

# Brac comes to aid of retrenched Adamjee Jute Mills workers

EMRAN HOSSAIN, back from N'ganj

The retrenched workers of Adamjee Jute Mills Ltd, who have been jobless since the closure of the state-owned mill in 2002, are now thronging the offices of different non-government organisations (NGOs) in Narayanganj to get some financial assistance or find out new means of livelihood.

Most of them have already run out of the money that they were paid after the closure of the mill and now visiting NGO offices hoping to get free training or financial help for the education of their children.

Some of the workers have also taken loan and begun small business in poultry, livestock and fisheries sectors.

Though not established properly, some of them can now manage meal thrice a day through hard working while some others pass days in tension over how to pay back the loan as very often they cannot earn enough money or incur losses.

Some retrenched workers also said they would not get loan from any NGOs as they do not have property, house or piece of land.

"Moreover, how could I give guarantee to payback the money in regular instalment at such a high rate of interest when I have no fixed income?" asked Robin.

Like Robin, around 300 retrenched workers and their families yesterday thronged the Bandar office of Brac, a leading NGO in the country.

Some went there to get education stipend for their sons being provided by Brac under the project of Social Protection Package for Retrenched Workers (SPPRW) while some others went to know about taking loan under the project.

"I have come to get education stipend for my son Shahin who is studying in class eight. I am also looking for a job," said Jahanaara.

"I incurred a loss of Tk 50,000 from my fisheries project due to current flooding. I am now afraid of paying my instalment of interests for this month," said Delwar Hossain, who took Tk 25,000 in loan from Brac several months back and began the project. His monthly instalment is Tk 2344.

However, Helaluddin, another retrenched worker, said, "I am well now. I can manage meal for my

family everyday."

Since the initiation of a five-year-long project in 2005, Brac has disbursed Tk 6.367 crore to 2061 retrenched workers or their families till July 2007 at the interest of 12.5 percent per month.

A total of 3494 students were also given education stipend worth Tk 47.76 lakh while Tk 14.21 lakh was spent in providing health care to retrenched workers since the inception of the project.

The project provides education stipend only to male students studying from class six to class ten at Tk 200 per month. Stipend for higher education is also given under the project.

The female students are excluded from the project, as girls' education is free up to secondary school level in the country.

Brac imparted agro-based and technical training to 6,049 retrenched workers or their family members alongside giving them loan to embark on new means of earning.

It also provided different jobs including the one of security guards to 570 retrenched workers. Of them, about 125 were recruited at its

different offices.

Tk 101 crore project was launched targeting 45,000 retrenched workers to offer counselling, skill training, credit facility, education stipend, medical support and job information.

The project is being implemented through two offices in Dhaka and Khulna and eight outstations in Narayanganj, Chandpur, Pabna, Noakhali, Gopalganj, Tangail, Sirajganj and Chittagong.

Brac also provided relocation allowance of Tk 1000 to 921 families of retrenched workers of People's Jute Mills Ltd at Khalishpur in Khulna.

"Workers' response to the project is impressive and inspiring. Considering their sufferings we have fixed the criteria in providing loan, jobs and suggestions in accordance with their demand," said Mehejabeen Z K, manager of SPPRW.

"There might have been allegations against the NGOs but we are trying hard to help the retrenched workers," she added.



Rahima Banu along with her son came to a filling station on Rayer Bazar embankment in the city yesterday to receive relief materials but did not get anything as she could not manage to collect a slip. Earlier, organisers of the relief distribution programme handed out slips to flood victims to properly manage the distribution of relief materials.

## Pakistan faces huge challenges at 60

AFP, Islamabad

Facing a stark choice between military dictatorship and democracy, Pakistan marked its 60th anniversary weighed down by challenges which threaten the very existence of the nation, analysts said.

Tuesday's low-key anniversary of the creation of Pakistan in 1947 was conducted in the shadow of military ruler Pervez Musharraf's attempts to shore up his crumbling power base in the face of widening discontent.

With political opponents circling and violent Islamic militant groups gathering strength, Musharraf is facing ever-louder demands to step down, call a general election and allow a return to democracy.

