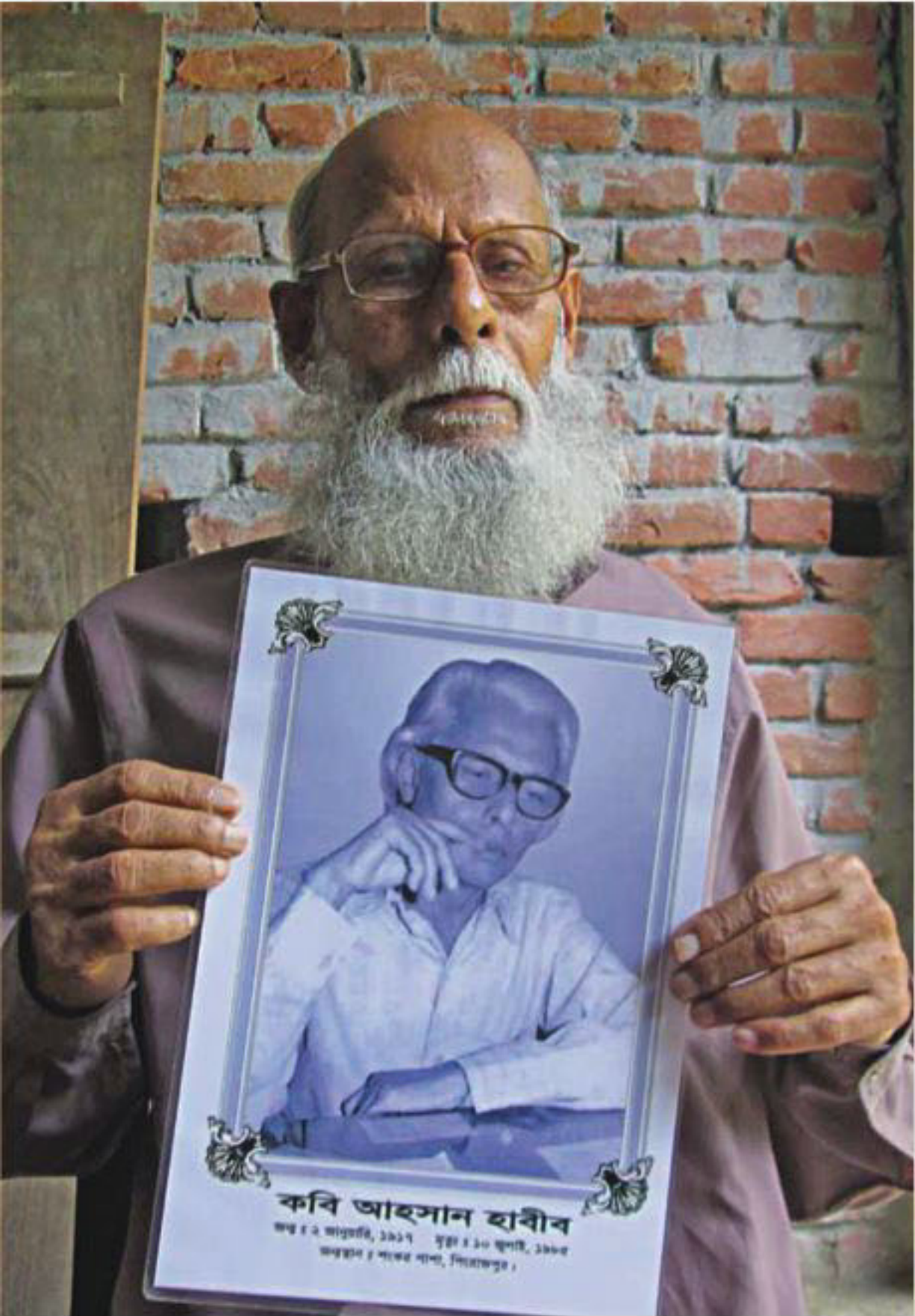


The forgotten poet of Pirojpur



Golam Kobir, brother of Ahsan Habib, holding the poet's picture.
PHOTO: STAR
HABIBUR RAHMAN, Pirojpur

Ahsan Habib is an eminent poet of Bangladesh and his writings are valuable assets of Bangla Literature. Sadly, his contribution is slowly fading away as no steps have been taken in his own district to keep him alive for future generations.

