



Piles of trash lay on the bank of the Buriganga near the Kamrangirchar area. While talks about restoring Dhaka's rivers and canals continue, this is the ground level reality of how these water bodies and their surrounding areas continue to be polluted over the years. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Death anniversary of Begum Fazilatunnessa

STAR REPORT

Today is the death anniversary of Begum Fazilatunnessa.

She was wife of late Lt AM Ataul Haque, a freedom fighter of Bangladesh Navy who played an important role in building the Naval Force after the Liberation War in 1971. Fazilatunnessa, mother of 10 children, died on November 9, 2015 at the age of 80.

PRAYER TIMING					
NOVEMBER 9					
Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha	
AZAN 5:00	12:45	3:45	5:25	7:00	
JAMAAT 5:35	1:15	4:00	5:30	7:30	
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION					

Committed to ensuring rights of Garos: Rizwana

UNB, Dhaka

Environment Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan has reaffirmed the government's commitment to protecting the rights of the Garo community.

During her speech as the chief guest at the Wangala festival yesterday, held at Banani Bidyaniketan School and College, she emphasised that legal measures would be introduced to safeguard the community's land rights, water rights, and their ability to extract forest resources.

Wangala, a significant cultural event for the Garo people, symbolises the deep connection between nature and human society, celebrating the harvest season with gratitude toward nature.

Rizwana urged all to protect the environment and preserve natural resources, as the Garo community has long done.

She also highlighted the government's ongoing efforts to address conflicts between forest-dependent communities and the forest department.

The Indigenous Council has begun working to secure the rights of the Garo people, with local authorities directed to demarcate disputed land boundaries in the Modhupur Forest, she said.

The event also featured traditional Garo dance and music.

Man hacked to death 'by brother'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

A man was hacked to death allegedly by his younger brother in Sirajdikhan, Munshiganj yesterday.

Following the incident occurred at Char Pania village in Baluchar union, locals handed over the accused -- Harun Mia, 35 -- to police.

The deceased was identified as Md Hasan Mia, 42, who had been living in Kuwait for about 11 years, said locals.

Md Faruk Hossain, member of ward-3 of Baluchar union, said Harun killed Hasan in broad daylight.

Sirajdikhan Police Station OC Khandaker Hafizur Rahman said, "Harun has been arrested. The victim's wife is being interrogated. The reason behind the murder can be known after investigation."

Childhood lost in rolling biris

FROM PAGE 3

when pressed about the young faces working around him. "The parents might sometimes bring their children, but they're not our responsibility," he said.

Authorities also play a complicit role by rarely inspecting the facilities or enforcing regulations that could protect these children.

Prolonged exposure to tobacco dust can cause lung disease, stomach ulcers, high blood pressure, and severe impediments to both physical and mental growth, said a report of Child Labor Unit of the Ministry of Labor and Employment in 2013.

BIRI FACTORIES IN BARISHAL

In the Karikor Biri factory -- the oldest among Barishal's seven biri factories -- nearly 80 children could be seen hunched over, working long hours to keep up with production quotas.

They sit for hours on end, their backs hunched and fingers stained from handling raw tobacco.

Many of them suffer from persistent coughing. Mostly, parents were seen working side-by-side with their children.

With no childcare options, many women are left with little choice but to bring their children along. Infants and toddlers often sit on dirty factory floors, exposed to the same risks as their mothers.

Toddlers crawl through layers of tobacco dust, inhaling it, with health consequences that may only manifest years down the line.

Bangladesh ratified the ILO's Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention back in 1999, a commitment to eliminate child labour from dangerous industries.

CHILDREN AT RISK

Eleven-year-old Nurul

Islam, a student of class six, one of the youngest workers at the Karikor Biri factory, took a shallow, rattling breath as he sat on a mat of discarded tobacco

leaves, coughing every few minutes. "It hurts when I breathe," he said, pausing to catch his breath. "But if we don't work, my family won't have enough to eat. My mother also works here."

"I can package 2,000 biris a day," said Nurul.

In another corner of the factory, nine-year-old Mithila, her face streaked with sweat and her fingers stained dark brown, echoed Nurul's words. "Sometimes, it feels like there's something stuck in my chest," she said.

"I see other kids cough and struggle to breathe, but we don't really talk about it. This is just how things are here."

