

Flower business regains scent amid ebbing pandemic

Traders hope to make a good sale this time unlike that of the previous year

Turanur Islam

Flower being the mainstay of Bengali culture and festivals has played out as the primary source of income for many including florists and flower farmers, thereby equally subscribing to local and urban economy.

Flower sales go through the roof during important occasions like Pohela Falgun, Valentine's Day and 21st February and other national days and festivals, and traders are optimistic to make a good sale this year as the pandemic is ebbing away.

Due to the raging Covid-19, last year the industry saw a drastic fall in sales and production, but now it is gradually turning around.

"Last year, we suffered a great loss due to coronavirus. This year we were optimistic, but an untimely rain has destroyed many flower plants, thereby shooting up the flower price," said Babul Prasad, president, Dhaka Flower Traders Welfare Multipurpose Cooperative Society and Bangladesh Flower Association.

"Students are the major customers of flowers. As educational institutions are closed at present, we think we will be able to supply enough flowers during the upcoming occasions."

The flower traders say the demand for flowers is growing steadily and they are apprehensive as to whether they would be able to meet the demand as inclement weather ruined a lot many flower plants. Afjal Sardar, a flower grower from Savar union said, "Most of my flower plants died due to fungus. I think I will be able to get back my lost capital this year as I am getting good price. But some farmers lost all their plants. They are going through hard times."

Agargaon flower market, another wholesale flower market established in 2014, is getting popular in recent times.

According to Sohag Mia, who is sell-



Due to raging Covid-19, the industry saw a drastic fall in sales and productions in last year

- Shamsul Haque Ripon

ing flowers for more than 10 years, the demand for flower is high this year, and so is the price due to low supply.

Sources said there are 300 listed flower traders under Dhaka Kalyan Samiti who as well as the flower growers in villages eagerly wait for major festivals when flower sale goes big.

Every year the largest wholesale and retail flower market in the country -- Shahbag Flower Market -- makes sale worth around 50 crore of different kinds of flowers cultivated by farmers.

Commercially, a large scale production of flowers started in the country during the 1990s and about 15 to 20 lakh people are earning their livelihood by flower production, cultivation and

related business. Shahbagh Battala Small Flower Traders Cooperative Society, an organisation of wholesale flower traders, said following the pandemic-induced nosedive in the business last year, they are set to make a comeback and do brisk business during the upcoming Pohela Falgun, 21st February and Amar Ekushey Book Fair.

"Most flowers come to Shahbag from Gadkhali in Jashore and Jibon Nagar in Chuadanga, and most roses from the rose villages in Savar and Ashulia," they added.

Many farmers stopped flower cultivation last year fearing the pandemic-driven loss. Nur Mohammad, president, Bangladesh Flower Growers

Society, told The Business Post that over the last two years, farmers suffered a heavy loss, and untimely rain and low prices hit them hard.

"This year rose and some other flower plants are infected by some fungi and the yield is 40 per cent less."

Rajan Shikder, a retailer who buys flowers from Shahbag, said: "This year, I cannot but sell a flower double the price of last year as I have to buy them at high prices."

"The price of roses has become 6 to 7 times more than that of last year. The same is the case for other flowers too. I used to buy other flowers at Tk 2 or Tk 3 a piece which is now priced at Tk 20 due to scarcity."

BANGABANDHU AVIATION UNIVERSITY

Permanent campus to be set up in Lalmonirhat

Hasan Arif

The permanent campus of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Aviation and Aerospace University (BSMRAAU) will be set up in Lalmonirhat aiming to meet the increasing demand for skilled manpower in the aviation industry.

Apart from that, a branch of BSMRAAU will be established in Ashkona of Dhaka.

The government has already conducted a survey for building the university while its overall cost has been estimated at Tk 10 crore.

Although BSMRAAU's establishment is still in its early stages, the university's academic activity has already started at the old airport in Tejgaon area.

Bachelor's classes in aeronautical engineering (avionics) and aeronautical engineering (aerospace) of the aviation engineering and technology (AET) department for the 2020-21 session have already started.

The government will finance the survey project while the accurate cost of the overall project will be Tk 9.96 crore.

BSMRAAU will be the first aviation and aerospace university of Bangladesh to produce skilled manpower in aviation and space technology where space research and training in airplane construction, repair and satellite making will be provided under the supervision of the Bangladesh Air Force.

Currently, only three academies in the country provide air training. They are quite expensive and lack higher education and research facilities in aviation.

Primarily, graduation and post-graduation degrees in three subjects will be provided by the university. It will gradually expand into seven faculties, four institutes, and 37 departments in the next 20 years. Pilots and engineers will get institutionalised and professional certificates from the university.

The university has plans to make



The overall project cost is estimated at Tk 9.96 crore

aeroplanes using modern technology while some European countries have also shown interest in being a part of the project.

An abandoned airport from the Second World War period in Lalmonirhat will be the main campus of the university while its adjacent areas will become an aviation city, which will be turned into an aviation hub later.

A space research and satellite institute will be established at the university where aircraft making, repair, and maintenance will be carried out.

There is a shortage of approximately five lakh skilled manpower worldwide in the aviation industry, which will reach 10 lakh in 2030.

Experts opined students of the university would be able to meet the demand at the international level and earn foreign currency for the country.