In 2003, to mark his birthplace around six kilometers away from Pirojpur district headquarter, a memorial was built at the village entrance at Sankarpasha by the District Council. But it has remained neglected there. Damaged parts of the memorial have not been tended to. On the other hand, a kilometer long street behind Pirojpur Stadium has been named after him and a part of Pirojpur Public Library has been named Ahsan Habib Corner. But the shelf here is full of many writer's books. No activities are visible in Pirojpur as remembrances to the poet. No events were organized in Pirojpur to mark his birth and death anniversaries, which are on 2 January and 10 July respectively. Though numerous visitors visit the poet's house from different parts of the country, they find nothing substantial there. "Although my bother played an important role in Bangla Literature, no memorable activities are seen in Pirojpur from the authorities to keep his memory alive," said Md Golam Kabir, 78, the younger brother of the poet, who lives at Sankarpasha village in Pirojpur. "Students and literary lovers from different parts of the country come to our house and return frustrated, since there is nothing here related with the poet," he added, saying that visitors write their opinion sometimes in a diary kept by the poet's daughter.

He feels that the government should take steps to keep his brother's memory alive for the next generation.

Literature lovers and cultural activists are also frustrated at the negligence towards the poet. "Ahsan Habib is our pride. Something must be done to save the poet's memory," said Kazi Monirul Islam, a villager of the Pirojpur. "Ahsan Habib is one of the eminent poets of the country. I think the Public Library should be named after him in the district town where his biography and works will be available," said Md. Abubaker Siddique, Senior Lecturer of Bangla at Aftabuddin College in Pirojpur. "Zila Shilpakala Academy or a big road could be named after the poet," he suggests. "Research on his works should be conducted," said Jagat Priya Das Bishu, a cultural activist in Pirojpur. "In this case, students at different institution in the district must be encouraged," he added. He also mentioned that discussion meetings and competitions on his work may be arranged to mark his birthday or death anniversary. He also alleged that the poet's family members are at a distance with Pirojpur and they hardly come to Pirojpur. During his life, Ahsan Habib did not visit Pirojpur much either.

The poetic genius of Ahsan Habib was evident from his childhood. On his way to school from home, he would compose poems, said his village people. His first poem 'Mayer Kabar Pare Kishor' was published in the school magazine in 1934 when he was student of class ten. Next, his poems were published in various journals and magazines. 'Ratri Sheshe', his first poetry, was published in 1947. After passing the matriculation examination in 1935 from Pirojpur Government School, he got admitted at the Brojo Mohan (BM) College in Barisal. Facing financial crisis, he could not complete his course there. Next, he went to Kolkata in 1937 in search of employment. He struggled with life and eventually joined the 'Takbir' as an Assistant Editor for a salary of Tk. 17.

He next worked in the Bulbul (1937-38) and the Saogat (1939-1943). From 1943 to 1948 he also worked as a staff artiste at the Kolkata centre of All India Radio. After the partition of India in 1947 from Pakistan, he returned to Dhaka and got married. His contribution as a journalist is praiseworthy. As a journalist he worked in the Daily Azad, Monthly Mohammadi, Weekly Probaho and some other newspapers.

He also worked as the production adviser of Franklin Publications from 1957 to 1964. From 1964 to 1985 he worked at the Dainik Pakistan, and then the Dainik Bangla. His publications include Ratri Sheshe (1948), Chhaya Horin (1962), Shara Dupur (1964), Ashai Boshoti (1974), Megh Bole Chaitrey Jabo (1976), Duhate Dui Adim Pathar (1980), Premier Kabita (1981) and Bidirno Dorpone Mukh (1985). His poems reflect the reality of social life of his time focusing on the middle class people. He also wrote for the children. His creations for the children are Josna Rater Golpo, Bristi Pare Tapur Tupur (1977), Chutir Din Dupure (1978), Relgari Jhomajhome, Jotsona Rater Golpo, Choto Mama the Great, Pakhira Firea Ashea, Rotnodip (a sort translation of Treasure Island), Hajibaba, Probal Dipe Obhijan (a sort translation of Coral Island). His also wrote a few novels: Aronney Neelima (1960) and Raneer Khaler Shanko (1965).

Ahsan Habib was the eldest among five brothers and four sisters. He has two sons and two daughters. One of his daughters died few years back. Ahsan Habib received several awards including UNESCO Literary Prize (1960-61), Bangla Academy Award (1961), Adamjee Literary Prize (1964), Nasiruddin Gold Medal (1977), Ekushey Padak (1978), Abul Mansur Ahmed Memorial Prize (1980) and Abul Kalam Memorial Prize (1984).

