreneurs came to the fair in hope of getting in touch with foreign buyers. "But we have failed to bag a single buyer as there was not so many of them."

Officials of FT Husain Tyre, a tyre-maker for medium-sized trucks, bikes and three-wheelers, said they had contacts with businessmen from Singapore and Canada during the fair, but no export deal was reached.

A number of entrepreneurs said the fair could not live up to the expectations if the objective was to promote local products and help them find overseas markets.

"Besides, the low quality products flooded the fair," said one of them. Entrepreneurs also termed the rent of the stalls huge.

"About half a dozen companies from Rangamati used to take part in the fair even five years ago, but only two of them took part this year. The

rest might be unsure about the return on the investment," said Tansen Barua, an entrepreneur from the hill district.

The entrepreneurs said traders got the most space because of corruption on the part of the authorities. They also urged the EPB to separate out local producers from importers and traders.

Asif Ibrahim, a leading exporter in the country, said the DITF has not reached the international stature yet. As a result, there is a lack of interest among domestic manufacturers to utilise the fair effectively.

The former president of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry called for setting up a permanent venue for the fair.

"In countries like China, they have permanent facilities at the fair venues. If we can't upgrade our facilities we won't be able to raise the standards of our DITF," he said.

Monowara Hakim Ali, first vice-president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of

Commerce and Industry, said the EPB should sincerely look into the quality of products, both by local and foreign companies, to be displayed and sold at the fair.

Shubhashish Bose, vice-chairman of EPB, said the number of local manufacturers and entrepreneurs was not as high as expected, and the EPB could do very little in stopping importers and distributors.

"We give priority to manufacturers and entrepreneurs when we allot stalls and pavilions. We have allotted stalls to every local producer who has applied. If we don't get enough applications from them we can't do anything," he told The Daily Star.

He thinks the Tk 2 lakh rent for a stall is not too high, given the rising cost of operations.

About the thin presence of foreign companies, Shubhashish said international companies and participants are not generally interested in a lengthy event.

US views on Jan 5 polls unchanged

Says Mozena, calls for fresh polls

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

US Ambassador in Dhaka Dan Mozena yesterday reiterated that there had been no change in US views on January 5 polls as it called for immediate dialogue and holding fresh polls as soon as possible.

"...our view remained the same as stated on Jan 6," he said, adding: "It is not America to set the time line, we are clear in calling for immediate dialogue to find way to hold elections as soon as possible."

Speaking at a "Meet the Press" event in Dhaka, Mozena said, it was not about recognising the government as there was no such thing.

America recognised Bangladesh and it will continue to recognise Bangladesh, he added.

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Keep highways free of locally made vehicles

HC asks govt to withdraw Nosimon, Korimon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday ordered the government to withdraw locally improvised people carrier -- Nosimon, Korimon and Votvoti -- from highways in 10 districts within a week to reduce road accidents.

The districts are Jessore, Khulna, Jhenaidah, Magura, Meherpur, Satkhira, Bagerhat, Narail, Kushtia and Chuadanga.

In response to a petition, the court also issued a rule upon the government to explain in two weeks why it should not be directed to stop plying of these vehicles.

It also asked the authorities concerned to explain why they should not be ordered to follow the provisions of Motor Vehicle

Ordinance -1983, in giving licence to vehicles to run on roads.

The petition was filed following media reports about illegal running of these people carriers.

The HC also asked them to submit a report after complying with the order in two weeks, Deputy Attorney General Mokhlesur Rahman told The Daily Star.

The bench of Justice Salma Masud Chowdhury and Md Habibul Gani gave the order and issued the rule after hearing the petition filed by Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh on February 9.

During the hearing, petitioner's counsel Manzill Murshid told the court that many

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AL, BNP try hard to keep rebels at bay

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The upazila parishad elections, although non-partisan, seem to have become a prestige issue for the two parties after the January 5 parliamentary polls that the BNP-led alliance had boycotted.

To win the upazila polls, high commands of both the parties have directed their grassroots to choose a single candidate for each post.

On Thursday, in presence of Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed, AL leaders of Borhanuddin upazila in Bhola district decided to support party-backed chairman aspirant

Mohabbat Jan Chowdhury. AL's dissident Jasim Uddin Haider, the incumbent chairman of the upazila parishad, agreed to withdraw his candidacy today.

Here, BNP managed to keep one candidate for the chairman post through discussion even before anyone had opted to file his or her candidacy application.

In Bagha upazila of Rajshahi, AL could not succeed in choosing one candidate for the chairman post. The local AL leaders recently at a meeting in State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam's house decided to back Bagha upazila AL convener Azizul Islam. But three other AL leaders are also in the race here.

The situation in the BNP side here is also the same. At a meeting on February 7, local BNP leaders decided to support Jubo Dal leader Abdullah Al Mamun for the chairman post although a group of a local BNP leaders and activists

were against it. The protestors support district BNP leader Jahangir Hossain.

Both AL and BNP have been able to choose single candidate for the chairman posts in three upazilas -- Khoksha, Kumarkhali and Mirpur in Kushtia.

"We chose them through secret votes," Ali Asgar, general secretary of Kushtia district unit of AL, told The Daily Star.

Syed Mehedi Ahmed Rumi, president of Kushtia district unit BNP, said they had chosen single candidates for each posts on consensus among local leaders.

