

Grameen Bank earns Tk 12 lakh from Bogra zone last year

From Our Correspondent
SIRAJGANJ, Jan 31: The Grameen Bank has earned net profit amounting to Tk 12 lakh in Bogra zone during 1994. It is gathered that 70 branches out of 100 branches of Grameen Bank under 10 areas of Bogra zone have earned Tk 12 lakh as profit. During last year, the bank earned Tk 13,96, 80, 900 and spent Tk 13, 83, 09, 768. In 1993, the bank earned Tk 42 lakh as profit in Bogra zone alone. The profiting areas of the Grameen Bank are Rajganj, Sirajganj, Shahzadpur, Chatmohor, Joipurhat, Sherpur, Shibganj, Gabtali, Dhup-Chachia and Pabna.

Price of rice up in Netrakona

NETRAKONA, Jan 31: The rice price is showing an upward trend in the district during the current week although new aman rice has arrived in the markets, reports BSS.

Netrakona district marketing officer source said new aman rice is selling at Taka 13 per kilogram while old variety at Taka 14 per kilogram. Besides the *pajam* is selling between Taka 15 and 16 per kilogram.

According to the traders, the price of rice registered sharp rise due to short supply in the markets. The traders also mentioned that due to unprecedented drought aman cultivation during the current season faced a great setback in the district.

Local people urged the government to open fair price shops as quickly as possible in order to check the high price of rice.

Clash over land claims one

From Our Correspondent
GAIBANDHA, Jan 31: One person was killed in a clash over land dispute at village Barodha under Gobindganj thana recently.

On the day of incident, inmates of Sahebuddin went to cultivate potato on the field belonging to Sobhan almost forcibly. At that time Rezia Begum, wife of Sobhan resisted them. On hearing the fact Sahebuddin rushed to the spot with his colleagues. They launched an attack on Rezia and injured her. Meanwhile, husband of Rezia, Sobhan with some others fellow members came to the help where the rival group gave them severe beating in which five persons received injuries. All the injured persons were removed to Gobindganj hospital. On January 17 Sobhan was removed to Rangpur Medical College Hospital in critical condition where he succumbed to his injuries. A case was filed with Gobindganj thana.

Seminar on female education held

From Our Correspondent
GAIBANDHA, Jan 31: A seminar on female education was held at the newly set up Palashbari Mohila College campus recently.

On the occasion, Prof Serajul Islam, Chairman, Rajshahi Education Board and Prof Mansur Ali, School and College Inspector were present as chief and special guests respectively.

The seminar was addressed by Shaha Alam Sarkar, Azizur Rahman M A Jali Mondol and Naheed Sultana. Prof Islam assured of affiliation of college, opening of degree classes and setting up of HSC Examination Centre at newly established Palashbari Mohila College. The seminar was presided over by Principal Moklesur Rahman, founder president of the college.

Huge quantity of firewood seized from brickfields

KUSHTIA, Jan 31: More than twenty thousand maunds of timber wood were seized from different areas of the district during one week recently from different brick fields, reports BSS.

Shafique Anwar and Mahbub Alam first class magistrates of Kushtia sadar seized eight thousand maunds of timber wood from different brick fields under sadar thana. Abdul Mannan and Anwar Hossain magistrates seized three thousand eight hundred maunds from brick fields under Daulatpur thana. A large quantity of timber wood were seized from brickfields under Islaharama thana.

Scarcity of inputs, water

Price hike of cereals

From Our Correspondent

RANGPUR, Jan 31: Price spiral of cereals, fertilizers, scarcity of diesel, gas cylinder, lack of job opportunities, want of irrigation and drinking water and severe cold wave have gripped the entire district and adjoining areas which triggered immense sufferings to the lakhs of people.

Information available from different areas of the district say that poor and marginal farmers, general consumers, floating people and erosion hit victims who comprise 85 per cent of the total population in the area are worst affected by the present situation.

It may be noted that only three months back the district survived an unprecedented drought that paralysed economy of the region and the people. Again these people fell prey to the present calamity that appeared more devastating.

Rice is selling in the markets at an abnormal high rates between Taka 13 and 17 per kg while *ataa* is sold at Taka 13 per kg.

The winter crop farming which began in the district is also facing a great set back following crisis of boro and other crop seeds, price hike of diesel and fertilizers and shortage of irrigation water as most of the rivers, beels, ponds and other water bodies dried-up besides thousands of tubewells went out of order with abnormal fall in underground water level.

