



PHOTO: STAR

Amir Hossain in front of his newly devised petrol-run vehicle which looks like a train but serves the purpose of traditional palki.

Petrol-run train-like palki!

Amir's brilliant fusion of modernism and tradition

MAMUN-UR-RASHID, Bogra
A newly devised petrol-run vehicle, combining the artistic beauty of traditional palki with the look of an earlier type train, has become a talk of the town. Amir Hossain, 50, a famous mechanic of Bogra, has made the vehicle at his Rahim Engineering Workshop at Dharmapur in the town. "The vehicle with a room for the driver and two compartments for the passengers can carry 22 passengers. It will run at least 12 km with one litre of

petrol at 40-60 km per hour. It can be run in long routes too," said inventor Amir Hossain, who conducted a test-run of the vehicle a few days ago. It too Tk 5 lakh to make the 'auto-palki' in four months, he said. In earlier times, wooden palki, designed for one or two persons, was used mainly to carry newlywed brides and bridegrooms in rural areas. Besides, zamindars and rich people used it for movement from village to village. It took four to eight

people to carry a palki. Now palki has become a nearly extinct item, making the new generation virtually unknown of the tradition. "I was motivated to make the vehicle with modern amenities to revive the rural palki culture," said Amir. "The new vehicle reminds me of the coal-run rail engine when I visited Kolkata long ago. The inventor should be rewarded for it," said Sirajuddin Sheikh, 82, of Katnarpara area of Bogra town.

"I went to her father-in-law's house boarding a palki when she was married at the age of 15. The new vehicle, having some resemblance with palki, reminds me of those romantic days," said Khabirunnesa, 85, of Chokstrapur. The 'auto-palki' can be used for carrying brides and bridegrooms to and from the community centre, said inventor Amir. It can also be used in children's parks and amusement parks for entertainment of all classes of people, he added.

LOCALS CALL TO HALT ONSLAUGHT BY MEGHNA

Extend dyke, save historic places of Ulania

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barisal

The people of Ulania in Mehendiganj upazila under the district have demanded extension of the existing embankment by one kilometre to make it sustainable for saving the historic places from erosion by the Meghna River.

In 2013, the Water Development Board constructed an 875-metre-long embankment at a cost of Tk 22 crore to save the historic places of Ulania including the zamindar bari ((landlord's house), mosque, and Coronation High School, Mansur Ahamed, a senior citizen of the area, told this correspondent during the latter's visit a couple of days ago.

The initiative came as a relief to the locals as the Meghna had eroded more than two kilometres area during the last one decade, said Fakhru Islam Anu, a descendent of the Ulania zamindar family. "Mughal rulers sent Hanif Khan, a commander of their armed forces, to the area to repel the attack of pirates from Arakan. He became a permanent resident of Ulania, and his ancestors became wealthy



PHOTO: STAR

The historic Ulania mosque, built in 1861, was saved due to building of dyke to stop erosion by the Meghna.

zamindars," said poet Asad Chowdhury, who hails from the area. "They set up a bazaar and constructed many buildings including a fort named Sangram Kella in the area. A beautiful mosque built in 1861 and Coronation High School set up in 1912 are also their achievements," he said. The newly constructed

embankment has prevented the river erosion, but local people want its extension by one kilometre to make the embankment sustainable, Language Movement veteran Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury said during his recent visit to the area. Zahiruddin Ahmed, executive engineer of WDB in Barisal, admitted that construction of additional

one kilometre embankment is needed to make the already built 875-metre-long embankment sustainable for prevention of river erosion in the long run. A proposal for extension of the embankment has already been sent to Dhaka for consideration and approval by the higher authorities, he said.

Fertility at stake as kilns 'buy' topsoil from poor farmers

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Topsoil from over 300 bighas of farmland is used for brick manufacturing at 30 kilns in the district every year, much to the harm of soil fertility. Brick kiln owners often create pressure on the farmers to sell topsoil, farmers at Madonerchak village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila said during this correspondent's visit there a few days ago.

Removal of topsoil leads to low yield of crops from these lands, but the agriculture department is not doing anything to save the farmlands from the brick kilns, they said. Officials dare not take any action against the harmful practice as the brick kiln owners are influential people, said a few agriculture officials on condition of anonymity.

