

Haor boat makers happy with good business

MINTU DESHWARA, back from Habiganj

With haors in Sylhet division getting filled to the brim by monsoon rains, the demand for boats has peaked.

Traditional boat makers in the region are now swamped with orders for new boats -- the primary mode of transport for people living around the haors.

Many residents of the area are also getting their old boats repaired so those can withstand the wear and tear for at least another season.

This is the time when the boat makers are the happiest and many of them are now working day and night to furnish the orders according to the needs of their customers.

Sale of boats has also picked up at different boat markets around Hakaluki and Kawadighi haors in Moulvibazar, Ikram haor in Habiganj and Sunamganj haor in Sunamganj.

Prices of a boat range from Tk 2,000 to Tk 45,000, depending on its

size, type and quality.

Boloram Das, a boat maker from Khowaimukh area in Habiganj town, said various aspects including design, size, workmanship, protective coat, cost of labour and quality of materials used contribute to the price of a boat.

He also said the timber, the main component of a boat, is gathered from local trees such as koroil, raintree, jarul, shal and mahogany.

Abdush Shukkur, another boat maker from Ikram Haor in Baniachong upazila of Habiganj, said he prefers timber form raintree to make his boats.

This is the season which all boat makers look forward to during the rest of the year, said boat maker Shiraj Mia from Hakaluki haor's Bhusimol area in Kulaura upazila of Moulvibazar.

When water is everywhere and people cannot go about their everyday business, they feel the need for a boat, said boat maker Bikash Das from

Tangaur haor's Sripur area in Tahirpur upazila of Sunamganj.

So far, he has six orders on hand and when the monsoon is over, there will be no job for him, he said, adding that boatmaking has been the livelihood of his family for generations.

A local named Mohibur Rahman said he recently bought a flat-bottomed traditional boat from a market in the area.

The boat is suitable for shallow waters and a person or two can paddle it, he added.

Boats are an integral part of the haor region and livelihoods of many depend on the profession of boatmaking, said Syed Mosharrif Ali, convener of Moulvibazar Jela Khet Mojur Samitee.

Nurul Huda Mukut, chairman of Sunamganj district council, at least 70 percent of the haor population rely on water transport and boats play a crucial role in the local economy.



Demand for boats peaks during monsoon in haors of Sylhet division. In a recent photo, a boat maker is seen at work in Khowaimukh area of Habiganj town. PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA



Several hundred farmers from Lalmonirhat's Aditmari upazila yesterday blockaded Lalmonirhat-Burimari Highway in front local storage depot (LSD). Forming a human chain there, they alleged that the food inspector at the LSD has been extorting money from them while buying paddy for the government. PHOTO: S DILIP ROY

BASIC LITERACY PROJECT IN LALMONIRHAT

No bribe, no honorarium for teachers

The 6-month project ended on June 30

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Thirty-five teachers in Lalmonirhat's Hatibandha upazila have complained that they were under pressure to bribe the authorities in order to receive their dues for working under a literacy programme of the government that ended over a month ago.

A total 1,200 teachers were appointed under a six-month project to educate 36,000 people at 600 centres in Aditmari and Hatibandha upazilas.

They were promised a monthly salary of Tk 2,400 under the project that ended on June 30. In order to keep the chunk on the hook, the authorities did not pay them the total sum every month, rather, deducted a portion and promised that the deposited amount would be disbursed upon the end of the project.

Now, in order to receive the due Tk 3,230, the project officer is charging Tk 1,000 per head, according to a written complaint submitted to Aditmari Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Mohammad Asaduzzaman on Sunday.

Taslima Akhter of Mahishkhoa village in Aditmari, said she had given Tk 4,000 bribe to the project officer to be recruited. "They promised us that the project would continue and eventually we would get a monthly salary of at least Tk 5,000."

"But now the project has ended and the

project officer is demanding Tk 1,000 for clearing my dues," she said.

Similar account came from 25 other teachers that this correspondent spoke to.

"I was not given Tk 3,230 as I denied to pay the bribe," said Shamsul Islam, another teacher of Mahishkhoa village. "We submitted a written compliant to the UNO on Sunday but no steps are visible yet," he told this paper.

Dipti Rani of Sarpukur village said she received the due amount after paying Tk 1,000. "Project supervisors are collecting the bribe from us."

"I paid Tk 1,000 to supervisor Shafiqul Islam and got Tk 3,230," said Rashedul Islam of Bhelabari village.

"During recruitment, I had paid Tk 4,000 to the project officials," he added.

When contacted, Project Supervisor Shafiqul Islam said he had no say on the matter as it was being handled by Shafique Hasan, programme officer in Aditmari upazila.

Shafique also shrugged off the claim saying, "I am just discharging by duties by handing over the dues. Seven hundred teachers have received the dues so far."

Saidur Rahman, assistant director of Basic Literacy Project in Lalmonirhat, said he was not aware of the matter. "I would look into it and bring to book if any official is found guilty."

Aditmari UNO Asaduzzaman echoed him.

Youth killed in rivals' attack

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A youth was killed while trying to save his father allegedly from the wrath of a rival gang at Pahardanga village in Terokhada upazila on Tuesday night.

The deceased, Naim Sheikh, 25, was son of Piru Sheikh, 65, of the village.