The once-cowed judiciary is leading a campaign threatening the president's attempts to stretch his mandate for another five years and keep his political rivals outside the country.

"The choice is whether Pakistan will look to the past or look to the future," said political commentator Najam Sethi.

"The past is one of mishmashed identity, the future is functional democracy.

"We will succumb to political anarchy and economic meltdown if we miss the opportunity to achieve functional democracy," he told AFP.

Security across the country has deteriorated in recent months as Islamic extremists sympathetic to Al-Qaeda have launched attacks on troops in the northwest tribal regions and suicide bombings in major cities.

The nation is still reeling from the aftermath of the bloody two-day siege of Islamabad's Red Mosque which was taken over by armed religious extremists.

Nationwide violence since the July 10-11 siege, including 13 suicide attacks mainly in northwest Pakistan, has left nearly 300 people dead.

Newspapers have highlighted the country's huge defence spending. The failure of the state to provide universal education and health care has also helped to create a vacuum being filled by extremists whose influence is spreading.

The security breakdown has unnerved Musharraf's political allies, who last week urged him to declare a state of emergency.

## Road crashes kill 3

STAR REPORT

At least three people were killed in separate road accidents in Satkhira and Benapole yesterday.

Our Correspondent from Satkhira adds: Two people were killed on Monday night in a road accident in Tarali Bazar area in Kaliganj upazila on Kaliganj-Ujirpur road.

The dead were identified as Kamrul Islam, 40, son of Samir Sardar of village Ramnagar and Ruhul Amin, 35 son of Lokman Hossain of village Raghunathpur in Kaliganj upazila.

Quoting local police who said the accident occurred when a Kaliganj-bound bus from Ujirpur hit a motorcycle on Monday, leaving Kamrul and Ruhul, motorcycle riders, injured seriously.

The injured were rushed to Satkhira Sadar Hospital from where Ruhul Amin was shifted to Khulna Hospital as his condition deteriorated, hospital sources said.

Kamrul, betel leaf trader, succumbed to his injuries at Satkhira Hospital at about 8:00pm while Ruhul died at Khulna Hospital at about 9:00pm.

A correspondent from Benapole adds: A Krishak Dal leader was killed in a road accident yesterday at Natun Hat in Benapole.

The deceased was identified as Ahsan Habib Tunu, 50, General Secretary of the Krishak Dal of the Sharsha upazila.

Police said, Tunu, who was returning his home at Navaron from Jessore by a motorcycle. The accident occurred when a truck hit his motorcycle from behind.

The locals rushed him to the hospital where the on-duty doctors declared him dead.

Tunu is the son of Yunus Ali of Burujagan village at Navaron.



Awami League Presidium member Motia Chowdhury distributes relief among the flood-affected people at Manikganj Poursabha Zakir High School in Manikganj yesterday.

## Indonesian volcano spews smoke, heat clouds

AFP, Jakarta

A volcano on Indonesia's Sulawesi island spewed smoke into the sky and spat heat clouds down its slopes Tuesday, but no evacuation of people in its surrounds was needed, an official said.

A column of smoke soared 1,500 metres (yards) above Mount Soputan and clouds of gas shot down its western slope, said Sandi, an official managing the vulcanology observation post on the volcano's slopes.

"It actually began to spew smoke yesterday (Monday) but the first heat clouds went 500 metres down the western slope only early this morning," Sandi told AFP by telephone.

Saudi Arabia will provide \$50 million for helping the flood-hit people. The shipment from Saudi Arabia included 7000 cartons of food items, 20000 packets of ready-made food, 10000 blankets, 10000 bed sheets, 20000 tents and plastic cover and 10000 metric tonnes of medicines, including vaccines.

Saudi Ambassador Abdullah bin Mohammad al Obayed Al Namla met Foreign Affairs Adviser Itefkar Ahmed Chowdhury on Monday and said four more aircrafts would arrive tomorrow, on August 20, 23 and 27.

The foreign adviser expressed his gratitude to Saudi Badsha Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz and the people of the country.

