



The stages of jeans production in Keraniganj factories. Beauty of every pair of jeans lies in cutting of denim and sewing, which workers have to carry out with extra care using hands and light machine. Then come attaching buttons and stickers, dyeing and polishing. When the finished products arrive in shops, the items bear no sign of toil or sweat.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

## Silent revolution in Keraniganj

FROM PAGE 1

"The bank of Buriganga is emerging as a growing apparel hub in the country due to the product quality and competitive prices," said Mizanur Rahman, general secretary of a Keraniganj-based garment owners association.

Traders in Keraniganj sell 70 percent of the annual turnover during Ramadan and their sales get momentum from Shab-e-Barat and last till 15th Ramadan, he said.

During the period, around 3,500 traders come to the market from all over the country every day compared to just 250 to 300 on a normal day, he added.

The wholesale hub is mainly popular for its denim products as it accounts for 50 percent of the total readymade garment production in the area.

"An increased number of customers [retailers] are buying denim and woven items from Keraniganj as we offer a wide range of items at lower prices," said Rahman.

Mustafizul Rahman, proprietor of New Channel Fashion at Ganginarpar in Mymensingh town, who came to the market on Monday, echoed the same.

"I usually come to Keraniganj twice a month," the retailer said, adding that he could buy a pair of jeans in this market at Tk 50 to 100 less than that in other wholesale markets in Dhaka.

Customers are now more attracted to local products than before because of the quality maintained by the garment makers in Keraniganj, said Ismail Mondol, co-owner of Mondol Garments in Bera upazila of Pabna.

This year, his shop has registered higher sales than last year.

The apparel makers in Keraniganj produce the items targeting both the lower and the middle-income groups.

"In and around the capital, prominent shopping centres are selling clothes made in Keraniganj," said SK Jan-e Alam, proprietor of New Jetu Garments in South Keraniganj.

He sells a pair of normal jeans between Tk 250 and 300 and quality ones at Tk 550 to 2,000.

"The same products cost double or even triple in various outlets in the capital," he added.

Alam, however, is not happy with the sales so far this Ramadan. Every year, his factory makes 1.25 lakh pairs of jeans targeting the Eid-ul-Fitr but he

made around 80,000 pairs this year due to poor sales.

Cost of production has also gone up significantly due to high rent. For his small showroom, he pays Tk 36,000 in monthly rent.

"I am worried about my business, particularly because of such high rent," said Alam, who has been in the business for 25 years.

Frequent load-shedding, poor condition of roads and unplanned expansion of factories and showrooms are among the other major challenges they face. Some roads are so narrow that fire service vehicles cannot reach small factories in case of a fire incident.

Apparel makers in the area design clothes collecting samples from India and China.

Their fabrics come mainly from China, India, Thailand, the UAE and also the local markets such as Islampur.

Wholesalers in the area sell a shirt for Tk 150 to 800, a punjabi Tk 400 to 900, three-pieces Tk 400 to 3,000 and children's wear Tk 150 to 400.

The business model in Keraniganj is a little different from other wholesale markets. Keraniganj traders usually sell a significant bulk of their products on credit to attract retailers from across the country to do business with them.

The trading hub, a cluster of about 200 markets, spread over an area of two kilometres in Aganagar and Suvaddaya unions under Keraniganj Upazila.

Such vibrant trading has already

attracted banks to open more branches and transport agencies to set up more offices there.

The area has now branches of about 25 banks and offices of 30 transport agencies.

"Banks are interested to set up more branches in Keraniganj due to the huge business potentials," said Syed Abdul Momen, head of small business at Brac Bank.

"We have a branch and an SME unit in Keraniganj and these are among the highly rated units for us. We transact Tk 8 to 10 crore daily through the branch," he told The Daily Star.

Currently, Brac Bank has outstanding loans of Tk 57 crore in Keraniganj against the deposit of around Tk 37 crore, he added.

## ADB approves

FROM PAGE 16

waste management and drainage systems. In response, ADB has already been providing support for improved services under an urban governance action program.

The new project, which is part of the program, will provide assistance to 30 municipalities with a total population of 2.2 million, including 20 district headquarters. These administrative, trade and economic centres, and transportation and distribution hubs, are crucial for more balanced development in Bangladesh.

The loan funds will be used to upgrade infrastructure and services, including roads, drainage and sanitation systems, piped water supplies, and solid waste collection and disposal. They will also be used to strengthen the ability of municipalities to carry out urban planning, financial management, and service delivery.

Some of the expected benefits will include reduced travel time and cost savings from better roads, health improvements from piped water supply and solid waste collection, and more citizen participation -- including by women and poor and marginalised groups -- in governance and provision of basic services.