Meanwhile, a section of traders are taking advantages of the present situation? They have been selling fertilizers and diesel at higher rates. Moreover, they are almost openly marketing the adulterated seeds, fertilizers and insecticides cheating the innocent farmers.

From Our Correspondent

Sudden crisis of gas cylinder is also causing untold sufferings to the thousands of domestic consumers in the district. According to the allegations both the distributors and the wholesalers are selling gas at much higher rates in black markets between Taka 250 and 300 per cylinder as against its fixed price of Taka 220. Reasons of such crisis of gas was said to be poor stocks of gas cylinders in the depots at Baghabari and Chittagong.

Scarcity of drinking water also persisting in the remote villages following drying-up of water bodies and drop in underground water level.

To add to the miseries, people of the region who survived an unprecedented drought are now experiencing severe cold wave as mercury dropped below 8 degree Celsius.

Thousands of poor people mostly floating people, erosion hit destitutes and low income group are worst sufferers in absence of warm clothes.

Many people are also suffering from asthma, cough and other diseases being hit by cold wave.

Our Correspondent from Kushtia adds: The consumers in general and people of fixed and low income group in particular have been undergoing serious inconveniences due to sharp rise in prices of rice, *ataa*, and other essential commodities in different markets of the district during last two months.

Despite marketing operation by Food Department to tackle the situation of abnormal price hike of rice the situation still remains unchanged. Rice is being sold at Taka 14 per kg as against Taka 12 per kg two month back.

Price of coal high

More brickfield owners use timber as source of fuel

From Our Correspondent

JAMALPUR, Jan 31: Different kinds of trees are being used in large scale in brickfields as the only source of fuel in the district.

It is observed, plantation of trees, both in private and public sector, is quite inadequate in comparison to the cutting of trees.

It is learnt that brickfield owners finding acute shortages of wood in the district are importing timber from neighbouring districts where it is reported available in plenty. It is learnt that in spite of best efforts brickfield owners could not procure coal at reasonable price and as such, they have been compelled to use wood as fuel.

While talking to some brickfield owners they said that although cost of wood has

gone very high in comparison with previous years, yet wood for burning bricks are less costly. They maintain that the cost of coal imported by the government is very high. They rather use wood to keep prices of bricks stable.

On the other hand, high cost of wood as fuel has caused immense difficulties for the consumers. More than 65 per cent people of the district depend on wood for cooking.

It may be mentioned here that a recent survey conducted by this Correspondent revealed that there are fewer trees in remote areas of the district because the poor villagers in general have sold them due to their poverty.

Knowledgeable sources feel that to avoid the trend of indiscriminate use of wood in

brickfields, coal and gas in large quantity should be imported.

As section of traders purchase trees at the cheapest price from the poor villagers and sell them to the owner of brickfields. As a result big and small fruit bearing trees and similar ones are gradually vanishing from the countryside.

The ultimate result: Farmers sustaining heavy loss. Finding no other means the farmers are compelled to mortgage the land to the owners of the brickfield.

A survey of a non-government organisation revealed the fact that innumerable brickfields have polluted the environment alarmingly and in this case the neighbouring farmer are the worst sufferers.

Gradual fall in attendance of students in rural areas

KUSHTIA, Jan 31: The number of school-going children is decreasing in remote areas of the district day-by-day due to abject poverty resulting in continued dropout for quite a long time, reports UNB.

A large number of children of remote areas aged between 8 and 12 years are engaged in different petty jobs instead of going to schools to maintain their livelihood.

Poverty stricken farmers are preferring to involve their kids in income generating works like cattle grazing, rickshaw pulling and hotel-boy. The children are compelled to take up this kind of odd jobs at poor remuneration.

Most of the marginal or landless farmers in the district have four or more children and are suffering from financial stringency.

As a result, they can not afford educational expenses of their children. Finding no other alternative, they are forced to encourage their children to take up any job.

During the harvesting season, a large number of farm labourers along with their kids migrate to distant districts in search of work.

Due to this, primary schools in the remote areas of the district have been facing acute shortage of students and the problem is being intensified day-by-day.

Teachers asked to develop educational management

AGRI-VARSITY (Mymensingh), Jan 31: Vice-Chancellor Professor Dr Shah Muhammad Farouk stressed the need for higher education and training in order to develop skilful performance in the nation building activities, says a BAU press release.

Speaking as chief guest at symposium on "University and the responsibility of the teaching community" organised by the Bangladesh Agricultural University Teachers Association (BAUTA) held at the BAU Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin Auditorium recently. The Vice-Chancellor called upon the teachers to develop educational management for evaluation and accountability to avoid confusions.

