



PHOTO: STAR

Members of a potter family at Palpara in Nilphamari Sadar upazila pass busy time making artistic idols as the items see high demand ahead of Pahela Baishakh, the first day of the Bangla new year.

NILPHAMARI Potters busy as Pahela Baishakh approaches

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Nilphamari's potters are passing busy days preparing for the upcoming Pahela Baishakh, the first day of the Bangla year. They are making fancy earthen items for the accompanying traditional fair in towns and villages in all the six upazilas of the district, and indeed across the country.

On a visit to potters' villages like Kukhapara Palpara in Sadar upazila and Chaora Palpara in Saidpur upazila, it was found that the members of the community are making various earthen items like toys, decoration pieces, statues of famous men and gods and goddesses, and animals like tigers, elephants, cows,

birds, fish, etc.

Dhirendra Nath Pal, 55, head of the community, locally called 'mohot,' in Khukhapara Palpara says, "We have no institutional training on making fancy goods but learn it naturally in the same way as we learn our mother tongue, from our elders."

The Baishakhi fair brings opportunity for the members of his community to make good profits as clay-made fancy items are much sought after at this time, and the fair may last for a month, he adds.

Podo Pal, 45, of the village says he has made 250 earthen animals of different kinds, 200 birds, 200 fish and 500 dolls. "I'm hoping to earn Tk 20,000 in the fair as four members of my

family have been working hard for the last three months making those items," he adds.

Uttom Pal, Bijoy Pal and Nimai Pal of the village explain that wholesalers from different parts of the district and surrounding areas come to their village to buy their products.

Sachin Pal, 60, of Chaora Palpara lamented that the demand for fancy earthen items is declining day by day as people are using plastic or steel items made in factories. "Our items are in demand only during the Baishakhi fair. We maintain our families for the rest of the year with the profit we make during the fair," he says.

This correspondent found that many members

of the pal community have left the profession and are working as farm workers in the village, or plying rickshaws, or doing other petty jobs in the big cities.

One of the major reasons behind this trend of giving up their ancestral profession is that, with the increase of population, the volume of land is shrinking, and hence clay earth, the main raw material of this cottage industry, has become scarce and is too expensive.

KM Arifuzzaman Arif, cultural officer of Nilphamari, said, "To save pottery from becoming extinct, the potters should be properly trained so that they can make more sustainable and varied products as pottery is an art that is thousands of years old."



PHOTO: STAR

This bridge on Muchir canal at Auliapur in Patuakhali Sadar upazila remains incomplete as the contractor left the work halfway three years ago. Consequently, a 12.50-kilometre road connecting Sadar and Galachipa upazilas under the district cannot be opened for vehicular movement.

Thousands suffer as bridge lies incomplete halfway

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

Thousands of people of Patuakhali Sadar and Galachipa upazilas are suffering as a 12.50-kilometre-long road, completed three years ago, cannot be opened for vehicular movement due to non-completion of a girder bridge for three years.

Patuakhali LGED (Local Government Engineering Department) constructed the road from

Patuakhali Sadar upazila to Badura Bazar under Galachipa upazila to ease road communication in the area.

But the road cannot be opened for traffic as a girder bridge on Muchir canal at Auliapur in Patuakhali Sadar upazila is still incomplete.

Construction firm Sumi Enterprise was given the work order to build the 30-metre-long bridge, but left the work halfway three years ago.

This correspondent tried to contact Nazma Rahman, the contractor, but she did not receive calls over cell phone.

Sources said the firm lost interest to complete the work due to price hike of construction materials.

Md Altaf Hossain alias Shah Alam Sharif, chairman of Auliapur union parishad, said the authorities should take immediate steps to complete the bridge to mitigate sufferings of several

thousand people of Patuakhali Sadar and Galachipa upazilas.

Abu Saleh Md Hanif, executive engineer of Patuakhali LGED, said, "We have already cancelled the work order of the bridge although 48 percent of it was completed. Re-tendering is under process to complete the bridge construction and we hope that the road will open by this year."

Storms kill one, damage 10,000 houses in 3 dists

STAR COUNTRY DESK

A woman was killed, 10 others were injured and over 10,000 houses damaged as nor'westers lashed Chuadanga, Bagerhat and Jhenidah districts on Tuesday.

An elderly woman was killed as a nor'wester hit several upazilas of Chuadanga in the evening, reports UNB.

Witnesses said Sabina, a resident of Majdah village in Alamdanga upazila, died on the spot as a wall of her house fell on her after being hit by the storm around 6:30pm.

Besides, several hundred houses were damaged and thousands of trees uprooted during the storm in different areas of the district.

Power supply to different areas got snapped as a number of electric poles were uprooted by the storm.

In Jhenidah, violent storms swept over Kaliganj, Kotchandpur and Moheshpur upazilas in the district on Tuesday evening, leaving around 10,000 houses damaged, reports our correspondent.

