

Hill people ready to welcome Boisabi

SAJJOY KUMAR BARUA, *Bandarban*

The New Year comes again for the people of the ethnic communities living in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Now is the time only for enjoyment, bidding farewell to the old and sad songs and welcoming the very lucid tunes of optimism.

'Boisabi' is a traditional and cultural festival of the hill people, who live with their lively ethnicity and heritage of the country.

The very word is the amalgamation into a Bangla acronym of the words for the festival namely Boishu of the Tripuras, Sangrai of the Marmas, Sankran of the Mros, Sangran of the Kyangs, Sankrai of the Khumis, Bizu of the Chakmas and Bishu of the Tanchangyas.

The indigenous people are now busy with shopping for traditional clothes and food, cleaning their houses, and inviting relatives and friends from the hills and elsewhere to their largest festival of the year.

On the occasion, Khudra Nrigoshthi Sangskritik Institute in Bandarban has organised a four-day programme at the district headquarters that will begin at 7:00am today with the marching of Mongol Shobhajatra and holding of an art competition and elderly puja.

On the New Year's day a religious procession will march through the town with the statue of Lord Buddha. After that the statue will be taken to the Sangu river, locally known as Shankha, to arrange bath of the statue.

Pitha Utsab (preparing traditional cakes) will take place at night at Madhyam Para and Ujanipara in the town.

On the last two days, a cultural programme featuring 'Maitree Pani Barshan' or showering each other with water will be held at Puraton Razar Math at 4:00pm.

At the function, indigenous young women and men will sprinkle each other with water that symbolises cleansing themselves of the weariness of the past year.

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Indigenous people offer prayers on the Chengi river in Khagrachhari for a beautiful life. The Chakmas yesterday observed Fulbiju, the first day of their three-day New Year celebrations.

PHOTO: ANVIL CHAKMA

Nababarsha graffiti defaced in port city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Ctg*

Days before the Pahela Baishakh celebrations, unknown criminals smeared graffiti painted on roadside walls near Chittagong University's Institute of Fine Arts with burnt lubricants around Tuesday midnight.

The incident has frustrated the teachers and students of the institute on Badsha Mia Road in Chittagong city. They have demanded immediate arrest of the culprits.

The institute, which is about 22 kilometres away from the main university campus, has been the hub of Pahela Baishakh celebrations in the port city for years.

Witnesses said it happened when most of the students had gone home doing daylong preparatory work ahead of the celebrations. The criminals came on two to three motorbikes.

"The gate-keeper [of the institute] told us some people came in motorbikes, spread oil over the graffiti, depicting the Bangla folk culture, painted on around 20 feet of wall and fled towards the Chatterswari Road," said Abir, a master's student at the institute.

"They also hurled abusive language... SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

Relieved Huji kingpin Mufti Hannan hanged

Blast victims react after execution of Hannan, 2 others

STAR REPORT

Thirteen years have passed since the terror attack at Hazrat Shahjalal's mazar in Sylhet, but the memory of the horror never left the victims.

Rahmat Ali, a local journalist who survived the attack, still bears the splinter wounds.

But there was something that hurt him more than his injuries -- the implementation of the verdict was taking "forever" and the main culprits were out of the jail.

"But the execution of the verdict [last night] has healed that wound now," he said.

The May 21, 2004, attack left three people dead and over 70 injured.

On that day, Rahmat was with British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury at the shrine for news. As Anwar was a Bangladeshi-born British citizen, his appointment as a high commissioner caught many people's attention in Sylhet Division, Anwar's birthplace.

Many people joined the crowd only to see him. After the Juma prayers, as soon as Anwar reached near the main gate, an explosion turned the holy place into a site of horror.

Rahmat was admitted to the hospital for one month after the incident and needs regular check-ups even today. Still carrying splinters in his body, Rahmat took treatment at a Kolkata Hospital two months back.

Another local journalist Muhibur Rahman still has three splinters in his right leg and hand.

Expressing satisfaction over the execution of Mufti Hannan and two others, he said the verdict established

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This is the first execution of a high-profile militant like Hannan in a decade.

Earlier on March 29, 2007, six top militant leaders, including Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh supremo Abdur Rahman and his deputy Bangla Bhai, were executed for killing two Jhalakathi judges.

On December 23, 2008, a Sylhet court sentenced Hannan and his two accomplices to death. The High Court upheld the lower court verdict on December 7 last year.

Later, the Supreme Court confirmed the death penalty for the three.

In a span of five years from 1999, Huji militants led by Hannan carried out terror attacks with a mission to introduce Sharia law and annihilate what they said was "the enemy of Islam."

In the first such attack, they killed 10 people at a cultural function of Udichi in Jessore on March 6, 1999.

