

TULARAMPUR BAZAR

Demand for dinghy boats rises in Narail

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Bagerhat

As dawn breaks over Tularampur Bazar in Narail Sadar upazila, the quiet gives way to the creak of wooden hulls and the murmur of bargaining voices. Craftsmen arrive one by one, unloading handmade dinghies from vehicles and lining them neatly under the sprawling shade of an old rain tree. Some add the final touches with a chisel, while others lean in to negotiate with buyers.

This vibrant rural market is held twice a week -- on Fridays and Mondays -- throughout the monsoon season.

From early morning until midday, traders from nearby villages and distant districts gather to buy and sell a traditional watercraft known locally as the taler donga, or palm tree dinghy.

Shorter and more slender than regular boats, these dinghies are made from mature palm trees,



a craft passed down through generations in Char Shalikha village.

"Our people have been making dinghies for a very long time," said artisan Sojib, a second-generation craftsman. "We travel to different areas to buy palm trees, hire workers to cut and shape them, then bring the finished dinghies to Tularampur market."

A single palm tree yields two dinghies and takes four craftsmen

a full day to complete. "Depending on quality, we pay three to five thousand taka for a tree," said carpenter Nazrul Sheikh. "After expenses, we earn about two to three thousand taka per dinghy. This year, demand is good because of rising water levels."

A high-quality donga sells for between six and thirteen thousand taka and can last 11 to 14 years," said seller Yadul Sheikh. "Lower-quality ones cost four to five thousand and last no more than six years."

These palm dinghies are an essential mode of transport in

shallow, still waters. Locals use them for fishing, harvesting water lilies, transporting paddy and jute, or collecting snails. Heavy rains swell the canals and floodplains, boosting both the need for and the sale of dongas.

Buyers come from far beyond Narail. "Our house is between a river and a wetland," said Ramesh Halder from Gopalganj. "I'm looking for a boat for fishing. Prices seem a bit high, but if I find one I like, I'll take it."

Mohon Biswas, who bought a dinghy for Tk 12,000, added, "I'll use it to feed fish and collect snails from my enclosure. Transporting it home will cost me another thousand."

Wholesale traders also do brisk business here. "I've been buying and selling these boats for over 20 years," said Ananda Dutta from Monirampur, Jashore. "In a good season, I can make enough profit in four markets to build a house."

According to BISIC's Narail district office, over 100 families in Char Shalikha are involved in donga making.

"If they need assistance, we will provide them technical as well as all types of support to keep the craft alive," said its Deputy Manager Solaiman Hossain.

Plastic pollution treaty stalled

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efforts by the European Union and small island states to cap virgin plastic production -- fuelled by petroleum, coal and gas -- faced opposition from petrochemical producing countries and the US under President Donald Trump.

US delegate John Thompson from the State Department declined to comment as he left the talks. The path forward for the negotiations is uncertain.

UN officials and some countries including Britain, said that negotiations should resume but others described a broken process.

"It is very clear that the current process will

not work," South Africa's delegate said.

More than 1,000 delegates have gathered in Geneva for the sixth round of talks, after a meeting of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) in South Korea late last year ended without a deal.

Negotiations had gone into overtime on Thursday as countries scrambled to bridge deep divisions over the extent of future curbs.

Many, including Danish environment minister Magnus Heunicke, who negotiated on behalf of the EU, were disappointed that the final push did not yield any results.

"Of course we cannot

hide that it is tragic and deeply disappointing to see some countries trying to block an agreement," he told reporters while vowing to keep working on the treaty necessary to tackle "one of the biggest pollution problems we have on earth."

Inger Andersen, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, also pledged to continue work. "We did not get where we want but people want a deal," she said.

The most divisive issues include capping production, managing plastic products and chemicals of concern, and financing to help developing countries implement the treaty.

Trump meets Putin in Alaska summit

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Trump is pressing for a truce in the 3 1/2-year-old war that would bolster his credentials as a global peacemaker worthy of the Nobel Peace Prize.

For Putin, the summit is a big win before it even starts as he can use it to say that years of Western attempts to isolate Russia have unravelled and that Moscow has been returned to its rightful place at the top table of international diplomacy. He has also long been keen to talk to Trump face-to-face without Ukraine.

The White House said the summit was set to take place at 11:00 am Alaska time (1900 GMT). The US president said he will let Ukraine to decide whether to engage in territorial swaps with Russia. Trump made the comments to reporters on Air Force One yesterday as he travels to Alaska.

One source close to the Kremlin said there were signs that Moscow could be ready to strike a compromise on Ukraine.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, a veteran of Russian diplomacy and part of its Alaska delegation, said Moscow never revealed

its hand beforehand.

Ukraine and its European allies were heartened by a call on Wednesday in which they said Trump had agreed Ukraine must be involved in any talks about ceding land. Zelensky said Trump had also supported the idea of security guarantees for Kyiv.

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The day before the summit, the Russian president held out the prospect of something else he knows Trump wants -- a new nuclear arms control agreement to replace the

last surviving one, which is due to expire in February next year.

Trump said on the eve of the summit that he thought Putin would do a deal on Ukraine, but he has blown hot and cold on the chances of a breakthrough.

