

MY DHAKA



PHOTO: TOUHID HASAN REAN

GLASS BANGLES make a fashionable comeback

RBR
There is an undeniable charm associated with glass bangles, particularly during events like Pahela Baishakh. Traditionally sold by churiwalis, the craze for these colourful glass bangles died down in recent years as fashion changed. Nowadays, most people opt for metallic bangles for their durability and design. However, there is an almost magical feeling when one puts on a dozen glass bangles, which chime and tinkle as you walk wearing them. Catering to the demands of those looking for the romantic and nostalgic experience of wearing glass bangles, Dhaka now has a shop that exclusively sells glass bangles. This is one niche business that not many have ventured

into. Kacher Churi is a bangle shop that started in 2018. Touhid Hasan Rean initially launched the venture online while he was a first year student of Software Engineering. "Glass bangles are such a gift that it does not burden your wallet and at the same time perks up your mood instantly. At Kacher Churi, 60 percent of my buyers are men! They come to get gifts for their significant others and friends. I have special gift boxes on offer for them. A dozen glass bangles can sell for anywhere between Tk 49 and Tk 380," says Touhid, Founder and CEO of Kacher Churi, which now has three outlets in Khilgaon, Banasree, and Mirpur. This unusual venture began with a visit to Chawk Bazar in Old Dhaka,

when colourful glass bangles caught Touhid's eyes. This led to him deciding to sell them online. He bought 120 dozen reshami churis or single colour glass bangles with Tk 1,650 only. "Throughout my university days, I was stuck sitting in front of my computer, juggling the business of selling glass bangles and studying. However, my business really took off during the COVID-19 days. Initially, during the lockdown, everyone was doing some sort of online business. Many of my peers started selling glass bangles at steep prices, making the market unstable. During the first six months, I stayed away. Then, when their half-hearted efforts withered away, I entered the domain again, this time with both online and offline presence," Touhid explained.

Touhid now buys his exclusive collection from Delhi, Mumbai, and other cities as each Indian state has their unique bangle design. The reason he brings glass bangles from India is because Bangladeshi bangles are not up to the same quality. "I buy them from a third party and clear my customs and VAT obligations. For me, selling bangles is a part of my emotional attachment. I wanted to do something on my own and I have taken loans to expand my business," he says. Baishakh is usually when Touhid's sales experience a boost. Additionally, for the upcoming festivals, he has 60 new designs on offer. Kacher Churi is a must-visit, especially for men looking for a perfect gift for their partners.

MV Abdullah likely to reach Bangladeshi waters by May 14

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chattogram

The Bangladeshi-flagged vessel, MV Abdullah, which was released by Somali pirates on April 14, is expected to reach Bangladeshi waters with 23 sailors and crewmembers by May 14. The sailors and crewmembers of the ship were held captive by pirates for around 33 days. Meherul Karim, chief executive officer (CEO) of the ship's owning firm, SR Shipping Limited, told The Daily Star that the ship, which is on the way to Chattogram from UAE, was around 750 nautical miles away from Kutubdia around 1:00pm yesterday. At its current speed, the ship is likely to reach Kutubdia on Monday (May 13) night or the following morning, he said. After loading 56,000 tonnes of limestone, the ship left the UAE port of Mina Saqr in the early hours of April 30 and then went to a nearby port to refuel before heading for Chattogram. The ship came under attack by Somali pirates on March 12, when it was carrying 55,000 tonnes of coal from the Maputo port of Mozambique to Al Hamriyah port in the UAE. The pirates released the ship in the early hours of April 14 after reportedly receiving a ransom.

Rohingya man shot dead in Teknaf camp

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

A Rohingya man was shot dead in a refugee camp under Hnila union of Teknaf upazila in Cox's Bazar last morning. The incident took place at Mochni registered Rohingya camp in the union around 8:30am, said Teknaf Police Station Officer-in-Charge Mohammad Osman Gani. The deceased Mohammad Alam, 48, was a resident of E-Block of Mochni Rohingya camp. According to the locals and police, Alam was stopped by five to six miscreants in the morning while going to a local arbitration meeting. They picked up Alam and took him to an area near a local school. He was later shot in the head, killing him on the spot, the OC said. "We are suspecting that previous enmity might be the reason behind the killing. We are trying to arrest those involved in the incident." The body has been sent to Cox's Bazar District Sadar Hospital's morgue for autopsy.

Languishing in BCS LOOP

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The Public Service Commission (PSC) took four years and four months to complete the 41st BCS exams. The 42nd exams were a special one held in February 2021 only for the doctors to tackle the medical emergency during the Covid-19 pandemic. From circular to gazette notification, it was completed within one year. Nearly 4,000 doctors were appointed through that special BCS. The 43rd BCS took three years and one month to publish the final results. The public administration ministry is yet to publish the gazette notification of this exam. As per PSC's Annual Report 2020, the constitutional body prepared a roadmap to complete the whole process in a year, but the roadmap remains on paper. Meantime, government jobseekers continue to lose up to four years of their career. PSC Chairman Sohorab Hossain evaded a direct reply about the delay, and said, "We tried to complete the process within a year, but we couldn't do it."

