



Baskets made from bamboo are seen on display in the Natun Bazar area of Muktagacha upazila in Mymensingh. Priced between Tk 120 to 150, the baskets offer little profit to their craftsmen as each can cost up to Tk 100 to make. PHOTO: MD AMINUL ISLAM

Bamboo craftsmen being battered by higher input costs

MD AMINUL ISLAM, Mymensingh

Life has become exceedingly difficult for craftsmen that make different bamboo products used in agriculture and fishing as production costs have soared in recent years.

With the price of finished goods being almost equal to the input cost, many bamboo craftsmen have been forced to leave their ancestral profession in search of a better source of income.

"We are struggling to survive as it is very hard to earn even Tk 100 daily from this profession," said Rafiq Mia, a bamboo craftsman of Kandigaon village in Mymensingh's Muktagacha upazila.

Various bamboo traders and craftsmen in the Muktagacha Natun Bazar area told this correspondent that rising raw material costs are the main concern.

A small to medium size piece of bamboo currently costs up to Tk 100 while the products made from it are priced at Tk 120 to Tk 150, they said.

Sales usually peak during the aman and boro harvesting seasons while demand also spikes during major festivals such as Pabela Baishakh. However, most bamboo craftsmen are unable to go for large scale production as they lack sufficient funds



and workers.

Instead, many of them are deprived of fair prices as middlemen eat up a lion's share of the profit for simply taking the goods to the market, they added.

Babul Mia, a bamboo craftsman of Rouharchar village in the same upazila, said his business now totally depends on housewives who can engage in making bamboo products for hours at home.

"This is because most male workers have already left the profession in search for a better living to support their future generations," he added.

Idris Ali, a bamboo trader of Chogoria Ramnathpur village in Muktagacha upazila, said many craftsmen have either left the locality for work elsewhere while others that are continuing their ancestral profession are living in a "half-fed" condition.

Locals say there are some 500 families engaged in making bamboo products in the district, mainly in the Muktagacha, Phulpur, Tarakanda, Gouripur and sadar upazilas.

The arrival of plastic alternatives was the biggest threat for bamboo products

in recent years as they are comparatively cheaper and more available, according to Haradhan Pal, a trader of bamboo products at Shambhuganj Bazar.

A farm labourer can easily earn an average of Tk 400 daily but the same cannot be said for bamboo craftsmen as they get only about half of that amount while having to source raw materials locally, said Abu Hanif, a craftsman of Subornakhila village.

Mononesh Das, a journalist, said bamboo products once had great demand for use in agriculture as well as aquaculture.

But now, most farmers prefer comparatively cheaper plastic sacks and other articles as they are more easily available.

As such, demand has decreased of the years, leaving the craftsmen in a crisis, he added.

Meanwhile, farmers say the price of bamboo products used in agriculture or fishing has increased over the years, leading to the rise of plastic alternatives.

A medium size bamboo basket is now being sold for Tk 100 to Tk 120 while the big ones cost more than Tk 150. Due to price hike of bamboo items, people are using plastic items to optimise costs, they said.

Emirates Skywards crosses 30m members milestone

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Emirates Skywards, a loyalty programme of Emirates and flydubai, has hit a new record with more than 30 million members enrolled worldwide.

As part of the celebration of the new milestone, Emirates will be offering passengers travelling on select flights special branded cupcakes on board.

The loyalty programme was rolled out on January 23 and will continue till February 4 this year, said a press release.

Skywards members can join a competition and win more than 10 one-way Emirates Business Class tickets from Dubai to London.

Emirates Skywards members, who will travel to and through Dubai between January 30 and February 1, will also have a chance to win even more rewards. Winners will discover a red "30 million" sticker on luggage upon arrival into Dubai airports. Over the next 3 days, 10 members will have a chance to win 30,000 miles each.

Besides, the awards will include 30 silver tier upgrades, 10 Skywards+ packages, 30 flight upgrades and 30 complimentary chauffeur drive service vouchers for Dubai.

