MY DHAKA



PHOTO: JAWWAD SAMI NEOGI

Nouka baich returns to Nawab Bari pond

JAWWAD SAMI NEOGI

After a pause of more than three decades, Nawab Bari's pond, also known as Gol Talab, came alive once again with the return of a long-lost tradition. On August 6 and 7, thousands gathered around the historic pond near Ahsan Manzil, to witness the revival of Nouka Baich and a series of traditional water-based competitions.

Khawja Rashed, a member of the Nawab Bari family, said the event used to be held every August, with the last one taking place in August 1992. After nearly 35 years, the Nawab Bari Angling Committee has revived the tradition, bringing the event back to the pond and reconnecting it with its heritage and community traditions.

I visited the event on the second day, when the semi-finals and finals were taking place, and the atmosphere was overwhelming. The area around the pond was packed with people, with barely any space to move. Stalls lined the surroundings, selling everything from fuchka and traditional pitha



to tehari and other local favourites, alongside displays of traditional crafts. The air carried the aroma of food, lively gossip, and excitement.

The pond, enclosed by metal fences, saw crowds climbing up for a better view as the competitions intensified. And when the Nouka Baich began, the energy peaked. Cheers erupted from all sides, echoing across the water. What is usually a calm and peaceful place transformed into a vibrant atmosphere of celebration, creating an experience unlike anything I had witnessed before.

Gol Talab is one of the few ponds in Dhaka that still carries traces of the city's past. Located in the busy area of Islampur, the oval-shaped pond offers a rare sense of calm among the crowded surroundings. Locals still use the pond for bathing, while some visit to fish for a small fee. Beyond its everyday use, the pond holds a long and fascinating history.

There are different stories about how the pond was created. The exact date of the excavation is unknown, but some members of the Nawab family believe it dates back around 400 years. Now, it is owned by the beneficiaries of Moulvi Khwaja Abdullah Welfare Trust and managed by the Nawab Bari Angling Committee.

Alongside Nouka Baich, there were competitions such as swimming, bar-crossing, water polo, and the duck-hand game. Interestingly, only members of the Nawab Bari lineage through the daughter's side were allowed to compete, preserving a unique family tradition that has been maintained over generations.

As the boats raced across Gol Talab and crowds gathered around its banks, the revival brought a forgotten tradition back to life. More than just a sporting event, it offered a chance to celebrate Nawab Bari's heritage and keep a part of Old Dhaka's history alive for future generations.

Couple, house help murdered in Sylhet home

Suspect detained

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Sylhet*



An elderly couple and their house help were killed at their home in the Sylhet city's Raynagar area yesterday.

Police recovered the bodies of MA Sattar, 82, his wife Suraiya Begum, 72, and their house help Tahmina, 15, around 11:00am, said Md Monjurul Alam, additional deputy commissioner (media) of Sylhet Metropolitan Police (SMP).

The victims had their throats slit.

Sattar, a businessman, was a member of the Sylhet Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The couple's four children live abroad.

Meanwhile, police detained a man in connection with the killings.

SMP Commissioner Sarwar Murshed Shamim said the detainee, Babul Miah, a former painter at the building, primarily admitted that he had committed the offence.

He added that he had a relationship with the house help while working as a painter at the building. He entered the house in the morning with her assistance, according to the commissioner.

Quoting him, the commissioner said that over some reasons, Babul started arguing with the maid and at one point, he slit her throat. Hearing her screams, the couple came, and Babul also killed them and fled through the balcony.

Filing of a case in this connection was underway, he said.

Munna Miah, the couple's nephew, said he had spoken to them around 9:00am and it was presumed that they were killed sometime after that.

Asked about any enmity, he said, "A tenant of the building was recently evicted after my uncle sought arbitration to a local club as they did not paid rent for long. Besides, we don't know about any other feud."

The house help's uncle, Rahim Miah, said her family lives in Sunamganj's Dowarabazar upazila and that she started working for the family after last Eid to support her family.

While visiting the spot, Abdur Razzak, BNP's central microcredit affairs secretary, said, "This family owns property in front of Madan Mohan College, which is valuable land, and as far as I am informed, there is an ongoing legal dispute over the land. This might also be an issue."

Lingering LNG crisis may drag power cut woes

FROM PAGE 1

"We don't want to run out of the existing stock in the Summit-run terminal, which is why it reduced supply," said a Petrobangla official, wishing anonymity.

The vessels are ready to offload, but due to rough weather at sea, it is not possible. The situation can deteriorate further if Summit cannot receive LNG by today, he said.

The loss of that LNG supply is now being felt in the power sector.

Inadequate gas supply is one of the main reasons gas-fired power plants are unable to generate as per demand, said Anindya Islam Amit, state minister for power, energy and mineral resources.

The Excelerate terminal is still not operating at full capacity, he said, adding that domestic gas production could not be increased overnight.

A day earlier, Amit said one boiler of the Excelerate-run terminal is being repaired while the other is out of operation. Restarting the second boiler will require the operating boiler to be shut down for at least 72 hours, causing another temporary disruption, he said.

