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A vibrant end to Kumbh Mela

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NAIMUR RAHMAN AND SHAKIB NILOY

The 11-day-long 21st International Rishikumbha and Kumbha Mela concluded with the initiation of Pandits yesterday.

Kumbh Mela, one of the largest religious gatherings in the world, takes place every 12 years in India. However, in Bangladesh, it is celebrated every three years in Chattogram’s Banshkhali upazila.

The word “Kumbh”, which translates to “pitcher”, refers to a mythical pitcher that was used to collect the nectar of immortality during a great battle between the gods and the demons.

According to Hindu mythology, drops of nectar fell in four different locations, and it is at these places



that the Kumbh Mela is held.

The festival lasted 11 days and involved a series of spiritual rituals and ceremonies, including bathing in the holy rivers, attending sermons by Hindu saints, and participating in mass prayers and offerings.

“This is the only Kumbh Mela in Bangladesh where we gather and celebrate every three years. The fair started on January 27,” said

Harihor Dey, one of the organisers.

In addition to the religious aspects of the festival, the Kumbh Mela is also a vibrant cultural event, featuring performances by musicians, artists, and dancers, as well as a bustling market where vendors sell food, souvenirs, and other goods.

The Kumbh Mela is also a symbol of unity and a celebration of cultural diversity. Despite the massive crowd, the festival is known for its peaceful and harmonious atmosphere.

“The event was a success, with everyone leaving with a sense of fulfilment. I have been attending this fair since my childhood and it is gradually changing and becoming more colourful,” said visitor Amrita Harinam Das.



Mro boy breaks world record

NAIMUR RAHMAN

Football was a relatively foreign concept in the Mro community. However, the magic of football as a game is that it finds itself in the furthest nooks and corners of the world.

And just like that, the football magic reached Chimbuk, Bandarban, where it made a boy dream. His name was Prenchong Mro, currently a fourth-year student of Physical Education and Sports Science Department of Chittagong University, who was determined to introduce the sport to his community and inspire them to see its potential as a profession.

Recently, Prenchong finally inched closer to his dream, as he made it to Guinness Book of World Records for the most football (soccer) toe taps in one minute.

He started practicing for several records and finally made the attempt to break the record on April 24 last year. Guinness World Records approved the video in November and Prenchong got the official letter in this year’s January.

When asked about what motivated him to set this record, Prenchong said, “In early 2022, the idea of Guinness World Record came to my mind. I saw the video of Kanak Karmakar, who held the record for the highest toe taps (197 times in 1 minute).”

“There was no footballer in my community. People from the Mro community knew very little about this sport. That hit me and I wanted to introduce football as a profession here,” he added.

In 2021, Prenchong played for Brothers Union Club in the Chittagong Premier League and won the championship. He is also playing for the district and university teams.



Killing a canal to save a river!

Contractor filling up Mariamnagar canal with sand after dredging Karnaphuli



SIFAYET ULLAH

The 1.5-kilometre-long Mariamnagar canal in Rangunia upazila is a hub for bamboo trade. Besides, locals use this canal -- which originates from the Karnaphuli river -- for household chores and farmers use it for irrigation.

However, a contractor firm assigned by Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) is filling up the waterbody by dumping sand, despite protests from locals.

Mohammed Kamal, a bamboo trader, said, “We bring bamboo from hilly areas by waterways and store them on boats beside the canal. Later, we sell the bamboo and transport it by river routes from here to various areas such as Chattogram city and Cox’s Bazar.”

However, Bashundhara Engineering,

the firm assigned by BWDB for dredging Karnaphuli river, has been dumping sand on the canal for three months. As the waterbody is getting filled, we have no alternatives but to close our business, he added.

Despite having options to store the to-be-dredged sand elsewhere, Bashundhara Engineering is still dumping it into the canal, he claimed.

During a recent visit to the area, this correspondent found that the contractor filled half a kilometre of the waterbody. Many boats were seen anchored in the filled

canal.

Sujon Ahmed, director of the project from Bashundhara Engineering, admitted that they filled the waterbody with the dredged sand.

He said once the dredging of the river is done, they will re-dig the canal.

Tayan Kumar Tripura, executive engineer of BWDB, said, “We have instructed the contractor to dump sand at specific places. If anyone does not follow the instructions, we will take action against them as per the rules.”

Aliur

Rahman, general secretary of Chattogram River and Canal Protection Movement, said, “Sand dumping on the canal has not only destroyed its biodiversity but also affected the residents of the area who depend on the water body. We demand that the government agencies take legal action against those filling the canals.”

According to the Bangladesh Environment Conservation Act, 1995, filling up a waterbody is a criminal offence.

Ferdous Anwar, deputy director of the Department of Environment of Chattogram district, said, “Due to a shortage of manpower, we often fail to supervise and implement environmental laws everywhere.”

“However, we will take prompt legal action against those who are filling up the canal.”

