



PHOTO: STAR

Women engaged in making artistic handicrafts from bamboo at Purbo Basudevpur village in Phulbari upazila under Dinajpur district.

Dinajpur craft export industry in decline

KONGKON KARMAKER WITH ANDREW EAGLE

Dhirenranath Samanto, 64, of Purbo Basudevpur village in Dinajpur's Phulbari, is proud of his business success. In 1977 after completing training with the Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation he established a handicrafts concern. By 1982 he had achieved his first export, a bamboo tray to the United States. Subsequently Samanto exported traditional craft products to several countries including India, Pakistan, Japan and Germany.

Indeed he was not alone in his endeavours and rural villages in Phulbari became renowned for producing traditional baskets, rice winnowers, hand fans, tea trays, boxes and other items for domestic and decorative uses. Exporting traditional crafts became a mainstay of

the area. As is natural for many a small entrepreneur, Samanto believed he was building a future not only for himself but for future generations of his family and true to this goal, the business is now being run by his son Mohon. However, while overseas interest in traditional craft products is as robust as ever, the craft export industry is in decline. "Recently my son cancelled an export order to Germany," says Samanto glumly, "The buyer wanted the goods as early as possible and we couldn't manage it." The problem facing Samanto and Mohon, a difficulty shared across the industry is a lack of skilled artisans.

"When I started the business," says Samanto, "it was easy to find artisans locally but in recent years there became fewer skilled people available. Nowadays

the position is alarming." Many workers have left traditional crafts in order to pursue more lucrative professions. While the German organisation in this instance hoped to receive the products within 3 months, with existing manpower the order would take 7 months to produce. The Daily Star found that only 25 families in the village continue to work in craft manufacture, which many do as an expression of Bangladeshi culture and hobby, rather than as a chief income source.

Housewife Sarwati Rani who learnt artisan skills after her marriage is typical. "I work away at making something almost every day between household chores, so that at least I can help my husband a little." Still others take to crafts only seasonally, to meet the increased local demand for traditional items that pre-

cedes Pohela Boishakh and other festivals. Without the logistics available to arrange export sales themselves, such household producers are paradoxically facing the problem of not finding enough buyers to warrant craft making outside festival times.

"We are trying to make new things, more creative designs that might better attract buyers," says artisan Milon Samanta, thinking of the local market.

Despite his son cancelling export orders that have become too large to handle, Dhirenranath Samanto believes that across the country many do retain traditional craft manufacture skills. "If the government could help us to better access the international market with the smaller-scale production levels that are nowadays possible, then at the least our business could survive."



PHOTO: STAR

Diarrhoea patients crowd Gaibandha Sadar Hospital as the disease saw a sudden outbreak in the town yesterday.

SUDDEN OUTBREAK OF DIARRHOEA

Over 100 land in Gaibandha Sadar Hospital in 12 hrs

K M REZAUL HOQUE, Gaibandha

Over a hundred patients got admitted to Gaibandha Sadar Hospital with serious diarrhoeal problem in 12 hours as the disease saw a sudden outbreak in Gaibandha town and adjoining areas early yesterday.

The disease first appeared at two students' boarding houses at Thanapara and Khanka Sharif in the municipality, forcing the patients

to go to the hospital, said locals. Afterwards, patients from Paschimpara, College Road, Palashpara, Masterpara and Banierjan rushed to hospital with the same problem. Many patients had to stay in the corridor and veranda as the accommodation capacity of the hospital is too small.

Several patients complained that there was no physician in the emergency ward for the treatment of

patients. Meanwhile stock of cholera saline in the hospital finished and the patients' relatives had to buy it from local market that too fell short of the essential medicine, said relatives of patients. "To meet the crisis, we have asked medicine traders in Rangpur to urgently supply 300 packets of cholera saline. We also started announcement through loudspeakers, asking people not to drink

water without purifying," said Shamsul Alam, mayor of Gaibandha municipality.

"The epidemic might be due to contaminated drinking water. However, proper test will be needed to ascertain the reason," said Dr Azad Mandol, in-charge resident medical officer of Gaibandha Sadar Hospital.

Meanwhile, over 30 patients have already been released from the hospital and the situation is now under control, he said.

JAMUNA RECEDES FURTHER

Flood situation in Jamalpur, Bogra improves slightly

More relief needed to mitigate sufferings of the victims

STAR COUNTRY DESK

The Jamuna has receded further, causing slight improvement in the flood situations in Bogra and Jamalpur districts.

Our Bogra Correspondent reports: The flow of the Jamuna declined by 25 cm in the 24 hours till yesterday although the river was flowing 24 cm above the danger mark, said Water Development Board (WDB) sources.

