



A potter keeps clay-made pots for drying at Kumarpara village in Bogura Sadar upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

Diversity of Bogura pottery in peril

MOSTAFA SHABUI, *Bogura*

Looking at the yogurt tubs made by Bogura's potters, it is difficult to imagine that the ceramics industry once flourished in the region.

Technology has made pottery production easy and less time consuming but the variety of earthenware, which once existed in Bogura, has disappeared over time, and is now limited to yogurt pots and bowls only.

The history of pottery in Bogura, evident in the artefacts displayed at the Archaeological Museum of Mahasthangarh, dates back to the pre-Mauryan period of the Iron Age, according to Banglapedia.

Assistant Director of Department of Archaeology, Bogura Regional Office, Mujibur Rahman of said, all the artefacts excavated from the ancient city of Pandranagar, located in Mahasthangarh, were made from clay.

During the Pundrabardhan era in 300BC even everyday ceramic tableware and clay utensils took the form of art, he said, adding that the diversity of Mahasthangarh's pottery depicts that there were many families of potters in this area throughout history.

The potters of Bogura mostly belong to the Pala Hindu community and have been engaged in this profession for generations.

Over the centuries, pottery has lost its importance and relevance after the

discovery and use of metals including brass, copper, silver and aluminium, and inorganic materials such as plastic.

Visiting Palpara in Shekherkola village in Bogura Sadar upazila, this correspondent talked with a number of potters about the current condition of their ancestral occupation.

Goshai Chandra Pal of the village remembered a time when many village markets — Kalitala, Nunagola and Shekherkola haats — would throng every week around pottery trade.

"Even 10 years ago, we would go and sell earthenware and clay toys in the haats," reminisced the 70-year-old.

Rafiqul Islam, 55, a stationery shopkeeper of Kalitala Bazar in Bogura town, also remembers the haats. "We mostly use plastic and aluminium pots and pans now. If someone needs, they go to Palpara and order pottery," he said.

Potter Rabindra Chandra Pal, 45, of Palpara echoed Rafiqul.

People are no longer buying earthenware. Now, beautiful, luxurious, durable and varieties of porcelain, plastics, silver, aluminium and other metal utensils are available at much cheaper prices than pottery, he said.

"To survive, we only make different kinds of yogurt pots required by the Bogura's famous curd industry," Rabindra added.

Though the demand for pottery declined, making and selling the product



has in fact become easier, the potters said.

They no longer have to work hard to prepare the soil with their hands. Potters now can make huge quantities of curd-pots in a short time using electric-motored wheel.

However, the prices of their products did not go up as expected. Female potter Ambika Pal, 50, said, "The price of the soil, electricity, labour costs have all gone up, but our best curd-pot is selling for only Tk 26. Therefore, many are choosing other professions like agriculture, day labour and shop-keeping."

Moreover, the school goers do not have any interest to join the traditional profession, she said.

Adhir Chandra Pal, 60, said, "About 10 to 15 years ago, we had to go from village to village on foot to sell clay utensils. It was difficult to make a sale of Tk 200 to Tk 250 in one day."

"But now traders from different districts

come with trucks and CNG-run auto rickshaws, and buy our curd-pots in bulk. This has made our life a lot easier but the price of these pots did not increase with the rise in cost of living," he said.

Although, demand for curd-pots kept the pottery profession alive in Bogura, potters fear that this too will not last long.

Lalita Rani Pal, 48, a female potter of Shekherkola village, said, "If plastic curd-pots arrive at our locality then we all will lose our traditional profession."

Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation office (BSCIC) in Bogura could not provide any exact data on the total number of potters in the area or the industry's turnover.

Deputy General Manager (acting in-charge) of BSCIC Bogura Md Zahedul Islam said, "There might be more than 1,000 families of potters in the district. Their present situation is not good because people are not interested to buy earthenware."

Zahedul said, there are centres in Dhaka and Cumilla to train potters on designed ceramics and if potters come to them, BSCIC will arrange for their training and small loans and microcredits.

