

LAXMAN DAS CIRCUS

A DYING ART

The last of the riverboat circus

SUSHANTA GHOSH

The crew of Laxman Das Circus once travelled from one place to another on their steel-bodied boats, carrying the magic of their craft wherever they went. Troupes lived aboard the boats, disembarking to perform at fairs or events across Barishal's many riverbank communities. After the show, they would pack up their props, hoist the gangway, and set off to the next destination.

But with shifting cultural trends, the circus lost its charm. Audiences dwindled, bookings became scarce, and income dried up. Paying the crew turned into an uphill battle, and one by one, they left for more secure livelihoods.

Today, 79-year-old Arun Das, custodian of this fading legacy, clings to what remains.

"I don't know anything else," says Arun, who has spent more than four decades living on the boat. "This boat holds my father's memory. I can't leave it."



LAXMAN DAS

Once filled with laughter, chatter, and the thud of acrobats practising flips, the boat is now eerily quiet. Arun keeps it afloat — both literally and figuratively — waiting for the rare call to perform. These days, gigs are few and far between, and performances are stripped down to their bare bones, with Arun often working solo or with just one or two crew members.

Inside the boat, traces of the past linger. Drums echo faintly in the compact space as Arun rehearses. Ladders and ropes dangle from the ceiling, gleaming steel rods and vintage circus props lean against walls, and the scent of old wood



fills the air.

The Laxman Das Circus, formed in 1948, was once renowned for its daring acts — from cutting iron rods with teeth to motorcycle stunts inside a steel sphere.

Arun remembers the golden years vividly. "People would cheer so loudly, you could feel it in your chest," he recalls with a wistful smile.

Now, the cheers have faded into memories.

But Arun remains anchored to his past, living on the hope that one day, the circus might hear its call again. Until then, he waits, preserving what he can of the Laxman Das Circus, as the boat rocks gently on the waters of the Arial Khan River.

A STORIED PAST

The circus's roots trace back to Laxman Das, who founded it after honing his skills under the tutelage of his relative, Sadhu Das, the owner of Dhaka's famed Lion Circus.

Initially named "The Royal Pakistan Circus," it quickly gained popularity, showcasing awe-inspiring acts such as bending iron rods with one's neck, weightlifting, and the spinning trident.

After the brutal killing of Laxman Das during the Liberation War, the circus was renamed "The Laxman Das Circus" to honour its founder.

Arun Das' journey with the circus began at an early age when he performed a motorcycle stunt in place of an absent performer. That singular moment would lead to a 65-year career performing the

very act that once mesmerised him as a child.

At its peak, the circus would employ 70 to 80 performers, including artisans, technicians, and players. Their repertoire, which included rope games, cycling stunts, and dagger boards, was renowned for its diversity.

Among the troupe members was Runa Mondal, a rope artist who had once dazzled audiences with graceful acrobatics. He still returns occasionally to assist Arun.

"When the shows stopped, it felt like a part of me had been cut away," Runa shared.

"Without regular performances, we lose not just our craft, but a piece of who we are."

1971 AND A FOUNDER'S SACRIFICE
During the Liberation War of 1971, Laxman Das provided financial support to the freedom fighters, including a contribution of Tk 2,000 to Hemayet Uddin Ahmed, the chief of the Hemayet Bahini.

This marked Laxman Das as a target for the Pakistan Army and their collaborators.

In May 1971, tragedy struck. Laxman Das' family sought refuge in Kodaldhwa village, but the Pakistani military, aided

by local collaborators, discovered their whereabouts.

Laxman Das and his wife, Lila Das, fled to a pond but were eventually caught. Laxman was shot through the throat, and Lila was bayoneted.

The family's elephant, Batasi, was also not spared.

Shot first in the leg and then the head, Batasi's agonised screams echoed for miles before she succumbed.

After the war, the circus found a way to rebuild.

The circus resumed its performances with support from freedom fighter Nizamuddin, who provided a relief tent.

A STRUGGLE TO SURVIVE

Declining interest, bureaucratic hurdles, and financial woes have pushed the Laxman Das Circus to the brink. "The situation is not good. There are no fairs or festivals, and the administration does not grant us permission," Arun Das said.

Arun describes the administrations' restrictions as an "undeclared ban on circus".

The circus has not performed regularly in years.

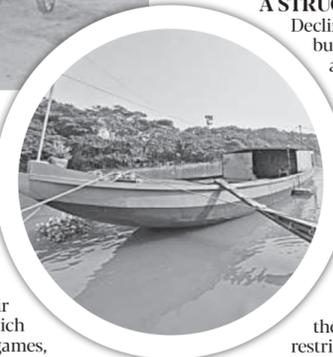
Last year, it held a 12-day stint in Kalapara, but since then, invitations have dried up.

"During performances, our expenses exceed 40,000 taka per day. But we did not earn much in return. Besides, without shows, it's impossible to even meet the boat's operational expenses," Arun said. "To cut costs, most of the troupe members, who are from Rangpur and Dhaka, have been sent home."

Arun was even forced to place the circus's elephant, Madhubala, under the custody of a mahout.

