

RP Shah's legacy for the betterment of society



Kumudini Hospital at Kumudini Complex under Mirzapur upazila in Tangail

PHOTO: STAR

MIRZA SHAKIL, from Tangail

"My institutions are my greatest achievement." These were the words Ranadaprasad Shah, born in 1896 and a great philanthropist of the sub-continent and martyr of 1971, used when he was asked about all his welfare institutions. When he was 7 years old, he had to endure the loss of his mother due to lack of healthcare for her tetanus infection during her childbirth.

After his mother's passing, Ranada was sent to his uncle's house in Manikganj and later on, he moved to Kolkata. While there, he got involved in various kinds of work including porter and male nurse. Later on, through various businesses, he managed to accumulate a sizable amount of wealth.

The need for basic rights for women such as honor, social standing, education and empowerment was realized by this self-made man more than a hundred years ago. Through the use of his accumulated wealth and time, he decided to try and make his realization, which at the time was considered very progressive, come to life.

About 80 years ago, he had established the Kumudini Welfare Trust, in honor of his mother, to ensure human welfare, enlighten citizens,

women's education and treatment facilities for mothers.

The welfare programmes started in his birth place at Mirzapur village near the then subdivisional town in Tangail in the erstwhile Mymensingh district of East Bengal.

The activity of the Kumudini Hospital was started with the initial name "Shova Sundori Dispensary" in 1944.

To ensure women's education, he established Bharateswari Homes at the same place in 1945.

He also established Kumudini Women's College in Tangail town (the college went under Government control later on) in 1943 and Debendra College in Manikganj town on the same period (also went under Government control).

During the Liberation War in 1971, the Pakistani military, with the help of local collaborators, abducted RP Shah from his Narayanganj residence on May 7. They also abducted his younger son Bhabani Prasad Shah Robi. Both father and son have been missing since then.

Soon after RP's disappearance, his younger daughter Mrs Joya Poti took over the responsibilities as Chairman and Managing Director and continued to serve the Trust, till 1999. The pres

ent Chairman and Managing Director is the only grandson of RP Shah, Razib Prasad Shah, who took over responsibilities in 2000.

To meet the dreams of RP, the Trust later established Kumudini Nursing School in 1973, Kumudini Women's Medical College in 2001, and Kumudini Nursing College in 2007 at Mirzapur.

The Trust also established Kumudini Handicrafts in Narayanganj in 1983 as part of the self-dependent process for the many neglected women in the society, including the mothers and daughters, who sustained losses during the Liberation War.

Recently, the Trust has also taken various programmes for the welfare of autistic children in the country to honor the memory of RP's autistic son Durga Prasad Shah.

Durga was the eldest among RP's two sons and two daughters and he died in Kolkata in 1985, at the age of 47, and was cared for like a child by his family until his death.

Due to their own personal suffering through many types of social issues, the Kumudini family have a very intimate interest for it in the society as well.

Programs that they offer for disabled children include creating awareness about autism, social rehabilitation process for the autistic children and setting up ideal institutions for education and training.

On August 27, the trust arranged a workshop on "Autism Human Endeavour" at the Principal Protiva Mutsuddi Auditorium in Bharateswari Homes in Kumudini Complex in Mirzapur.

Principal Protiva Mutsuddi, director of the Trust, attended and addressed the workshop as the chief guest.

Also present were, Shreemotee Shah, director of the Trust and RP's daughter-in-law, Dr Dulal Chandra Poddar, director of Kumudini Hospital, principal of Kumudini Women's Medical College Dr Abdul Halim and its superintendent Dr PK Roy, principal of Kumudini Nursing School and College Rina Cruz and acting principal of Bharateswari Homes Protiva Halder addressed the workshop as well.

The speakers vowed to serve for the betterment of human welfare and keeping RP Shah in their hearts.

Protiva Mutsuddi, an Ekushe Lorient, during her speech, said that the Trust is standing on the contribution of Jhetha Moni (RP Shah).

"People call him (RP) a 'Danbir' (philanthropist), though his family had no wealth. If so, then how did he become one? He earned his wealth by hard labor and spent it all for the welfare of society," she said.

The veteran educationist also urged the rich people in the country to follow in the footsteps of RP Shah and stand beside the humanities with their abilities.



Two villagers taking away their domestic animals in the safe area on Kolar Bhura (vessel is made by banana trees) as flood water from the river Teesta submerges their houses during the rainy season at char Sindurna village of Hatibandha upazila in Lalmonirhat.

Changing water levels distress Teesta dwellers

S DILIP ROY, from Lalmonirhat

"The Teesta River is an unending source of problems for people living near the banks and surrounding villages of Lalmonirhat," said 86 year old Nahur Ali Munsi who lives in the Gobordhan char village of Aditmari upazila in Lalmonirhat. He also went on to say "Our grief comes from the fact that the Teesta doesn't provide any water during the dry season and completely floods the land during monsoon". Another farmer, 80 year old Hafez Uddin Miah of char Boirai village at Kaliganj upazila in Lalmonirhat, said "It's not possible to cultivate the lands for IRRI-boro paddy due to lack of water for irrigation as the river Teesta dries up during the dry season, and during the monsoon, the flood damages our transplant aman paddy as well."

Residents of the Kalmati char village in Lalmonirhat Nabir Hossain(65), Mafiz Uddin(62), and Tamiz Uddin said "To connect to the mainland requires walking atleast 5 kilometers in the dry river bed as the Teesta has been drying up for the last ten years, leading to massive inconvenience for us. Before, the water from the Teesta was a vital element in our livelihood and agriculture."