Under Hannan's leadership, Huji attempted to assassinate Awami League President Sheikh Hasina, the then leader of the opposition in parliament, on August 21, 2004 by carrying out a grenade attack on an AL rally on Bangabandhu Avenue in the capital. Twenty-four party leaders and activists were killed in the attack.

LAST MOMENTS
The jail authorities started preparations for executing the three after the president rejected their mercy petitions on Sunday.

Yesterday evening, the authorities beefed up security in and around the Kashimpur jail. Nearby roads were made off limits to pedestrians and vehicles for around eight hours from 3:30pm. Business establishments within 500 yards of the prison were asked to keep their shutters down.

Two ambulances entered the jail around 6:30pm.

Following execution, Hannan's body was taken to his village home in



Delwar



Sharif

Gopalganj's Kotalipara and Sharif's body to Chandpur's Masdi village for burial.

Earlier, Hannan's wife, two daughters and three brothers met him at the jail. His mother couldn't make it to the prison due to illness.

His elder brother Aliuzzaman told The Daily Star that Hannan called him on his mobile phone from the jail around 8:30pm, and talked to their mother for a minute.

Sharif's family members also went to the prison to meet him in the morning. At Sylhet Central Jail, Delwar's family members met him around 2:00pm.

Guarded by three police vans, an ambulance carrying Delwar's body left the prison at 10:40pm for his village home in Moulvibazar's Konagoan, Senior Jail Superintendent Sagir Miah told reporters.

As per the jail code, the jail authorities can execute death sentence between 21 and 28 days from the date of issuance of death warrants.

The Sylhet Divisional Speedy Trial Tribunal issued death warrants for the three on March 22.

POLITICAL BLESSING
Hannan and his men were used as mercenaries to carry out the August 21 grenade attack, according to the charge sheet of the case.

They agreed to execute the plot to assassinate Hasina and other top AL

allowed to move freely in the country.

Proceedings in some cases, including Ramna Batamul blast case against him, were stalled as the BNP government was reluctant to allow the case to come to an end.

But after the banned Islamist outfit JMB carried out countrywide serial bomb blasts on August 17, 2005, the government came under pressure to crack down on militants.

Hannan was finally arrested in early October 2005.

A few days after his capture, the BNP-led government also banned Huji, branding it as a "self-proclaimed terrorist organisation".

In statements to the press and in a court a few days after his arrest, an indignant Hannan claimed that law enforcers were not supposed to arrest him since some influential ministers of the BNP-led government had assured him that he would be exempted from the August 21 grenade attack case.

AFGHAN WAR VETERAN

Hannan, who faced at least 26 cases, including the grenade attack case, was born in 1963 at Hiran village in Gopalganj's Kotalipara upazila.

In his statement before a court, the militant leader said he studied at a local primary school up to class five and then got admitted to a madrasa. In 1979, he became a Hafiz e Quran.

Later, he went to India and studied at a Deoband madrasa. He then got admitted to the Islamic Studies Department at Aligarh University, and obtained Master's degree in 1987.

After a few months, he returned home. Later, he went to Pakistan. In 1988, he got enrolled at Jamiya Yusuf Bin Nuriya Madrasa in Karachi.

During a Ramadan break at the madrasa in 1990, he left Pakistan for Afghanistan to fight the Afghan war. He received a 15-day training there. As fighting broke out at Khost in Afghanistan's Paktia province, he was called to join the fight.

Hannan was injured in the fight. He was later admitted to Kuwait al-Helal Hospital in Pakistan's Peshawar. Other Bangladeshis who also took part in the fighting included Moulana Obaidullah from Comilla, Hassan and Saluddin from Chittagong, and Abu Musa from Kushtia.

After getting treated at the hospital for 10 months, he returned to the Karachi madrasa to finish his studies.

Upon completion of studies, he returned home in 1993 and started leading a group of Afghan war returnees.

Moulana Abdur Rahman Faruki from Jessore's Manirampur, along with other Bangladeshi Mujahids, founded Huji in Bangladesh in 1989 while they were still fighting in Afghanistan. Later, Faruki died trying to defuse a mine in Khost.

After the Afghan War ended in 1992, many Bangladeshis Mujahids returned home and announced the launch of Huji at a press conference in Dhaka on April 30, 1992. Moulana Abdus Salam was made its chief. Salam, an accused in the August 21 grenade attack case, is now in jail.

ORIGIN OF HUJI
The origin of Huji can be traced back to the Soviet-Afghan war.

Qari Saifullah Akhtar, one of the Pakistani Mujahideen fighting the Afghan War, founded Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami (Huji) sometime in 1984. Saifullah is considered one of the initiators of jihad in Pakistan.

Huji became a Pakistan-based notorious terrorist group and kept carrying out subversive activities in that country.