Putin, meanwhile, praised what he called "sincere efforts" by the US to end the war.

The source close to the Kremlin told Reuters it looked as if the two sides had been able to find some common ground.

"Apparently, some terms will be agreed upon ... because Trump cannot be refused, and we are not in a position to refuse (due to sanctions pressure)," said the source, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of the matter's sensitivity.

They forecast that

both Russia and Ukraine would be forced to make uncomfortable compromises.

Putin has so far voiced stringent conditions for a full ceasefire, but one compromise could be a truce in the air war.

Analysts say Putin could try to look like he's giving Trump what he wants while remaining free to escalate.

"If they (the Russians) are able to put a deal on the table that creates some kind of a ceasefire but that leaves Russia in control of those escalatory dynamics, does not create any kind of genuine deterrence on the ground or in the skies over Ukraine... that would be a wonderful outcome from Putin's perspective," said Sam Greene, director of Democratic Resilience at the Center for European Policy Analysis.

through an official notice.

Despite this, dangerous wiring, exposed electrical connections, and expired extinguishers continue to endanger lives and livelihoods.

Kazi Nazmuzzaman, assistant director (Dhaka) of fire service, said, "This market has no safety plan, no fire safety system. Despite repeated notices, no action has been taken. In a market worth thousands of crores, hanging open wires like this is absolutely unacceptable."

According to him, the tangled wiring accelerated the spread of the fire and produced thick, suffocating smoke, making the incident far more severe.

JCD leader

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involved in the incident -- managed to flee the scene during the raid.

Madhabpur Police Station Officer-in-Charge Shahid Ullah said, "No case has been filed yet." In response to the arrest, Habiganj district Chhakra Dal President Shah Rajib Ahmed Ringon said the organisation would not take responsibility for any personal wrongdoing by its members.

PRAYER TIMING AUGUST 16

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4-25	12-45	4-45	6-38	8-00
JAMAAT 5-00	1-15	5-00	6-41	8-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

The fading fibre

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from a lack of mature seeds. Although many seed companies operate across the country, very few are trusted to sell quality seeds, they said.

Nirapoda Biswas, a farmer from the village, said, "Each company sells different types of seeds each year, but almost all packets contain about 10 percent immature seeds. We buy from company dealers or local markets and face losses."

He also claimed that farmers receive very little

guidance from the DAE regarding seed quality.

Advocate Kudrat-E-Khuda, president of Patkai Rokkhay Sammilito Nagorik Parishad, said the sharp fall in both cultivation and production is alarming for Khulna's jute sector.

"If the closed jute mills are reopened, the price of jute will increase," he said.

"After facing so many challenges, farmers don't get a fair price for their jute in the market. If the agriculture department set a fixed price for jute like it

does for rice and procured it directly from the fields, farmers would benefit," he added.

"If that happened, the golden days of jute could return," he said.

Md Nazrul Islam, deputy director of the DAE in Khulna Division, said, "Farmers are very calculative. If they face a loss from a crop, they switch to another."

"We are trying to bring back the heyday of jute and will discuss the matter with higher authorities," he added.

Abbas seeks justice

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popular leader in Bangladesh's political history, he said.

"Her leadership and determination made her a target of political vendetta on many occasions," he added.

"Even when she was ill and denied medical care, the people of Bangladesh came forward to demand justice for her," Abbas

said, adding that public sentiment continues to call for justice of these injustices.

Khaleda Zia, who has led the BNP for several decades, has been a prominent figure in the country's political landscape, he said. Other BNP leaders also reiterated their commitment to securing justice for the party chairperson.

PACHGACHHI VILLAGE IN KURIGRAM

Damaged bridge forces trains to make unofficial stop



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Between Lalmonirhat's Teesta station and Kurigram's Singardabari station lies Pachgachhi village in Rajbari upazila.

Although it has no railway station, trains have been stopping there daily since August 2023 -- not to pick up passengers officially, but because of a risky bridge.

The 40-foot "Four-J" railway bridge over the Dudhkawa Khal was damaged in the August 2023 floods and declared unsafe.

To avoid accidents, trains reduce speed to two kilometres per hour, stopping for 50-55 seconds before crossing. This makes it possible for villagers to board without travelling to the nearest stations.

On the Teesta-Kurigram route, one pair each of intercity, mail, commuter, and local trains run daily, and all stop at this spot.

The Lalmonirhat Railway engineering division said the bridge is being rebuilt

by a Rajshahi-based contractor at a cost of Tk 4.66 crore. Work began in January 2025, despite the order being issued in September 2024.

Assistant Engineer Abdur Razzak said 75 percent of the work is done, with completion expected by December. Caution is required as trains continue to operate on the route, slowing progress.

Locals, however, say the work is moving too slowly. They welcome the convenience of the unofficial stop but remain concerned about safety.

"Earlier, sacks of sand were placed to protect the bridge's pillars. While we're happy the train stops here, there's always a safety concern," said village elder Majibur Rahman, 67.

Locomotive driver Abdus Salam said they slow down only on orders from the authorities. "Normally trains run at 55-60 kmph here, but now we can't go faster than 2km," he said.