However, the potters of Shekherkola are unaware about BSCIC's programmes. Goshai Chandra Pal told this correspondent that most potters avail loans from local NGOs. "We have not heard about any training or microcredit facilities from BSCIC."

Newsmen protest death threat to fellow

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Moulvibazar*

Journalists held a programme on Shaheed Minar Road in Habiganj's Baniachong upazila yesterday demanding immediate arrest of the culprit who gave death threat to a local newsman.

"Alongside giving death threats, the perpetrators sent shrouds to me," said Imdadul Hossain Khan, Habiganj district correspondent of the Daily Tribunal, also general secretary of Baniachong Press Club.

He lodged a general diary with Baniachong Police Station on Tuesday seeking security of life, said Ranjan Kumar Samonto, officer in charge of the police station.

A good number of people including journalists of electronic and print media and leaders of political and social organizations joined yesterday's protest programme presided over by senior journalist Angur Mia.

Manikganj celebrates liberation today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Manikganj*

Valiant freedom fighters of Manikganj, then a sub-division, liberated their motherland on this day in 1971 with hoisting the national flag atop Primary Training Institute in the district headquarters.

In March 1971, people of Manikganj, under the leadership of Captain Abdul Halim Chowdhury, put up resistance against the Pakistani occupation forces.

The freedom fighters started training with firearms after collecting those from Manikganj armoury on March 27, the day after the country's independence was declared.

While the Pakistani forces captured several important establishments in the district and killed many innocent people, the freedom fighters formed 'Biplobi Parishad' at Kowri village in Harirampur upazila and fought the enemy in a number of battles, splitting into several groups.

On October 28, the freedom fighters — led by Engineer Tobarak Hossain Ludu, Lokman Hossain and Zahidur Rahman — in a fierce battle killed 82 Pakistani soldiers and held 50 others with injuries at Colaidanga village in today's Singair upazila.

Meanwhile, in an operation led by Bir Protik Ibrahim, the freedom fighters blew up Siddhiganj power station.

On November 22, Pakistan forces attacked Terosree village in Ghior upazila and killed 43 innocent lives including Atiar Rahman, principal of Terosree College and Siddheswary Prosad Roy Chowdhury, a former Zamindar of the area.

The freedom fighters in a major offensive during the last week of the month pushed towards the then sub-divisional headquarters by defeating the enemy forces at a number of battles.

Finally, on December 13, they declared Manikganj sub-division free from occupation, said Engineer Tobarak, commander of Bangladesh Muktijoddha Sangsads in Manikganj district unit.

A memorial for the martyred freedom fighters of Manikganj was built in March 2006 in front of Shaheed Miraz-Tapan Stadium.

The plaque at the memorial has only 39 names of martyrs engraved as the authorities, 48 years after the war was won, are yet to prepare a complete list of martyrs in the district, lamented freedom fighter Lokman Hakim.

In December 2016, a memorial named 'Adomyo Ekator' was built with 50 names of martyred freedom fighters engraved on its plaque.

On the occasion of liberating Manikganj, Muktijuddher Bijoy Mela Parishad is organising a 15-day-long 'Muktijuddher Bijoy Mela', scheduled to start today at 3:00pm.

Health and Family Welfare Minister and Manikganj-3 lawmaker Zahid Maleque will attend the programme as chief guest.

At the fair there will be a photo exhibition, discussions, Jatra, puppet show, Paala Gaan, theatre, cultural competitions and sporting events. Also, around 300 stalls will showcase various items including books, clothes, musical instrument, food and toys, said Abdul Majid, member secretary of the Parishad.

Vegetable growers all smiles

Salmonirhat farmers earn much better as produces in the N dist see higher demand after Cyclone Bulbul damaged vegetables in South

S DILIP ROY, *Salmonirhat*

Vegetable growers in Salmonirhat are earning more than expected profits from selling their produce this season.

The situation has arisen as demand of winter vegetables from the northern districts has increased after Cyclone Bulbul in last month damaged vast vegetable fields in the country's southern region, said farmers and traders.