Meanwhile, the Bangalee has increased by one cm, following the collapse of a flood control embankment in Gaibandha district early Tuesday.

It is flowing 50 cm above the danger mark.

Earlier, the two times flood inundated at least 150 villages of 25 unions of five upazilas of Bogra from late August to the first week of

this month and affected at least 1.5 lakh people of Jamalpur and Bangalee river basin areas.

The affected people, mostly staying under the open sky at high places including embankments, are suffering from crisis of food, drinking water and medicines.

Many of them are also in need of fodder for their domestic animals.

District Civil Surgeon Dr Ardhendu Deb said one medical team was set for each union of five affected upazilas and a team for each upazila is kept standby in the headquarters.

Water purification tables and other medicines have been distributed among the flood victims and there is no report of disease related deaths so far, he said.

The Department of Agriculture Extension

(DAE) sources said at least 14,737 hectares of land of aman, aus, lentils and vegetables in five upazilas of the district have been damaged by the flood.

The government has so far distributed 175 tonnes of rice, at Tk 9.65 lakh in five flood affected upazilas in the district, said Bogra Deputy Commissioner Md Ashraf Uddin.

Our Jamalpur Correspondent reports: Flood situation in the district further improved as the Jamuna declined by 22cm at Bahadurabad Ghat point in 24 hours till yesterday noon.

It was flowing 12 centimetres above the danger mark (19.50 metres) there, local WDB sources said.

Although the flood water continued receding for three days, 380 villages of 53 unions under seven

upazilas have remained under water and 2.80 lakh people of 52,678 families of the affected areas are still marooned and classes at 316 primary schools, 81 high schools and madrasas and four colleges in the district have remained suspended, said officials concerned.

Meanwhile, 18,645 hectares of croplands including 17,550 hectares of transplanted aman, 128 hectares of its seedbeds, 20 hectares of aus, and 943 hectares of vegetables remained submerged till yesterday, said Dr Rafiqul Islam, deputy director of the DAE.

The local administration has provided 335 tonnes of rice and Tk 7.67 lakh to the marooned families, said Anwar Hossain, additional deputy commissioner (Gen-

Two get life for murder

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Projoipur

A court here yesterday sentenced two people to life imprisonment for killing a man in 2007.

The convicts are Nasima Akter, 27, wife of Kabil Hawlader, and her brother-in-law Habil Hawlader of Betka village in Kawkhali upazila of the district.

Additional District Judge Nazim-Ud-Doulah also fined them Tk 20,000 each. In default, they are to suffer another one year in prison.

According to the prosecution, Kabil's wife Nasima had illicit relation with his brother Habil. As the duo decided to get married, they killed Kabil on July 12, 2007.

Later, a case was filed with Sadar Police Station in this connection.

After examining witnesses and evidence, the judge found Nasima and Habil guilty and pronounced the verdict.

BCL leader held for stalking schoolgirl

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) leader was arrested yesterday in Hakimpur upazila of the district for stalking a schoolgirl and beating up her brother for protesting the stalking, police said.

The arrestee is Mokaddes Ali, general secretary of Boaldar School and College's BCL unit in the upazila.

On Wednesday night, the victim's father filed a case with Hakimpur Police Station, accusing Mokaddes and his brother Babar Ali.

According to the case statements, the accused BCL leader used to tease a Class VIII student of Boaldar School and College on her way to and from the institution. Recently, the girl complained to her parents about the stalking as it was getting intolerable. A few days ago, Jahrul Islam, elder brother of the schoolgirl, had protested the stalking.

Angered by the protest, Mokaddes and Babar Ali caught Jahrul in front of the college and mercilessly beat him up. Locals rescued Jahrul and took him to Hakimpur Upazila Health Complex. Jahrul sustained severe head injury, police said.

Mokhlesur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Hakimpur Police Station, said they were trying to arrest Babar Ali.

100 roadside trees illegally felled in Lalmonirhat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Over a hundred trees beside different roads, especially Durakuti-Chaparhat road, have been felled 'illegally' in Chalbala union under Kaliganj upazila of the district for over a week.

The illegal tree felling is still going on but steps are yet to be taken against the culprits due to unknown reason, alleged locals.

Some unscrupulous officials of local union parishad, office of the upazila nirbahi officer and district council are allegedly involved in this connection, they said.

Some labourers, who are engaged in felling trees on

Durakuti-Chaparhat road at Chalbala village, said they were hired by one Rashedunnabi Mukul for felling the roadside trees.

Mukul said he got a bid for felling 121 roadside trees recently, they added.