The key note papers of the symposium were read out by Professor Muhammad Hossain and Professor Abdul Halim. Professor A M Farouq, General Secretary, BAU Teachers Association conducted the symposium.

Posts of teachers, thana education officers lying vacant

From Our Correspondent
GAIBANDHA, Jan 31: Primary education in the district is facing trouble for want of adequate teachers and concerned officers. As a result proper education is being hampered in different schools.

According to the present situation a total of 31 posts of headmasters, 80 posts of assistant teachers, 11 posts of assistant thana education officers and two posts of thana education officers are lying vacant in the district since long. The posts have fallen vacant due to transfers and retirement of concerned teachers and officers.

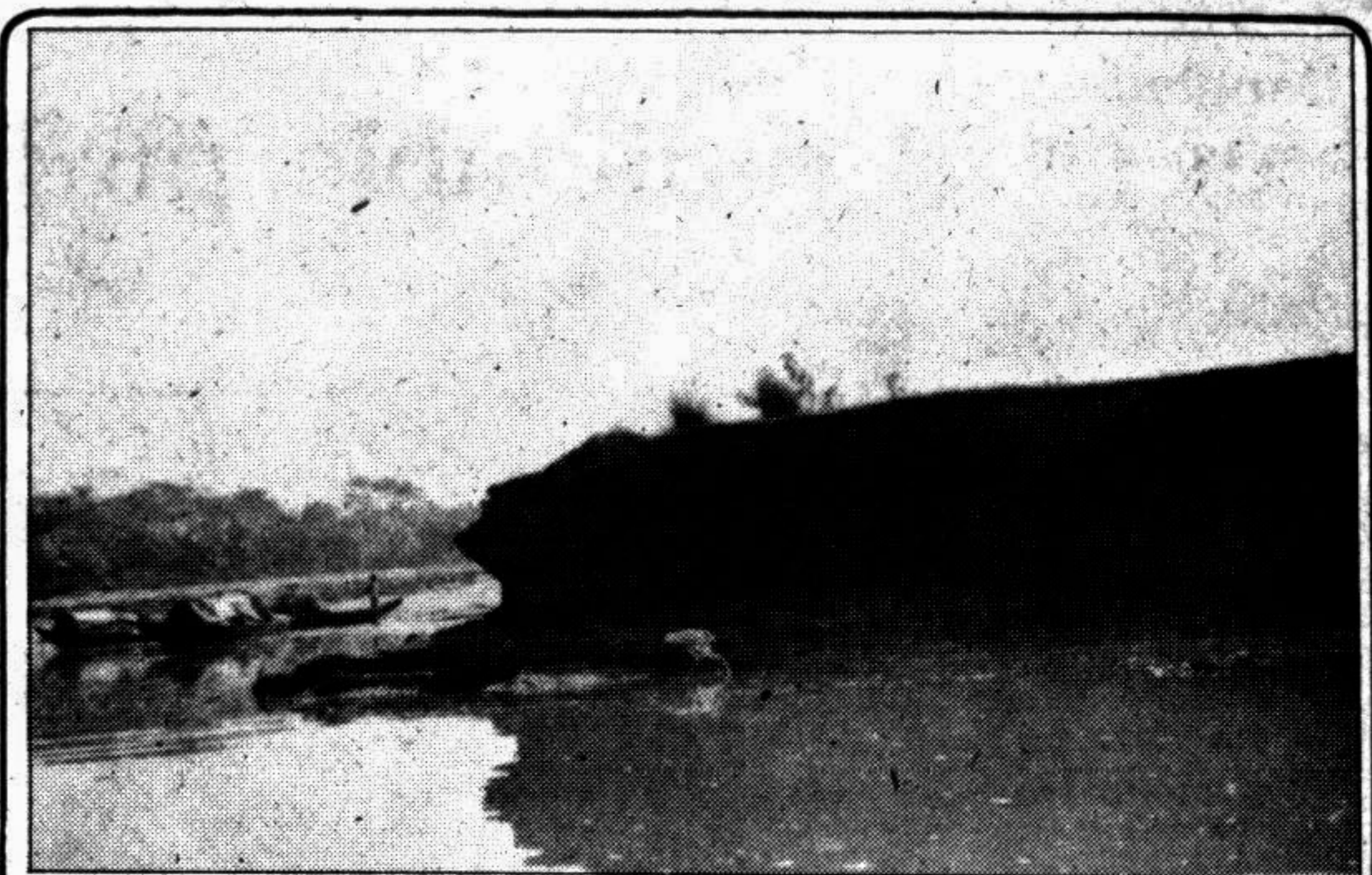
Shortage of number of teachers created interruption in the education of concerned schools. According to an assessment, it was found that only two teachers have been conducting lessons for 15 schools of Gaibandha sadar, Sunderganj, Fulchari and Gobindganj thanas.