But in Bogra district, both the parties failed to do so for Shahjahanpur, Kahaloo, Shibganj and Adamdighi upazilas.

Local leaders of the parties who

have been negotiating with the dissidents said the chairman aspirants must obey the party decision and withdraw their candidacies by today (Tuesday), or else they would have to face disciplinary actions.

Meanwhile, BNP succeeded in picking single chairman aspirants in all five upazilas of Chandpur while AL is still struggling there.

In Comilla, situation went in favour of both the camps in Monoharganj and Laksham upazilas.

The effort of convincing rebel candidates is also going on in Jamalpur, Munshiganj, Jessore, Natore, Manikganj, Rangpur, Khagrachhari, Gaibandha, Mymensingh, Brahmanbaria, Noakhali and Netrakona districts.

Verdict kept in wait

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Talking to The Daily Star, Public Prosecutor Asaduzzaman Khan Rochi said he would try to complete the arguments on the next date if the judge hears.

Ershad's counsel Sheikh Muhammad Serajul Islam, however, said it would depend on the judge's decision whether the arguments would be concluded on the next scheduled date or take longer time.

Jatiya Party Chairman Ershad, also special envoy of the prime minister, looked tense while he was at the court yesterday.

Of the four other accused, Maj (ret'd) Kazi Emdadul Haque and Lt Col (ret'd) Mostafa Kamaluddin

Bhuiyan were present at the court. The proceedings against Maj Gen (ret'd) Abdul Latif and Lt Col (ret'd) Shamsur Rahman Shams have been stayed by the High Court.

The case filed in 1995 during the then BNP-led government has never got the pace for disposal. The trial began in 1999 when the Awami League-led government was in power.

But it was sped up in July last year after Ershad had refused to extend support to the AL-nominated mayoral candidate in the Gazipur City Corporation election.

At that stage, both the prosecution and the defence placed their arguments.

Hearing of the case resumed in

November last and on completion of hearing on January 22, the court fixed yesterday for delivering the verdict.

The Dhaka district judge on January 29 transferred Judge Begum Hosne Ara Aktar of the Manzoor murder case to another court replacing Khondker Hasan Md Firoz.

Maj Gen Abul Manzoor was killed at Chittagong Cantonment on June 1, 1981, just two days into the assassination of the then president Ziaur Rahman.

Manzoor, who was the commander of Sector-8 during the Liberation War, was believed to have carried out an abortive Chittagong coup in which Zia was killed.

Representation of the People Order.

Under the law, he was supposed to reschedule the loan by November 24 last year to be able to run in the election.

Feroz is the director of Patuakhali Jute Mills which is a loan defaulter since 2009, the petition says, adding that Feroz rescheduled the Sonali Bank loan on November 27 and therefore was not qualified to contest the election.

Maheshkhali

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52-month construction can begin in 2017. The plant would be built on 1,500 acres of land keeping in mind its future expansion. The cost of this land has been estimated at Tk350 crore.

The feasibility report identified that the site has one bird and five reptiles, which have been designated worldwide as threatened species. But the species would not be harmed by the project if certain rules and restrictions were enforced.

The proposed ultra-supercritical (USC) technology for this plant would consume 2,16,400 tonnes less coal than the basic coal plants and emit 1,98,300 tonnes less carbon per year. However, it would use medium quality coal to save cost whereas the Rampal plant would use the best quality coal considering environmental concerns over the nearby Sundarbans forest.

The plant would use seawater after desalination for its cooling system. The water would be discharged into the sea at an ambient temperature. It would have elaborate air and water pollution control arrangements.

A well-placed power ministry source said the government had drafted a coal based power policy outlining an obligation for any future coal power plant to create and maintain a fund for the local community development from a part of power sales revenue. It is applicable for this project.

With one of its components, the Matarbari plant would go for full electrification of the local community.

Prof Rangalal Sen

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Dhaka University (DU) and founder chairman of Bangladesh Sociology Association, Rangalal died around 3:20pm.

He was also a member of the syndicate and academic committee of the university.

His body will be kept in front of the Arts Building of the DU between 10:00am and 11:00am for everyone to pay tributes to the deceased, said a DU press release.

Suchana Sen, eldest daughter of the deceased, said her father's funeral will be held at Postagola crematorium in the capital.

Born in Moulvibazar on September 24 in 1933, Rangalal completed his

honours and masters in sociology with first class from the DU.

His PhD thesis "Politico Elites in Bangladesh" at a UK university earned him worldwide fame.

In 1966, Rangalal joined Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) as a lecturer. The following year, he joined the sociology department at DU and served there till 1993.

He served in important positions of Asiatic Society and Bangladesh Itihas Parishad.

Dhaka University Vice-Chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique and Jagannath Hall Alumni Association expressed deep shock at the death of Dr Rangalal Sen.

The poor bear

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The situation cannot continue any longer when it poses serious threats to public health, said rights activist Mahbubur Rahman. The number of patients is going up day by day, and the increasing healthcare cost is pushing more people towards poverty.

CAB demanded that a monitoring cell be formed to prevent adulterated medicines and a rule be imposed to make it mandatory to hang a price list at the medicine shops.

It also demanded banning of drug sales without written prescriptions, establishment of more drug testing labs, and enforcement of laws to discipline the medicine companies.

After the demonstration, the consumers' rights body submitted a memorandum to DGDA in Motijheel asking it to look into the matter of price hike and take stern actions against those responsible for drug adulteration.