"We are getting 50 to 60 percent profit from selling vegetables this season," said Nazrul Islam, 58, a farmer at Kamlabari village in Aditmari upazila.

Mozaharul Islam, 50, of Mogholhat village in Salmonirhat Sadar upazila said he has cultivated cauliflower on eight bighas of land

where from he has started earning well.

"Now I am selling each cauliflower at Tk 12 or 13 in the field but it was only Tk 6 or 7 in last year. The item sees a huge demand as a good number of traders from Dhaka are buying it from our field," he said.

Atul Chandra Roy, 40, a vegetable grower at Durakuti village in the same upazila, said after growing bottle gourd on five bighas of land he is getting around 60 percent profit from the sale while it was 25 to 30 percent in last year.

Sarwar Hossain, 55, a farmer at Karnapuri village in Salmonirhat Sadar upazila, said all kinds of vegetables are selling at higher prices this year as traders from Dhaka and other areas are buying these at good prices, following shortage of supply from the southern districts.

"We are buying vegetables at high rates from the growers in northern region for supplying to different markets. There is huge demand of winter vegetables among the customers," said Ahatul Islam Sarker, 48, a vegetable trader from the capital.

A variety of vegetables have been cultivated on 9,000 hectares of land in five upazilas of the district, said officials of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Salmonirhat.

"Generally farmers get good profit from vegetable cultivation. This season they are getting more than expected prices. Our officials always provide technical support to farmers to help them get good yield," said Bidhubhushon Roy, deputy director of DAE in the district.



Saheda Begum shows cauliflower grown at her field of Mogholhat village in Salmonirhat Sadar upazila. Winter vegetables are selling for higher prices this season, following rise in demand due to huge loss to the crops due to Cyclone Bulbul in southern districts.

PHOTO: STAR

A launch anchors in sawmill area instead of Kalapara launch terminal of Patuakhali, causing immense sufferings to passengers.

PHOTO: STAR

Launch ghat lies unused for 2yrs

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, *Patuakhali*

Although a new pontoon and jetty lie at Kalapara launch ghat, its leaser is not using the terminal for launches for long.

Instead, launches are anchoring in the sawmill area, about 400 metres away from the ghat, causing immense sufferings to passengers.

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) set up the pontoon and jetty at the launch ghat two years ago but leaser Tanvir Munshi is yet to operate it for launches.

Three launches ply separate internal routes in Kalapara and its adjacent Rangabali upazilas. Launch is the only means of communication for shoal people in the area.

Of them, two launches run between Kalapara and Rangabali upazilas and the rest runs between Kalapara and Mowdubi, a fish landing station under Rangabali upazila, and as Mowdubi and Rangabali are isolated areas, there is no road linking the areas.

Md Rashedul Islam of Mowdubi area said they often come to Kalapara upazila headquarters by launch and face immense problem while getting on or off the launch.

Especially children and female passengers are the worst sufferers, he said.

Abdur Rahman of Taktabunia Bazar in Rangabali upazila said despite repeated pleas, the authorities concerned are yet to take any steps in this regard.

Locals said many traders of Rangabali and Mowdubi areas take their goods from Kalapara town and most wholesale grocery shops lie near the sawmill area.

The traders prefer to use the sawmill area as they do not have to pay more money for loading and unloading goods but the traders will have to spend extra money for carrying cost while loading and unloading from the ghat as the place is far away from the sawmill area.

Abdul Jabbar, supervisor of ML Tushar-2, a single-decker launch on Kalapara-Mowdubi route, said as per instruction from the leaser of the launch ghat, the launch anchors in sawmill area instead of the ghat.

Contacted, leaser Tanvir Munshi said "I asked the launch authority to use the terminal but they don't listen to me."

He declined to make any further comment on the issue.

Contacted, Kwaja Sadiqur Rahman, deputy director of BIWTA in Patuakhali, said they have already got an allegation over the matter.

They will take action after investigating the incident, he said.