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Niamul Islam
An entrepreneur

Md Niamul Islam is seen condensing a vat of milk to produce yogurt at his factory in Shirirampur village under Madapur union of Rajbari Sadar upazila. Naimul's factory has not only brought success for himself, but for others in the area.

PHOTO: SUNZIT KUMAR DAS

Rajbari's yogurt maker helps local economy grow



INSPIRING STORIES
FROM THE FIELD

SUZIT KUMAR DAS, Faridpur

Md Niamul Islam did not like to eat the yogurt or curd sold at sweetmeat shops. So, he tried to make it himself at home using his own cow's milk. Little did he know that this effort would one day make him an entrepreneur.

Other than achieving success in his own right, Naimul employs seven youths in his village at his yogurt factory, centring which several dairy farms have been established in the area.

Naimul, who hails from Shirirampur village under Madapur union of Rajbari Sadar upazila, was admitted to Islamic University in 2006. But due to poverty, he had to leave his studies after one year.

Now though, Niamul earns Tk 50,000 per month from his yogurt factory called "Halal Sor Doi."

"After returning from the university I started fish cultivation in our small pond and reared a cow. In 2010 I joined a local Madrasah as teacher but left the job as they demanded Tk 2 lakh for my post as MPO in 2014," he said.

After that, he started rearing two cows and could collect 5-6 liters of milk from each but there was a problem in selling the milk as there were not enough customers in the area.



So, Naimul decided to use the milk to make sweets and yogurt.

"I saw a cup ice-cream that sold at Tk 20. Then I hit upon a plan that I would make yogurt at home in the same cup and it would be sold Tk 20 in 2018," he said.

"I spoke with a shopkeeper about it, he inspired me to do that and gave me word he would sell my yogurt at his shop," Naimul added.

He supplied some yogurt the next day and got good feedback from customers.

After that he gradually increased the quantity from 3.5 liter and within one year the quantity raised at 50 liters of yogurt.

At first he would collected milk from

different houses of his village but it was not enough for him as the demand of his yogurt had already increased.

"I had to appoint someone to help me make yogurt and market it. All the people of our area who rearing cows gave their milk and I gave them the market price. That why, they stated rearing more cows at their house," he said.

Now Niamul needs 620-650 liters milk every day to full fill the demand of his yogurt at different markets, including those in Dhaka, Faridpur, Kushtia and Rajbari.

Sumon Islam, a resident of Rajdhorpur village under Baliakandi upazila in Rajbari, said he started his dairy farm

with two Australian cows in 2016.

"And I gradually increased the number of the cows in my farm but there was a problem in selling milk at local markets as I collected 50 kgs or more every day," he said.

"Now though, I have 35 cows in my farm, of which 10 give 120 liters of milk daily. I do not face any problem as I give all the milk at Niamul yogurt," he added.

Md Nazir Hossain, another dairy farmer of Surjadia village under Madapur union of Rajbari sadar upazila, said he initially started his cattle farm with two cows.

"Now I have seven cows that give 35-40 liter milk every day. I will collect more 25 liters milk from another two cows from next month. Due to Niamul yogurt factory we can easily sell all milk at his farm," he said.

Another dairy farmer of Rajdhorpur village, Saharul Mollha, said he once worried about being able to sell his milk as there were not enough customers in the area.

"We previously had to go different sweet shops at Rajbari town to sell milk. Due to Naimul, we can sell milk from home. So people of our area who are involved in farming are rearing two-five cows and sell milk," he added.

Abdul Kudus, a resident of Gobindapur village said, Naimul's yogurt factory opened a new business for him.

"I visit different villages near my house and buy milk at Tk 45-48 per liter and I sell it to Niamul at Tk 50 per liter. This way I earn Tk 500-800 per day," he said.

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The art of bribery

MAHTAB UDDIN AHMED

I know of a deputy managing director of a financial institution who has a fascination for driving fancy cars, something that most young kids dream of.

He made enough money in his long career to afford one but refrained from fulfilling his wish as it would be a public statement of his wealth. So, he worked out an intelligent plan.

He asked one of his vendors to buy a Range Rover in the vendor's company name. After the whopping purchase of Tk 2.5 crore, the plan was that the car would be in the DMD's possession for temporary use only.

And after six months, the vendor would auction it off, enabling the DMD to get it at Tk 30 lakh only. This way neither the tax authorities nor the organisation he worked for would raise any objection! The DMD wins, and so does the vendor, but the ethics of society gets a bashing!



