



Urun (wooden container used for husking) on sale at Kanthalbari Bazar in Kurigram Sadar upazila. Inset, craftsman Habibullah Mia uses an axe to carve out urun from a rough piece of wood at his house in Kanthalbari union under the upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

# The return of manual husking

Kurigram housewives favour physical exercise and good health

ABDUL WAHED with ANDREW EAGLE

Early of a morning or into the evening, it used to be that the pounding, grinding sound of the urun-gayne, as it is called in Kurigram, was as common to the village as native chickens scratching about the yard. The urun, a wooden container commonly carved from jackfruit or mango wood, together with the five-and-a-half-foot attendant pole, the gayne, made from sonalu, panial or shal timber, were mainly used by women to de-husk rice grain. For the past few decades however, thanks to introduction of mechanised huskers the sound of the urun-gayne has fallen silent. But now the simple household tool is making an unexpected comeback. Many housewives are convinced traditional husking methods offer quality results, while the exercise involved brings health benefits.

"Even though we husk our rice at the mill, sometimes I still grind spice or husk some rice grain at home," says Selina Parvin, 33, from Kaley village in Kurigram sadar upazila. "I like using urun-gayne. It makes me sweat. When I finish I feel relaxed and sleep well at night."

"I use urun-gayne for spice grinding and pounding raw rice," says Shirina Khanam, 39, from Muktarum village in Sadar upazila. "I think in any household an urun-gayne set is essential. It requires physical exercise that is much needed for my health."

Kashem Ali, 53, from Shibrum village in Kanthalbari union is a craftsman who makes them.

"They are popular items," he says. "I sell about fifty uruns and fifteen gaynes to a value of around Tk 30,000 per month. Women use them to de-husk rice, grind chilli, turmeric and other spices conveniently, and the exercise helps control diabetes." He notes that it's becoming more difficult to source good wood for the urun these days.

Next to Kashem in the marketplace is agriculture officer Abdul Mottalib Sarkar, 56. He's looking to buy an urun. "Some of my family members have diabetes," he says. "They walk every day but my wife doesn't like to walk far from our home. She wants an urun-gayne set for exercise; she says rice husked in the traditional way is full of nutrients."

Another urun purchaser, Ismail Hossain, 50,

from Muktarum village in Belgachha union echoes Abdul's sentiments. "Using an urun-gayne set is useful for controlling diabetes and hypertension," he says.

Urun come in four sizes at the bazar, designed to hold from two to five kilograms of grain at a time. Prices range from Tk 300 for the smallest size to Tk 1,000 for the largest, more than double that if quality wood is used. "I've been making urun-gayne for 56 years," says Habibullah Mia, 65, from Shibrum-2 village in Kanthalbari. "I inherited this work from my father." Despite renewed interest in the traditional husking implements, Habibullah says the number of artisans making urun-gayne in Kurigram is decreasing. "The main issue is locating good timber," he says.

"There aren't enough mature jackfruit trees available."

Kurigram Civil Surgeon Dr Aminul Islam agrees that urun-gayne offer a substitute for other exercise in many households. "But the urun-gayne doesn't exercise the legs," he warns.

"Walking and swimming are the best exercise for controlling diabetes."

## Man arrested for raping RMG worker

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

Police arrested a man from Mawa in Louhajang upazila on Wednesday on charge of raping a female garment worker.

The arrestee is Rajib, said Ansiur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Louhajang Police Station.

The victim started for Dhaka from her in-law's house in Barisal on Sunday. She reached Kathalbari Ghat at midnight to go to Shimulia Ghat by a ferry.

As the ferry was delaying the garment worker and some other passengers left it, boarded a speedboat and crossed the Padma. When the speedboat reached Shimulia ghat, other passengers paid their fare and went down. But the speed boat driver Rajib and Mithu Shikder did not let her go saying they did not have change for Tk 500 note. The duo later raped her.

