

Traditional holy dip for the 'salvation of soul'

'Shombolpur ghat' to mark the 127th birth anniversary of Thakur Anukul Chandra



Hindu devotees take a holy dip in the Ganges at Shombolpur Ghat of Nemayetpur village in Pabna. PHOTO: STAR

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, Pabna

"Go to 'Ganga' (Shambalpur ghat point in Hemayetpur of Pabna) for holy dip on Vadra, 30 for salvation of the soul." Thakur Anukul Chandra asked his devotees before his death in 1968. Thousands of devotees have been rushing to Shambalpur Ghat on that day to partake in the holy dip of salvation ever since.

The devotees observe the traditional holy dip on the occasion of birth anniversary of revered Hindu sage Thakur Anukul Chandra every year. Like previous years, the 47th traditional 'Ganga Snan' was observed at Shombolpur ghat in Hemayetpur of Pabna while September, 17 this year marked the 127th birth anniversary of the sage.

"Thousands of devotees rush to Shombolpur ghat every year from home and abroad. The arrival of devotees turned into one of the biggest traditional festivals in Pabna." Shibli said adding that the Shambalpur ghat becomes festive every year.

Discussions, religious offerings and the unveiling of a book titled 'Abirvab', based on the life and works of the sage, took place on the occasion.

Kunjo Bihar Aditya, president of Satsangha Bangladesh, chaired the inaugural program while superintendent of Pabna Police, Miraz Uddin Ahmed inaugurated the two day festival on Monday as the chief guest.

Among the speakers, Dr. Abdul Alim, chairman of Pabna University of Science and Technology's Bangla Department and Secretary of Satsangha Bangladesh, Dhritabata Aditya spoke on the occasion focusing on the spirit of Thakur Anukul Chandra.

The speakers urged people to uphold Anukul Chandra's teachings and ideals to establish fraternity among all, while keeping aside narrow communal attitude for the sake of humanity.

Karam Puja celebrated in Thakurgaon

QUAMRUL ISLAM RUBAIYAT, Thakurgaon

Karam Puja, a major festival of the Orao community, inhabitants of the northern districts of Bangladesh, was celebrated last Wednesday and Thursday in Thakurgaon district.

To celebrate the festival Thakurgaon Karam Utshab Udjapan Committee organized different programs including discussions, cultural functions and offering puja.

On the night of Wednesday, 17th September, Deputy Commissioner of Thakurgaon, Mukesh Chandra Biswas attended the festival as chief guest at Pachpirdanga Adibashi village in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila.

Programme Manager of Heks Bangladesh, Syed Taposh and Chairman of Salondar Union Parishad Fazle Elahi Chowdhury attended as special guest while convener of Thakurgaon Karam Utshab Udjapan Committee Biswanath Kerketa in the chair.

Also attending the festival are advisor of district unit Jatiya Adibashi Parishad Advocate Imran Hossain Chowdhury, Md. Samsujjoha, Assistant Programme Coordinator of Eco Social Development.

The speakers at the discussion said

that the indigenous people are victims of discrimination in different fields as the government did not pay proper attention to their causes and they are always lagging behind as they are being deprived of their rights in all sectors. They also called to establish a separate ministry for indigenous people to deal with their problems.

The speakers also demanded mother tongue-based primary education for their children and the community's quota in higher education and government service.

They said indigenous people played a significant role during the liberation war in 1971 but they have yet to gain constitutional rights.

DC Mukesh Chandra Biswas said in his speech that the government has taken various steps to protect ethnic community's rights. He assured them to give all out support of any backward situation of their living.

According to researchers, the Karam festival is a way of the indigenous people expressing their affinity with nature. They also pray for happy conjugal lives during festival.

The festival ended the next day through immersion (Bisharjon dewa) branches of the Karam tree to the Tangon River.