MTB, Rahim Textile ink deal on payroll banking service

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Mutual Trust Bank (MTB) has recently signed an agreement with Rahim Textile Mills, a concern of New Asia Group, for providing payroll banking services to its employees.

Md Shafquat Hossain, head of retail banking division of MTB, and Brig General (ret'd) AF Jaglul Ahmed, executive director of Rahim Textile Mills, inked the deal at a ceremony held at the bank's head office in Dhaka, said a press release.

Syed Mahbubur Rahman, managing director of MTB, Md Khalid Mahmood Khan, deputy managing director, Md Shaheenur Rahman, executive director, and Mohammad Sakhawat Hossain, chief financial officer of Rahim Textile Mills, were present.

| | PRICE (JAN 25, 2023) | % CHANGES FROM A MONTH AGO | % CHANGE FROM A YEAR AGO |
|------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Fine rice (kg) | Tk 60-Tk 75 | -0.74 ↓ | 5.47 ↑ |
| Coarse rice (kg) | Tk 46-Tk 52 | -2.97 ↓ | 3.16 ↑ |
| Loose flour (kg) | Tk 58-Tk 60 | -5.6 ↓ | 66.2 ↑ |
| Lentil (kg) | Tk 100-Tk 105 | 0 | 3.54 ↑ |
| Soybean (litre) | Tk 168-Tk 170 | 0.3 ↑ | 14.58 ↑ |
| Potato (kg) | Tk 24-Tk 30 | 20 ↑ | 63.64 ↑ |
| Onion (kg) | Tk 30-Tk 35 | -13.33 ↓ | 18.18 ↑ |
| Egg (4 pcs) | Tk 40-Tk 45 | 14.86 ↑ | 16.44 ↑ |

SOURCE: TCB



Golam Gaffar Imtiaz Chowdhury, head of foreign remittance department of Bank Asia, receives an award from Dr Mashiur Rahman, economics affairs adviser to the prime minister, in recognition of the bank's contribution in collecting remittance for 2022 at a programme at Pan Pacific Sonargaon Dhaka on Monday. PHOTO: BANK ASIA

Bank Asia wins Remittance Award 2022

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Bank Asia Limited has won a "Remittance Award 2022" conferred by the Centre for Non-Resident Bangladeshis (NRB) for outstanding contribution in collecting remittance

for 2022.

Golam Gaffar Imtiaz Chowdhury, head of foreign remittance department of Bank Asia, received an award from Dr Mashiur Rahman, economics affairs adviser to the prime

minister, at a programme held at Pan Pacific Sonargaon Dhaka on Monday.

MS Shekil Chowdhury, chairperson of the Centre for NRB, presided over the ceremony, said a press release.



Mohammad Ali, managing director of Pubali Bank, inaugurates the bank's Matuail sub-branch at Demra Thana in Dhaka yesterday. Md Kamruzzaman, regional manager of Dhaka south region of the bank, was present. PHOTO: PUBALI BANK



Tarique Afzal, managing director of AB Bank, hands over smart credit cards with easy terms to school teachers at a programme held at Gimadanga Tungipara Government Primary School in Tungipara Thana of Gopalganj recently. Sheikh Tozammel Haque Tutul, mayor of Tungipara municipality, and Sheikh Sukur Ahmed, chairman of Patgati Union Parishad, were present. PHOTO: AB BANK



HN Ashequr Rahman, chairman of Meghna Bank, attended its "Corporate Conference 2023" at Gulshan Club in Dhaka on Sunday. Rehana Ashequr Rahman, chairman of its risk management committee, Sohail RK Hussain, managing director, and Kimiwa Saddat, head of corporate banking, were present. PHOTO: MEGHNA BANK



Mohammad Feroz Hossain, managing director of Exim Bank, opens the bank's Badamtoli sub-branch in Old Dhaka yesterday. Md Moidul Islam, additional deputy managing director of the bank, Serazul Islam, president of Bangladesh Fresh Fruits Importers' Association, and Md Al-Amin Hossain, deputy secretary, were present. PHOTO: EXIM BANK