Since I started my consultancy business, it has not been easy getting consultancy jobs, as working with multinationals never gave me that cockeyed knowledge which is critical in our environment.

To my surprise, I am learning from some very successful business counterparts about the norms and practices of the industry. These include how deals can be creatively made beyond personal connection, and how board members, business owners and even senior officials can be satisfied!

Board members or owners also take bribes in exchange for favours! Some even take the risk of making payments before the deal comes through despite the risks involved. Sadly, this is a common phenomenon in all developing countries and Bangladesh is no exception.

As a management trainee in the early 1990s, I had a short attachment at the Chattogram Customs to see how consignments are cleared. I still remember how for any clearance, a fixed sum had to be deposited at 13 out of the 19 check or approval points and that too in broad daylight!

But the multinational I worked for professed a principle of "zero tolerance" to such practice. Later, I came to learn that such "norms" were above the purview of our zero tolerance.

There was a time when bribery was an unspeakable offence, a taboo. But today, taking cash money, valuable gifts, exchanging favours etc all go around openly

The multinational companies or the private sector just handle it more smartly by distancing themselves legally and passing the job on to a third party who manages it on their behalf. The point is, they all get their hands dirty in the process.

The above instance is a widely accepted "norm" to get the job done by government offices in countries like Bangladesh. Our civil society has dubbed it speed money, facilitation fee or service charges. Such fees are arbitrary and can go up to billions.

According to the Transparency International, corruption makes up 5 per cent of Bangladesh's GDP.

There was a time when bribery was an unspeakable offence, a taboo. But today, taking cash money, valuable gifts, exchanging favours etc. all go around openly.

Because of global attention to money laundering activities, local surveillance on financial transactions has been revamped, making traditional forms of bribery a bit more challenging. And with the rise of Bitcoin, be on the lookout for more innovative ways of bribery!

Every one of us is directly or indirectly responsible for the vile culture of bribery in our society today. But it is never too late to eradicate such social vices and work towards building a Golden Bangladesh.

The author is a telecom and management expert.

Banglalink logs 11.6pc revenue growth in Q3

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Mobile phone operator Banglalink registered a double-digit revenue growth in the third quarter of 2022, the second consecutive period that it has gone over 10 per cent on the back of strong data sales.

The telecom operator's revenue rose 11.6 per cent year-on-year to Tk 1,379.5 crore in the July-September quarter of 2022.

It was 8.6 per cent and 11 per cent in the first and second quarters of 2022 respectively.

With this, the country's third-largest operator is poised to surpass its 5.1 per cent year-on-year revenue growth in 2021, which was the highest revenue growth in six years.

The strong display in performance comes amidst the company achieving the top spot in internet speed tests conducted by the regulator and global analyst firms.

A 21.4 per cent year-on-year data revenue growth and a 6.4 per cent year-on-year subscriber-base growth contributed to the consistent performance, said the mobile phone operator in a press release yesterday.

Its parent company Veon published the latest quarterly results yesterday.

"The consistent double-digit revenue growth confirms the customer's recognition of our increased network footprint and service quality across the country," said Erik Aas, chief executive officer of Banglalink.

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Flat-bottomed vessels carry sand on their open hold on the Chengerkhal river in Sylhet sadar upazila. A number of trans-boundary rivers flow through the district, such as Lalakhali, Shari-Goyain and Piyain, bringing along sand which is used in the construction of buildings and roads. Vessels of different sizes, capable of carrying anywhere from 15,000 cubic feet (cft) to 70,000 cft of sand, transport at least Tk 500 crore worth of sand over waterways from the district each year, as per estimates of traders at Badaghat. Nowadays each cft of sand sells for Tk 14. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

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BD Thai Aluminium sees sharp fall in profit

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh Thai Aluminium Ltd's profit plummeted more than 98 per cent to Tk 25.55 lakh in the financial year that ended on June 30, 2022.

The manufacturer of aluminium profiles made a profit of Tk 15.97 crore in 2020-21.

The company reported earnings per share of Tk 0.02 for 2021-22 against Tk 1.25 in the previous financial year.

The net asset value per share improved slightly to Tk 28.33 in the last financial year from Tk 28.11, while the net operating cash flow per share returned to a positive Tk 0.51 from a negative Tk 0.14 during the period.

The board of directors of Bangladesh Thai recommended no dividend for 2021-22.