Reflecting lessons from previous ADB project assistance, the target municipalities will be eligible for additional phased funding support as they meet performance-based targets linked to governance reforms.

## World demands answers

FROM PAGE 1

All 15 crew were Malaysian.

Two students, a former BBC journalist and two Newcastle United fans are believed to be among the British passengers on board.

A number of those on board were travelling to an international AIDS conference in Melbourne, including Joep Lange, an influential Dutch expert.

"We lost somebody who wanted to make the world a better place," said his friend Marcel Duyvestijn.

Tragic stories have been emerging of people who boarded the flight, including an entire Indonesian family, a nun and three young children flying home with their grandfather.

The plane crashed about 40km (25 miles) from the border with Russia near the regional capital of Donetsk, an area that is a stronghold of rebels who have been fighting Ukrainian government forces and have brought down military aircraft.

US President Barack Obama demanded Russia stop supporting separatists in eastern Ukraine after the downing of Malaysian airline.

He said a surface-to-air missile fired from rebel territory shot down the jet and it raised the prospect of more sanctions on Moscow.

"Evidence indicates that the plane was shot down by a surface-to-air missile that was launched from an area that is controlled by Russian-backed

separatists inside of Ukraine," Obama said.

Calling it "an outrage of unspeakable proportions", Obama stopped short of directly blaming Russia for the incident but warned that he was prepared to tighten economic sanctions. He echoed international calls for a rapid and credible investigation and ruling out US military intervention.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has said Ukraine bears responsibility for the crash and said it underscored the need for a "peaceful settlement" to the Ukraine crisis in talks with Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte.

Leaders of the rebels' self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic denied any involvement and said a Ukrainian air force jet had brought down the intercontinental flight.

Russia's defence ministry later pointed the finger at Ukrainian ground forces, saying it had picked up radar activity from a Ukrainian missile system south of Donetsk when the airliner was brought down, Russian media reported.

Ukraine's emergency services have found two black boxes at the crash site of a Malaysian airliner, Interfax-Ukraine quoted an adviser to the governor of eastern Ukraine's Donetsk region.

"Two black boxes were found by our emergency services. I have no information on where these boxes are at the moment," Kostyantyn Batovsky was

quoted as saying.

A spokesman for the emergencies ministry in Kiev declined to comment on the report.

However, separatist leader Alexander Borodai denied reports that black box flight recorders of MH17 had been recovered and handed to Moscow.

The UN Security Council called for a "full, thorough and independent international investigation" into the downing of the plane and "appropriate accountability" for those responsible.

Staff from the Organisation for the Security and Co-operation in Europe's (OSCE) went to the village of Grabovo where the plane came down on Thursday. But, they complained, they did not have the full access they wanted.

A unit of heavily armed rebels blocked the 30-strong team from the OSCE, cordoning off a large part of the crash site. The inspectors retreated after an hour-long standoff, having been unable to gain access. They were sent on their way by warning shots fired by the rebel unit commander.

According to western-based defence and intelligence specialists, Russian separatist groups in eastern Ukraine are hastily covering up all links to the Buk missile battery suspected to have been used to shoot down the plane.

As the US, Ukraine and other governments sought to determine who pressed the button, postings on a rebel

social website boasting of having shot down what they claimed was an Antonov Ukrainian military plane have been taken down.

Photographs and video purportedly showing a Buk battery being moved in the rebel-held area between Snizhne and Torez close to the crash site in eastern Ukraine on Thursday have been removed from a separatist website.

One picture was alleged to show a Buk vehicle with a missile in vertical launch mode beside a supermarket in the district of Torez.

Ukrainian intelligence has published a tape claimed to be a recording between rebels and Russian intelligence in which they realised there had been a catastrophic blunder.

A Nato intelligence specialist quoted by the military analysts Janes said the recordings "show that the Russian 'helpers' realise that they now have an international incident on their hands -- and they probably also gave the order for separatists to erase all evidence -- including those internet postings."

The Security Service of Ukraine (SSU) said in the leaked audio, which they claimed to have intercepted, Bezler, also referred to as 'Bes', can be heard reporting to commander Vasyl Mykolaiovych Geranin of the Russian Armed Forces at 4.40pm local time on 17 July on a civil airplane that had been recently hit.

According to a transcript of the conversation translated by The Guardian, in one of the calls Belzer can be heard saying: "Just now a plane was hit and destroyed by the miners group."

In a second conversation with the SSU said was recorded seven minutes earlier, a militant referred to as 'Major' is reported to have said: "It's the Cernukhinskis. The Cossacks who stay in Chernukhinks, from their post."

The loss of MH17 is the second devastating blow for Malaysia Airlines this year, following the mysterious disappearance of Flight MH370 in March, which vanished with 239 passengers and crew on board on its way from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing.

