



Tarapado Chandra Devnath of Chandijan Jugeepara village in Kurigram's Ulipur upazila prepares kolichun, slaked lime, from oyster shells. The photo was taken last week.

PHOTO: ABDULWAHED

Kolichun faces threat of extinction

Producers of slaked lime made from oyster shells struggle to keep their traditional profession alive

ABDUL WAHED, Kurigram

Producers of kolichun, slaked lime made from oyster shells, are leaving their traditional profession due to low demand of their product and high cost of production materials.

Locally known as jugee, makers of this particular type of slaked lime blamed oyster scarcity, competition from industrially produced calcium hydroxide, and low demand for betel leaves and nuts eaten with slaked lime for the loss in their business.

The Devnath community belonging to the Hindu faith in Kurigram have been involved in the hereditary profession of making kolichun (slaked lime) from oysters for centuries.

Jugee Sachindra Nath Devnath of Chandijan village of Pandul union under Ulipur upazila said they have to buy oysters from shell collectors. Beforehand, these freshwater molluscs were available in abundance for free in rivers, canals and other waterbodies.

Once collected, the oysters are boiled to help open the shells and extract the body. The shells are then piled for a couple of days to dry off, then burned in an earthen kiln. Water is added to the ashes of the burnt shell to make slaked lime or calcium hydroxide, Sachindra explained.

Besides, the cost of shells, jugees also need firewood, jute stick and straw required to burn the shells, said the 80-year-old.

He informed that one maund (40 kg) of shells costing Tk 300 is needed to produce one maund of slaked lime. With fuel and labour to fan the kiln, Tk 600 is spend for making one maund of slaked lime.



Jugee Kalipado Devnath of the same village claimed, slaked lime is sold for Tk 30 per kg and jugees make about Tk 1,200 per week by selling the product in the local haat (village market).

"Thirty years ago, I could feed my family with the money I earned from selling kolichun because I could collect oysters for free from rivers. Now I have to buy oysters and straws and it becomes impossible to run my family with the meagre profit," he said.

Unable to run his family with such low

income, Kalipado now works as a day-labourer, while keeping his ancestral occupation as a part-time affair.

Jugee Suzan Chandra Devnath, 20, of Kathalbari union in Sadar upazila, is getting even less selling a maund of slaked lime.

"We could sell 40 kilogram of slaked lime every haat-day six months ago, but now we can sell around 20 kg and the rate per kg has come down from Tk 30 to Tk 20," he claimed.

The jugees noted that the number of people

consuming betel leaf and nut with slaked lime has also not increased, rather in Suzan's opinion the number is decreasing.

Besides, the kolichun produced from oysters have a darker shade compared to the industrially produced calcium hydroxide forcing jugees to keep their price lower in fear of losing out to competition.

According to jugee Sachindra, kolichun is also used in some herbal, traditional medicine and sometimes used in fish ponds as a disinfectant but that practice has become obsolete too.

Urging the government to take initiatives to save the age-old profession, the jugees of Kurigram asserted that improved technology for the burning process could bring their cost down and help them compete with the industrially produced slaked lime.

Director of Bangladesh Bhawaiya Academy Bhupati Bhusan Barma believe that slaked lime production from oyster shells could be considered as a small cottage industry.

He said, loans with easy condition can be provided to the jugees to save the industry and research on the benefits of such naturally produced lime should be undertaken.

Meanwhile, District Fisheries Officer Kalipada Roy blamed encroachment of waterbodies and water pollution as the reason behind the oyster scarcity.

Reduced water flow from encroachment of rivers and canals, unplanned use of pesticides, and waste disposal in waterbodies has created an adverse environment for oyster breeding, he added.

Fish poisoned dead in Matamuhuri river

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Criminals poisoned to death different species of fish in the Matamuhuri river of Lama upazila on Monday.

A section of unscrupulous people on Monday night threw poison into two-km-long area of the river, putting biodiversity at risk, said Anil Kumar Saha, Bandarban district fisheries officer.

On Tuesday noon, locals found dead fish at several points in the river.

With the recession of water level in the river, a section of greedy fishermen started netting fishes in different parts of the river using toxic chemicals, said the officer.