Our Bogra correspondent adds: Disaster Risk Reduction Project of Practical Action Bangladesh distributed emergency relief among the flood victims of Sariakandi area in the district yesterday.

A total of 400 flood-affected families of this union have received 15 kg rice, 3 kg lentil, 3 kg potato, 1 kg salt, 10 packets ORS and some other daily essentials as relief.

People's Health Movement (PHM): PHM Bangladesh is carrying out rescue operations in the districts of Netrokona, Sirajganj, Gaibandha, Pabna and Jamalpur.

Besides, four medical teams supported by the Gonoshasthaya Kendra and Medical Students' Association are trying to assist the children, pregnant mothers and the aged.

Buro: Buro, a micro-finance organisation, has decided to disburse a micro-credit amounting to Tk 5 crore among the flood victims on relaxed terms for their quick rehabilitation.

The organisation has already started massive relief operation in the flood-affected areas of Tangail, Manikganj and Faridpur.

Part of its flood relief operation was supported by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Under this programme Buro distributed relief in three unions of Tangail district in the first phase.

Besides, it has also sought a relief fund amounting to Tk 10 crore from different donor organisations to conduct its relief operation.

Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme (CDMP): CDMP under the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management with assistance from the UNDP and DFID distributed relief materials among 2000 families of Tangail district.

The package contains 5 kgs of flattened rice, 1 kg of molasses, 5 packets of oral saline, 20 water purifying tablets, 1 mosquito net, 2 carbolic soap, 2 laundry soap, a piece of sari, lungi and towel, 6

# More aid for flood victims: Relief distribution continues

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different government and non-government bodies, political parties and social organisations continue to distribute relief materials among the flood victims yesterday.

Besides, foreign countries have provided succour for the flood-affected people.

Sweden: Sweden has decided to grant SEK 2 million (approximately \$3 lakh) to support the flood victims in Bangladesh, a press release from the Embassy of Sweden said yesterday.

Condoling the widespread destruction and human suffering, Ola Hallgren, head of the development co-operation at the Embassy of Sweden, said through the Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency (SIDA) SEK 1 million (approximately \$1.5 lakh) will be given to Save the Children Sweden-Denmark to assist 18,500 families. Another SEK 1 million has been given to the Swedish Red Cross to assist 98,000 persons with food, water and other necessities.

Saudi Arabia: The Saudi aircraft carrying relief materials reached Dhaka on Monday night, a press release from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said.

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pieces of candles and a match box.

District Relief and Rehabilitation Cell: The District Relief and Rehabilitation Cell has allocated 100 water purifying filters and 96000 water purifying tablets among the flood victims in the city yesterday.

Bangladesh Rifles: Members of Bangladesh Rifles donated their one day's salary worth Tk 54,86,387.

Demra-Shyampur Pani-Biduy Aday Sangram Committee: The committee has distributed 1500 hand-made breads among the flood-affected people in the city.

University of Dhaka: Department of Pharmacy and Biological Science launched a saline making project.

Faculty of Pharmacy would make 2 lakh packets of saline and Biological Science would make 60000 packets.

Besides, DU Relief Operating Committee has distributed 750 relief bags comprising rice, pulses, flattened rice, molasses, candles and matches. Two medical teams are staying at the flood-hit area.

Meanwhile, Prof Amanat Ullah of the department of Geography and Environment has handed over 48 kg sugar, 96 kg wheat and two cartons of biscuits to the relief operation committee.

Teachers of the University Laboratory School and College have also donated Tk 7500 to the committee.

Northern University Bangladesh: Northern University of Bangladesh (NUB) distributed relief materials among the flood victims of Bogra, Gaibandha and Sirajganj districts.

Bangladesh Scouts: Bangladesh Scouts, Thakurgaon Zila Scouts have donated Tk 1 lakh among the distressed people. Besides, they distributed 1.5 lakh packets of oral saline and 1 lakh water purifying

tablets and seed of vegetables among the farmers.

SHEBA: Students Humanitarian Effort in Bangladesh (SHEBA) distributed relief materials among the flood-affected people in Manikganj district.