Surjo Mormu, President of dis-



The indigenous people celebrating the Karam Puja through traditional songs in the Thakurgaon district. PHOTO: STAR

tribut unit of Jatiya Adibashi Parishad (an organisation of the indigenous communities) said that the festival is celebrated in Pachpirdanga, Jagannathpur, Gobindanagarh and Chandipur villages in Sadar upazila, Boirchuna, Jhongaon villages of Pirganj upazila the district.

Chaina Ram Tirki, leader of Orao community of Jagannathpur village under Sadar upazila of the district said that Karam puja is one of the major festivals celebrated by the 37 indigenous families of the village. "Though our unique culture is likely heading towards extinction, we want to preserve the traditions and heritage for generations to come," he said.

Perching and Light Trap system benefits farmers

MAMUN-UR-RASHID, Bogra

The perching and Light Trap system introduced by the agriculture department for keeping Aman-paddy fields' pest free has been gaining popularity and ensuring success among the farmers of Bogra.

Sources from Bogra's Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) said that this year the DAE set a production target of 4,92,092 tones of T-aman cultivation on 1,85,413 hectares of land in the district but farmers brought 1,90,000 hectares of land under T-aman cultivation.

Thanks to the use of the above mentioned systems, farmers do not need to use insecticides or other such poisons, saving them money in the process. Instead they have been given training in using perching with the support of tree branches namely the Dhance tree while light traps in the paddy fields keep the crops safe from the poisons of insecticides.

While visiting the paddy-fields of Nandigram upazila, the local upazila Agriculture office has taken up the huge initiative of using perching and light trap systems to control different insects effectively.

Sources from Nandigram upazila agriculture office said the department had set a target of T-



A light trap system is used at a field in Kohuli village under Buroil union of Nandigram upazila in Bogra. PHOTO: STAR

aman cultivation on 20, 859 hectares of land in the district and a production target of 55, 411 metric tones of rice but farmers only brought 20, 570 hectares of land under cultivation they started to cultivate early varieties of vegetables after Aus cultivation.

The source also added that most of the Aman Crop-land of the upazila had been attacked by Majra Poka, Gandhi Poka and Chungi Poka and

Cash Foring. Since then farmers of the upazila have been using perching and light trap systems on 80% of the total land managing to keep the crops safe.

A farmer of Kothom village of the upazila Shafiqul Islam said that they have been successful in using perching and light trap systems which cost considerably less to cultivate paddy on their land, keeping the soil poison free.

Another farmer of Kohuli village of Buroil union of the upazila Shonatan Kumar said that they have been using the system instead of using insecticides which lessens their production costs and keeps the crops contaminant free.

Pesticide trader of Nandigram municipality area Jahangir Alam said after implementing the insecticide-free systems, the sales of insecticides are less than that of last year.

Contacted, Upazila Agriculture Officer (UAO) of Nandigram, Mohammad Moshidul Haque said "farmers have been benefitting from implementing the systems and more farmers are showing interest in the insecticide-free systems.

To motivate and to encourage farmers the department has been conducting yard meetings, milking, leaflet distributions, field level monitoring and observing field-day, added the UAO.



As in Lalmonirhat, brown plant hopper (BPH), a pest locally known as current poka, has become a cause of concern for the aman farmers. Photo shows a farmer in Dinajpur Sadar upazila spraying insecticide in his affected field. PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKH

Pest attack on aman fields worries farmers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Farmers in the district are worried as attack on paddy fields by brown plant hopper (BPH), locally known as current poka, poses threat to their hope for a good yield of aman this season.

Agriculture officials claim the situation is now under control while the farmers said the use of pesticides has failed to check the pest attack.

Farmers said BPH started attacking aman plants a week ago and many aman paddy fields in the district have already been attacked. They are trying to save their aman plants from being attacked by BPH, using natural methods and spraying pesticides in the fields.

Nurul Islam Bappi, a farmer of Durakuti village in Sadar upazila, said his aman plants on two bighas of land have been attacked by BPH (current poka) and it is also attacking the plants on another two bighas of land.

