



Dhaka's handicrafts now in GLOBAL MARKET

RBR

Tucked inside Baitul Aman Housing Society at Adabor is the factory outlet of "Hand Touch" – a handicrafts venture with a focus on recycling and catering to a niche market of hand-woven textiles in Bangladesh and abroad.

The endeavour, Hand Touch by Mohammad Ali Khan, has been in business since 2002 and its speciality is in home décor and textiles made by Bangladeshi women. The fabrics of choice are hand-woven materials like cotton, silk, and local fibres namely khadi, endi silk, jute, and others.

While clothing like local saris and three pieces are solely for the local market in Dhaka, the household products are of export quality and they have already grabbed the attention of the European market – especially in countries like the Netherlands, Sweden, France, and Italy. Their products are also exported to Canada, Japan, and Saudi Arabia...even as far as Uruguay!

"Neel Poddoo Crafts" is an online page of Fahmida Sultana. She buys wholesale products from Hand Touch like khadi



PHOTO: STAR

Graduating in silk technology with weaving as a minor subject, Khan has been experimenting with fabrics made by local artisans. His most recent experiment is the double-khadi weave, where he worked on the warp and weft of the loom with handmade, recycled cotton threads.

"It is not an easy task. After many tests and trials, I got the fabric done. It was for an order of throws and cushion covers in the Netherlands. I had them printed in black, zigzag patterns and the final product looks incredible.

"What makes me happy is that it carries the 'Made in Bangladesh' tag. Just like the RMG sector, we can work wonders with our cottage industry handicrafts," said Khan.

Currently, there are 30 or so

companies based in Dhaka working to export local products like wicker baskets, table mats, runners, dining cloths, kitchen aprons, napkins, kitchen towels and tote bags made of recycled cloths, jute bags, and mats. Mohammad Ali Khan has two factories in Panchagarh and Manikganj for their production.

"I have 300 producers involved in the cottage industry. I explain my order and give them a sample. Then, the women artisans get the work done maintaining strict quality control," he shared.

"In Cumilla, handmade khadi threads are spun from spinning mill waste and I collect the garments waste, make cotton out of them, and re-spin them into threads. The khadi products are hand spun and others are

woven in machines. Dhaka is buzzing with ventures promoting local crafts and there is a robust online presence of local saris," Khan explained the reason behind the busy outlet.

We know that Pabna is popular for its *buti* and coarse saris from Dogachi. Tangail has its fine taants, Rugganj boasts timeless Jamdanis, and Mirpur has its gorgeous katans. Similarly, Cumilla has its yarn-based handloom khadi, and Rajshahi has silk.

Needless to say, our heritage weaves, yarns, and handicrafts are still struggling to put their stamp on the global market. So, when you come across such vibrant local businesses exporting and trading in our handmade merchandise in the global markets you most certainly feel elated.



and taant saris and sells them through social media pages. There are about 100 or more such Dhaka-based online sites that sell products bought in bulk from Home Touch.

Correction

A report published on February 23 in The Daily Star under the headline "A Voyage Fraught With Peril" mistakenly mentioned that 26 lakh Bangladeshis crossed the sea to enter Europe. Actually, 26 lakh migrants of different nationalities crossed the sea to enter Europe. We regret the error.

Gunshots

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Balukhali border, and Myanmar's border guards fled to Bangladesh after failing to put up a resistance.

They believe the latest gunfire near the border took place between members of the Arakan Army and a Rohingya drug trafficking gang known as Nabi Hussain group.

For the past few weeks, fierce fighting has been going on between the Arakan Army and Myanmar junta forces across the border near Ghumdhum union of Naikhongchhari upazila in Bandarban, and Palongkhali union of Ukhiya upazila and Whykong union of Teknaf upazila in Cox's Bazar.

Rohingya leaders living in refugee camps in Ukhiya and Teknaf fear that a possible retaliation by Myanmar forces to regain territories in Rakhine may force more Rohingyas to attempt to enter Bangladesh.

In the midst of tension in Myanmar's Rakhine state along the border stretching from Bandarban to Cox's Bazar, nine Rohingyas tried to enter Bangladesh but were turned away Thursday morning.

Aside from that, Border Guard Bangladesh and Bangladesh Coast Guard intercepted a total of 372 Rohingyas attempting to cross the Naf river on small boats this month.

Early this month, fierce clashes broke out between the junta troops and the Arakan Army across the border from the Tumburu area of Naikhongchhari upazila.

The fighting forced 330 members of the Myanmar junta to flee to Bangladesh. They were later handed over to the Myanmar authorities on February 15.

Later, the fighting moved to the border area in Myanmar opposite Shahporir Dwip in Teknaf upazila of Cox's Bazar.

During the fighting between the Myanmar junta troops and the Arakan Army, one Bangladeshi woman and a Rohingya man were killed after a stray mortar shell landed in Ghumdhum under Naikhongchhari upazila earlier this month.

