



Shops have been set up by filling sand into the river, obstructing the water flow of the vital Mayur River, which was dredged recently. The reduced navigability of the river is now causing waterlogging in various areas of the city during the monsoon. The photo was taken in Khulna's Gallamari area.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

'Tal-pakha' artisans struggling to survive

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barishal

Before electricity reached this region, and even afterwards when load shedding was a daily occurrence, traditional palm leaf hand-held fans were a common item in every household. Especially in rural areas, this handmade item, locally known as "tal-pakha," is still widely used, particularly during the sweltering heat of summer days.

Chadshi village, under Barishal's Gournadi upazila, is locally known as "pakhar gram" (village of fan craftsmen), with around 200 artisans engaged in making these hand fans from palmyra palm leaves as their primary livelihood for generations.

With the onset of summer, artisans in Chadshi village were seen working tirelessly to meet the rising demand for palm leaf fans. Many were busy collecting and processing palm leaves. Women were observed cutting, shaping, and stitching the leaves into the traditional fan shape, binding them with bamboo sticks, and



adding colours for the final touch.

Located about 44km from Barishal city, the village is renowned for this traditional handicraft.

"We have been making palm leaf fans for many years," said Khadeza Begum, a craftswoman.

Al Amin, 70, a craftsman, stated, "Last year, we sold 10,000 hand fans at different village fairs. This year, we are preparing for the same, but there's uncertainty

whether the village fairs will be held this year." The artisans mentioned they produce 100 fans at a cost of Tk 1,000 and sell them at a wholesale rate of Tk 2,000. Each fan retails for Tk 30 in the market. On average, an artisan can make 30-35 fans in a day, depending on the type.

However, the growing scarcity of raw materials and dwindling demand due to modern alternatives pose major challenges

for the artisans to thrive.

"Many palmyra palm trees in the local areas have been felled without any new ones being planted. As such, we often face an acute shortage of palm leaves and have to source them from other areas at high prices, raising our cost of production while demand has been decreasing over the years," said Ibrahim Khalifa, an artisan.

Rehana Begum, another craftswoman, added that despite being a traditional handicraft, this trade receives little to no government support.

Many artisans are forced to take high-interest loans from wholesalers or NGOs to sustain their businesses. "We need government assistance and training to thrive," she said.

Md Nazrul Islam, deputy general manager of Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation in Barishal, said, "We have opportunities to support artisans of such traditional handicrafts. If they seek assistance, we can arrange skill development projects."

Yunus calls for unity

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before us; we will build this new Bangladesh as a united nation, Insha Allah," he added.

The chief adviser made these remarks in his brief speech prior to offering prayers at the Eid Jamaat at the Jatiya Eidgah ground on the morning of March 31.

Prof Yunus noted that Eid-ul-Fitr was being celebrated in every part of the country, stating that Eid is an occasion for minimising distance with others and establishing closeness.

"This message must reach everyone: Eid should be celebrated with deep love," the chief adviser said.

He prayed for the eternal peace of the departed souls of those who were martyred in the July uprising and sought the early recovery of the injured.

Meanwhile, India Prime Minister Narendra Modi conveyed Eid greetings to Prof Yunus and the people of Bangladesh through an official message.

"As the blessed month of Ramadan comes to a close, I take this moment to extend warm greetings and felicitations to you and the people of Bangladesh on the joyous occasion of Eid al-Fitr," he wrote in a message sent to Yunus.

The message was received on March 31.

Modi mentioned that during the holy month, 200 million Indians of the Islamic faith joined their brothers and sisters across the world in spending pious time in fasting and prayers.

The joyous occasion

Woman raped

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OC Habibullah said the victim has filed a case against Hakim Mia with the police station. An operation is underway to arrest Hakim.

Meanwhile, a teenager was sued yesterday for attempting to rape a third-grader in Thakurgaon's Baliadangi upazila on Tuesday afternoon.

The victim's father filed the case accusing a 17-year-old boy who lives in the same village, said Baliadangi Police Station acting OC Dibak Odhikari.

The accused allegedly stabbed the victim's throat during the incident. She is currently undergoing treatment at a hospital.

The father of the victim told The Daily Star that the accused, also their neighbour, brought her to a field in Matanagaon Sardarpura village around 4:00pm. At one stage, he attempted to rape her at knifepoint. As the girl resisted, he stabbed her in the throat.