Official sources from Bangladesh Water Development Board BWDB in Lalmonirhat said that the river Teesta dries up every year from October, lasting for 8 months, till June, as there is only 200-300 Cusec of water in the river even though that number was 10,000 Cusec 10 years ago in the dry season. The monsoon brings about very dangerously high level of water flow, leading to massive flooding in the chars and surrounding low lying villages.

BWDB sources also said "During the monsoon, India opens all the gates of their Gajoldoba Barrage, which leads the water from upstream to come into the borders of Bangladesh and causes massive floods, and during the dry season, India keeps their Barrage gates closed, which leads to the drying up of the Teesta."

84 year old fisherman Jitin Chandra from Khuniyagachh char village in Lalmonirhat said, "Many fisherman become unemployed during the 8-9 month dry period of the Teesta every year. While the monsoon does bring better fishing opportunities, it also brings about massive flooding which causes its own misery."

75 year old char farmer Sekher Ali Mandal at Char Goddimari village of Hatibandha upazila said that he leaves his 20bighas of char land during the dry season because farming on it is impossible due to shortage of water for irrigation. Crops that grow in the monsoon are also damaged due to the rise of water levels. "We char farmers have been facing this issue for the last 10 years. Earlier, we benefited greatly from the Teesta as it provided stable water all year round," he said.

Afzal Hossain (65), of char Sindurna village of Hatibandha upazila said that the Teesta has managed to devastate the economy of the people living in the shoals of the Teesta. "We don't get water for bathing in the Teesta River during dry season, but we can't go out in fear of flood water from the river Teesta during monsoon," he said.



An artiste busy preparing an idol at Maa Shankari Kali Mandir (temple) at Guripara in Chapainawabganj town as the Durga Puja festival is only two weeks away.

Durga idol making becomes costlier

RABIUL HASAN,
Chapainawabganj

High price of raw materials used for making idols coupled with other costs is badly affecting preparations of Durga Puja in the district, only two weeks ahead of the largest festival of Hindu community.

"Prices of wood, bamboo, straw, paints, cloths and other materials used for making the idols have gone up sharply."

"On an average, cost of the raw materials has increased by 30 to 40 percent compared to the last year's," said Khudiram Pal, president of Maa Shankari Kali Mandir of Jhankar Sangha at Guripara in the district town.

During this time every year, the country's Hindu community with a festive mood prepares to welcome goddess Durga and celebrate the occasion.

Ahead of the biggest festival of the Bangali Hindus, idol makers are now busy day and night to

make sure that they can complete the job in time.

Ashish Kumar Sinha could hardly sleep during the last few days as he had been too busy to complete the work orders. He is making four idols this year, two of Monakasha union in Shibganj upazila, one of Chapainawabganj town of the district including one in Godagari upazila of Rajshahi district.

"I am not expecting a good profit this year because of high labour costs. Four people are working with me on daily wage basis," he said.

Another idol maker Labu Pal of Baroghoria in Sadar upazila said, their business this year was suffering due to increased cost of raw materials and related items.

Mohit Kumar Da, president of Chapainawabganj unit of Bangladesh Puja Udjapon Parishad said that this year 122 mandaps were being readied for Durga Puja in the district. However, high costs are badly affecting the preparations for the festival, he added.

Tal brings days of tasty cakes

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

The sweet smell of ripe Palmyra fruit, locally called *tal*, fills the air in rural areas during the ongoing Bangla month of Bhadra (mid-August to mid-September), the peak time for ripening of the popular fruit.

Bunch of ripe fruits assuming blackish red colour adorn the top of tall Palmyra trees, creating an eye catching scene against the backdrop of clouds floating in autumn sky.

In line with our age-old rural culture and tradition, villagers prepare several kinds of tasty cakes and *pajes*, mixing Palmyra fruit juice with rice powder, honey, milk and other ingredients.

Palmyra fruit is financially profitable as a mature tree can

bear around 1000 fruits annually, and a piece sells for Tk 30-Tk 40 on an average.

Its soft and tasty seeds at tender stage and sweet scented juice at mature stage are delicious as well as nutritious.

The stem of the tree can be made into boats with very little labour while the leaves are used for making hand fans, baskets, mats, puppets etc.

Golam Mostofa, former principal of Nilphamari Government Girls' College, also a teacher Bengali literature, said the Palmyra trees and fruits are part of our culture.

Poets and writers compose poems and stories on Palmyra fruit while sweet childhood memories of picking up ripe fruits in stormy days often make

us nostalgic," he added.

"Both the tender seeds and juice of ripe Palmyra fruit have high food value. *Tal michri*, a kind of candy made of palm juice, is traditionally used in rural areas for herbal treatment of fever and intestine problems since ancient period," said Sneha Kanti Chakma, civil surgeon of Nilphamari.

Keramot Ali, Sadar upazila agriculture officer, suggested planting at least one Palmyra tree on every house yard as the tree yields huge quantity of fruits for long years and requires only a little care and small amount of fertiliser.

There should be research for quality development of the nutritious fruit and spread of its cultivation, he said.



Anybody who knows the taste of Palmyra, locally known as *tal*, would be easily attracted by the sweet flavour of the seasonal fruit.



মিথৰ দেখা চাখ রাখুন

প্রতিযোগিতা প্রয়োগ শেষ
অপেক্ষা শুধুমাত্র গ্র্যান্ড ফিনালের

Spelling Bee Season 3 এর

পুরো যাত্রা আরো একবার দেখতে

চেখ রাখুন আজ বুধবার

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