According to the roadmap, it is possible to complete all the work from publishing the advertisements to the final recommendations in 12 months, he said. However, successful candidates too face delays even after publication of the final results. They need to go through medical tests and security clearance from various agencies, including the police. It takes nearly one year before publication of the gazette. **WHY THE DELAY** PSC members say they have a limited workforce. As a result, they rely on others to carry out the bulk of their work, including preparing and printing question papers, evaluating answer scripts and holding viva. "One reason for the delay is late submission of the answer scripts by the examiners [university teachers and bureaucrats]. Also, a significant number of scripts go to third examiners, causing further delay in the publication of the written test results," a PSC member told The Daily Star. The PSC introduced the provision for double examiners in 2018 to ensure "transparency" in assessing the answer scripts. The provision requires each answer sheet to be examined by two teachers of public universities. The system took effect from the 38th BCS exam. The following year, the PSC introduced another system, requiring a third examiner to evaluate the

scripts in case there is a 20 percent difference in the marks awarded by the two examiners. In the case of the 44th BCS, more than 9,000 exam papers out of the 15,708 were evaluated by third examiners because of such differences in the marks awarded by the first two examiners, PSC members said. "Despite our request for timely submission of the answer sheets, many examiners do not do so citing various excuses. Since they are respected people, we cannot take any strict action.... PSC is in trouble because of these examiners," one PSC member said. Apart from public university teachers, some bureaucrats are also involved in evaluating the answer scripts. They examine the current affairs section only. Three teachers of two public universities who evaluated BCS answer scripts over the years said public university teachers are already very busy with their regular lectures, examinations and exam paper evaluations. Many of them also have administrative roles. As a result, they neither have the time nor the motivation to evaluate the BCS exam papers. Also, the remuneration that the PSC offers for the job is so low that teachers show little interest in evaluating the papers, they added. On average, each teacher gets 100-120 papers. **IN A FIX** The Daily Star spoke to 15 candidates recommended in various cadres in the 43rd BCS. Each of them said the exams involve considerable expenses, including for coaching, accommodation, food and travel. The long delay only adds to the financial pressure and puts them in a fix as they cannot make a decision about their career until the process completes. "I cannot suddenly change course and look for other jobs even though the PSC is taking a long time. If the results came out faster, I could have made a final decision," said Mahmudul Hasan, a jobseeker in the 43rd BCS. As his wait continues, both his house rent and food cost have gone up. "I cannot leave the mess either, as it would hamper my studies. It is difficult to cover the cost with my earnings from private tuition," said Mahmudul. **WHAT TO DO** Ali Imam Mazumder, a former cabinet secretary, said the introduction of the provision for double examiners, especially when there is a shortage

of qualified examiners in public universities, is a big factor behind the backlog. According to him, the provision is "apparently justified" but only a few public universities have teachers qualified enough to evaluate BCS answer scripts. The time taken for police verifications and medical examinations is also way too long, he said. Currently, it takes about a year to complete police verifications and medical examinations. "It can be done in two to three months. It used to be like that. That system should be restored. All that is required is to verify whether the candidate is facing a criminal case," the former secretary said. According to him, the current verification also unnecessarily includes background checks and political affiliations of the relatives of the candidates. Also, many recommended candidates even get rejected because of the political affiliations of their relatives and family members. "In India, candidates are offered jobs upon recommendation while the verification continues. Moreover, they do not focus on other things [political affiliations of relatives]," he said.

Iran conservatives tighten grip in parliament vote
AFP, Tehran
Iran's conservatives and ultra-conservatives clinched more seats in a partial rerun of the country's parliamentary elections, official results showed yesterday, tightening their hold on the chamber. Voters had been called to cast ballots again on Friday in regions where candidates failed to gain enough votes in the March 1 election, which saw the lowest turnout -- 41 percent -- since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Candidates categorised as conservative or ultra-conservative on pre-election lists won the majority of the 45 remaining seats up for grabs in the vote held in 15 of Iran's 31 provinces, according to local media. For the first time in the country, voting on Friday was a completely electronic process at eight of the 22 constituencies in Tehran and the cities of Tabriz in the northwest and Shiraz in the south, state TV said.