There'll be no scarcity during Ramadan: PM US team due today

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Hasina said bilateral issues dominated the agenda of her meetings with global leaders on the sidelines of the conference.

"We have state-level relations with European countries. Besides, we have an advantage because of personal relations. No one spoke about the election. They themselves knew that I would win the election.

"Those who don't want [to see me in power again] raised the issue."

Not naming anyone, Hasina said there is a country where the election is called free and fair though it takes 12-13 days to announce the results of polls.

"Then how come the election is not free in Bangladesh though the results are announced within 24-48 hours [after voting]. We don't have any medicine for this disease. I believe our strength is our people.

"We have good relations with European countries. France will provide us with \$1 billion to mitigate

the impacts of climate change."

Asked about her fear of "a famine" in the country in February-March this year, Hasina said conspiracies have always been there.

"A big conspiracy was afoot to prevent the election from taking place. There was the October 28 incident and arson attacks before that. These did not happen suddenly, all were planned.

"When the vested quarters understood that they couldn't prevent the election, they began making a plot to hike the prices of essentials."

"The plot was hatched to oust the government... You all know who they are. I don't want to name anyone. I don't even need to say. But the plot still exists."

Hasina further said there is a lack of "genuine" political parties in Bangladesh.

The Awami League was formed in 1949 to speak for the people and then the party moved forward through

movements. But no other party in Bangladesh has such history, she said, adding that Jamaat-e-Islami is a party of war criminals, and the BNP and the Jatiya Party were formed by military dictators.

About traffic jam in the capital, Hasina said she already asked the authorities concerned to activate the traffic signal system instead of the manual one in the city to ease traffic congestion.

"I talked to the IGP yesterday [Thursday] and asked him to take measures to activate the traffic signal system in a better way to ease traffic congestion," she said when her attention was drawn to the traffic situation in Ramadan.

The city streets now don't face additional pressure of traffic like they did before the launch of metro rail, she added.

Hasina went to Munich on February 15 and returned home on February 19.

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civil society, and labour organisations.

Diplomatic sources said that though there were ups and downs in the bilateral relationship, both countries have a lot of stakes in advancing the ties.

The visit comes at a time when the situation in neighbouring Myanmar is worsening, with ethnic rebel groups taking control of camps of junta troops and cities in the bordering areas, including in Rakhine.

The visit, therefore, is also significant from the point of view of regional security, they said.

Eileen Laubacher, who visited Bangladesh in January last year, visited Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar and met officials from UN-run organisations, NGOs, and local government.

She also met PM's then Security Adviser Major General (ret'd) Tarique Ahmed Siddique, and other government officials.

Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS), the crisis in Myanmar, its regional implications, and the Rohingya crisis may be a major part of her discussions, sources said, referring to US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Donald Lu's recent remarks.

On February 15, Lu said the

situation in Myanmar and the refugee crisis were not improving and that security issues could deepen for Bangladesh and potentially for India in the coming days.

Afreen Akhter, who also visited Bangladesh on October 16-17 last year, may mainly focus on civil society, media, and labour rights, which was also reflected in her recent remarks.

At a briefing in Washington on February 14, she said Washington is focusing on engaging civil society, labour organisations, and the media to build institutions that will enable Bangladesh to become more democratic.

Meanwhile, USAID Assistant Administrator for Asia Michael Schiffer is expected to focus on the development partnership between the two countries.

The bilateral trade between Bangladesh and the US accounts for more than \$10 billion. The US is the leading contributor of humanitarian assistance in response to the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh.

Democratic deficiency, lack of media freedom, shrinking space of civil society, and labour rights are some of the major concerns for the US, which it wants to improve, diplomatic sources said.

37 arrested for involvement in gangs

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Rab arrested 37 people for their suspected involvement in juvenile gangs from different areas of Dhaka and Gazipur.

The arrestees are members of various teen gangs, including 007 Group, Baba Group, Jaura Group, Voltage Group, D Company, and Jahangir Group, said Rab-1 Commanding Officer Lt Col Mostaq Ahmed yesterday.

They were arrested from Gazipur, Tongi, and Airport, Banani and Mohakhali areas.

Twenty of the arrestees are teenagers.

The others are Al-Amin, 24, Islam, 29, Jewel, 22, Saad, 22, Rohan, 22, Mana, 28, Hriday, 20, Md Akash, 30, Md Iman, 20, Md Ramzan, 21, Md Shakib, 22, Md Amir Hossain, 36, Shahjahan Saju alias Russell, 45, Md Zilad Mia, 20, Md Babu Mia, 22, Md Shahjahan, 21, Md Jalal Mia, 28.

According to Rab, half a kilogramme of marijuana, 24 mobile phones, one blade, one axe, one power bank, five rods, 16 knives, three iron chains, one hammer, one motorcycle, and Tk 24,250 in cash were recovered from the accused.

