

Monipuri weavers feeling the fury of Covid-19

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

The coronavirus pandemic over the past few months has dealt a severe blow to the people of lower income group, especially the artisans in different trades.

The Monipuri weavers of Sylhet region are no different.

The Monipuris are an indigenous community that carries on a uniquely exquisite art of weaving -- their bread and butter that has been passed down for generations. Monipuri saris, shawls, scarves, three-piece cloth for women and bed sheets are a few of the merchandise that are usually high in demand.

Since most of their sales, including that of women's clothing, their best-seller, peak during the two Eids, the Monipuris invest all their energy and savings in making new merchandise ahead of these two festivities.

All of their investment was wiped out last Eid when social distancing rules were being enforced to rein in the virus. Later, the Monipuris had their hopes up once again as the restrictions were eventually withdrawn or relaxed nearly a month before the Eid-ul-Azha -- the second of the largest two festivities celebrated by Muslims.

Unfortunately, with the Eid day just around the corner, the weavers did not see their sales pick up to the extent that would enable them to stand back on their feet and look forward to a better future.

In Sylhet city there are more than 100 large wholesale stores that carry Monipuri woven items. With the largest wholesale market being located in Bandarabazar area, many of the



A weaver using a handloom to make a traditional Monipuri sari in Moulvibazar recently.

PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA

wholesale stores are in Lamabazar, Zindabazar, Tilaghar, Chowhatta and Ambarkhana areas of the city.

Many Monipuris also sell their merchandise directly from their houses in Lamabazar and Mashimpur in Sylhet city and Kamalganj and Sreemangal upazilas in Moulvibazar.

While visiting Monipuri clothing markets in Adampur and Madhabpur areas of Kamalganj and Radhanagar of Sreemangal recently, this correspondent found half of the stores shuttered.

During normal times, these markets are usually swarming with shoppers, with hardly any personal space between

one another. But this time, there were only a few people around and not much noticeable business transactions were going on at the handful of the stores that were open for business.

Monipuri clothing trader Mithun Singha, from Sreemangal's Radhanagar area, said, "I had a wholesale clothing

store in Sreemangal town. I haven't been able to sell any of the clothes in the past few months. But the store rent, electricity bills and other expenses kept piling up. So I had to let go of the store this month. Burdened by the debts over my shoulder, I can't sleep at night now." Weaver Shilpi Devi, a resident of

Adampur in Kamalganj upazila, said the items Monipuri weavers make usually sell for good prices at local markets and they usually keep busy making those round the clock.

"Monipuri saris are more popular with young women including the newly-weds. But lately, sales have been poor due to the coronavirus," she also said.

"Wholesale buyers are not turning up amid the fear of Covid-19. So I'm selling the items at lower prices to any customer I can find," said Ranjita Debi, another weaver in Lamabazar area of Sylhet city.

"Over a thousand Monipuri saris used to sell all throughout the year and quite a good number used to be exported to the UK. But with sales falling almost to none, we are now living on empty pockets."

While speaking with this correspondent, many of the weavers including Anjali Sinha, from Adampur in Kamalganj, said after Covid-19 restrictions were relaxed, they took loans to make new products, targeting the Eid shoppers. But they now fear losing all the investment as sales did not pick up as much as they had hoped for.

Contacted, Barkat Ullah, liaison officer of Bangladesh Handloom Board (BHB) in Kamalganj, said, considering the present scenario, BHB has reduced interest rate on their loan, packaged for Monipuri weavers, to 5 per cent from the previous rate of 10 per cent.

The loan repayment period has also been extended and loan conditions relaxed, with maximum loan amount set to as high as Tk 2 lakh for the Monipuri weavers, he added.

Busy town road in awful state



The busy road in Alorupa intersection area of Lalmonirhat town is in bad condition, causing immense sufferings to townspeople.

PHOTO: STAR

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A portion of nine-km-long main road in Lalmonirhat town lies in awful state for long, causing immense sufferings to commuters.

The condition of the two-km-long portion of the busy road is so terrible that people even cannot walk during a little shower. During monsoon, the road has become almost unfit for traffic movement.

Especially schoolchildren and critical patients are the worst sufferers due to the communication problem, said locals.

Townspeople said hundreds of people, including businessmen and government officials, use the road every day, facing serious problems.

But the authorities of Lalmonirhat Roads and Highways Department (RHD) and the

municipality are yet to take any steps to ease sufferings of the town dwellers, they said.

The townspeople further said that the road has become almost unfit for vehicular movement due to lack of proper maintenance. Traders carrying their goods bear the brunt of continuous jerking.

During a visit, this correspondent saw a number of potholes and cracks on the road which has become muddy at some places.

Shamsul Islam, a businessman in Alorupa intersection area of the town, said they have been suffering a lot for long. The number of buyers has decreased due to poor condition of the road. As a result, they are incurring losses day by day.

They informed the authorities

concerned about the bad condition of the road but it is yet to be renovated properly, he said.

