

Handmade *muri* in high demand during Ramadan

Exports promise bright economic prospects

SHYKH SERAJ
Production of puffed rice (*muri*) has traditionally been done by hand in rural areas of the country. It is produced on a huge commercial scale nowadays, and is a vital part of the economy.
Dear readers, I welcome you all to read my article dealing with economic impact of *muri*, especially in the holy month of Ramadan.

Dapdapia union make *muri* round the year. Their handmade *muri* is famous throughout the country. I went to farmer Babul Khan's home in Timirkathi. People work round the clock in shifts to produce quality *muri* here. The sound of the puffed rice is so silky, and sometimes it seems like a tune or a rhythm -- yes, it's like a musical composition. Although the weather was hot and the people working there were really busy, they were super hosts. They were so cordial and friendly to me. Before I left Babul's home, he gave me *muri-ghanachur*; the best I've ever tasted. Commercial production of *muri* has expanded quite greatly in the villages of Nalchhiti. A farmer named Bujruk Khan played an

immense role in the extension of quality *muri* production in the region. He lives in Timirkathi village. "I have been involved with traditional *muri* production for a long time and many people have changed their lives following my footsteps," Burjuk said. "We use a special kind of a rice called Nakhuchi to produce handmade *muri*," he added. Then, I went to Halim Hawlader's house in another village of Nalchhiti. "I'm doing pretty well. I don't lead a luxurious life, but I can easily meet my basic needs," said Halim. Like the ten ideal villages for producing *muri*, there are a couple of ideal markets for selling *muri*; one is Boithakata situated in Pirojpur. I went there to see how the quality *muri* gets sold.

Most of the *muri* sold here is made from the special local variety of rice, Nakhuchi. *Muri* produced across the country is now being exported, mainly to Abu Dhabi, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, England, Germany, Belgium, France and Singapore. There is great demand for the traditional *muri* among the Bangladeshi expatriates. Even people from other countries consume Bangladeshi *muri*. Dear readers, I request you wholeheartedly to become more conscious about consuming safe food. In this holy month, traders should also focus on selling good quality and pure *muri* to their customers. In the end, my heartfelt greetings to all of you for the holy month of Ramadan.



Organic *muri* (puffed rice) being prepared in the traditional method at a village in Jhalakathi.



Shykh Seraj is a Media and Agriculture Development Activist. He is an Ashoka Fellow and recipient of Ekushey Padak, FAO A.H. Boerma Award and many other prestigious accolades. At Channel i, he is Director and Head of News. He is also Director and Host of the popular agro-documentary, "Hridoye Mati O Manush".

Nowhere to play, children's park abandoned

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Children are deprived of a place to play as the railway children's park at the station area in Lalmonirhat town has been abandoned for many years, but no steps have been taken to renovate it. The seesaws, swings, slides and other playing equipment are unusable. It has become a place for anti-social activities. Locals said the children's park was used by the children every day eight years ago, but now it is abandoned due to lack of maintenance. "I used to spend a lot of

time in the park everyday with my two children some years ago," said Nazrul Islam, 45, a resident of Station Road in the town. "The park had a good environment for children to play in, but now it has turned into a safe area for anti-social people," he added. "Due to the bad condition of the park our two children cannot play outdoors, and they get bored watching TV at home. Children need mental and physical recreation in a fresh environment," said Noor Hossain, 48. Atikul Islam Milon, 18, a student of Lalmonirhat

Government College, said he used to go to the park to play. At that time the park was a very nice place. But his younger brother does not get this opportunity, he added. Habiba Akhter, 7, a Class II student of Railway Children's Park High School in the town, said they don't go to the children's park as all the equipment is damaged. "As I cannot go to the park, I pass my leisure time at home watching TV. Of course, I feel very bored," she added. Railway officials in Lalmonirhat station said the railway children's park was built beside the station

100 years ago. Children of the railway staff, and even from general people's families, used the park everyday. The park was maintained by the railway authorities, but now no money is allocated to maintain it, they added. Ariful Islam, divisional railway engineer in Lalmonirhat Railway Division, said, no funds are allocated to maintenance of the children's park, so it has been abandoned for years. He will write to the higher authorities concerned, seeking funds for the park to ensure the recovery of the children's facility, he said.



Playing equipment at railway children's park in Lalmonirhat town are damaged due to lack of maintenance.

Abducted schoolgirl rescued, 2 arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) rescued an abducted minor schoolgirl of the district from Narayanganj and arrested two people in this connection. The arrestees are Ashraf Islam, 25, and his accomplice Nazrul Islam, 28. The 12-year-old girl, a Class VII student of Mirzapur Moriom Girls' High School in Gopalpur upazila, was abducted from the school on August 10 last year, Mohammad Bellal Hossain, additional police superintendent of PBI in Tangail, said yesterday.