Topsoil from around 10 bighas of land is needed to make 12 lakh bricks and each of 30 brick kilns manufacture 10 to 30 lakh bricks every year, said brick field sources. "Labourers recruited by brick kiln owners collect topsoil from the nearby farmlands as the topsoil is very essential to manufacture best quality bricks," said Nabirul Islam, 45, a

brick manufacturing labourer at Madonerchak village. Sirajul Islam, 58, of Chaparhat village of Kaliganj upazila, said, he had to sell topsoil of his three bighas of farmlands to a local brick kiln owner this year, as his lands faced water crisis due to two feet digging in the neighbouring lands when its topsoil was sold a year ago. Many other farmlands in the village are losing the topsoil every year, he said. Sahidul Islam, owner of ASB Brick Kiln at Bamonerbasa village in Aditmari upazila, said, "We purchase topsoil from the farmland owners but never put any pressure on them for it."



PHOTO: STAR

Workers of a brick kiln at Modonerchak village in Lalmonirhat Sadar collecting topsoil from a farmland for making bricks.

The authorities concerned should take immediately step to stop the use of topsoil for brick manufacturing as it is badly affecting the agriculture and environment, said Mamunur Rashid, agriculture and environment coordinator of NGO RDRS Bangladesh. Safayet Hossain, deputy director of the Department of Agriculture Extension in Lalmonirhat, admitted that use of topsoil for brick manufacturing causes harm to agriculture in the district. "I will take necessary step with the help of district administration to save the topsoil of farmlands from the brick kiln owners," he said.



PHOTO: STAR

This flood control embankment was built along Ulania village in Mehendiganj upazila of Barisal to save the historic spots from the onslaught of the Meghna River.

5000 families suffer as dyke damaged by tide not repaired

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

Over 5,000 families of Sehakathi, Balaikathi and Badura villages in Patuakhali Sadar upazila are badly sufferings as over 500 feet flood control embankment cum road at Balaikathi village collapsed into the nearby Sehakathi River during tidal surges from July 7 to 15 this year.

Due to the situation, people of these villages have to cross additional two kilometres to communicate with Sadar upazila parishad and district headquarters. "Students of two high schools, two primary schools and a madrasa around

the area are suffering much as the embankment cum road collapsed into the river. Our suffering will increase if it is not repaired during this dry season," said Dulu Mridha, 55, of Badura village. Many villagers shifted their houses several times due to river erosion that affects the area every year, he said. Aman cultivation was affected this year as over 500 acres of cultivable land remained under saline water, said Moslem Howlader, a local farmer. "We raised the matter at the meeting of upazila development committee several times for taking step to repair the embankment soon. I also urged

Water Development Board (WDB) and Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) to repair the embankment and the road," said Altaf Hossain Shah Alam, chairman for Auliapur union parishad. Md Rafiqul Islam, sub-assistant engineer of Patuakhali Water Development Board, said, "We have sent an estimate of Tk 75 lakh to the higher authority to rebuild the embankment. The work will start if the fund becomes available." Abu Saleh Md Hanif, executive engineer of LGED, said they will rebuild the road after the embankment is repaired.



PHOTO: STAR

The flood control embankment at Balaikathi village of Patuakhali district, which collapsed during tidal surges about five months ago, still awaits repair.

ASSAULT ON STAFF BY YOUTHS

Transport workers block Bogra-Rangpur highway

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Transport workers halted vehicular movement on Bogra-Rangpur highway at Mayamoni Intersection under Gobindaganj municipality on Tuesday night, protesting assault on a fellow worker by some local youths.

Due to the roadblock hundreds of vehicles, including the long-route buses and trucks carrying perishable items remain stranded on the highway for over two hours from 6:00pm. Later, they withdrew their agitation programme and removed the barricades around 8:00pm, following the assurance from the police of arresting the culprits immediately.

Earlier, some unruly youths of Panthapara village beat up Rashed Mia, 25, a staff of a Dhaka-bound coach's ticket-counter over previous enmity, witnesses

UP godown sealed off

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

The Banliadangi upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) yesterday sealed off a warehouse of Duoshuo Union Parishad on charge of irregularities in distributing VGF rice among the poor.

In a recent complaint to the deputy commissioner filed by local people stated that the UP chairman was distributing VGF rice less than the allotted amount of rice, said UNO Sogir Hossain. The UNO went to the spot and found rice at the godown which was scheduled to be distributed last week.

said. Rashed is now undergoing treatment at Gobindaganj Upazila Health Complex in critical condition. Protesting the attack, local transport workers blocked the highway demanding immediate arrest and exemplary punishment of the attackers, said Aminul Islam, officer in-charge (Investigation) of Gobindaganj Police Station.