

Traditional muri makers in Bagerhat struggle for survival

At least 45 families left the profession and took other job for a living in the last few years

PARITHA CHAKRABORTY

Traditional muri (puffed rice) producers of Baruikhali village in Bagerhat's Kachua upazila are facing a tough time, as machine-made puffed rice has flooded the market.

Baruikhali, a remote village in the district, is called 'Murigram' (puffed rice village). Once, more than a hundred families of this village used to make a living by handmade puffed rice. However, the number of families involved in the profession is decreasing yielding place to the item produced by machines.

In the last few years, at least 45 families have left the profession getting engaged in other professions. However, many people are sticking to this profession as they do not have the opportunity to switch to other professions.

Kamal Saha, who has been making handmade puffed rice for 35 years, said that the income generated from making puffed rice is hardly enough to bear the expenses of the family. That is why he has bought a van for his son to add to the income.

"Most of the people in our area used to make puffed rice once



The prices of paddy, wood, sand and earthen pots have gone up. But the price of puffed rice has not increased simultaneously. So, many of us have left the profession. On the other hand, most people buy packaged puffed rice of different brands as the price is cheaper than ours. So, our handmade muri is not sold as before," he said.

The production cost of per kg handmade muri stands at Tk 72-75. About 24 kg of puffed rice can be made from 40 kg of coarse rice costing Tk 1500-1550, he also said.

"I sell it to the wholesaler at Tk 90 per kg with a very little profit

margin," he added. Krishna Saha, another handmade puffed rice trader of the village, said, "I inherited the profession from my father and have been involved with the profession since my childhood. Earlier, I used to sell 10-12 maunds of puffed rice in two haat days. Now, I can't sell more than five-six maunds a week."

On the other hand, machine-made puffed rice has flooded the market reducing the demand for handmade puffed rice as the former is cheaper, he also said.

He urged the government to give them a soft loan at the beginning

of the season so that they can buy coarse rice at a cheaper rate.

Subal Saha, who has left the profession, now pulls a rickshaw also cited similar reasons for his leaving the profession.

Not only Subal but also many others of Baruikhali area have left handmade puffed rice trading and gone to other professions.

Kachua Upazila Agriculture Officer KM Shahabuddin Ahmed said, "The puffed rice produced by the traders of Baruikhali is chemical-free. The demand for their produce has decreased due to the availability of machine-made puffed in the market. In addition, the price of coarse paddy has also gone up. We will take initiative to increase the cultivation of coarse paddy in this area for the benefit of the farmers."

Kachua Upazila Parishad Chairman Nazma Sarwar said the government has taken various initiatives for the expansion of small and cottage industries. Handmade puffed rice is the tradition of Kachua.

"We will work to preserve this tradition. We will cooperate with the traders in different ways including giving them soft loans," she added.



A CREATIVE GESTURE: Images of the national flag of the country, national monument and map of Bangladesh depicted with grass and mosaic. Roman Ali Shah, a farmer from Jafraabad village in Kishoreganj's Kuliarchar upazila drew the images on six decimals of land, marking the 50th Victory Day celebrations of Bangladesh.

Advertisement for Barishal City Corporation (বরিশাল সিটি কর্পোরেশন) regarding a public hearing (স্বাক্ষরিত নং-বিসিসি/ইডি/০৮৪/২১) for the 50th Victory Day celebrations. It includes details about the meeting location, time, and agenda items.



Puffed rice (muri) being prepared at Baruikhali village in Bagerhat's Kachua upazila in the conventional way. Manual preparation of muri (puffed rice) is still a common practice in the village, having better taste than that produced by machines.

A commemorative graphic for the 106th birth anniversary of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (16 Dec 1920 - 15 Aug 1987). It features his portrait, the national flag, and text celebrating his leadership in the independence movement.

BOGURA FACTORY FIRE 5 bodies identified

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura

Bodies of the five workers, including two teenagers, who were killed in a fire at a disposable plastic factory in Adamdighi upazila on Tuesday, have been identified and handed over to their respective families yesterday.

The deceased are Sibab Hossain, 14, son of Lutfar Rahman of Kamaldogachhi village, Emon Ali Mondol, 15, son of Hasan Ali of Paloyanpara village, Shahjahan Ali, 28, son of Nasir Uddin of Sandira village, Belal Hossain, 55, son of late Abdur Rahman of Satni village, and Abdul Khaleq, son of late Afsar Ali of Ghoraghat village in the upazila.

Officer in Charge (OC) of Adamdighi Police Station Jalal Uddin said to confirm the identities of the deceased they matched the description, clothes and other objects found with the corps.

Masud Rana, one of the victim Shahajan's cousin, said although the factory owners promised to give financial compensation, they are yet to receive any grant.

Adamdighi Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Sraboni Roy said the district administration are yet to think about providing financial assistance to the deceased families.

Meanwhile, one of the workers Mehedi Hossain, who was present during the incident, said the fire originated from the recycling machine and spread in the entire factory within a few minutes, leaving the five dead on the spot.

Creditor beaten dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A housewife was beaten to death allegedly by a grocer and his family members in Aditmaru upazila on Tuesday when the woman wanted back the money she had lent to him.

The deceased, Rahima Begum, 52, was wife of Abdul Mannan of Dularakuti Colony area in the upazila.

Rahima used to live with her ailing husband Mannan while her two sons Abdul Karim and Abdur Rahim live in separately.

Rahim said Saiful Islam, a local grocer, borrowed some money from their mother to run his business.

An altercation took place between his mother and Saiful when the latter was requested to pay back the money but refused, Rahim said.

At one stage, Saiful, his family members and some of his relatives swooped on Rahima and started beating her with sticks, leaving her dead on the spot.

OC of Aditmaru Police Station Moktarul Islam said they sent the body to Lalmonirhat Sadar Hospital for autopsy yesterday morning.

A large table with multiple columns and rows containing detailed information about public works projects, including project names, budgets, and completion dates. It is titled 'স্বাক্ষরিত নং-বিসিসি/ইডি/০৮৪/২১'.