## LAND ACQUISITION IN MYMENSINGH

# Fresh list in view of 'quake risk'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

The first list of acquired land involving Sadar upazila's China Mor area was changed not to save the land of some 'secretaries' but because of earthquake risk and traffic congestion in the area.

Divisional Commissioner GM Saleh Uddin said this at a views exchange meeting at his office on Wednesday.

The fresh list was prepared on the basis of technical reports for the new city, the divisional commissioner added. A decision was taken in the meeting to survey the listed area again to find ways to lessen the loss of thousands of char people.

The administration first prepared a list of 1,220 acres of land for divisional development but the list was later cancelled and new list of 4,366 acres was released, locals said.

Protesting the 'unfair' and 'motivated' land acquisition, thousands of char people of six villages under Sadar upazila have been continuing their movement for nine months under the banner of Basatbhita Rokhha Committee.

In his written statement, the committee's convener Prof Syed Mosharrif Hossain alleged that the government was not informed about the sufferings of char people.

The char people said the administration will be held responsible for any untoward incident if it uses force against them.

The committee leaders also urged the administration to free their century old homesteads from acquisition list.

Additional Divisional Commissioner Mozammel Haque, Deputy Commissioner of Mymensingh Khalilur Rahman, Zila Parishad Chairman Prof Yusuf Khan Pathan, Mymensingh Nagorik Andolon President Advocate Anisur Rahman Khan were present at the meeting.

# Unfit buses get ready to carry homebound people

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr every year, thousands of homebound passengers face a bitter experience in the bus terminals as the number of buses plying on the roads and highways are usually too inadequate to meet the demand.

Usually, people living and working in the capital and other major cities in the country go to their village homes at the fag end of the holy month of Ramadan to celebrate Eid with their near and dear ones.

Considering the huge demand for additional passenger carriers, owners of the unfit vehicles repairs their buses to give them a new look so that they can carry a huge number of homebound passengers.

"In the fag end of Ramadan every year, bus owners take their vehicles to different workshops for renovating so that they can earn some extra bucks as homebound people are out in the street to reach their destination at any cost, sometime by paying double or three times the actual fare," said Abdul Baten, a workshop owner in Nilphamari town.

"About seventy percent passenger buses plying on different roads and highways in the district do not have fitness certificate but carry thousands of homebound passengers, which often causes fatal accidents every year," said Tajul Islam, vehicle inspector in Nilphamari.

While visiting different vehicle repair workshops in Nilphamari Sadar and Saidpur upazilas this correspondent found workers are busy all day and night to make unfit buses fit.

Many were seen repairing cracks, some are replacing broken windows, while a few are sewing seats or painting the body of the old vehicles.

Mrinal Roy, convener of Nirapod Sarak Chai Andolon's Nilphamari unit, said launching frequent mobile court drives against such unfit vehicles can improve the situation.

Nilphamari Traffic Inspector Nahid Parvez said they regularly conduct drives against the old and unfit vehicles.

Nahid said non-cooperation by a section of motor owners' association members hinders our efforts.

## BSF returns bodies of 2 teenagers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) returned the bodies of two teenagers through a flag meeting with Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) at Khoshalpur frontier in Moheshpur upazila on Wednesday night.

The deceased were Sobel Rana, 14, and Harun-or-Rashid, 13, of the upazila.

BSF opened fire on the two when they entered the border area to bring the cattle on Tuesday morning, said Ahmed Kabir, officer-in-charge of Moheshpur Police Station.

Later, BSF men dragged the bodies and conducted post mortem at Krishnanagar Hospital.

## LANDSLIDE IN BARLEKHA

# Thousands suffer as road communication snapped

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

Around 10 thousand people from several area passing hard days as their movement is badly hampered following earth collapse at some 60 places on Chhotolekha Bazar-Bobartola road and Uttar Dimai-Artoki road in Barlekha upazila under the district early Sunday.

The affected areas of Gagantila, Madhya Gandhai, Dakkhin Gandhai, Pashchim Gandhai, Madhya Tepucherra, Islampur, Saitghori, Koicherra, Bobartol and Gandai punjee villages are kilometres away from the Barlekha upazila headquarters.

