

## Songs of the soul

### Shah Abdul Karim folk fest begins

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The Baul Shah Abdul Karim Folk Festival begins in Ujandhal village under Sunamganj's Dera' upazila, where the folk music legend lived, today.

The two-day yearly festival is being held over the past 18 years marking the birth anniversary of Shah Abdul Karim, also honoured as Baul Samrat. The festival is organised by his disciples.

"Daily programmes at the festival will commence at 3:00pm and conclude in early morning on next day. The festival will conclude on February 16," said his son Shah Nur Jalal, also president of Shah Abdul Karim Parishad.

Folk musicians from across the country will join the festival to perform and attend discussions on the Baul Samrat's life and works, he added.

Much like Hason Raja, Radharaman Dutta, Ukil Munshi, Durbini Shah and many others, Shah Abdul Karim also explored the roots of Baul philosophy through his music.

Born on February 15, 1916 in Dhal village under the upazila, Karim grew up amid poverty and did not attend school. His journey into the world of folk music started at a very early age under the tutelage of Baul Shah Ibrahim Mastan Baksh.

He wrote and composed over 1,600 songs, which showcase deep spirituality and baul philosophy. He also wrote Gono Sangeet (songs of the masses), through which he expressed his feelings about the sufferings of mankind in a capitalist society.

Shah Abdul Karim was honoured with Ekushey Padak in 2001.



## Reza Ali's first death anniversary observed

STAR REPORT

The first death anniversary of Reza Ali, a lawyer and former lawmaker from Trishal, was observed on February 13, said a press release.

Former member of the advisory committee of Awami League, Reza Ali was the founder and former chairman of Bitopi Group and Bitopi Advertising Ltd. Marking the death anniversary, Reza and Nayeema Ali Foundation organised a memorial meeting and prayer session at 3:30pm that day.

His wife Prof Nayeema Ali, former professor of Dhaka University attended the event chaired by Advocate Ziaul Haque Sabuj, organisational editor of the Mymensingh district Awami League. Besides, prayers were also offered at his graveside by his family members -- including his wife, sons, and daughter.

## Inflation

FROM PAGE 3

The PM also said the government has taken initiative to sign the Mutual Legal Assistance (MLA) Agreement with 10 countries to receive necessary information, evidence, and other assistance in a bid to recover the money laundered from Bangladesh.

A strategic paper with recommendations on recovering laundered money, approved by the National Coordinating Committee on preventing money laundering and terror financing, has been sent to all relevant ministries, departments, and agencies for implementation, she also said.

Law enforcement agencies are communicating with their foreign counterparts to recover money laundered by hundi and other means, the PM added.

Hasina also informed that the government has approved "Bangladesh Offshore Model Production Sharing Contract 2023" to strengthen the country's offshore oil and gas exploration activities.

"Offshore bidding round will be announced soon," she also said.

Also, a concept paper has been prepared for dredging 491 rivers to restore their flow, she added.

## Love resides here

EKUSHEY BOI MELA

ARAFAT RAHAMAN

There was something special in the air yesterday.

Dhaka residents had not just one but three occasions to celebrate -- Saraswati Puja, Valentine's Day, and the joyous arrival of Falgun.

The trifecta of celebrations also spilled over to the Amar Ekushey Boi Mela. A wave of red and yellow covered Suhrawardy Udyan, amid the sweet fragrance of spring flowers mingling with the scent of new books. Parents walked hand-in-hand with their children, their faces lit with joy.

The day not only saw love blossoming between hearts, but also between readers and books.

Monira, a university student, adorned in a vibrant yellow saree and a flower crown, was seen browsing poetry collections at a stall. "It feels like a double celebration," she said.

"The love for books and the love for spring, both bloomed here today," shared her friend Raihan, dressed in a colourful punjabi.

Another visitor, Sabuj Sarker said, "I came for Saraswati Puja but



Three sisters dolled up in red and yellow with flower crowns around their heads follow their parents as they walk through the Boi Mela at Suhrawardy Udyan yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

ended up buying a book in the afternoon."

For Samira, a student, the fair was an escape from the monotony of daily life. "Reading a book here feels like finding peace," she said, with a new novel in hand.

Sadhaon Chandra, 57, an avid reader, chipped in, "It's not just about books, it's about celebrating our culture, language, and love for life."

The popularity of the metro rail also boomed after Boi Mela kicked-off as many were finally able to quickly make their way to the fair thanks to the service. Almost all carriages remained filled to the brim throughout the day. However, the service was disrupted yesterday afternoon, after a kite fell on the power lines. Thankfully, it resumed after around an hour.