Nursery trade creates thousands of jobs

HABIBUR RAHMAN, Pirojpur

Nursing of wooden, flower and medicine plants at Nesarabad upazila in Pirojpur has created job opportunities for thousands of men and women. In the upazila, nurseries are doing well at Jalabari, Shangal, Sarupkathi, Alankarkathi, Samudoykathi, Mahamudkathi, Guarekha and some other parts as well.

Most of the families living in the area are involved in the trade. Not a single inch of space at their houses and gardens are left empty. At first farmers sow seeds of plants in the soil. After they grow a few inches high, they are set in small mud pots known as tally. Plants slowly keep growing in their pots as they are sold in this stage. These nurseries are simply beautiful, and attract many people who come to simply admire the natural beauty of diverse plants even if they aren't specifically interested in buying anything. In average, farmers spend TK 4-5 for rearing a wooden tender plant and they sell it at TK 8-10 to wholesalers. According to change in variety of plants' species, the production costs change. Wholesalers sell these plants across the country, and Naserabad fulfills a large part of the country's demand for small plants.

All kinds of wooden plants, such as rain tree, mehangani, champal, akasmoni and so on are available at the nurseries at Nesarabad. Different species of flowering plants such as rose, tuberose, night queen and many other species are available here as well. Fruit bearing plants including strawberry, malta, lemon, guava, jack fruit, grape, apple can also be found.

Because of a large number of canals in the upazilas spread like a web, traders can transport plants easily to different parts of the country. "I have become solvent through nursery business and my cultivation area is increasing every year," said Md Manik Miah, owner of Nesarabad Nursery adding that at least ten people are always at work at his five bigha nursery. It's not

just adults, but young boys and girls as well who are getting involved in their free time since they can earn well through this profession. "During my break after school, I work at my father's nursery," informed Rabbi, a student at a high school of Nesarabad municipality. "I help to grow plants in places around our house with my mother and I am happy being able to play a role in increasing our family income," said Sumaiya, a school student of the area. Men and women work as equals in this profession, be it in sowing seeds or simply looking after them in the yard.

Wholesalers frequent the upazila buying plants which they then carry to the city to sell. "I usually buy wooden plants for TK 10 and I can sell them at TK 14-15 in Dhaka," said Md. Firoj Khan, a wholesaler who has been doing this business for the last 15 years. There are eight people under Firoj's employ. Like him, many other wholesalers operate in the area. The buying and selling of flower plants run all year long. But sales of wooden plants are known to peak in the rainy season.

Unfortunately, with the rise in production costs, the profit margin of farmers has thinned. "Now we have to pay more to buy seeds and other materials than before and labour cost has also increased," said Md Rafikul Islam, a nursery owner of Sarupkathi municipality in the upazila who has cultivated small plants on 2 bigha of land and has been involved with the trade for the last 35 years.

According to Nesarabad upazila agriculture office, 1,942 farmers are involved in nursing and they are cultivating plants over 485 hectares of land. "Job opportunity has been created for many educated but unemployed youth in the upazila through the nursery trade," said Md. Shahidullah, Agriculture Officer of Nesarabad. He added that the agriculture department provides technical support to the farmers in many cases.



An eye catching plants' nursery at Nesarabad upazila under Pirojpur.
PHOTO: STAR



Farmer Afzal Hossain shows an off-season watermelon produced in his farmland at Ganna village in Sadar upazila of Jhenidah. Growers of the village are all smiles due to bumper yield and fair price of the fruit.
PHOTO: STAR

Growers make fortune from off-season watermelon

AZIBOR RAHMAN, Jhenidah

Watermelon farmers of Ganna village under Moheshpur upazila are all smiles due to bumper yield and fair price of the fruit in the off-season.

The growers said they sowed the seeds in May and started to harvest in July.

They spent Tk 40, 000 for one bigha of land. On each bigha they spread 50 grams seeds worth around Tk 600.

Besides, jute sticks, polythene, bamboo slate were used in making a structure where the watermelons are usually seen hanging in huge numbers, the farmers said.

Being aware of the profit, at least 45 farmers of the area took interest in producing the fruit. A one-kilogram

watermelon is now being sold at Tk 60/70.

Afzal Hossain of the village said, he cultivated watermelons on two bighas of land spending around Tk 80,000. Till August 15, he earned Tk 40,000 by selling the fruit.