On September 20, the victim's father filed a case with Gopalpur Police Station, accusing the arrestees. After investigation, police pressed charge sheet against Ashraf Islam on January 27 this year. Ashraf then filed a *naraji* (no confidence) petition to a Tangail court against the charge sheet. The case was later shifted to Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) for fresh investigation. On secret information, the law enforcers raided Pagla upazila in Narayanganj district on Sunday and rescued the girl and arrested Ashraf. After quizzing Ashraf, police arrested another accused of the case Nazrul from Bil Palima village in Kalihati upazila in Tangail.



Five villages in Patuakhali's Mirzaganj upazila get flooded following collapse of Payra River's dyke at two points under the pressure of tidal water yesterday. Photo shows the submerged playground of Mirzaganj Darbar Sharif Government Primary School.

4 held on charge of killing 2 at Jessore filling station

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Police on Monday arrested four people on charge of killing two people at a filling station at Charabhita Bazar in Bagharpara upazila of Jessore district. The arrestees are employee of Abdul Bari Filling Station Sirajul Islam, a resident of Jessore Sadar upazila and his accomplices Iqbal of the upazila, Nayan of Bagharpara upazila and Nasir of Charabhita. Obaidur Rahman, 40, manager of the filling station, and one Apu Khan, 25,

a student of Jessore MM College, were found murdered at the filling station on Monday morning. Sirajul went into hiding soon after the incident, Assistant Superintendent of Police Billal Hossain said, adding that a case was filed in connection with the incident. According to Sirajul's confessional statement, he had a feud with manager of the filling station Obaidur over sharing of money earned from selling oil. Sirajul said he used to steal oil everyday. At the end

of the day the manager took 80 percent of the money that came from sale of the stolen oil. Sirajul was agitated as he got only 20 percent. Sirajul told police that Iqbal, Nayan and Nasir used to take drugs inside the filling station and manager Obaidur also objected to it, the ASP said. Over the feud, Sirajul, Iqbal, Nasir and Nayan together killed Obaidur around 1:00pm on June 5. As college boy Apu, who was sleeping beside Obaidur, awoke, they also killed him.

NILPHAMARI

Short supply of subsidised Ramadan staples

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Dealers of Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) in Nilphamari demanded the allocation of adequate supplies of consumer goods during the month of Ramadan as low to middle-income group consumers come to their selling centres in large numbers because the quality of commodities is high while the rates are more reasonable than in the open markets. TCB started selling essential commodities like sugar, soyabean oil, chickpea and mushur pulses at different spots in the district town from June 1. Per day allotment against a dealer is only 400 kg sugar, 900-litre soyabean oil, 500 kg chickpea and 200 kg mushur pulses, which is inadequate to meet demand. The government rate is Tk 48 for a kg of sugar, Tk 80 for soyabean oil, Tk 70 for chick peas, and Tk 90 for mushur pulses, while they are being sold in the open market at Tk 60, Tk 90, Tk 85 and Tk 130, respectively. Customers are favouring TCB goods due to quality and prices which, unlike in previous years, are better than in the market. Rahmatullah Ruhul, president of the TCB dealers' association in Nilphamari, told this correspondent that they were supposed to sell goods from trucks at differing points from 9:00am to 4:00pm, but due to the scanty supply and high demand, the goods are sold out within 2-3 hours, forcing many customers to return home empty handed. A buyer can purchase a maximum of 4 kg sugar, 5 litres soybean oil, 5 kg chickpea and 2 kg mushur pulses. "On some days, we face unwanted situations, sometimes leading to scuffles, as customers wrongly think that we are intentionally not



People queue up to buy essential commodities supplied by the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) at fair prices in Gasbari area of Nilphamari town yesterday, the first day of Ramadan.

selling the goods to them though we simply don't have enough stock," he added. On a visit to the bazaar selling centre at 12:30pm yesterday, it was found that the stock of the commodities was all sold out, but people were still standing around arguing with the TCB staff. Abdur Hafiz, a rickshaw puller, said he had been standing in the queue for a long time to buy chickpeas and soyabean oil, but the dealer suddenly declared that the day's stock was finished and those who wanted to buy goods should return on the following day. Another customer, day labourer Dhoroni Roy, alleged that the local shopkeepers send their employees as customers to buy the items from the TCB centres, and then sell them at market prices. Contacted, Miskatul

Many customers expressed dissatisfaction that TCB was not supplying dates and onions, which are important during Ramadan. TCB dealer Sottyen Roy said, "We raised the issue at the market monitoring committee meeting this week, requesting the district administration to make arrangements for higher allotments of TCB goods. They assured us of taking measures." Ershadul Habib, ADC general of the district collectorate, also in charge of monitoring the markets, said the district administration had drawn the attention of the higher authorities of the ministry concerned to consider the matter. They also advised local dealers to handle the situation until their demand was met, he added.

Alam, in-charge of TCB in Rangpur region, said they had sufficient stock of goods in their godowns and the dealers could get their allotment without hindrance twice a week. Regarding the demand of the Nilphamari dealers, he said that the dealers of other districts are demanding the same, and it was a matter to be decided by the commerce ministry.

Happy 2nd Birthday to SANAYA MAHIYYAT FIHA
Grow up your own talent
Your Grandpa & Grandma