Meanwhile at the Boi Mela, publishers were somewhat divided in their opinions regarding the occasion.

Sirajul Kabir Chowdhury, managing editor of Anya Prakash, said they had a good day because many people visited their stall and their sales increased.

However, a staff at Bishwo Shahitto Kendro said, "People who genuinely want books usually avoid this day, knowing it's more about visiting than purchasing."

Even as the sun set and the day drew closer to its end, the joyful spirit stayed strong as crowds continued to buzz late into the evening.

A total of 91 new books were added to the Boi Mela yesterday, including "Chaashabhushar Sontan", a novel by writer Mohammad Muazzal. Prof Muhammad Zafar Iqbal unveiled the novel's cover at the fair.

## Will formulate policy

FROM PAGE 3

online journalism.

Referencing meetings with other journalist organisations, Arafat said he also received a proposal to formulate a policy determining the eligibility and qualification of a journalist.

"We will do so after consulting with you [journalists]," he said.

In regards to providing broadcasting or internet services ignoring existing laws, he said legal

action will be taken against those involved in irregularities.

Responding to demands for steps against sudden layoffs in media industry, he said it is a violation of universal human rights convention.

"I will issue an official directive to media outlet authorities so that no institution can sack its journalists on short notice. A layoff notice must be served at least three months beforehand," he added.

## Crumbling under

FROM PAGE 6

Conservation Trust, initiated a movement to protect these heritage buildings.

People from all walks joined him.

"It is necessary to protect heritage and culture. But in Bangladesh, responsible authorities are always negligent regarding heritage sites. Such a mindset must be changed, and these century-old structures must be

protected," Dipon said.

AKM Syfur Rahman, regional director (Chattogram and Sylhet) of Department of Archaeology, said, "We will soon send an inspection team. As per its recommendation, we will decide on declaring these buildings as antiquities and take necessary steps towards conservation."

Prof Abul Anam Md Riaz, principal of MC College, said, "All other

structures from that period were successfully retrofitted and are being used regularly. But these structures deteriorated badly and are in no shape to be renovated."

"If the Department of Archaeology or another organisation can conserve these structures authentically, that's ideal. Otherwise, we might demolish them and build two new buildings with matching designs," he added.

## Is family planning

FROM PAGE 3

prevalence rate in the country is 64 percent, with only 8 percent attributed to males.

The Directorate General of Family Planning (DGFP) lists seven contraceptive methods for couples, with only condoms and no-scalpel vasectomy (NSV) designated for men.

While the methods for males entail no side effects or incisional pain, the female counterpart comes with various drawbacks, including lower abdominal pain, spotting, mood swings, and weight gain, as per DGFP website.

A 2020 Nijera Kori study by Prof Zobaida Nasreen of Dhaka University's anthropology department revealed that 96 percent of male respondents believed birth control was solely a woman's responsibility.

Condom use among males was reported at 1 percent, with 86 percent admitting to never using them.

**WHY THE RELUCTANCE?**  
The reluctance to use contraceptives is pervasive across all social classes, as highlighted by interviews with men from various backgrounds.

Aminul Islam, a 36-year-old street vendor in Mirpur, has not used any contraception since he got married in 2012, and is unsure what method his wife currently uses.

When asked why he doesn't use any method, he said, "That's women's stuff. I've seen her taking pills, and sometimes she gets injections too," he said.

Shafiqul Islam, a 34-year-old shopkeeper in Farmgate, married for the past 10 years, said family planning decisions in his household were primarily managed by his wife.

"I do not use condoms because it interferes with our quality time," he said.

And when it comes to

long-term methods, he said, "I have heard that it makes guys weak and causes weight loss."

When asked if they had ever tried it, he replied in the negative.

Fahim Hossain, a 35-year-old businessman, disclosed that he and his friends viewed long-term contraceptive use as a threat to their masculinity, contributing to their avoidance of such methods.

"Many men joke about getting a vasectomy, saying it turns them into hijra who are unable to make a woman pregnant," he said. Monjun Nahar, head of advocacy at Marie Stopes, suggested encouraging the use of non-hormonal methods, such as condoms, to promote shared responsibility.

"It is a safer option and also protects one from sexually transmitted diseases," she said.

Men's participation can be ensured by offering psychological support to women and being responsible partners, something lacking in many men, she mentioned.

"In many cases, they simply don't care, and instead of providing support or assistance, they resort to domestic violence. Many even discourage their partners when they want to opt for permanent methods," she added.

Abdul Latif Mollah, Director of Information Education Motivation Unit of DGFP, highlighted ongoing efforts to inspire and educate through various channels, including TV programmes, radio advertisements, and a dedicated call centre "Sukhi Poribar".