The Roads and Highways Department in Lalmonirhat repairs the road occasionally but it does not last long, said Shamsul Islam.

Another resident Abdar Hossain of BDR Road area in the town said not only Alorupa intersection area but the condition of the entire road is terrible. This road is no longer suitable for traffic movement.

He further said the townspeople cannot move smoothly on the road due to ditches. Besides, mud covered the road even during little rain. So, they have to suffer a lot in the rainy season. The suffering is beyond description when they need to take a critical patient to hospital.

Lalmonirhat municipality

Mayor Reazul Islam Rintu said as the road is owned by the Roads and Highways Department, they maintain it. As the road is not repaired properly, it is always broken.

Despite repeated pleas, the authorities of Lalmonirhat Roads and Highways Department are yet to take any steps to renovate the road properly, said the mayor.

Contacted, Lalmonirhat RHD Executive Engineer Mahbub Alam said it has become unfit for traffic movement due to lack of drainage system beside the road.

They have already taken a plan to repair the road and improve its drainage system, said the executive engineer.

They will immediately start the repair work to ease people's sufferings, the engineer added.

Communication cut, villages face flooding as road under floodwater

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

A large portion of Sarail-Aruail road in Brahmanbaria's Sarail upazila is now hardly distinguishable from the adjacent haor (a vast waterbody) area as it has gone under knee to thigh-deep floodwater.

Vehicular movement on the road remained suspended since Thursday, much to the trouble of the people of Aruail, Pakshimul and Chunta unions in the upazila.

The road faces the threat of erosion to the haor following onrush of floodwater, locals said.

The 14-kilometre-long road from Sarail Hospital intersection to Aruail Bazar was constructed in 2010, said sources of Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) in Sarail.

During a visit on Saturday, this correspondent found that about one and a half kilometre portion of the road from Bhuishwar Bazar to Kalishimul area has

been inundated, making it difficult to locate as water of the adjacent haor has merged with the flooded road.

"Light vehicles like CNG-run autorickshaws moved through this road amid risk till last Wednesday. Then vehicular movement stopped altogether as water rose above the danger level," said Saiful Islam, chairman of Pakshimul union parishad.

"This road also worked as protection embankment for dwellings of low-lying areas of Aruail, Pakshimul and Chunta unions. Now these areas face flooding as earth and CC blocks of the road are being washed away by the onrush of water," he added.

Contacted, Nilufa Yasmin, acting upazila engineer of Sarail LGED, said, "We have informed our higher authorities of the situation. Officials of Brahmanbaria LGED have already visited the spot. We will arrange putting drop geo-bags there very soon."



Vehicles move with difficulty on the flooded portion of Sarail-Aruail road in Brahmanbaria's Sarail upazila a couple of days ago. With further rise of water, vehicular movement is now fully suspended there.

PHOTO: STAR



Distressed Children and Infants International (DCI) and Rights and Sight for Children (RSC) distributed relief materials among 160 families under the Sun Child Sponsorship Program at Koimari in Nilphamari's Jaldhaka upazila on Monday. Each family received seven kg of rice, one kg of lentils, one kg of edible oil, one kg of potato, one kg of salt, one kg of onion, 250 gram of garlic and two pieces of soap. With donations from people from home and abroad, DCI and RSC will continue such arrangement for hard-pressed people during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, said a press release signed by Md Humayan Kabir, communication officer of RSC.

PHOTO: COURTESY

Office of the Natore Pourashava

Natore

Memo No. Nat: Pour/Engr.Div/UIIP/2020/1744

Date: 28/07/2020

e-Tender Notice No. 05/2019-2020

Open Tendering Method (OTM)

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

Sl. No.	Tender ID	Package No.	Name of works	Last selling date & time	Closing & opening date & time
1	473378	UIIP-BC/PCOW-223	Construction of Drain By RCC Starting from Alaipur H/O Masum Councilor To Narod River, Ward No. 6, Under Natore Pourashava (Ch. 00-250.00m)	19/08/2020 at 16.00pm	20/08/2020 at 12.00am
2	473395	UIIP-BC/PCOW-224	1. Construction of Road By RCC Starting from (a) Alaipur Main road to Shahin School at-Alaipur, (Ch. 00-220.00m) (b) Main road (Raza Badsha Furniture Shop) To Nurbag Mosque at-Alaipur (Ch. 00-250.00m) (c) Shahin School to Zila Parishad Auditorium at-Alaipur (Ch. 00-160.00m) (d) Medha Koching To Nichabazar at-Alaipur (Ch. 00-200.00m) Ward No. 06, Under Natore Pourashava (e) Sonali Bank Nichabazar Road at-Alaipur (Ch. 00-200.00m) Under Natore Pourashava.		20/08/2020 at 12.15am

This is an online tender where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and offline/hard copies will not 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 documents 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) (The bill will be paid when fund revived).

Gd-1202

Md. Rezaul Islam
Executive Engineer (I/C)
Natore Pourashava