SRDI, GKIP training programme concludes

From Our Correspondent

KUSHTIA, Jan 31: A 6-day long training programme jointly organised by the Soil Resource Development Institute (SRDI) and the GK Irrigation Project at local BWDB Board Irrigation Extension Training Centre concluded here recently. Thirty participants from GK Irrigation Project attended the training course. The Director SRDI SM Shaheed opened the programme.

In his opening speech the Director stressed the need for localised soil classification, identification of its characteristics, its quality for the determination of cropping pattern, crop suitability, crop-water relationship and water management.



BARISAL: Continuous erosion of Kirtonkhola river rendered thousands of people homeless and devoured hundreds of acres of cropland during the last four years. The photo shows recent erosion hit area. — Star photo

River erosion in Barisal

Kirtonkhola: Friend or foe

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, Jan 31: More than one hundred acres of land have been engulfed by the river Kirtonkhola rendering more than two and a half thousand families homeless at Charkana in sadar thana of Barisal district. Charkana is located on the opposite side of the river Kirtonkhola facing Barisal town.

During cultivation seasons, especially when it rains very little, Kirtonkhola provides plenty of water for irrigation. The presence of the river in the area has rather been a boon to the local people. It has helped farmers for generations. But in the recent years the river's behaviour has dramatically changed. Some even ask whether they should call Kirtonkhola a friend or foe.

Meantime, about five hundred shops and business establishments including dwelling houses were devoured the river erosion recently. Thus thousands of people have already turned into begging.

But according to informed sources, if the erosion of Kirtonkhola river could be checked in time, particularly in this area hundreds acres of cropland, houses, shops, bazar and some educational institutions could be saved if proper

measures were taken. Erosion in the area started from 1960 during rainy season — local sources said. And since then erosion started at Charkana village but none was paying heed to the matter. Thus, erosion continued with its regular course. Now the Charkana village along the eastern side of the river under the Kirtonkhola river is about to vanish.

Further erosion started in the Charkana area on other side of the river. It was 1991 to 1993 particularly in the rainy seasons when erosion hit the area with its full strength.

Last year erosion suddenly engulfed nearly one hundred shops and houses of Chaakana Bazar area within 48 hours time.

In that circumstances Barisal district administration took immediate measures to check the erosion. Besides the water Development Board (WDB) undertook a programme for constructing CC blocks to control the ongoing erosion. Accordingly tender was called with an estimate cost of 35 lakh taka but this endeavour totally failed and gone in vain due to the negligence of the concerned contractor — the sources said.

Now, member of more than two thousand families of these areas are passing an inhuman lives living almost under the open sky in slum areas or on embankments in different places. Many of these ill fed people now have engaged themselves with illegal professions, crimes or at the least, begging finding no alternative.

Further, Water Development Board (WDB) authority has undertaken another programme with an estimated cost of 60 lakh taka to construct CC blocks of the banks of the river.

Later, the local people brought out a procession and handed over a statement to the district administration to take immediate measure to control the situation.

A 9-member committee was formed to oversee the works. Meanwhile, WDB also introduced 'parcopine' method in checking the erosion but that too failed to satisfy the engineers.

Further, Water Development Board (WDB) authority has undertaken another programme with an estimated cost of 60 lakh taka to construct CC blocks of the banks of the river.

But it was too late to take the necessary measures to control erosion and save hundreds of acres of cropland, house, shops and institutions from the cruelty of continuous erosion of Kirtonkhola river.

Now, member of more than two thousand families of these areas are passing an inhuman lives living almost under the open sky in slum areas or on embankments in different places. Many of these ill fed people now have engaged themselves with illegal professions, crimes or at the least, begging finding no alternative.

BSCIC industrial units in Jamalpur

BSCIC fails to attract interested entrepreneurs

From Our Correspondent

JAMALPUR, Jan 31: Although Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) industrial town has been set up in Jamalpur at Jagaldi village on Jamalpur-Tangail highway at a cost of about Taka two crore, no significant number of industrial units has been built here even after four years of its establishment since 1990.

Little interest from industrial entrepreneurs, complication in obtaining bank loan, unplanned earth development work, lack of proper drainage system have been identified as the major causes for the failure of the BSCIC project. In fact, the site at present serves as a grazing ground for the local cattle.