Yesterday, a Petrobangla official told The Daily Star that there is no chance of resuming this boiler this week. "Rather, we will try once the Summit one can operate fully," he said.

The government adopted a new strategy from last evening, so some improvement in the electricity situation is expected, according to Amit.

In a directive last evening, the power division said shopping malls, markets and shops can remain open from 11:00am to 8:00pm, instead of the previous closing time of 9:00pm.

Illuminated billboards must be switched off by 7:00pm, while decorative lighting will remain off.

Fairs, trade fairs, and cultural programmes will also have to end by 8:00pm. Restaurants, hospitals and pharmacies are exempt.

As of 8:00pm yesterday, the country faced an average 2,745MW shortfall every hour, which means the power distribution companies needed to conduct outages for extensive hours.

The latest deterioration follows a brief improvement earlier this month. The average hourly load-shedding fell to 335MW on August 6 and 740MW on August 7, but then rose to more than 2,000MW on the following days.

The renewed power shortage is particularly severe in rural areas, where distribution companies are receiving substantially less electricity than demand.

In a letter to the inspector general of police yesterday, the Bangladesh Palli Bidyut Association, representing all 80 Palli Bidyut Samities (PBSs), sought security for their grids, substations and offices amid growing public anger over prolonged power cuts.

According to the letter, the combined demand of the 80 PBSs had averaged 8,000MW-9,000MW over the past several days, against allocations of only 5,000MW-6,000MW. This indicates most of the outages have been outside cities.

The PBSs supply electricity to around 80 percent of the country's consumers, or nearly four crore customers.

Some areas are experiencing eight, 10 or even 12 hours of load shedding a day, the association said.

Some substations and offices had been attacked and vandalised, leaving officials and employees feeling insecure.

The association asked the IGP to instruct local law enforcement agencies to strengthen security.

In Netrokona, the local Palli Bidyut Samity sought security from the district administration on Monday after officials allegedly received hostile phone calls and threats to besiege and vandalise its offices.

The samity also said its officials and employees had faced attacks and assaults while conducting drives to collect outstanding electricity bills. Its data showed the supply of 50MW-60MW against the demand of 120MW.

Residents of several upazilas said they are getting electricity for only five to seven hours in a 24-hour period, often in short spells.

In Gopalganj, the West Zone Power Distribution Company sought police patrols around its offices and 33/11kV substations, citing concerns over possible attacks and sabotage.

The supply there was 9MW against a demand of 15MW yesterday morning, said Moinuddin Ahmed, executive engineer of the Gopalganj Electricity Supply Division. At noon, demand rose to 17MW while supply remained at 9MW.

The division had been experiencing around eight hours of load shedding a day on average over the previous week, he said, adding that the situation had worsened over the last two days.

In Gaibandha, the local PBS said demand across seven upazilas was 65–75MW, while it was receiving 25–30 percent less electricity than required, forcing six to seven hours of load shedding during the day and night.

The impact is also visible in urban areas outside Dhaka.

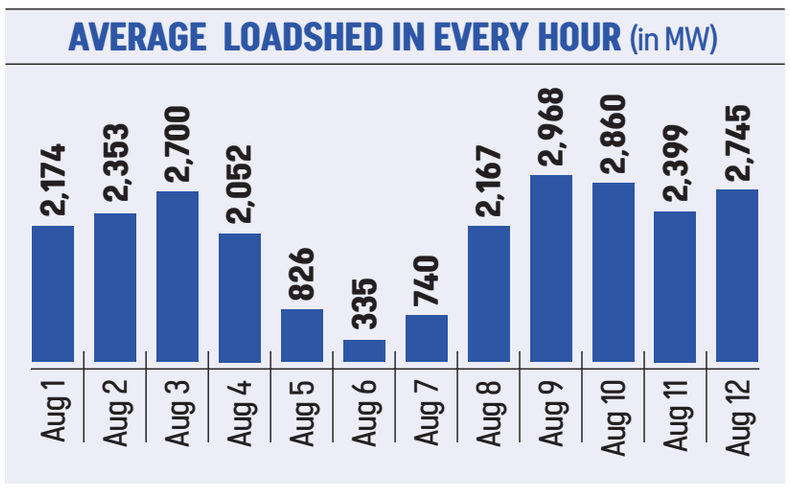
In Sylhet, Bangladesh Power Development Board data show load shedding reached 68MW at 8:00pm on August 10, the highest recorded during the period from August 5 to 11. The repeated outages have hit small businesses, including shops dependent on refrigeration and printing services.

In Narayanganj, 30 of the district's 33 CNG filling stations have stopped operating because of extremely low gas pressure, according to the Bangladesh CNG Owners' Association.

At Mas CNG Workers in Sastapur, engineer Kazi Rakibul Islam said the station needed at least 15 pounds per square inch (PSI) of pressure to operate its machines but was receiving less than 1 PSI.

Gas supply had been completely suspended for at least five hours the previous night. Although pressure increased in the morning, it fell again by noon, he said.

[Our correspondents in Netrokona, Pabna, Bogura, Sylhet, Gopalganj and Narayanganj contributed to the report]



Success in school fails to carry girls forward

FROM PAGE 1

GPA-5s. They achieved a pass rate more than eight percentage points above that of their male counterparts. Among GPA-5 achievers, girls outnumbered boys by 11,401.

