



The slow, painful death of BAIN LOOM

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We have no project for weavers. The bain-loom industry is in danger of extinction in absence of patronisation for its immediate revival.

MD MAINUDDIN
Coordinating Officer
of Bangladesh Small
and Cottage Industries
Corporation of
Khagrachhari

SIFAYET ULLAH

The back-strap handloom, popularly known as “Bain” loom, is a centuries-old textiles craft of the indigenous people of Khagrachhari district. But faced with continuous aggression from the power-loom industry, weavers are being compelled to leave their ancestral profession.

In addition, the high price of raw materials, coupled with the low-cost of finished products, has made the situation worsen over the years.

According to Bangladesh Handloom Board, around 12,000 looms have shut down in the district in the past 30 years.

Even in the ‘90s, there were as many as 40,000 looms in the district, which has now come down to 28,000.

According to sources, many traditional weavers have been compelled to switch crafts after incurring huge losses over the years.

For example, there were more than 100 looms in Dhumnighat area of Sindukchhari, but that number has now come down to 50, said Dahan Bikash Tripura, a resident at the area. “Once upon a time, the knocking sound of the loom was heard day and night across Dhumnighat. But we’re past those days now.”

He said many of the traditional weavers

have now switched to jhum cultivation.

During a recent visit to the area, this correspondent saw weaver Maryam Tripura spinning yarn and running the loom to make traditional Thami.

“I have a passion for our traditional Bain-loom industry. Whenever I find time after finishing my studies, I start running the loom in my own bid to keep the industry

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alive,” she said.

She said weavers don’t get much profit anymore due to increase in raw material prices.

“A loom-made winter blanket is sold at Tk 600 to 700. But to make the blanket, we have to buy wool for around Tk 450 to 500,” said Maryam Tripura.

Besides, lack of capital and problems related to marketing and distribution were

also behind handloom sector’s gradual downfall, said Pranab Kumar Das, liaison officer of Bangladesh Handloom Board of Khagrachhari.

The government trains a small number of weavers every year, which is much less than the demand. In 2022, only 30 weavers will be trained, sources said.

Shapla Tripura from Khagrachhari has been working in the weaving industry for 15 years. She received the Joyeeta Award for her work for the bain-loom industry.

She has a Bain Textile outlet in Khagrachhari city. “Before, we used to weave 30 to 50 pieces. Now, we get no more than five or six orders a month,” she lamented.

She said in order to sustain this industry, marginal entrepreneurs have to be given benefits.

Md Mainuddin, coordinating Officer of Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation of Khagrachhari, told The Daily Star, “We have no project for weavers. The bain-loom industry is in danger of extinction in absence of patronisation for its immediate revival.”

According to the Handloom Census 2018, carried out by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, there were 116,006 handloom units in the country, which is a 36.79 percent fall from 2003, when there were 183,512.

Household waste stinks up the city

CCC’s door-to-door garbage collection programme in shambles

ARUN BIKASH DEY

Among the many problems that consume a metro, the one that has become a headache for port city dwellers is poor waste management.

Residents across different areas of the city are being compelled to keep domestic waste in front of their homes or adjacent roads, as conservancy workers of Chattogram City Corporation (CCC) are irregular in collecting them.

During a recent visit to KB Aman Ali Road, Ujir Ali Shah by-lane, Momin Road and DC Road areas, it was seen that household waste wrapped in poly bags were kept on the road and in front of residential buildings.

“Conservancy workers used to come every day but they started coming thrice a week since April 2020, right after the pandemic hit,” said Abul Kashem, a resident of Ujir Ali Shah by-lane.

“Since January this year, they have started to come twice a week,” he added.

Sources said CCC started collecting waste from door-to-door in January 2017. It distributed over 900,000 bins to the houses so that conservancy workers could collect the waste from them daily.

Over 2,000 conservancy workers were appointed on a daily wage basis under the scheme as well.

Himadri Biswas, a resident of KB Aman Ali Road, said, “The authorities have also removed the trash cans. Where do we keep the waste now?”

This correspondent, during recent visits, saw open trash cans in many areas.