When the girl screamed for help, the villagers rescued and brought her to the hospital.

Rokibul Alam, resident medical officer, said three stitches were needed on the girl's throat, but she is not in critical condition. Police said efforts are underway to arrest the accused.

Prof Yunus also congratulated the people of Pakistan on the occasion of Eid.

Sharif mentioned that Deputy Prime Minister of Pakistan Ishaq Dar, who is also the foreign minister of the Islamic Republic, would visit Bangladesh in April to discuss issues of mutual interest.

of Eid-ul-Fitr is a time of celebration, reflection, gratitude, and unity, he said.

It reminds us of the values of compassion, generosity, and solidarity that bind us together as nations and as members of the global community," the message read.

On this auspicious occasion, Modi wished for peace, harmony, good health, and happiness for people across the world.

"May the bonds of friendship among our countries grow stronger," he added.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister of Pakistan Shehbaz Sharif also called the chief adviser over the phone to exchange Eid greetings.

Sharif greeted the people of Bangladesh.

He also invited Prof Yunus to visit Pakistan at a convenient time in the coming months, the Chief Adviser's Press Wing confirmed.

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The leaders of two of the largest Muslim majority nations had previously met in Cairo during the D-8 Summit in December and during the United Nations General Assembly in New York in September last year.

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reduce the office requirement to one-tenth of districts and five percent of upazilas, along with a minimum of 5,000 registered supporters nationwide -- significantly lowering the existing 21 district and 100 upazila threshold.

According to party sources, the NCP is confident it can meet both the existing and proposed registration conditions within the stipulated time. Speaking to The Daily Star, NCP Senior Joint Convener Ariful Islam Adib called the current criteria an "obstacle" for new parties.

"For a party that just launched, meeting all the requirements within one and a half months is difficult. We recommend amending the RPO as per the Electoral Reform Commission's recommendations before initiating the registration process," Adib said.

Despite the challenge, party insiders claim that over 450 committees of the NCP already exist nationwide. Simply converting these into NCP committees would be enough to meet the registration requirements. Establishing the necessary district and upazila offices would not be a major hurdle, they added.

A senior NCP leader confirmed that many existing NCP Committee offices will be converted into NCP offices.

A significant number of NCP Committee members will be incorporated into the NCP. Besides, members

of Students Against Discrimination and those who uphold the spirit of the July uprising will be prioritised," said Alauddin Mohammad, joint member secretary of the NCP.

He said discussions are ongoing with leaders of other political parties and senior citizens to bring them into the NCP fold.

SAD leader

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Rabiul Islam Robin, organiser of the Kurigram district unit SAD, said Mehedi Hasan is a SAD leader. It was not right of him to stop the couple's rickshaw. However, the allegations made against him are not correct. An attempt has been made to make a big deal out of the matter, he said.

"Each of the injections costs Tk 800. But it is not possible for us to bear the cost, so we stopped taking the injection. We came here to consult with the doctor, but we are not finding him. Doctors at the emergency department could not advise us and asked us to wait for the particular doctor," Asma's brother, Aslam Hawlader, said.

Noting that there is no ambiguity regarding the elections, he categorically stated that the polls will definitely be held.

"There are two timelines

- December or June - and the election will take place within this timeframe. The government may not go beyond these timelines.

Political parties should

prepare. The election will happen," he added.

Regarding the Media

Reform Commission, Mahfuj said the recommendations of the commission will be reviewed with the involvement of all stakeholders.

"We will reform as much as we can during the current interim government's tenure. Specifically, the issue of media workers' wages and benefits is a top priority. The issue of ownership is also under review," he added.

Asked about the number of patients, he said the number was higher than usual.

Over 200 people came to the emergency department daily during normal times, while 331 visited the department on Monday and 245 on Tuesday, he said.

The case will be investigated properly and a charge sheet will be prepared, he added.

Man sets

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Locals rescued her and took her to Birampur Upazila Health Complex, from where she was referred to Rangpur hospital for advanced treatment.

A police operation is underway to arrest the accused, the OC said.

Patients suffer

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She alleged that her husband died without proper treatment. "I found Riyad's body lying in the [Kurmota] hospital corridor," she said.

Contacted, Nazrul Islam, officer-in-charge of Pallabi Police Station, said around 2:30am on Sunday, army personnel handed Riyad over to them. He was beaten on suspicion of being a mugger, the OC said.