He noted the need for introducing new and innovative methods to increase male participation in family planning.

(Interviewee identities have been protected with pseudonyms)

## Save Sundarbans

FROM PAGE 3

We don't want a developed Bangladesh by destroying the Sundarbans," said Shahidul Islam, Bapa co-chairman and professor of geography and environment department at Dhaka University.

Mihir Biswas, joint secretary of Bapa, alleged that the current government has consistently been

approving projects that are harming the Sundarbans in the name of development.

Bapa general secretary Alamgir Kabir called upon the government to refrain from undertaking such projects.

Bapa joint secretary Hassan Yousuf Khan, executive members Halim Dad Khan and Parvin Akter, spoke among others.

## Truckers avoid

FROM PAGE 6

largely unsuitable for traffic.

Also, the five steel Bailey bridges on this road have long been in a dilapidated state and are unfit for vehicles carrying over 10 tonnes of load. However, with the trucks using this alternative route, the bridges have become vulnerable and risky, he added.

Many truck drivers, wishing anonymity, said they are already suffering financially due to increase

in price of fuel oil, tolls on various bridges, and other related expenses.

They often try to offset this extra cost by transporting more goods on their trucks. But if they cross the Payra Bridge, they have to pay a fine. To avoid more financial loss, they are using the alternative road, they added.

AM Atiq Ullah, executive engineer of RHD in Patuakhali, said they will discuss the matter with the higher authorities and take immediate action.

## Ensure justice

FROM PAGE 3

indigenous community.

Demanding justice for Preeti's death, Dipok Sil, president of a section of Chhatra Union, said the death of Preeti and the attempted rape incident at Mahalchhari are part of the repression against indigenous people.

Alik Mree, president of Adivasi Chhatra Sangram Parishad, said they demand

a fair and impartial investigation into Preeti's death.

He also demanded that all forms of repression against women and indigenous people should be put to an end.

Falguni Tripura, coordinator of Adivasi Nari Network, and Reng Young Mro, central vice president of the Pahari Chhatra Parishad, also spoke at the event.

**EXIM EXPORT IMPORT BANK OF BANGLADESH LIMITED**  
Shariah Based Islami Bank  
General Services Division  
Head Office, Dhaka.

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL**

Export Import Bank of Bangladesh Limited is going to procure Desktop Embosser/Card Production machine with Card personalization software for Embosser, EMV & NFC card and Profile manager for EMV & NFC cards, Payment HSM with firmware and license/certificate for all the components, including module-based supply, installation, and configuration separately in the bank with OEM standard support. Sealed RFPs for separate items are hereby invited from the eligible bona-fide firms/suppliers with long business track record and adequate supporting experts including supply, installation, configuration, commissioning, of essential hardware and software. The interested, eligible bidders are requested to collect the schedule from the website <https://www.eximbankbd.com/media/tender>. The bidder can propose/quote for any single item or all items of the RFP. RFP should be submitted in a sealed box kept at the General Services Division, HEAD OFFICE, "EXIM Bank Tower", Plot # 15, Road # 15, Block# CWS(C), Bir Uttam A. K. Khondokar Road, Gulshan-1, Dhaka- 1212 on or before March 03, 2024 within 3:00 pm. Bank reserves the right to accept or reject any bid partially or fully without assigning any reason whatsoever.

Senior Vice President, Head  
General Services Division

**Duplex for Sale @ Baridhara**  
7000 sft. With personal swimming pool & Many more.  
Call : 01853 070859

**INDEPENDENT UNIVERSITY, BANGLADESH (IUB)**

**VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT**

**Office of The Registrar**

- Senior Officer
- Officer
- Junior Officer

**Operations and Maintenance**

- Senior Electrical Engineer
- Junior Officer (Coordination)

**Department of Computer Science & Engineering, SETS**

- Research & Development Officer

Application Deadline:  
**Wednesday, February 28, 2024**

To apply, please visit:  
<http://www.iub.edu.bd/jobs> or scan the QR code

**Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB)**  
Department of Media and Communication  
School of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (SLASS)

**FACULTY SEARCH**

Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) invites applications for the position of **Assistant Professor**, specialized in Development Communication in the Department of Media and Communication, under the School of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (SLASS).

**Location:** IUB Campus, Dhaka (on-site)

**Application Deadline: Wednesday, February 28, 2024**

**How to apply:**  
Scan the QR code to download the application form, fill it in and email it to [hrdept@iub.edu.bd](mailto:hrdept@iub.edu.bd) along with your most recent resume and photograph. Clearly mention the name of the position in the subject line of the email.