

Could not care less

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

A prisoner was released yesterday from Satkhira jail 22 months after he had served out his seven-year term due to the sheer carelessness of jail authorities.

Sultan Mahmud, son of Mohor Ali of Baidyapur village in Kalaroa upazila, was sentenced to 10 years' rigorous imprisonment on March 3, 1999.

Satkhira Additional District and Sessions Judge Didar Ali Fakir gave the verdict on him in a women and children repression prevention case with effect from February 2, 1998.

However, a High Court bench had reduced his punishment to seven years following an appeal and sent its order to the jail authorities.

According to the HC judgement, Mahmud's term ended on March 3, 2003, as nine months make one-year jail term with three months' concession each year.

As a local daily revealed this, the authorities freed him yesterday afternoon.



Anti-tobacco organisations Adhunik and Coalition against Tobacco (CAT) took out a procession in the city yesterday welcoming the passage of a bill prohibiting smoking in public places.

PHOTO: STAR

Micro-credit programme brings changes to the life of Dhamrai villagers

PORIMOL PALMA, back from Dhamrai

Nasima Akhter seemed to be one of the happiest women in the world. With her eyes sparkling, she ran to her room, then to the cowshed and looked fondly at Akash, a two-day old calf. It is the first baby of Rozina, one of the cows Nasima raises for milk. The names of her other cows are Moyna, Brishti, Mukta and Piya.

Each of the cows gives about 30 to 35 litres of milk after giving birth to a calf. But surprisingly, Mukta gives milk throughout the year.

"Now I will get at least 70 to 80 litres of milk a day from Rozina and Mukta, the price of which will be about Tk 1200," Nasima told journalists during their recent visit to Lalitnagar village in Dhamrai.

The life of Nasima, 24, is now full of happy moments, thanks to a micro-credit programme Proshika established in the village back in 1988.

She became a member of the Lalitnagar Women's Cooperatives Credit Union in 1999 under the micro-credit programme of

Proshika. A year later, she took a loan of Tk 14,000 from the credit union, added Tk 5,000 to it and bought an Australian cow, Trishna.

Trishna has died, but Nasima cannot forget her as she was the mother or grandmother of the other cows.

Now she can save at least Tk 800 everyday by selling milk after meeting all expenditures.

Nasima, who studied up to class nine, was married to Joyanal two years ago. Her husband now works in Saudi Arabia.

Rahima Khatun, 45, another member of the credit union also achieved a notable progress in her family with a loan from the Proshika's micro-credit programme. She sent her son Imran to Bangalore, India, for a degree in computer engineering. He is now preparing to go to England for higher studies.

"What will I do with the money; my son is my best capital if he can go to England and complete his studies," said Rahima, an illiterate but enlightened village lady.

"We had passed our days in great hardship, but I don't want my sons to meet the same fate," she pronounced boldly, sitting with the other members at her home at Lalitnagar.

Golam Mostafa and Monwara Begum, a couple who once had a small grocery shop, are now the owners of a poultry farm with 1900 chickens. The couple of Hiranodi Kulla village started their farm in 2001 with a capital of Tk 50,000. But today the total capital is Tk 7 lakh.

The couple has also set up a bio-gas plant where they use the waste of the chickens. They use the gas for

their own cooking and supply to a nearby family for a monthly charge of Tk 300. They are now trying to extend the plant to accommodate more families.

The Proshika has 896 credit unions and schemes in 253 villages across Dhamrai thana with a total of 14,709 members.

The organisation not only gives credits to the members but also trains them on small enterprises in different areas such as agriculture, livestock, irrigation, gardening, nursery, social forestry and fishery, said Shahidul Islam, team leader of Proshika Human Resource Development Centre Trust at Manikganj.

"These enterprises have created employment for more than 30,000 people in the thana, bringing a

positive change in their lives," he added.

1,707 more held, 9 firearms recovered

UNB, Dhaka

Police arrested 1,707 people, including two listed criminals, on various charges from different parts of the country in the last 24 hours till 6.00am yesterday.

During the period, the law enforcers recovered nine firearms, two other arms, 22 bullets and six explosives and filed five cases against seven people under the Arms Act, says a police headquarters press release.