Then there's 10-year-old Jahangir, who was seen rolling cigarettes with machine-like precision.

"My head hurts almost every day from the smell here," he said, squinting as he looked around the smoky room.

"When it's very bad, I go outside for some time, but I have to come back to help my parents, or I'll be behind on my work. I know it's not good for me, but I don't have a choice," he added.

Siddiqur Rahman, a former professor at Sher-e-Bangla Medical College, highlighted the significant link between tobacco use and the rising rates of tuberculosis (TB) in the region.

Rahman treats around 2,000 TB patients annually, with more than 60 percent of those cases linked to tobacco use. He said tobacco not only affects adults but also leads to serious health problems and even fatalities in children.

AN INHERITED CURSE

Meanwhile, 19-year-old Fatema Akther was seen sitting cross-legged, rolling biris. Her 13-month-old son lays cradled on her lap.

"I started coming to the factory with my mother, Minara Begum, when I was just a child," she said. "Now, I'm married and have a son."

Her mother, Minara, aged 40, sat beside her, doing the same work.

She reminisced about her own beginnings in the factory. She used to come here each day with her own mother, Hajera Begum.

In another section, 28-year-old Shila Halder was working at her station.

Shila's husband is employed by an NGO in Mehendiganj, but she continues to work here due to financial constraints.

Her four-year-old daughter sits beside her, eating her meal in silence, blending into the factory's routine.

Like Shila and Fatema, many mothers in these factories bring their toddlers and young children along because they have no other choice.

"The dust here makes my son cough all the time," says Shila, glancing anxiously at her daughter. "I worry about her health, but I have no place else to leave her."

WAGE DISCREPANCIES

Permanent employees at the factory are paid Tk 90 for manufacturing and packaging 1,000 biri sticks. These workers hold permanent ID cards and receive direct payments from the factory owner. Orders are assigned based on these ID cards, with more experienced workers receiving larger orders. Senior workers are given a maximum order of 32,000 biri sticks per week, while newer employees are assigned only 16,000.

The factory owner provides the necessary paper and tobacco for production. However, due to the low wages, permanent workers subcontract the labour to local women and children for just Tk 35 to manufacture and package 1,000 biri.

The subcontracting process involves paying Tk 16 for crafting the paper stick, Tk 3 for filling it with tobacco, and Tk 16 for sealing and packaging the 1,000 biri.

As a result, permanent

employees make a profit of Tk 55 per 1,000 sticks. In the meantime, they often take on alternate jobs, such as driving auto-rickshaws or running tea stalls, while outsourcing the labour.

WHAT AUTHORITIES SAY

Mokter Hossain Niraji, inspector for the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments in Barishal, said, "Children above 14 years can work by fulfilling certain terms and conditions. If we receive information about children below this age threshold, we file cases."

According to the 2020-2021 database of the Divisional Child Labour Elimination Welfare Council, 129 children were removed from hazardous jobs, including around 40 from biri factories.

Bijoy Krishna Dey, managing director of Karikor Biri Company Limited, told The Daily Star, "We do not employ children in biri-making; it is strictly prohibited. We provide equipment to permanent workers and pay them wages. I'm unaware of any children working in the factory, but action will be taken if complaints arise."

During an inspection by the Department of Factories and a meeting of the Divisional Child Labour Elimination Welfare Council, it was acknowledged that children were involved in hazardous occupations such as biri making.

However, when discussing the elimination of child labour in biri factories, committee members argued that many children were brought to the factory by their parents for security reasons and were not technically considered child labourers.

Despite this, both the committee members and the parents admitted that the presence of children in the factory, and in some cases their involvement in work, contributed to significant harm and loss.

Jamaat ameer pledges justice

FROM PAGE 3

homes. They are abducted and falsely accused of sedition," he said. "Top Jamaat leaders were killed in the name of justice on false and fabricated charges of war crimes."

Referring to Hasina, he said, "She said she wouldn't run away, but she fled to her beloved country."

While refraining from directly naming India, he emphasised, "We respect our neighbours and do not believe in creating hostility. But we also expect reciprocal respect and good neighbourly behaviour."

If play and music are stopped

FROM PAGE 3

While speaking, he was interrupted by a commotion as unidentified individuals shouted, "Catch him, catch him!"