The roads running through the hills are basically meant for walk. However, people in the backward area use Chander Gari, a locally assembled motorised three-wheeler, for movement and carrying of goods.

As no vehicles can ply the two roads due to the land collapse, local people have to walk with much difficulty in the hill areas, especially when they have to go to markets for essential commodities.

"Local people depend on cultivation of jackfruit, lemon, banana and betel leaf for living. But now we cannot carry these products to Barlekha upazila Sadar Bazar as Chander Gari cannot move on the collapsed roads," said farmer Monir Mia, at Dimai Bazar, a small market about eight kilometres away from his village.

"We cannot move anywhere due to landslide. I could not even buy new dresses for my kids ahead of Eid. I don't know how I will buy good food on the occasion of the festival," said Mizan Uddin of Dakkhin Gandai village.

Shahab Uddin, chairman of Dakkhin Shahbazpur union parishad, said blocking the two roads due to landslides in the area causes immense sufferings for nearly 10,000 people of ten villages, including one inhabited by Khasi people.

"It will need one month to repair the two roads and another one month to make those usable for the vehicles like Chander Gari. I told the local lawmaker and the UNO of the matter," he added.



Locals set a bamboo bridge to make usable for pedestrians the subsided portion of the rural road at Bobartol in Barlekha upazila of Moulvibazar. Similar landslides occurred at quite a few places of two village roads in the upazila early Sunday, following heavy rain for a couple of days.

PHOTO: STAR



With large potholes at places, Betila-Balirtek road in Manikganj Sadar upazila becomes more difficult for vehicular movement even after a moderate rain. The photo was taken from Lemubari a couple of days ago.

PHOTO: STAR

# Tale of an awful Manikganj road

Carpeting on most of Betila-Balirtek road has worn away

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Vehicular movement on Gabtoli-Singair-Balirtek road has been hampered for the last three years due to large potholes at many places on a 10 km stretch in Sadar upazila.

It is the only road connection between Dhaka and Dakkhin Manikganj.

Carpeting on most of the road between Betila and Balirtek Ferry Ghat of the upazila has worn away, especially at Terodona mosque, Lemubari Nazim Uddin member's house, Siraj Mahurir's house, Kafatia Bazar, Lemubari, Gokul Nagar and Kafatia Bara Mosque.

Besides, potholes have developed in most places of the road, causing severe disruption of traffic and suffering to the travellers.

Residents of the area fear that major accidents could occur if repair work is not done immediately.

Abul Bashar Abbasi, a singer and journalist of Hasli village, said thousands of people travel daily to Singair, Manikganj Sadar and Harirampur upazilas of Manikganj, and Nawabganj and Dohar upazilas of Dhaka through the road.

The road has become unfit for use due to creation of potholes between Betila and Balirtek Ferry ghat. Locals have been demanding repairing of this road, but nobody is coming ahead to do it, he added.

Babul Hossain, owner of a grocery shop, said the road has not been repaired for a long time.

Advocate Kabir Hossain said, "I have to go to Manikganj court daily at the risk of my life."

Md Badshah Mia, an officer of Agrani Bank Manikganj branch and resident of Kafatia village, said he is afraid of accidents as the seven kilometres of the road from Kafatia to Betilla is in terrible condition.

Manikganj Sadar Upazila Parishad Vice Chairman Maulana Shamsul Alam said the authorities should immediately repair the road in public interest.

Putail Union Parishad Chairman Abdul Jalil said the potholes were filled with bricks a few days ago by the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED).

Lawmaker from Manikganj-2 constituency Mumtaz Begum said it is necessary to repair the road immediately. In this regard, she instructed local leaders to consult with the LGED executive engineer and take necessary action on emergency basis.

Executive Engineer of Manikganj LGED Abdul Barek Hawladar said bricks were dumped at different places on the road to ease movement of traffic. Tender for repair work of the road will be invited in July, and the work will be completed this year, he added.