Of true grit and a mother's love

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mother-in-law. When Monoara gets her dinner break, she anxiously switches her internet back on and checks her phone. "Every missed call from my daughter, or any Bangladeshi number, makes me anxious. Before calling back, I fear the worst -- 'did something happen to my son?' But once I hear they're okay, I can breathe again," said the 39-year-old migrant worker. Monoara has been working in Mauritius for the past 16 years. "Sometimes they fall asleep by the time I can call back but my worries don't go away until my shift ends at 5:00am Mauritius time [7:00am Dhaka time]." When Monoara went to Mauritius in 2008, she had no clue her husband had secretly married for the third time and was spending the remittance she had been sending. When she returned six years later, she discovered that her husband already had a child with his new wife. Upon Monoara's disapproval, he abandoned her, their children and even his own mother. Thus began Monoara's journey as a single mother. In these 16 years, she was able to visit her children only twice -- in 2014 and 2023. She has been working at the tuna company for a decade, alongside other female migrant workers from different countries. They toil for nearly 10 hours with a target of cleaning and deboning 50 plates of large boiled and peeled tuna fish with knives. "Our hands get quite bloody in the process. Yet, even after meeting our target, we push for more work to earn some extra money. This way, I make around Tk 23,000, which is still not enough to meet my family's needs." Monoara's children live in a two-room house in Bamoil Bazar of Demra in the capital. They need at least Tk 17,000 to cover rent, food, and other essentials. Meanwhile, her son requires medication and her mother-in-law, who has suffered two strokes, needs routine medical care. With no healthy guardian present, Monoara had no choice but to marry off her daughter at an early age. Her daughter, who still lives in the Bamoil Bazar house, also needs Monoara's support with her husband facing financial difficulties. Back in Port Louis, once Monoara freshens up from her night job, she goes from home to home for part-time cleaning jobs. She tries to make time to speak to her children while going from one house to the other. Every day, she works in at least three houses, where she cleans the floors and garages, wipes the furniture and



Monoara

does the laundry for local families. With this, she adds another Tk 20,000 to her monthly income. Wrapping up her cleaning job around noon, she heads back to her living quarters, shared by nine other Bangladeshi women. After preparing her food and showering, she gets a brief window to rest her eyes, before gearing up to get back to her night job. When Monoara parted with her children, Sultana was just eight years old and Yasin was five. "Due to financial struggles, I had to leave them when they needed me the most. My thoughts are always with my children and I'll continue to work to support them for as long as I'm physically able." Today, Monoara can see her children through WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger video calls. But earlier, it was not so simple to keep in touch. "When smartphones weren't available, I used to call them from button phones. Just one call would finish up a MUR 300 Mauritian recharging card... When I yearned to see them, I would contact the local computer shop in Bamoil Bazar to speak to them on Skype. But often, we couldn't speak a single word. We would just see each other and cry. "There were many moments I felt like going back to my children for good, like when my son broke his hand or when my daughter cried because other parents would accompany her friends to the SSC exam hall but she had no one." With tears in her eyes, she continued, "Even now when I get to know that my children are in a stressful situation, I feel the urge to go back to them. But then I remind and ask myself, 'Who will provide for them if I don't?'" With no family in Mauritius, Eid or special occasions are lonely affairs for Monoara. "I don't eat special foods on these days because I can't do it without my children. I sometimes feel like flying to them to cook them special food and take them out for Eid... Maybe one day I'll finally be able to." One of the houses Monoara does

her part-time cleaning job at belongs to Aukburally Leila Shaheen, a research executive. Speaking about Monoara, Shaheen spoke highly of her dedication towards her children, saying it was a representation of a mother's true love and grit. "She works through the night, then returns to work at people's houses in the morning and catches a few hours of sleep after that. She sends every penny she earns to her children in Dhaka. This level of determination is something only a mother possesses." When Shaheen asked why she does not remarry, Monoara responded with, "My children are my whole life." Speaking to The Daily Star, Monoara's daughter Sultana, said, "Every mother is special to their children, but there are some who make profound sacrifices. Since we were young, we've been witnessing our mother dedicating her life solely to us. She sacrificed her own comfort, desires and even her personal life for us."

Won't approve unnecessary projects: PM

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inaugurating the 61st Convention of the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB) at its premises in the city. "We have to look into the return from any project. How much the people will be benefited, what will be its return and whether the project will be useful for the country. We have to make these calculations," she said. She requested the engineers undertake any plan or project, considering its impact on the environment, sustainability and cost-effectiveness. "That is our aim, and it has to be done, we face drought, flood, tidal surge every moment, so we have to prepare our plan keeping that in mind." The prime minister also asked engineers not to plan any development projects that require filling large waterbodies and emphasised the importance of preserving rainwater during the monsoon season so that it can be used later in the dry season. "So, we must not fill up our water reservoirs; we have to protect those." IEB President Engineer Md Abdus Sabur, General Secretary Engr SM Monjurul Haque Monju, Dhaka Centre Chairman Engr Mohammad Hossain, and its Dhaka Centre General Secretary Engr Md Nazrul Islam, also spoke at the function.