Without government assistance, the legacy of Laxman Das Circus may soon fade into obscurity.

As Arun Das reflects on his life aboard the boat that doubles as his home and the circus's headquarters, he remains hopeful but pragmatic. "I hope I can stay like this as long as I have. I don't know what will happen next."



Harsh winter paralyses life in the north

S DILIP ROY

The northern districts of the country, particularly Lalmonirhat and Kurigram, have been experiencing a harsh winter over the past several days, with temperatures dropping significantly on a regular basis.

The severe cold has forced many farmers and agricultural workers to stay indoors, unable to tend to their crops.

Daily activities in the region have come to a halt, especially in villages along the Brahmaputra, Teesta, Dudhkumar, Gangadhar, Jinjiram, and Dharla rivers, as well as in the chars.



Low income daily wage earners are among the hardest hit, struggling to survive without adequate winter clothing.

Many have resorted to warming themselves by burning dry straws and leaves to combat the cold, particularly during the mornings and nights.

Kutub Uddin, 60, a farmer from Fulgach village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila, said when he and others went to the crop field, it was so cold that they had to rush back home without completing any work.

So harsh was the weather that his hands and feet started feeling numb after just a few minutes outside.

Maminul Islam, 44, a van puller at Shaheed Shahjahan Colony in Lalmonirhat town, said, "We have to find warmth by burning straw or leaves. This is particularly the case during the morning and night."

Some, like farm labourer Manindra Nath Barmon, 55, from Jorgach village in Kurigram's Chilmari upazila, have no choice but to continue working despite the extreme conditions.

The farm labourer said workers like him have no other choice but to take to the fields no matter what.

He also shared that many of them had shifted to working on contract rather than a daily wage, as it might not be possible to be outside as regularly.

Nazir Hossain, 50, a day labourer, said he spends most of his days near fires as he cannot afford winter clothes.

According to the Rangpur Met Office, Lalmonirhat recorded a low temperature of 11.6 degrees Celsius, while Kurigram recorded 11.5 degrees Celsius. The lowest temperature in the Rangpur division was 9.5 degrees Celsius in Tentulia.

Abdullah Al Mamun, Deputy Director of the Department of Agricultural Extension in Kurigram, warned that prolonged disruptions caused by the cold could lead to crop damage and significant losses for farmers.



A clothing seller naps at his makeshift shop amid a lack of customers, as sales have dropped due to inclement weather. The photo was taken on Fazlul Haque Avenue in Barishal yesterday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Two killed as bus runs over three-wheeler

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Two people were killed when a bus ran over a CNG-run three-wheeler in Tangail's Ashkepur bypass area yesterday.

The deceased are three-wheeler driver Sohrab Hossain, 55, from Pathalia area in Kalihati upazila; and Pradeep Pal, 40, from Karatia area of Sadar upazila.

According to police and locals, the three-wheeler was going to Tangail town from Karatia in the morning. On the way, a speeding passenger bus rammed the CNG-run three-wheeler when it tried to cross the Dhaka-Tangail highway.

Locals took the victims to Tangail Medical College Hospital where Sohrab was declared dead.

The other died while he was being transferred to another hospital for better treatment.



Sergeant Saikat Hossain of Elenga Highway Police Station said they handed the bodies over to their families.

Teen killed after being hit by train

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A teenager named Apon, 18, was killed after a train hit him at Moghbazar level-crossing in the capital yesterday.

Bappi, a pedestrian, said a train hit Apon near Moghbazar level-crossing.

He was rushed to a nearby clinic. When his condition deteriorated, he was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Doctors at the DMCH later declared him dead, he added.

Apon's cousin Shariful Islam later identified him at DMCH.

Md Farouk, in charge of the DMCH police camp, said his body was sent to the DMC morgue for autopsy.

Office of the Bhandaria Paurashava
Upazila: Bhandaria, District: Pirojpur
www.bhandariapouroshova.pirojpur.gov.bd

Memo No. Bha/poura/engr/2024-25/933 Date: 19/12/2024

e-GP Notice No. 03/2024-25 (LTM)