I hope to sell more fruits worth Tk 1.5 lakh if the weather remains favourable, said a beaming Afzal.

Another farmer, Baki Billah of the area, proudly said his watermelons will be sold like hot cake if the weather remains hot in next several days.

He cultivated the fruit on one bigha at a cost of Tk 10,000 as he had the bamboo structure on field, built last year for the plants.

He said "Fortune smiled on me as I could sell Tk 50,000 the fruit this year".

Several other growers Anisur Rahman, Porimol Kumar, Hashem Ali, Azizul Islam and Rois Uddin expressed similar hopes while talking to this correspondent.

The farmers are earning almost double their prices by selling watermelon due to the off season, said sub-assistant agriculture officer Khalilur Rahman of Sadar upazila, adding that about 50 bighas of land were brought under cultivation this year.

Ganna UP chairman, Liton Hossain, said this year's cultivation has encouraged many farmers of the neighbouring villages as the venture is more profitable than the traditional crops like paddy and jute.

Murder of ex-Pabna BCL man sparks protest

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Local Awami League and Chhatra League men blocked Pakshey Lalon Shah Bridge road in Ishwardi upazila yesterday, demanding immediate arrest of the killers of former BCL leader Lavlu Biswas who was hacked to death in early Monday morning.

They also vandalised at least 20 vehicles during the blockade that continued for about five hours from 7:00am.

Son of late Jharu Biswas of Rooppur village in the upazila, deceased Md Rafikul Islam *alias* Lavlu Biswas, 38, was the former secretary of Pakshey union unit BCL. He recently joined in Jubo League.

Police and locals said Lavlu along with his friend Ishtiaq Hossain was returning home from Pakshey Bangla Kuthir around 11:00pm on Monday.

Criminals waylaid their motorbike near Pakshey Lalon Shah Bridge and attacked Lavlu with sharp weapons, leaving him critically injured. However, his friend managed to escape unhurt.

Lavlu was rushed to Rajshahi Medical College and Hospital where he died around 4:00am.

As the news spread, AL, Jubo League and BCL men put up barricade on the road and ransacked the vehicles, protesting the killing of Lavlu.

Vehicular movement was halted between southern and northern districts during the protest.

In primary investigation, it was found that muggers stabbed Lavlu to take away his motorbike, said additional superintendent of police Mostain Hossain.

The family members, however, claimed that he was killed in a planned way over previous enmity.

A muddy road that remains muddy for 200 years

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Thousands of people of Raipasha-Karapur union in Sadar upazila have been suffering for decades as a two-kilometer-long muddy road could not be turned into a concrete one allegedly because the demand made so many times by the locals fell on deaf ears of the authorities.

Hundreds of local people in the union on Sunday last formed a human chain and held a rally at Dharmadi-Raipasha cross-road near the city to realise the demand.

People from all walks of life, including students, joined the programmes with Khadiza Begum, a UP

Every year during the floods, the road in Barisal Sadar becomes unusable to pedestrians and movement of all modes of transport hampered as it goes under water

member, in the chair.

Addressing the rally, the speakers said the 200-year-old road, stretching from Mollar Bazaar of Purba Dharmadi to Raipasha, remained muddy for long although it is very close to the Barisal City Corporation (BCC) area.

During the monsoon, the commuters have to use the road when it gets damaged at at least five points

posing risk of accident, they said.

The road connecting the district headquarters and the city causes immense sufferings to thousands of locals of the area, especially school and college going students, due to its dilapidated condition, said Kabir Hossain, a resident of the union.

Every year during the floods, the road becomes unusable to pedestrians

and movement of all modes of transports hampered as it goes under water, he said.

"My son Robiul Islam, a fifth grader, and many others were stopped going to school due to the bad road communication," said Kabir.

Sumaiya Begum, a student of Class IV of the locality, said they carry two sets of dresses in fear of accident in the muddy road.

Despite repeated pleas, the ministry concerned is yet to take any steps to turn the road into a concrete one, said the speakers.

Among others, Nurul Amin, local UP chairman, and residents of the area Ansar Ali, Alam Molla, Ratan Molla, and Nuruzzaman, spoke.



People of Raipasha-Karapur union in Barisal Sadar upazila formed a human chain at Dharmadi-Raipasha point of a two-kilometre-long muddy road on Sunday, demanding that the authorities concerned convert the road near the city into a metalled one.
PHOTO: STAR