Conservancy workers were seen keeping household and commercial waste in both open and container cans at Chawkbazar Kitchen Market, Katalganj, Chatteshwari Road and KB Aman Ali Road – causing discomfort for pedestrians.

Contacted, CCC chief conservancy officer Shafiqul

Mannan Siddique said there are supervisors in every ward to look into the works of the conservancy workers.

“I will ask the supervisors. Negligence in duty will not be tolerated,” said Shafiqul.

Almost 90 percent of the 1,350 open bins and 96 container bins have already been removed, informed the official. “We will remove the remaining open ones soon,” he added.

Asked, Hridoy, a conservancy worker in Baghmoniram, said the number of workers has not increased in five years. On the other hand, the population of the city has increased manifolds.

“It’s not possible for workers to cover this many buildings,” said Hridoy.

This correspondent could not reach the CCC mayor for comments despite repeated attempts.



A makeshift market for USED LIFEBOATS

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN

Spotting used, red lifeboats parked on the canal banks beside Dhaka-Chattogram Highway at Sitakunda upazila, one might scratch their heads and ask why they’re kept there. But these boats are in fact of great value, being displayed for sale.

Acquired from local shipbreaking yards, these boats have now formed a makeshift boat market in Sitakunda, which meets the local and national demand. Depending on size and condition, the lifeboats are sold at Tk 25,000 to Tk 10 lakh each.

A lifeboat, or life-raft, is a small, rigid or inflatable boat carried for emergency evacuation in the event of a disaster aboard a ship.

Buyers across the country come to Sitakunda’s Madambibir Hat, Kumira, Bhatiari, Madanhat and other areas to buy the used lifeboats for their affordability and strength, which is much better than their wooden alternative. Government and private marine fisheries, fishers, resort owners and travel agencies are their main customers.

It’s noteworthy that most renowned shipbreaking yards are located in Sitakunda’s seashore, where various items like kitchen tools, electronic products, antique showpieces, different machinery and stationaries taken from scrapped ships are also sold.

At first, sellers collect the used lifeboats from scrap ships. The boats are then docked on the canal bed for display

Visiting Sitakunda, Bhatiari and Kumira recently, this correspondent saw hundreds of different sized lifeboats on both sides of the canal bank. Buyers were inspecting the boats floating on the water.

Used or new motor engines are installed on the boats after they’re sold. The sellers said sometimes they customise the boats as per demand.

The sellers informed that fishers are buying small sized lifeboats for their light-weight and affordable price, shifting from the use of “dingi” boats.

M/s Khaja Alam Enterprise’s proprietor



A rendezvous of booklovers

ARUN BIKASH DEY

Be it a weekend or work day, readers from all age groups are rushing to the Amar Ekushey Book Fair, at the MA Aziz Stadium Gymnasium premises in the port city, since its inauguration on February 20.

Visiting the fair premises over the last few days, this correspondent saw large crowds gathering in front of different stalls – some were shifting through the pages, while others were looking for books of their choice.

Volunteers were seen standing at the entrance of the fair with hand sanitisers, urging visitors to wear a face mask.

Himel Dutta, a sixth grader, visited the fair with his father on a weekend. He kept asking his father to buy him some comics at a stall.

Himel’s father smilingly said, “I had to buy two comic books for him. I got myself an essay book and a novel too.”

Meanwhile, eleventh-grader Senjuti

Chowdhury visited the fair with her friends. They were all looking at books at Baatighar’s stall. Senjuti said she had come to buy Biswajit Chowdhury’s story book “Patharer Murti Moto”.

Bablu Chowdhury, a sales official at Baatighar, said demand for novels and books on Bangabandhu was the highest at their stall, adding that daily sales overall was satisfactory.

Contacted, Nisar Uddin Ahmed Monju, convener of the book fair, said necessary steps have been taken for the overall security of the fair. Besides, instructions have been given to abide by the health rules. The fair grounds are under CCTV observation, he said.

The book fair will continue till March 10. A total of 95 publishers from Dhaka and Chattogram are participating at the fair. The fair is running from 3:00pm to 9:00pm every day and from 10:00am to 9:00pm on holidays.