Most of the dead fish were shrimp fries, he said.

As the news spread, many people thronged the river bank and started catching the dead fish, said locals.

Man killed in Faridpur clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

A man was killed and five others were injured in a clash over establishing supremacy at Chargagaria village in Sadar upazila of the district.

The deceased was identified as fruit seller Atahar Mollah, 35, son of Rahman Mollah of the village.

Locals said there was a longstanding conflict between Atahar and Zahir Mollah, former member of Charmanai union parishad, over establishing supremacy in the locality.

Atahar was going to Dhaka with his five supporters by a battery-run easy-bike on Monday evening.

When they reached one Zahim Mollah's house of the same village, the supporters of Zahir attacked them with sharp weapons, leaving them injured.

They were rushed to the upazila health complex and later Atahar referred to Faridpur Medical College Hospital as his condition worsened. The following day, he died there.

Syed Lutfar Rahman, officer in-charge of Sadarup Police Station, said on information, police recovered the body and sent it to Faridpur Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

Death of 8yr-old boy

Madrassa principal among 4 detained for interrogation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

An eight-year-old boy, who mysteriously fell sick at his educational institution and admitted to Charbhadrasan Upazila Health Complex, died on his way to Faridpur Medical College Hospital yesterday.

The deceased, Abdur Rahman, son of Abdus Sobhan of Rangadia village in Saltha upazila, was a resident student at Jamia Islamia Markajul Ulum Madrasa in Charbhadrasan upazila.

Victim's family members, however, claimed that Rahman died after the boy was sexually abused at his educational institution.

Meanwhile, police detained four people,

including the principal of the madrasa, from Gangi area for interrogation.

Victim's father Sobhan said madrasa authority phoned him early yesterday and said Rahman was admitted to Charbhadrasan Upazila Health Complex as the boy suddenly fell sick.

After hearing the news, Sobhan went to the health complex and took his son to Faridpur Medical College Hospital, where the doctors declared him dead.

Dr Wahiduzzaman, one of the on-duty doctors at Faridpur Medical College Hospital, said the boy might have been sexually abused.

"We found symptom of sexual abuse on the body of the minor boy," the doctor said.

Baliakandi-Pangsha road in awful state for years

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

A portion of 25-km-long Baliakandi-Pangsha road in Rajbari's Baliakandi upazila is in awful state for long, causing immense sufferings to commuters.

Especially schoolchildren and critical patients are the worst sufferers due to the communication problem, said locals.

About 12.3-km-long portion of the road connecting the upazila and district headquarters has been lying unrepaired for the last five years, said officials of Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) in Baliakandi.

Villagers said hundreds of people, including students, use the road every day, facing serious problems.

The road has become almost unfit for vehicular movement due to lack of repair or renovation for years. Patients and traders carrying their goods and produces bear the brunt of continuous jerking.

During a recent visit, this correspondent saw a number of potholes and cracks on the road which has become muddy at some places.

Mazed Fakir, a resident of Baherchar village, said they cannot move smoothly on the road due to potholes.

"Besides, mud covered the road during rains. So, we are suffering a lot," he said.

Liakat Sheikh of the same area



A portion of Baliakandi-Pangsha road in Rajbari's Baliakandi upazila lies in awful state for long, causing immense sufferings to commuters.

PHOTO: STAR



A number child patients have been admitted to Kurigram General Hospital with cold-related diseases like pneumonia and diarrhoea in the last few days. The lowest temperature in the district was recorded at 7.7 degree Celsius yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

said, "We have no other way to go to the upazila and district headquarters. The suffering is beyond description when we need to take a critical patient to upazila and district headquarters."

Farid Sheikh, a rickshaw-van puller, said sometimes the wheels of rickshaw-van get stuck in holes

of the road. They cannot move smoothly on the road."

Osman Gani, an easy-bike driver, said "We are suffering much as passengers no longer use our vehicle to avoid the brunt of continuous jerking. So, our daily income is going down day by day."

Sohel Rana, a resident of Boro

Gheekumla village in the upazila, said while crossing the area, they have to spend extra money due to awful condition of the road.

Upazila LGED Engineer Alamgir Badsha said they have already informed the higher authorities about the matter but no respond yet to come.