"I have been spraying pesticides in the fields for the last three days, but to no effect," he said.

Abdul Jalil of Jumma Para village in the upazila said BPH attacked aman plants on his three bighas of land five days ago and wreaked havoc on 50 percent plants. "As per advice of local agriculture officer, I sprayed pesticides that yielded no positive results," he said.

Cars on the

FROM PAGE 16

space for pedestrians, how do we possibly walk?" a middle-aged man in T-shirt reacted.

"We have no option but to walk on the main road," he added.

A few weeks ago, tow trucks were parked on the major thoroughfares in the capital in a step to ease traffic congestion. But with time they have gone off the roads.

While contacted, drivers and few owners of illegally parked vehicles admitted to their wrongdoings.

But they had no answer when asked why they parked at a wrong place.

Law enforcers working on the roads, on the other hand, were not willing to talk to The Daily Star.

Mere witness to the illegal act, an Ansar member said he was not authorised to say anything regarding cars. "I can only manage rickshaws and vans."

"Talk with our higher officials," a traffic official on duty at Farmgate said, without giving his name, when asked about the absence of any action against such vehicles.

AL to strengthen

FROM PAGE 2

The letter mentioned the decision of party's last working committee meeting held on October 12 to conclude the pending councils as soon as possible and sought the grassroots leaders' assistance to execute the decision.

Yesterday, the air in their home was heavy. Family members stood in silence, sobbing.

"My husband used to pull a rickshaw-van. I do not know how to raise my three children," said Nasima Begum, widow of Sohior.

Mehera Khatun, widow of Kohir, said her husband was a farmer. "Oh Allah, please save us."

But it is not only Anwara's family that is broke. The entire Shidhuli village is in mourning. Of the 33 people killed in Monday's tragic accident, 12 are from this village -- the six brothers and six other villagers.

The accident happened at

Early winter vegetables bring more profit to Bogra growers

Vegetables are grown at all villages in Sherpur upazila as it has fertile lands where yields are much higher

MAMUN-UR-RASHID, Bogra

Farmers in Sherpur upazila of the district are cultivating early varieties of winter vegetables on their farmland as the crops comparatively give them more profit.

Officials of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) said more than 1450 hectares of land in the upazila have been brought under cultivation of early winter vegetables like cauliflower, cabbage, radish, carrot, turnip, tomato, leafy spinach and red spinach this year.

While visiting the same union said they prefer cultivating winter vegetables

Garidoho union of the upazila, farmer Abdul Aziz told this correspondent that they successfully produced early winter vegetables on their lands last year and made a good profit.

DAE officials said vegetables are grown at all villages in the upazila as it has fertile lands where yields are much higher. Traders from across the country purchase vegetables from here and transport them to Dhaka, Chittagong and other major cities, they added.

Farmer Ratan Kumar of Phulbari village under the same union said they prefer cultivating winter vegetables

to other crops to avoid the risk of loss. The correspondent found the farmers busy taking care of their vegetables fields.

Golam Hossain, Rafiqul Islam and Badsha Mia of the village said they have been cultivating early varieties of winter vegetables on their farmlands as their families depend on the income coming from selling the vegetables.

Winter vegetables are grown in 20 villages out of 30 villages of Garidoho union in the upazila. Of them, Kalsimati, Garidoho, Rameshwarpur, Shibpur, Daripara, Bangra, Bonga,

Chandijan, Damuya, Raninagar, Joynagar, Mohipur, Ramnagar and Kanupur villages are known as key vegetable growing areas.

Contacted, upazila Agriculture Officer Abdur Rahim said, winter vegetables are largely grown in almost all the villages in the upazila and farmers make a good profit by selling their produce.

The field-level DAE officials visit the villages regularly, talk to the growers and give them advice about use of fertiliser and pesticides in their vegetable fields.