Rashidul Islam, a resident of Chalbala village, said they dare not protest against felling of the roadside trees in fear of harassment as some local influential people are directly involved in this connection.

Contacted, Mukul declined to talk on the issue.

Mizanur Rahman, chairman of Chalbala Union Parishad, said 121 roadside trees were felled by the

bidder legally.

Shafiqul Islam, a staff of Lalmonirhat District Council, said no tender for felling roadside trees was called in the last five months.

However, Yunus Ali, acting head assistant of the District Council, said a bid for felling 121 roadside trees in the union was called four months back.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer Shahinur Alam said he was unaware about the incident as he recently joined his workplace.

Punitive action would be taken against those responsible for the offence after investigating the incident, said the UNO.

Prosecutors asked

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Yesterday was fixed for hearing a show cause notice the tribunal had issued upon Fakrul Islam, a defence counsel for convicted war criminal Salauddin Quader Chowdhury.

After the judges took seats around 11:00am, Mizanur Rahman, a counsel for Fakrul, sought two-month adjournment of the hearing. No one from/on behalf of the prosecution was present before the tribunal then. Terming the matter "undesirable and unacceptable", the court issued the notice and adjourned the case until November 2.

There are 19 prosecutors, including the chief prosecutor who is now on leave for treatment abroad, to deal with the war crimes cases, and the two tribunals on several occasions had rebuked the prosecutors for their absence or delay.

This is the first time the tribunal issued notice for absence of the prosecutors that exposed a lack of coordination in the Chief Prosecutor's Office, a prosecutor, seeking anonymity, told The Daily Star.

Contacted, Syed Haider Ali said prosecutor Zead Al Malum deals with Fakrul's case and he does not know

why Malum did not appear before the court yesterday.

Haider said his office informed prosecutor Tapos Kanti Baul, another prosecutor who usually appears before the court in the case, around 10:00am.

"I will try to know the reason from them [Malum and Tapos] about their absence and will give the explanation to the tribunal," said Haider Ali.

He, however, ruled out any lack of coordination in prosecution.

Zead Al Malum said the prosecution was not a party to Fakrul's case as the tribunal, on its own motion, had issued the show cause notice upon Fakrul.

Malum, however, said he and several other prosecutors, who had dealt with the case against Salauddin, regularly appeared before the tribunal in Fakrul's case since this case has emerged from Salauddin's case.

The matter was written in prosecution case diary but the man who was responsible for informing the prosecutor did not do so on time out of his "carelessness," he said, adding, "There was no other reason behind it."

Prosecutor Tapos Kanti Baul said no one from the acting chief prosecutor's office informed him about the case. "We came to know

about it [yesterday's hearing] following the order of the tribunal. Actually it was nothing but a clerical mistake," he added.

On January 14, 2013, the tribunal, in response to a petition filed by Fakrul, issued a show cause notice to Fakrul, asking him to explain why contempt of court proceeding should not be initiated against him "for interfering in the tribunal's proceedings".

Fakrul had filed the petition against the backdrop of an alleged Skype conversation between the tribunal's former chairman Justice Md Nizamul Huq and expatriate legal expert Ahmed Ziauddin.

In the petition, Fakrul, the then defence counsel for Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, asked the tribunal to clarify its independence beyond any doubt and state whether any of its members was privy to the alleged Skype conversation or have been in contact with Ziauddin. Fakrul, however, sought unconditional apology for his action later.

Fakrul has been in jail since November 2013 in connection with a case filed over the leakage of the draft verdict of Salauddin's case and Fakrul's counsels sought adjournment of the contempt case on several occasions, saying the matter should be

Bangladesh-US

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Political-Military Affairs (PM) Todd C Chapman. The US delegation will also have officials from the US Department of State, defence and Bureau of Political-Military Affairs.

Diplomatic sources said officials from both sides were expected to exchange ideas on multiple issues pertaining to bilateral security partnership such as identification of strategic priorities, deeper engagement on both military and

non-military security aspects, political-military issues including joint military exercises, training and security cooperation.

Dhaka and Washington currently have three structured forum for dialogue. They are: US-Bangladesh Dialogue on Security Issues, Bangladesh-US Partnership Dialogue and US-Bangladesh Trade and Investment Cooperation Forum Agreement (Ticfa).

The first security dialogue was held in Dhaka on

April 19, 2012, while the second in Washington in April, 2013. The third dialogue was held in Dhaka on April 22, 2014.

Meanwhile, a US delegation, led by Assistant US Trade Representative (USTR) Michael J Delaney, is scheduled to arrive here on September 19 to assess the progress made in the RMG sector in line with the US Action Plan announced after the Tazreen and Rana Plaza disasters.