Naim's father Piru, who also sustained stab injuries during the attack, is now undergoing treatment at Khulna Medical College Hospital.

Local resident Taher Bepari said criminals entered Piru's house by cutting its mud wall and attacked him sharp weapons on Tuesday night.

They also stabbed Naim indiscriminately when he tried to save his father from the attackers, leaving his dead on the spot.

Officer in Charge of Terokhada Police Station Mohammad Salekuzzaman said rival groups might have killed Naim over previous enmity.

Organically fattened beef breeds increase ahead of Eid-ul-Azha

SHYKH SERAJ

Dear readers, Bangladesh has a total stock of 11.18 million (one million equals to 10 lakh) cows, buffaloes, goats and sheep ahead of Eid-ul-Azha, the second largest religious festival of the Muslims, a little up than that of the previous year. We know that preparations have already been taken regarding the stock of the sacrificial animals and supplying those to the selected markets. The government at an inter-ministerial meeting, chaired by State Minister for Fisheries and Livestock Ashraf Ali Khan, has taken necessary steps to implement a contingency plan and ensuring fool proof security.

Bangladesh has attained self-sufficiency in meat production and significantly it is important to reduce cattle imports and illegal entry of sacrificial animals from neighbouring countries. Departments concerned are working with livestock department and city corporations to prevent cow fattening and using steroid and hormone injections.

Many farmers expect that they'll get a good price for their cattle. However, farmers from the flood-affected regions don't foresee good profit this year, as they witness signs of malnourishment due to feed crisis amid the ongoing floods across the country.

During the 80s, farmers of the country used to nurture their cows and feed them natural foods. Those cattle were their wealth, ahead of Eid-ul-Azha.

However, in time's course, as the demand for meat increased vastly in the country, the concept of beef fattening came along. I featured these changing scenarios on BTV's Mati O Manush. Dr Saad Ullah, the then head of livestock department of Bangladesh Agricultural University brought into the light Urea Molasses Block, a cattle feed especially suitable during disasters like flood. This was a brick-shaped solid food, which the cows used to eat by licking. Afterwards, came Urea Molasses Straw Technology, a mixture of water, urea, molasses and straw.

Farmers, consumers and traders, all are now aware of the harmful effects of fattening cows by growing them with steroid or other harmful chemicals. Many consumers can now identify cows which have been fed steroids. You would see them very calm and quiet. You would also notice saliva dripping from their mouth. Farmers are trying their best to fatten the cows by feeding pure, natural and organic food.

The country's development in the farming sector is quite encouraging and inspiring. There

is no doubt that there has been a revolution in the livestock sector in the last few years. Many unemployed youths have become self-reliant by establishing their farms. Women's success in bringing solvency to the family by raising goats is a remarkable story for all of us. Thus, country's livestock sector is expanding day by day. The number of farmers is also increasing and it means, livestock sector has ample potential for employment.

Without doubt, future farming scenario means smart farming, IoT (Internet of Things) based on artificial intelligence is adding new dimensions to livestock farming alongside mainstream farming. Some of the cattle farms are using digital technology at their farms and fetching new information. It is quite evident when technology is used more in numbers, then the cost comes down and becomes relatively low. It really does help the farmers hugely when the data of animal movement, health status is always being updated.

Throughout the year, cattle farmers concentrated more on fattening using organic and natural methods. As I have said earlier, the customers are more aware about the effects of antibiotics, artificial growth promoters and harmful chemicals. So, most people are looking to find the 'organic' one.

Few years back, I also wrote an article on

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Shykh Seraj visits a cow fattening farm. PHOTO: HRIDOYE MATI O MANUSH

the beef breed, 'American Brahman'. It's been a few years that Brahman's new home is Bangladesh. In 2008, under the Beef Cattle Development Project, 10,000 samples of semen were brought to be used experimentally in Bangladesh. Then another 60,000 samples of semen were brought in. It is highly positive that Brahman has spread as an organic breed. During the first phase of the project in 2014-15, 130 selected cattle farmers in 80 upazilas of 38 districts applied Brahman semen on 260 cows. Meanwhile, advanced research on the breed is going on at Savar's Artificial Insemination (AI) and Research Centre and farmers are getting benefited hugely through this. This Brahman

breed can weigh up to 1000 kg.

In 2016, I rode from port city Ghent to reach the municipality of Avelgem, located in the Belgian province of West Flanders, to see something they call the monster beef breed, 'Belgian Blue', which can weigh up to 1200 kilograms. Big cattle farmers of our country have taken up the expensive beef breed 'Belgian Blue' to their farms, as well.

Dear readers, dengue and flood seem to have lessened the delight of Eid. We have always fought hard against any disaster, whether natural or manmade, and we will fight back. Keeping Eid-ul-Azha ahead, beef fattening is a profitable and promising business sector, you

already know. A large part of unemployment can be eradicated by expanding this sector. Livestock sector has been playing an important role in the country's economy. The march for 'organic' livestock should flourish even more. This sector will definitely create more employment opportunities for the youth. We must not forget one thing: we have to ensure a clean environment during and after the sacrifice of the animals as responsible citizens, since dengue has been spreading quite hugely across Dhaka and in many parts of the country. Clean and healthy surroundings is what we should give utmost priority to. My heartfelt Eid greetings to all of you.