But Farzana said Riyad had purchased a private car a few months ago for Tk 16 lakh. His only source of income was through ride sharing.

"My husband was killed over false allegations of mugging. No mugger buys a car for Tk 16 lakh," she said.

However, OC Nazrul said, "We are not yet certain if the car belongs to him. This will be confirmed after the investigation. Riyad's car has been seized. Cash and a woman's handbag were found inside, which suggests the car might have been used for muggings."

Asked about the allegation of not providing treatment, OC Nazrul said, "We are not responsible for him not receiving medical treatment. We sent him to several hospitals. We even took him to a private hospital, but we couldn't save him."

He said Riyad's body has been sent to the Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College morgue for an autopsy.

According to morgue sources, injuries were found on the lower part of the deceased's body, from the waist down. It is suspected that he may have died due to restricted blood circulation.

NITOR

One of the correspondents visited Pongu Hospital on Sunday and Monday.

The hospital treats patients from across the country who come to receive care for fractured body parts. During a three-hour visit from 7:00pm on Eid day, this correspondent found 18 patients on the waiting list at the emergency department, with most of them coming from outside the city.

Only one doctor was seen giving treatment there, assisted by a few nurses and ward boys. Patients had to wait up to two hours to receive treatment.

The correspondent found around 20 patients waiting in front of the emergency operation theatre.

Asma Begum, 47, who was suffering from gangrene, said the doctor advised her to take an injection three times a day before a second operation.

"Each of the injections costs Tk 800. But it is not possible for us to bear the cost, so we stopped taking the injection. We came here to consult with the doctor, but we are not finding him. Doctors at the emergency department could not advise us and asked us to wait for the particular doctor," Asma's brother, Aslam Hawlader, said.

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41 lives lost

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Mosharraf Hossain, officer-in-charge of Kushtia Model Police Station.

In Meherpur town, three people, including a child, were killed as a motorcycle and a rickshaw van on Tuesday, said Meherpur Sadar OC Sheikh Mesbah Uddin.

The deceased are Akratuzzaman Shovon, 29, Al Imran, 28, and Zubayer Hossain, 8.

In Madaripur, four people - Ramzan Sardar, 21; Oli Khan, 22; Mithu Talukder, 25; and Hridoy Dhali - were killed and two others injured in a collision involving three motorcycles on Babukhar Bridge in Shibchar upazila around 10:00pm.

A constable of Gazipur Metropolitan Police, Roni Sikder, 26, died after an auto-rickshaw hit his motorcycle in Kalikair upazila.

Abdul Hakim, 32, an auto-van driver was killed as his van lost control in Kutubpur area under Bogura's Sariakandi upazila at around 2:00pm, said Sariakandi OC Jamirul Islam.

In Cumilla, three people died and at least 25 were injured as a passenger bus veered off the road and crashed into an electric pole and a tree in Chandina upazila on Dhaka-Chattogram Highway in the evening.

MONDAY

In Chattogram, at least five

people were killed and 10 others injured in a head-on collision between two passenger buses of Saudia and Eagle Paribahan at Jangalia Majar Gate on Chattogram-Cox's Bazar Highway in Lohagara upazila at around 7:25am on Monday.

The deceased are Md Rifat, Md Arafat, Md Nazim, and Md Gias, from Lohagara upazila.

In Bogura, at least four people were killed and several other injured in three separate road accidents on Monday.

Shariful Islam, 32, and his daughter Sejda, 3, died as a motorcycle hit them and then a passenger bus ran them over while they were crossing the road, said Inspector Azizul Haque, in charge of Sherpur Highway Police Outpost.

In another incident, Alok Sarkar, 20, died while his friends were injured as their motorcycle lost control and hit a roadside tree in Sherpur upazila.

In Faridpur, Surya Begum, 55, died after being hit by a motorcycle in Nagarkanda upazila while walking in front of her house at around 4:00pm.

In Kishoreganj, Shamim Mia, 25, Al Amin, 27, died as their motorcycles collided head-on in Lakshipur Madhyapara area of Kuliarchar upazila around 3:00pm.

In Bandarban, Md Mizan Rahman died and three others were injured in separate road accidents on Lama-Alikadam road on Monday afternoon.

In Gazipur, two unidentified