Protesters responded by chanting, "Natok Moder Odhikar Rukhbe Natok Shaddhyo Kar," demanding the right to perform freely.

More than a hundred theatre workers participated in the demonstration outside Shilpakala Academy. After the eggs were thrown, Mamunur Rashid said, "We won't end this gathering. The play will continue inside, and we will guard

"Sheikh Hasina faces over 150 charges in Bangladesh. If requested by our courts, we urge our neighbours to hand her over," he said.

Outlining Jamaat's vision for governance, he promised a corruption-free administration.

"We will not take bribes. We will not let anyone do so," he asserted.

On women's role in society, the Jamaat ameer said they want to build a Bangladesh where women can contribute to social development and nation-building with dignity

through safety. Meanwhile, at a district conference in Chuadanga, Jamaat Secretary General Mia Golam Parwar said a new political conspiracy is unfolding around the next election.

He alleged that various factions are plotting behind the scenes to destabilise the country. He called on patriotic citizens, the army, and students to remain vigilant.

He also accused the Awami League of attempting to incite communal violence and disrupting the political process.

Lawsuits filed over

FROM PAGE 3

He was addressing the DRU-Desh TV Best Reporting Award 2024 ceremony as the chief guest at Dhaka Club.

Criticising a section of journalist leaders, the adviser said they only worked to improve their own fortunes, not to better the conditions for ordinary journalists.

"By holding ordinary journalists hostage, they [the so-called leaders] amassed a huge amount of money, became owners of houses and cars, and grew influential," Asif said.

Addressing the programme as a special guest, Environment Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan emphasised that fearless and unbiased journalism is essential for protecting democracy and the environment.

Presided over by DRU President Syed Shukur Ali Shuvo, the programme

was conducted by DRU General Secretary Mohi Uddin.

Meanwhile, The Daily Star's Senior Staff Correspondent Ahsan Habib and 10 other journalists received the Best Reporting Award-2023 in four categories, presented by DRU and Desh TV.

Habib won the prize in the print media category for his report titled "Aamar Bond not IFIC's". Mahmudul Hasan Nayan, a staff reporter of Daily Prothom Alo, also won the best reporting award in the same category for his report on "Benazir earns PhD degree from DU without enrollment qualifications".

Financial Express reporters Jasim Uddin Haroon and Farhan Ferdous jointly won an award in the same category for their story, "Women investors outperform men, challenging stereotypes".

A village of two

FROM PAGE 5

Over time, the isolation has invited threats. Seeing the land's value, vested groups have made repeated attempts to pressure Sirajul to leave.

Despite filing a general diary with Ishwarganj Police Station to report these threats, Sirajul lives with the unsettling sense that his legacy here could come to an end.

Monwara shares her husband's worries, especially when she thinks of their grandson. Now living with his mother, he may never return to this land that his family has called home for generations.

"If he doesn't come back, the house will be empty after us," she said.

The thought of their home standing silent and abandoned is one of her deepest pains.

Their story has caught the attention of local authorities.

Razibpur Union Parishad chairman, Md Abdul Ali Fakir, said, "A two-member family in an entire village is rare in our country," he said.

Sarmina Sattar, the upazila nirbahi officer in Ishwarganj, has assured the couple that any threats from vested groups will be properly investigated, with steps taken to ensure their safety.

For now, Sirajul and Monwara remain, living in their cherished solitude and holding on to a place they consider sacred.

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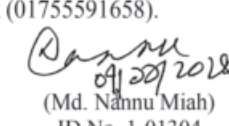
S L N O	Tender ID No.	Package No.	Reference No.	Description of Goods/Works	Last Selling Date and time	Closing Date and time	Opening Date and time
1	1033426	GR-04 FY 2024-25	27.11.0000.304.25.307.24 dated: 07/11/2024	Procurement of Hydrazine Hydrate (N2H4), Tri-Sodium Phosphate (Na3PO4), Ammonium Hydroxide (N114011), Poly Aluminum Chloride (PAC), Sodium Hypochlorite, Anion Resign and Cation Resign for HRSG Dosing and Water Treatment Plant of Chandpur 150 MW CCPP, BPDB, Chandpur, Bangladesh.	28-11-2024 13.30	28-11-2024 14.00	28-11-2024 14.00

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