Safari park is being constructed at Lathitila

Staff Correspondent

Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister Md Shahab Uddin on Sunday said a safari park is being set up at Lathitila aiming to conserve environment, forests, wildlife and biodiversity there.

He said as per the directives of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Safari Park construction project has been taken up after conducting feasibility study and research.

"If this safari park is built, Lathitila forest will be protected from illegal occupants," the environment minister said while speaking as the chief guest at a national workshop at Agargaon here, a ministry press release said.

The Forest Department arranged the workshop to approve the proposed master plan and DPP for setting up the proposed

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Safari Park at Lathitila in Juri upazila of Moulvibazar. Shahab Uddin said the safari park is being constructed keeping in view the consensus of the people living in the area and considering the opinion of people.

He said the experience of the two previously built safari parks will be utilised here so that no more wildlife dies unintentionally. He said tourists from different parts of the country and abroad will be able to come to this safari park and gain knowledge about different species of local and foreign animals.

Architect Ishtiaque Zahir and project director Rezaul Karim Chowdhury presented the master plan of the safari park.

In addition, representatives of different departments and agencies were, among others, present on the occasion.

Govt to establish 300 schools to nurture future leaders

Staff Correspondent

State Minister for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Zunaid Ahmed Palak on Sunday urged ICT graduates and stakeholders to remain in the country and innovate ways to strengthen the country in the ICT field.

The state minister made the call at a reception and prize giving ceremony at Bangladesh Computer Council (BCC) auditorium in the capital's Agargaon.

"We are going to be a developed country by 2041. We must build a strong infrastructure and human resource base of our own to survive the on-going 4th industrial revolution," Palak said, adding that the government has pledged to provide all necessary support in this regard. As many as 43 individuals who have won international ICT awards in 2021 for competitions received reception in the programme organised by the BCC.



ICT State Minister Zunaid Ahmed Palak hands crests and certificates over to children at Bangladesh Computer Council in Dhaka on Sunday - Courtesy Photo

The individuals included winners from Global IT Challenge for Youth with Disabilities (GITC) 2021, International Robot Olympiad 2021, International

Collegiate Programming Contest (ICPC) 2021 World Finals, and International Blockchain Olympiad (IBCOL) 2021.

"Many individuals from our country

are working for Google and Facebook, but what our country needs is innovative individuals like bkash founder Kamal Quadir and Pathao co-founder Fahim Saleh. They are contributing a lot to the country," he said.

"We will build an ICT ecosystem in co-ordination with the government, prominent academics, and industries," he said, adding that they are going to apply this model through Sheikh Hasina ICT institute.

"Sensing the need for nurturing future leaders, we are going to establish 300 'Schools of Future' in 2022," Palak said.

"Meanwhile, we have started teaching coding in secondary level of education. ICT learners will be able to achieve the problem solving skill sets," he added.

ICT Division Senior Secretary NM Ziaul Alam, BRAC University Professor Kaykobad and BCC Managing Director Md Abdul Mannan were present.

BSF kills another Bangladeshi at Kurigram border

Molla Harun-ur-Rashid . Kurigram

A Bangladesh national was shot to death, allegedly by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF), at Purbo Kaur Char border in Rowmari upazila of Kurigram in the early hours of Sunday.

The victim was Faridul Islam, 21, son of late Mojibur Rahman of Harindhara village under Dantbhanga union of the upazila.

Locals said a group of 25-30 cattle traders, including Faridul, gathered near demarcation pillar number 1057-3-ST where Border Security Force members opened fire on them.

Faridul sustained bullet wounds and died on the spot while his companions managed to flee the scene.

Border Security Force personnel took away his body, they said.

Shahid Mowla, brother-in-law of the deceased, said he requested the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) to bring the body from the BSF and hand it over to the family.

Subedar Ali Ansar, company commander of Dantbhanga camp of Jamalpur BGB battalion 35, said that talks with the Border Security Force were underway regarding the handover of the body.

METAL SHEETS FROM DRUMS



The tin drums are cut, cleaned and sold as metal sheets, with each kilogram costing as much as Tk 85. Small traders buy the sheets and turn them into utensils. The photos were taken recently from Dhaka's Dholaikhal

- Shamsul Haque Ripon

DGHS: Schools may reopen under Covid guidelines

Staff Correspondent

Educational institutions may reopen maintaining health-safety guidelines as Covid-19 infections continue to decrease across the country, said the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Addressing a virtual briefing on Sunday, DGHS Director and spokesperson Nazmul Islam added, "A large number of students are already vaccinated against the virus, so the institutions may reopen."

"The government will make the final decision in this regard, and the education ministry will have to ensure health-safety measures at schools. The highest level of caution can reduce casualties and public suffering caused by the novel Coronavirus."

He continued, "Covid-19 positivity rate is on the decline, but the situation is still not under control. So the DGHS is still making a serious effort to carry out vaccination drives. Thanks to vaccination, hospitalisation and fatalities continue to drop despite the high infection rate."

"Covid-19 positivity rate was 21.5 per cent on February 6, which dropped to 16.5 per cent on February 12. I am urging everyone, including shoppers and shopkeepers attending the upcoming Ekushey Book Fair, to carry vaccination certificates with them at all times."