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of

Tender ID & Package No.	Name of works	Last selling	Closing & Opening date
1053945 ADP/BHAN/P OU/2024-25/1	Construction of Public Toilet at Kalima Chottore in Ward No. 03, under Bhandaria Pourashava, Pirojpur.		
1053946 ADP/BHAN/P OU/2024-25/2	(A) Construction of 02 (Two) Nos. Dustbin at Near Bazar & Kalima Chottor Deferent Place in Ward No. 03, under Bhandaria Pourashava, Pirojpur. (B) Construction of CC Road Starting from East Luxmipura 154 No. GPS Back side (Ch.0.00-71.0m) in Ward No. 01, under Bhandaria Pourashava.		
1053947 ADP/BHAN/P OU/2024-25/3	Construction of CC Road Starting from East Bhandaria, Bhandaria-Kathalia RHD Road (Poura Complex Front) to Akon Bari (Ch.0.00-150.0m) in Ward No. 05, under Bhandaria Pourashava, Pirojpur.		
1053948 ADP/BHAN/P OU/2024-25/4	Construction of CC Road Starting from Freedom Fighter Late Gazi Nuruzzaman Babul Saheb Bari to Mundikhalai Canel Side UIIP BC Road (Ch. 0.00-87.0m) in Ward No. 01, under Bhandaria Pourashava, Pirojpur.		
1053949 ADP/BHAN/P OU/2024-25/5	(A) Construction of Earth Filling & HBB Approach at Mahatab Hossain Sojib Bapari House Front Box Culvert Both Side in Ward No. 01, under Bhandaria Pourashava, Pirojpur. (B) Construction of CC Road Starting from IUIDP-2 RCC Road to Mizanur Rahman House (Ch.0.00-85.0m) in Ward No. 05, under Bhandaria Pourashava.		
1053950 ADP/BHAN/P OU/2024-25/6	(A) Construction of CC Road Starting from BCCTF BC Road to Vuboneshor River Side Ghatla Via Foraji Bari Mosque (Ch.0.00-40.0m) in Ward No. 04. (B) Construction of CC Road Starting from Niz Bhandaria Vuboneshor River to Kabiraj Bari (Ch.0.00-77.0m) in Ward No. 03, under Bhandaria Pourashava, Pirojpur.		
1053951 ADP/BHAN/P OU/2024-25/7	(A) Construction of CC Road Starting from Kakima Chottore Alfalah Mosque Near Public Toilet CC Road & Boundary (Ch.0.00-18.0m) in Ward No. 04, under Bhandaria Pourashava, Pirojpur. (B) Construction of Gate at Bhandaria Upazila Complex in Ward No. 01, under Bhandaria Pourashava.		
1053952 ADP/BHAN/P OU/2024-25/8	Construction of (A) 02 Nos. Small Gate, (B) Brick Boundary Wall, (C) Earth Filling Work at Bhandaria Shishu Park, in Ward No. 02, under Bhandaria Pourashava, Pirojpur.		
1053953 ADP/BHAN/P OU/2024-25/9	Construction of CC Road Starting from 74 No. Government Primary School Yard Side to Nur Islam Bari (Ch.0.00-86.0m) in Ward No. 06, under Bhandaria Pourashava, Pirojpur.		
1053954 ADP/BHAN/P OU/2024-25/10	(1) Construction of CC Road (A) 74 GPS IUIDP-2 RCC Road Alamgir Howlader house & (B) Vuboneshor River Side BC Road to Freedom Fighter Late Ab. S. Alam Khan Teacher house in Ward No. 06, 07 under Bhandaria Pourashava, Pirojpur. (2) Construction of RCC Road Repair at Pourashava Complex in Ward No. 05, under Bhandaria Pourashava, Pirojpur. (3) Construction of CC Road From Niz Bhandaria IUIDP-2 RCC Drain to Sabina Akter Bari (Ch.0.00-24.0m) & (B) Construction of Construction of Culvert Approach at Rakkhal Mondol House front (East-West-side) in Ward No. 03 & 06 under Bhandaria Pourashava, Pirojpur.		
1053955 ADP/BHAN/P OU/2024-25/11	Construction of Temporary Poura Parking Shed at Pourashava Complex in Ward No. 05, under Bhandaria Pourashava, Pirojpur.		
1053956 ADP/BHAN/P OU/2024-25/12	Construction of 02 Nos. 1.00X1.00X5.50m RCC Box Culvert at South East Bhandaria Md. Jahidul Islam Rony House Front ADP CC Road & Lakshimpura UIIP BC Road in Back Side of Freedom Fighter Late Gazi Nuruzzaman Babul Saheb House in Ward No. 06 & 0, under Bhandaria Pourashava.		
1053957 ADP/BHAN/P OU/2024-25/13	Construction of CC Road From Bhandaria Hospital Front BC Road (South side) to Pona River Side (Ch.0.00-92.0m) in Ward No. 02, under Bhandaria Pourashava, Pirojpur.		
1053958 ADP/BHAN/P OU/2024-25/14	(A) Construction of CC Road From Niz Bhandaria Vuboneshor River Side to Sikder Bari (Ch. 0.00-120.0m) in Ward No. 03, under Bhandaria Pourashava. (B) Construction of CC Road From South — East Bhandaria Near Switch Gate BC Road to Mokbul Ali Foraji Bari Road (Ch. 0.00-60.00) in Ward No. 06, Bhandaria Pourashava.		
1053959 ADP/BHAN/P OU/2024-25/15	(A) Construction of CC Road From Lakshimpura Howlader Bari Bari Graveyard to Howlader House (Ch.0.00-40.0m) in Ward No. 02, under Bhandaria Pourashava, Pirojpur (B) Construction of CC Road at Jamirtola Nazem Foraji Bari (Ch.0.00-40.0m) in Ward No. 04, under Bhandaria Pourashava, Pirojpur.		

This is an online tender where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender document from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered banks branches. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

S. Nazrul Islam
19-12-24
Gazi Nazrul Islam
Assistant Engineer
Bhandaria Paurashava, Pirojpur

GD-1238