It was one of the two major militant outfits that were behind most of the terror attacks in Pakistan, mainly between 2002 and 2006. These attacks included assassination attempts on the then president Parvez Musharraf and the then prime minister Shaukat Aziz.

[Our Gazipur and Sylhet correspondents contributed to this report]

Relief for critical heart patients

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Once the MRP is fixed, prices of stents, a spring-like metal device used to prop open blocked arteries, would be the same in all hospitals, public and private.

Currently, patients have to pay between Tk 80,000 and Tk 1.5 lakh for a single drug-eluting stent at a public hospital though some private hospitals charge almost double, according to cardiologists. They blame unscrupulous middlemen and doctors getting commissions.

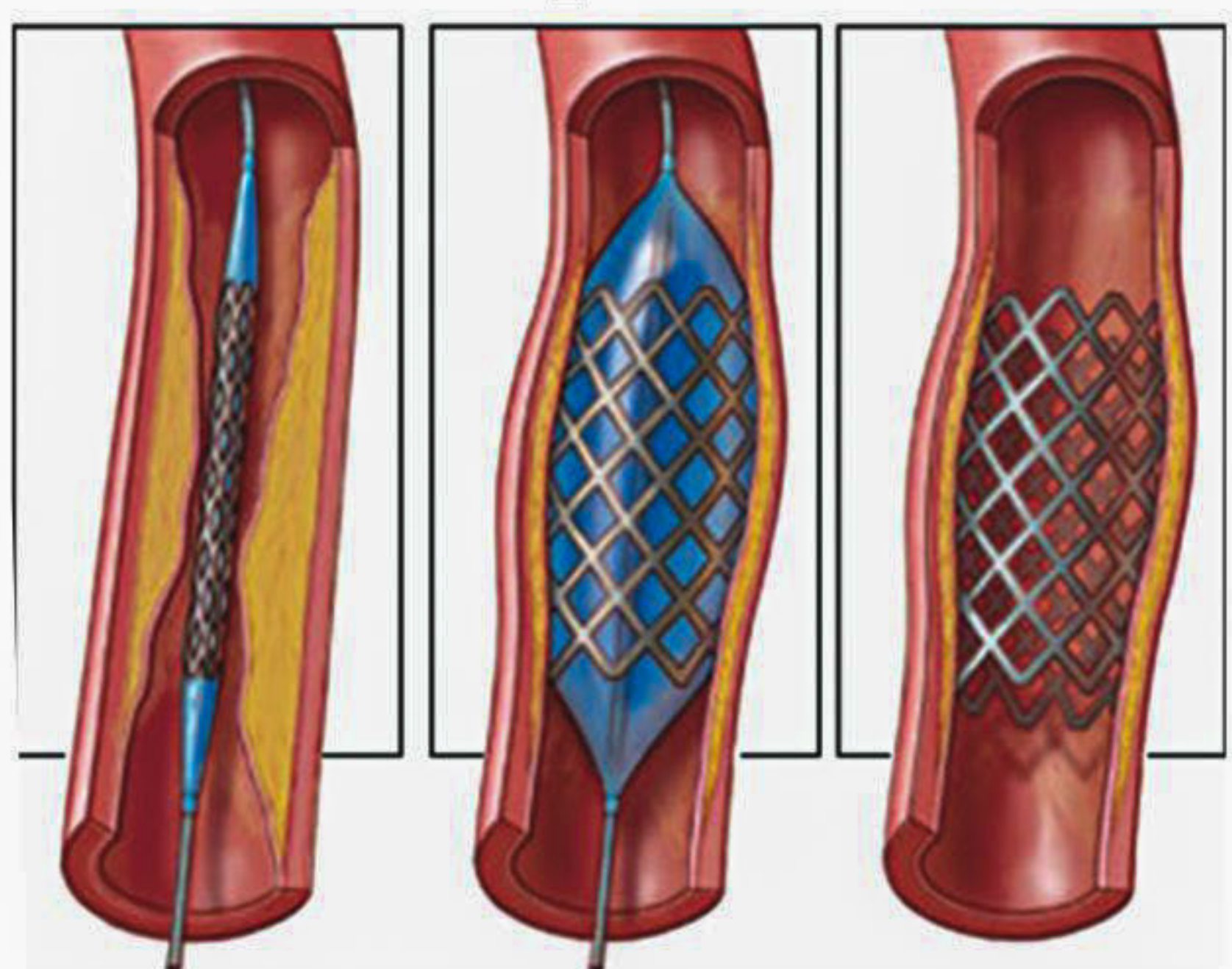
If the rate is fixed, they hoped the price would come down to Tk 60,000 to Tk 1.3 lakh. A bare-metal stent, which now costs Tk 40,000 to Tk 50,000 at National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases, will come down to Tk 30,000 to Tk 40,000, they said.