4 killed in road crashes

STAR REPORT

At least four people died in three separate road accidents in Satkhira and Chapainawabganj last morning.

In Satkhira, two women were killed and three injured when a lorry hit a battery-run three-wheeler in Noapara Dhalir Mor area of Assasuni upazila around 7:45am.

Fazila Khatun, 60, and Achhiya Khatun, 55, passengers of the three-wheeler, died on the spot, said Biswajit Kumar Adhikari, reports our local correspondent, quoting officer-in-charge of Assasuni Police Station.

In Chapainawabganj, an elderly woman and an eight-year-old boy died in separate road accidents in Sadar upazila.

The deceased are Khairunnesa, 65, of Sadar upazila, and Rafi, 8, son of Kawsar of Shibganj upazila, said Sadar Police Station OC Mintu Rahman, reports UNB.

DU entry test for arts, law, social sciences unit held

DU CORRESPONDENT

The admission test for Dhaka University's undergraduate programmes under the arts, law, and social sciences unit for the 2023-24 academic session was held last morning.

The entry test was held in Dhaka and seven other divisional cities to reduce the hassle of students and their guardians spending time and money.

The examination started at 11:00am and continued till 12:30pm.

The test for business studies (C unit) will be held today, science (A unit) will be held on March 1, fine arts (general knowledge and drawing) on March 9.

In the 100-mark question, examinees had to answer a set of Multiple Choice Questions (MCQ) for 60 marks and a written part worth 40 marks.

Dhaka air a winter hazard

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pollution exposure and increased risks of emergency room visits for acute coronary syndrome and respiratory diseases, particularly pneumonia."

PM10 exposure was similarly associated with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, asthma, as well as high rates of hospitalisation for heart failure.

While correlation between high AQI and heightened risk of lung and heart disease has been established, scientists are yet to definitively prove causality.

People who are subjected to Dhaka air, however, have often complained of the effects of pollution.

Anupoma Joyeeta Joyee, a lawyer who lives in the capital's Uttara, has been an asthma patient since childhood. Every winter, her respiratory health declines, and this year she minimised her outdoor activities.

"I have to cross the Khalpar area in Uttara every day if I go outside, so I have tried to work from home as much as possible recently. I still have to go out once in a while, and every time I do, my breathing is affected. I

try to make sure I'm wearing a mask whenever I'm outside, but I'm still in a panicked state because I know that not all pollutants are being blocked by it," she said.

Syeda Maisha Ali, a private university teacher, told The Daily Star about her father who was taken ill following prolonged exposure to dust and other pollutants during the winter.

"My father has to travel for work, so during November and December, he used long-haul public transport numerous times. He is an asthma patient and he has been ill with throat and windpipe-related complications for almost a month," she said.

Speaking about how worsened air quality in winter may have impacted patients, Md Rahmatullah Khan, an associate professor at the Institute of Health Technology and a chest diseases specialist and pulmonologist, said, "Asthmatic patients have increased, there has been a high prevalence of acute exacerbation of asthma too. I have been seeing patients of all ages suffer from these problems.

"We advise patients to avoid

allergens, to stay away from dust and smog. They should use warm water for showers and ablutions, and wear masks outside at all times," he added.

HSIA's terminal-3 to open in Oct

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Almost 4,000 people will be required just to maintain security, it added.

Since such a large workforce will not be available by October, the terminal will not be fully functional in the first few months when CAAB and Biman Bangladesh Airlines will run it, officials said.

CAAB expects that the people needed for the jobs will be hired by early next year, officials said, adding that the facility is likely to be fully operational in February next year.

CAAB officials say almost 30 organisations now provide passenger services and run the ground handling, immigration, and customs.

The government decided in principle to let a Japanese consortium under public private partnership operate and maintain the third terminal.

CAAB has already started discussions with a consortium of six Japanese companies. But it might take around a year to complete the formalities, sources said.

A "transactional advisor" appointed by the authorities is preparing a report which will be given to CAAB in April, officials said.

If everything is found okay in the report, it will be possible to sign an agreement with the Japanese consortium interested in providing ground handling services by August, they added.

The consortium will need around six months to prepare for the job.

Until the Japanese firm is ready, terminal-3 will be partially operational.

CAAB will make an announcement about the terminal's operation in October.

While the Japanese consortium will handle the operations, CAAB will look after security.

"We will handle customs and immigration ourselves. The Japanese company will manage the airport, ensuring the services needed from the time a passenger enters the airport to the time they board a plane," said CAAB Chairman Mafidur.

The third terminal is designed to connect with a multimodal transport system to let passengers enter and exit smoothly.

The new terminal will be connected with the elevated expressway, underground railway, and the airport railway station through a tunnel.

Besides, hajj pilgrims will be able to access the third terminal from Ashkona hajj camp through another tunnel.