Only sister left to mourn 6 deaths

FROM PAGE 1

57, Raihan, 55, Rabbel, 48, Sohrab, 45, Sohior, 42, and Kohir, 40. They died on the spot while their other brother Rahman is undergoing treatment at Patwari General Hospital in Baraigram upazila.

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Mehera Khatun, widow of Kohir, said her husband was a farmer. "Oh Allah, please save us."

But it is not only Anwara's family that is broke. The entire Shidhuli village is in mourning. Of the 33 people killed in Monday's tragic accident, 12 are from this village -- the six brothers and six other villagers.

The accident happened at

Rijur intersection on Bonpara-Hatikumrul highway when a Rajshahi-bound bus from Dhaka overtook a truck and collided head-on with a Gurudaspur-bound local bus coming from the opposite direction.

"We never saw so many bodies at a time. We cannot take this pain," said septuagenarian Aftab Ali Pramanik.

Only hours before the accident, Majedul Islam arrived home from the United Arab Emirates. He was waiting for his father's arrival. Instead, it was his father's body that people brought home.

"I wanted to eat my launch with my father. But I was not that lucky," he said.

According to the list prepared by the local administration, 31 of the victims are from several villages of Gurudaspur and Baraigram upazilas. The two others are from Feni and Kushtia.

ACCIDENT-PRONE

Though the number of accidents on the Bonpara-Hatikumrul highway has been on the rise, Monday's crash broke all the previous records, said highway police.

As many as 20 people were killed in 37 road mishaps in a stretch of 27 kilometres of the 60-km highway from November 2012 to September this year. Seven spots were identified as the most accident-prone spots, said Abdus Samad, assistant sub-inspector of Bonpara Highway Police Station.

The spots are Augran intersection, Rijur intersection, Razzaker Mor, Chalanbeel Mor, Noyabazar Point, Kasikata Point and Bypass intersection of the highway.

"There are huge bends in these intersections, but drivers often drive recklessly," said Samad.

Meanwhile, the team

headed by Additional District Magistrate Khan Mohammed Ali yesterday started inquiring the accident.

"We recorded statements of some witnesses and the injured. We also visited the spot. We will submit the report in three days," he said.

The inquiry team confirmed that Alam Sheikh, the driver of the local bus, died but could not ascertain the fate of the other driver.

Omor Faruk, officer-in-charge of Gurudaspur Police Station, said the bus Alam Sheikh was driving did not have the fitness certificate.

Also yesterday, Nobel Laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus expressed deep shock at the tragic deaths of so many people and offered his condolences to their bereaved families.

In a statement released by the Yunus Centre, he also called on the authorities concerned to ensure the treatment of the injured.

SC hearing on appeals

FROM PAGE 2

The International Crimes Tribunal-1 in its verdict on July 15 last year jailed Ghulam Azam for 90 years for masterminding crimes against humanity and genocide during the Liberation War in 1971.

The tribunal in the verdict said Ghulam Azam, now 92, deserved capital punishment but was given jail terms due to his old age and poor health.

Later on August 5 last year, Ghulam Azam filed an appeal with the SC seeking an overturn of his conviction and the jail sentence claiming the judgement was

not a verdict at all in the eye of law, as the charges brought against him had nothing related to offences or crimes against humanity and genocide.

On the other side, the government on August 12 last year submitted a separate appeal to the apex court seeking death penalty for Ghulam Azam and a ban on the anti-liberation political party Jamaat-e-Islami.

In the appeal, the government said Jamaat had committed crimes against humanity and atrocities during the war and the party had not changed its anti-liberation stance since independence.

The party has not even apologised for its criminal and anti-liberation activities, the appeal petition said, adding that Jamaat was termed a criminal organisation by one of the international crimes tribunals.

Two other appeals filed by former Jamaat's Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed and BNP leader Salauddin Quader Chowdhury are also in the pipeline for hearing.

Mojaheed and Salauddin have been convicted and sentenced for atrocities and crimes against humanity they committed in 1971.