Directorate General of Drug Administration (DGDA) under the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare at a meeting with all stakeholders on Tuesday decided that the Maximum Retail Price (MRP) along with the date of expiry and registration number have to be mentioned in each pack of stents.

The MRP would be fixed by adding a certain amount with the import cost of each stent.

A total of 22 companies and 47 stents are registered with the DGDA, its Director General Maj Gen Mustafizur Rahman told The Daily Star, adding that as per the terms and condition of the registration, a label on the packs containing price, date of expiry and registration number was mandatory.

But hardly one or two follow the rules, he said.



hospital would have to place a list of stent prices at a prominent place so that patients and their families could see and decide.

The MRP would ask the ministry if the prices of stents could be controlled like it is done in India.

India in February slashed stent prices and fixed maximum Rs 30,000. As the stent price is less than half in India than in Bangladesh, many patients have been going there.

The Indian High Commission making visa procedures easy for medical tourists helped many Bangladeshi heart patients.

Experts fear that if the situation did not change, heart patients would

continue to opt for India.

The DGDA director told The Daily Star, "We have decided that MRP will have to be mentioned on the stent packets with immediate effect."

"We will issue letters to hospitals asking them not to buy any unregistered product is found in any hospital, we will file law suit against that hospital."

He said it was the ministry which is to control the price of stents.

"Even though we can't control the price, we want to come to a common ground regarding the stent price considering the lower income and lower-middle income people," he said. Malpractices, like different hospitals

charging different prices for stents and doctors taking commissions came up for discussion during Tuesday's meeting at the DGDA, the director said.

A national committee has been formed to find anomalies in this sector, he added.

Cardiologists hailed the move for fixing the prices of stents and said it would greatly help the poor patients.

They said if the rates were fixed, prices would come down significantly as the patients would know the price of the stent and doctors and hospitals would not be able to charge extra.

Prof Afzalur Rahman, director of National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases and president of Bangladesh Society of Cardiovascular Intervention, also said poor people would be greatly benefited.

"With this decision [labelling MRP] I think the price of a stent will become even lower than the price the NICVD is charging right now," he told The Daily Star.

President of Bangladesh Cardiac Society Prof AKM Mohibullah said there was no control over the pricing of the stents as a result patients had to suffer a lot.

Prof SM Mustafa Zaman of BSMMU Cardiology Department said, "With this decision, I hope people will prefer to implant stent in the country."

Representatives from the ministry, Prime Minister's Office, administrators of public and private hospitals, top cardiologists, stent importers, and Anti Corruption Commission, among others, were present at the meeting held at the DGDA on Tuesday.

Caught red handed!

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preparing answers to the questions they "somehow managed to get from the centre".

He further said he had informed the matter to the education ministry and the deputy commissioner of Dhaka and decided to conduct a drive in the area. As planned, officials of the ministry and the education board, the mobile court and members of police were present there since morning.

"Minutes before the beginning of the exam, we caught Sifat and Mehedi red-handed while they were preparing the answers," Adaitya said.

Asked how the arrestees got the questions, he said, "It is still not clear how they got the questions." He, however, said they did not get the time needed for detailed interrogation as they were instantly jailed.

"The senior officials present there decided not to file a regular case and they were punished instantly," he added.

Contacted, Prof Dr Swapan Kumar Das, principal of CODA, told The Daily Star that Sifat Jasmine was the teacher of the institution's hostel unit who went there to facilitate the hostel students' entrance to the exam centre.

Defending Sifat, he said, "As far as I know some students were asking her questions and she might be trying to answer them. She was arrested right at that moment."

"She might not know if the questions were leaked out or not," the principal argued.

However, the college authorities

had suspended the teacher and formed an investigation committee, he added.

In Patuakhali, two teachers -- Khalilur Rahman, hall superintendent and lecturer of accounting at Akkel Ali College, and Shafiqul Islam, lecturer of computer science at Haji Mokhter Ali Mridha College, were held while preparing the answers around 9:30am, Khondaker Mostafizur Rahman, OC of Patuakhali police, confirmed.

Police sources said both the teachers were preparing answer sheets for the examinees of "accounting science and applied policies" paper after taking photo of the question from the centre. They were preparing the answers at a nearby house, our correspondent reports.

A mobile court led by executive magistrate Anu Das jailed them for two years each. The mobile court also fined Shafiqul Islam Tk 10,000, the OC added.

The HSC and its equivalent examinations began across the country on April 2 and some 11.83 lakh examinees from 8,864 institutions under 10 education boards have been taking part in the exams.

Referring to some incidents of alleged question leakage in SSC and equivalent examinations, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid on several occasions put the blame on a section of teachers.

"We have made all-out arrangements to stop the leakage, but where would we go if a section of our teachers leak it out?" the minister said.