In Malaysia, there was a sense of disbelief that another airline disaster could strike so soon.

"This is a tragic day, in what has already been a tragic year, for Malaysia," Prime Minister Najib Razak said.

International air lanes had been open in the area, though only above 32,000 feet. The Malaysia plane was flying 1,000 feet higher, at the instruction of Ukrainian air traffic control, although the airline had asked to fly at 35,000 feet.

Relatives gathered at the airport in Kuala Lumpur and the Netherlands declared a day of national mourning, without apportioning blame.

[From The Guardian, Independent, Reuters, Telegraph and BBC]

## Safety ignored to make money

FROM PAGE 16

There was no possibility of the vessel getting a fitness certificate before Eid because DoS needs around 35 to 45 days to complete inspection procedures, said Mirza Saifur Rahman, engineer and ship surveyor of DoS.

However, a top level DoS official admitted that around 20 to 30 unfit vessels operate during the Eid rush.

These unfit and unregistered vessels do not use launch terminals. They pick up and drop off passengers from mid-river or banks, said the official seeking anonymity.

As there is a huge rush during Eid, the passengers do not care about fit or unfit vessels and the government bodies concerned are too busy with river traffic and security, the official added.

On fitness inspections, Mir Tareque Ali, professor of the Department of Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering of Buet, said the vessel inspection department has

unskilled and inadequate manpower.

There are only five ship surveyors for 1,061 passenger-carrying vessels, according to DoS statistics. In the last one and half months, DoS issued fitness certificates to only 16 launches, according to its register.

There are around 25,000 unregistered passenger vessels in the country, sources said.

Saidur Rahman Rintu, vice-chairman of Bangladesh Inland Waterways (passenger carriers) Association, said launch owners usually repair and refurbish vessels to attract passengers ahead of Eid. But no unfit vessels would be allowed to ply.

"Every year, we see the same thing that many unfit and faulty vessels become 'new' before Eid due to a lack of government monitoring. It is the government's duty to ensure passenger safety," said Ashis Kumar Dey, convenor Nou, Sarak O Railkhat Rokkha Jatiya Committee.

"The season of stormy weather has passed. Now, the vessels may face rain. Proper weather forecast is very important. We are taking safety measure as usual like every year," said Mahbub Uddin Ahmed Bir Bikram, chairman of Bangladesh Inland Waterways (passenger carriers) Association.

Like always, the government-run BIWTA has said it would check overloading and take other necessary steps to ensure passenger safety, but in reality, almost nothing gets done.

Around eight to 10 lakh people leave Dhaka city from about a week before Eid through Sadarghat Launch Terminal, according to launch owners.

At least 5,290 people had died and 1,236 remain missing (presumably dead) in launch accidents across the country over the last 20 years, claims a non-government study.

## 'Biological pacemaker' tested in lab

FROM PAGE 16

Institute in Los Angeles.

The British Heart Foundation said applications of the research, published in Science Translational Medicine, were "a long way off".

The researchers injected a gene into pigs with a heart condition that causes a very slow heart rate.

The gene therapy converted some of the billions of ordinary heart muscle cells into much rarer specialised cells that kept the heart beating in rhythm.

The patch of cells the size of a peppercorn had acted as a pacemaker for two weeks, taking over the function of a conventional pacemaker, said the US team.

"We have been able, for the first time, to create a biological pacemaker using minimally invasive methods and to show that the biological pacemaker supports the demands of daily life," said Dr Eduardo Marban, who led the research

team.

"We also are the first to reprogram a heart cell in a living animal in order to effectively cure a disease."

Heart rhythm Conventional pacemakers are electronic devices that are implanted into the chest to control an abnormal heartbeat.

The pacemaker sends regular electrical pulses to keep the heart beating regularly.

Scientists are working on creating biological pacemakers that might one day be used in their place, either as a temporary or more permanent measure.

"Babies still in the womb cannot have a pacemaker, but we hope to work with foetal medicine specialists to create a life-saving catheter-based treatment for infants diagnosed with congenital heart block," said co-researcher Dr Eugenio Cingolani.

"It is possible that one day, we

might be able to save lives by replacing hardware with an injection of genes."

But the British Heart Foundation said this was a long way off.

Pacemakers had been around since the early 1960s, and while technology was constantly improving, researchers were looking ahead to a day when perhaps an implantable device might not be needed for some patients, said senior cardiac nurse Amy Thompson.

"However, it is a long way off yet and the benefits of a pacemaker are usually outweighed by the risks," she added.

"This study is an interesting contribution to this area of research, however it was quite small and only lasted two weeks."

"Pacemakers continue to be an important treatment for many abnormal heart rhythms, helping to keep hearts beating and save lives."