The storm also uprooted thousands of trees and at least 15 electricity poles and damaged vast tracts of croplands, said locals.

Besides, movement of vehicles on Dhaka-Khulna highway and Kaliganj-Kotchandpur road

remained suspended for six hours as trees were uprooted on the roads during the storm.

Similarly, train communication on Rajshahi-Khulna rout remained stopped for seven hours.

Deputy Commissioner Mahbub Alam Talukdar visited the affected areas.

Away in Bagerhat, at least 10 people were injured and a number of houses dam-

aged as a nor'wester swept through the district at night, reports UNB.

The violent storm, accompanied with hail-storm and thunderbolts, wreaked havoc throughout the district for 30 minutes from 8:00pm, said DC Jahangir Alam.

The storm uprooted a large number of trees and badly damaged huge paddy and other crops on vast

tracts of land in the district, he said.

In its aftermath, the entire district plunged into a blackout as more than 50 electric poles were uprooted by the storm.

A number of trees collapsed on the Bagerhat-Khulna and Dhaka-Mawa highways during the storm, creating road blockade which led to traffic congestion.



PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKH

Students of No 149 AB Banshbari Government Primary School in Morrelganj upazila under Bagerhat district attend classes under the open sky yesterday as a nor'wester on Tuesday night destroyed the schoolhouse.



Special squad to check stalking

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

A seven-member special squad of the Detective Branch of police has been formed in Manikganj to prevent eve-teasing and drug abuse.

The newly formed squad will patrol the roads and adjacent areas of the schools and colleges to check eve-teasing, said Manikganj Superintendent of Police (SP) Mahfuzur Rahman said at a press conference at his office yesterday noon. They will also conduct drives on information to catch drug-traders, the SP added.

Sub-Inspector Victor Banarjee and Sub-Inspector Jakaria will lead the seven-member special squad, he said, adding that they will be given training so that they can perform their duty properly.

Additional Superintendent of Police Jakir Hasan, Assistant Superintendent of Police (headquarters) Ajim-Ul-Ahsan, Assistant Superintendent of Police Manikganj Sadar Circle SA Newaji, Assistant Superintendent of Police Shivalaya Circle Harun-Ar-Rashid, Assistant Superintendent of Police of the District's Special Branch Md Shahjahan, and officers-in-charge of all police stations and Detective Branch were present at the press conference.

Bangla Bhai's aide held in Naogaon

UNB, Naogaon

Police arrested an accomplice of Siddiqui Islam alias Bangla Bhai, executed second-in-command of banned militant outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), from Barochhara village in Raninagar upazila of the district on Tuesday night.

The arrestee is Babu alias Muska, 50.

Officer-in-Charge Abdul Latif of Raninagar Police Station said law enforcers, acting on a tip-off, conducted a drive in the area and arrested Babu at around 10:00pm.

The arrestee was wanted in a murder case, the OC added.

DINAJPUR EDUCATION BOARD 40pc students drop out in 4 years from JSC to HSC

Financial problem, early marriage, drug addiction among reasons

KONGKON KARMAKER, Dinajpur

A staggering 69,348 students (39.90 percent) in eight northern districts of Rangpur division dropped out in last four years, shows the official statistics as Higher Secondary Certification (HSC) examinations under Dinajpur Education Board began on Sunday.

In 2012, one lakh 73 thousand and 786 students sat for the Junior School Certificate (JSC) examinations under the education board.

After four years, students belonging to the same batch are taking their HSC examinations, but the number of participants dropped to one lakh four thousand and 438, as per the data of Dinajpur Education Board.

In other words, 69,348 students dropped out -- 29,176 of them (34.59 percent) male and 40,142 (44.87 percent) female.

One lakh 18 thousand and 438 students appeared in their SSC examinations in 2014, showing that 55,348 students (31.84 percent) dropped out in two years after their JSC examinations.

Between SSC and HSC the dropout figure is 14,000 (11.82 percent).

In last two years, 2922 students dropped out in Dinajpur, 2026 students in Gaibandha, 1996 in Lalmonirhat, 1919 in Panchagarh, 1869 in Kurigram, 1812 in Thakurgaon, 944 in Rangpur, and 512 in Nilphamari district.

The causes of high drop-

out include financial problem, failing in examinations, underage marriage, and drug addiction, said Tofazzur Rahman, controller of examinations of Dinajpur Education Board.

"I appeared at the JSC examinations in 2012. But I discontinued study as my father died in a road accident and I had to shoulder the family responsibility," said Sudip Roy, 20, who was found working at a brickfield of Teghra village under Biral upazila of Dinajpur.

Moriam [not her real name], had outstanding results in her JSC and SSC examinations in 2012 and 2014, but she could not attend the HSC examinations this year as her parents married her off against her will.



PHOTO: STAR

A large number of students in Patuakhali town join human chains and processions yesterday demanding early steps for completion of Sheikh Russel Shishu Park in the area.