Data from the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics show that girls have consistently recorded higher SSC pass rates than boys since 2017.

They have also outnumbered boys among SSC GPA-5 achievers every year since 2018. That year, 317 more girls achieved the highest grade than boys. Since then, the gap has steadily widened.

From 2020 onwards, girls have also consistently outnumbered boys among HSC GPA-5 achievers. In 2025, for example, 5,097 more girls obtained GPA-5 than boys.

Md Solayman Kabir, an associate professor at RAJUK Uttara Model College, said his years of teaching have consistently shown girls performing better academically than boys. "Girls are generally more attentive, hardworking and disciplined. They take their studies more seriously."

The contrast is striking, given that girls outnumber boys in enrolment at the primary, secondary and higher secondary levels.

However, despite their academic success at the secondary and higher secondary levels, women account for just over one-third of enrolment in the country's public, private and international universities, according to the University Grants Commission's Annual Report 2022.

The disparity is also evident in the gross enrolment ratio (GER) at the tertiary level. Fewer than one in six university-age women pursue tertiary education, compared with nearly one in four men, according to Bangladesh Education Statistics 2024.

The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2025 also found that science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) degrees -- often associated with higher-paying careers and better employment prospects -- are more common among male graduates than female graduates. Around 12.34 percent of male graduates hold STEM qualifications, compared with 8.04 percent of female graduates.

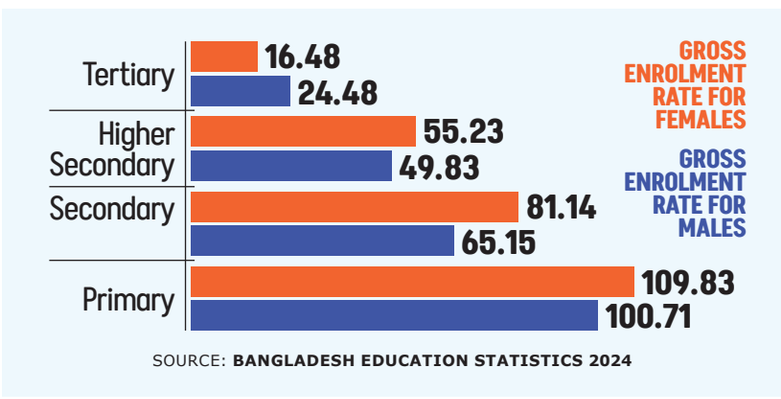
The gap widens in the labour market.

According to the Labour Force Survey 2024, nearly half (47.13 percent) of men who have completed tertiary education are formally employed. Among women with the same level of education, the figure is just 29.88 percent.

A similar imbalance is evident in government recruitment.

According to the Bangladesh Public Service Commission's Annual Report 2025, women accounted for only 21.03 percent of candidates recommended for appointment through the 45th BCS.

Across the 41st, 42nd, 43rd and 45th BCS examinations, women made up around one-fifth of successful candidates, with their share falling from 26.71 percent in the 41st BCS to 19.46 percent in the 43rd BCS.



World Bank data show that women held only 7.22 percent of middle and senior management positions in Bangladesh in 2024. The figure was 8.73 percent in 2023 and 7.52 percent in 2022.

Gender experts point to a combination of early marriage, unequal household responsibilities and deeply entrenched social norms as key reasons why women's academic success often does not translate into higher education and professional advancement.

According to the Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 2022, around 80 percent of women aged 20 to 24 are married, an age range that typically coincides with university studies and the early stages of professional life.

Even among women who married at 21 or older, roughly two-thirds did not continue their education after marriage. Only 7.2 percent continued for another three to four years, while 2.8 percent studied for five years or more, the survey showed.

Married women in Bangladesh also shoulder a disproportionate share of unpaid domestic and care work.

They spend an average of 5.16 hours a day on unpaid domestic labour, compared with just 38 minutes for married men, according to the Bangladesh Time Use Survey 2021.

A similar gap is evident in unpaid care work.

Zobaida Nasreen, professor of anthropology at Dhaka University, said the popular belief that "women can do everything" has become a double-edged sword, placing the burden of balancing careers and household responsibilities on women without adequate support.

"As a result, many leave the workforce due to exhaustion. Others leave because of their in-laws' disapproval."

(Tamanna Yesmin Maria contributed to this report.)

Colombia declares three days mourning for quake victims

AFP, *Bogotá*

Colombia on Wednesday declared three days of mourning for victims of an earthquake that demolished buildings in the west of the country, killing more than 200 people.

At 7.4 magnitude, Monday's quake was the strongest to hit Colombia in a century.

The government said flags would be lowered to half-staff on official buildings, as well as at Colombian embassies around the world, "in honor of all the dead."

Frantic attempts to find survivors continued, as authorities revised the death toll down to 216 after local officials in Cali corrected earlier figures.

In Pereira and in Cali, emergency crews used cranes, dogs and heavy machinery to search ruined buildings while volunteers formed human chains to clear debris by hand, hoping to reach people still trapped beneath collapsed structures.