In 1981 twenty-six and a half acres of land was acquired beside the central bus terminal to set up the industrial town. Work on earth filling, office and road construction, power line connections and water supply facilities for the industrial estate were completed. BSCIC spent a total of Taka 167,66,000 for all those works.

The industrial town has 148 plots divided into A, B and C categories. Number of plots planned for allotment to different industrial unit are 32 for food and allied items, textile and allied; 42, chemical pharmaceutical and allied; 28 and another 46 for engineering industries.

A senior officer of BSCIC at Jamalpur told this correspondent that out of the 148 plots only 34 have been allotted so far for 23 projects. Among them eight are now operating, others are closed or have been laid off due to financial reasons. Although, more applications were received for setting up of new industrial units, entrepreneurs however, are now showing their reluctance, he added.

The officer pointed out that there were bright prospects for the growth of glass ware, cold storage, pineapple industries in the town. He said that public health was seriously ham-

pered for indiscriminate growth of industrial units at different places inside the Jamalpur town. Those must be shifted to BSCIC industrial town to save the people from environmental pollution, the officer expressed. He informed that this issue had been discussed in the district coordination committee meeting. He underscored the need for making available bank loan on easy terms for shifting of units inside the industrial town of BSCIC.

When contacted an extension officer informed this correspondent that they have recently gave connection of gas supply to the every plot.

Some of the owners of industrial entrepreneurs of Jamalpur town however said that they were losing interests to set up units at BSCIC town because of complications and lengthy process in obtaining bank loan. Many of them would come forward to set up industrial units at the BSCIC town if financing process is made easier and earlier.

It is believed that planned growth of industrial units at Jamalpur BSCIC industrial town will help create at least 2000 job opportunities, side by side, it will make significant contribution to the economical development of the country.

BSCIC set up a new unit at Dewanganj Bazaar for village women development programme.

The BSCIC authority has prepared a list of 10 items which can be produced by women labourers. BSCIC supply raw materials and marketing facilities for these selected items available easily. The selected items included food items, jute-based handicrafts, timber products, sweet from honey, bamboo basket, toys, crockeries and other's.

Bangladesh Krishi Bank of Dewanganj bazar unite distributed taka 35 lakh in these areas.

We may not see the traditional kantha stitchers any more

From H B Khan

KURIGRAM, Jan 31: The ever increasing jobless women, both in the urban and in the rural areas have been posing a constant threat both economically and socially. Among various other jobs, domestic in nature and less costly compared to other jobs that can be thought of, the stitching of "Kanthas" (quilts) may be given due importance.

Strangely enough, this traditional art of Kantha Stitching, is gradually decreasing in rural areas of Kurigram district, although it is very popular in the rural areas where a vast number of poor people live on it by selling the product.

Long ago, a large number of women were found to remain engaged in this job, specially in the afternoons, not only for their own household use but also for commercial purposes. They also received orders for making Kanthas from their neighbours or agents on payment and thus they could even earn some money which they could use to support other activities of family works.

It is reported that due to the growth of the sizes of their families, the women artisans now-a-days have to remain busy with their usual household works and thus they hardly get necessary time to stitch Kanthas as before.

In addition to that, the prices of yarn and the cost of their labour has gone much higher fetching virtually no profit in towns. Prices of

essential commodities which they require to purchase for their maintenance, are also high. So, as the women have to give more time in maintaining their families, the good old Kantha stitching has to be given lesser for marketing. This is one of the reasons why we now do not often notice "Kanthas" any more in the markets.

Changing taste of the people specially of the well-to-do sections also stand on the way of taking up this job as a matter of profession. These rural women folk need training for better and modern colourful embroidery depicting scenic and aesthetic beauty of rural Bangladesh for fulfilling modern tastes. Such embroidered Kanthas or quilts are reminiscent of Poet Jasim Uddin's literary epic. These artistic creations demonstrate our ru-

ral Bangladesh at home and abroad.

Apart from such training, availability of colour yarn and thread, high quality needles and necessary cloths are also required to be ensured along with marketing facilities.

The Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation, BSCIC and other agencies and departments along with various non-government organisations working in different corners of Bangladesh can do a lot in this regard.

An all-out patronisations from all quarters, with good plans and programmes are needed to keep the profession alive. The Ministry of Cultural Affairs as well as Women's Affairs should do something in view to safeguard the cultural heritage of our country. Trees in brickfields/Jamalpur



KURIGRAM: A woman in Kurigram Sadar thana is stitching 'kanthas' for selling in the local markets. — Star photo



JAMALPUR: The empty Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) plots have virtually turned into cattle-grazing fields. — Star photo