Bangladesh Chhatra League: Bangladesh Chhatra League, Dhaka University chapter launched saline making project at the first floor of DUCSU building.

Former Chhatra League Foundation: The foundation distributed rice, pulses, potato, and molasses, flattened rice among 2000 flood-affected people in Manikganj.

CPB: CPB distributed relief materials among the flood-affected people of Mohammadpur embankment.

BSD: BSD distributed rice, pulses, oral saline and medicines among the flood-hit people in Gaibandha district.

Bangladesh Khetmojur Samity: Bangladesh Khetmojur Samity distributed rice, pulses and oral saline in Gaibandha.

Charon Sanskriti Kendra: Charon Sanskriti Kendra has sent 6000 packets of saline in Gaibandha.

BKMEA and Narayanganj Chamber: BKMEA and Narayanganj Chamber jointly distributed relief materials and cash among the flood victims of Narayanganj.

The 1200 relief packets those were distributed among the people contained 5 kg rice, 1 kg pulse, 2 kg potatoes, 2 packets of saline and three packets of biscuits.

Impact Foundation Bangladesh: Impact Foundation Limited distributed relief materials among 500 flood victims at Shahjadpur in Sirajganj district.

The emergency relief assistance includes food packages containing

18 items and medicines. Out of the 500 families, 91 families have disabled members, 208 families are headed by women and 201 are landless.

Assurance Developments: Gaus Uddin Khan, chairman of Assurance Group, distributed relief among the flood-hit people at Nawabganj in the city.

Amin Mohammad Group: Amin Mohammad Group distributed 10 kg rice, 2 kg pulse, 2 kg onion, 1 litre oil, 1 kg molasses, 2 kg flattened rice, 2 pieces of matches, saline, bread and water purifying tablets among the flood hit people at the Tajuddin Adarsha High School and Nasirabad Union Parishad office.

Besides, Amin Mohammad Group distributed relief materials at the emergency shelter home of Anwar Chowdhury High School and Srinagar Thana.

Nari Moitree: The non-government organisations have distributed 25000 packets of oral saline among the flood-hit people of the city. 16 medical teams are ready to serve while 2 teams are providing healthcare to the distressed people of Goran and Madartek areas.

Apart from the city health centres located at Nayatola, Maghbar, five more centres are giving medical care to the flood victims.

BDPC: Bangladesh Development Partnership Centre has distributed flattened rice, molasses, rice, pulses and salt among 61 families in Magura and Narail.

## Creek barrage brings new hope to farmers

FROM PAGE 16

raise ducks in the swelled section of the creeks all year round.

According to the DEO Office, they built five creek barrages in Matiranga upazila, two in Mohalchhari upazila, one in Manikchhari upazila, two in Dighinala upazila, three in Ramgarh upazila, and another one in Laxmichhari upazila in the last five years.

They spent about Tk 26 lakh to build the barrages, each one of which cost about Tk 1.7 lakh to Tk 2 lakh on an average.

The creek barrages are bringing new hopes to the farmers of Khagrachhari district as some hundreds of hectares of previously fallow lands have come under cultivation, especially for boro rice.

The barrages also help to cultivate fish and raise ducks making the farmers financially solvent, the sources said.

There are over 64,000 hectares of cultivable lands in the district, only two thirds of which used to be cultivated for triple crops, failing to fulfill the demand for about 2.5 lakh metric tons of food grains for the district's 5.5 lakh inhabitants in a

year, while the other third of the lands had been remaining fallow for many years due to a shortage of water in the hill areas.

To fulfill the population's demand for rice, the creek barrage method was followed in the hill district taking into consideration the fallow state of a large section of the lands, the geographic condition, and the remoteness of the area, the DEO sources said.

The Daily Star correspondent recently visited remote Lemuchhari under Mohalchhari upazila, and Echachhara under Matiranga upazila and talked to at least 20 farmers.

Mohammad Shahidullah, 45, a farmer from Echachhara under Matiranga upazila told this correspondent that at least 200 farmers in his area are benefited from the creek barrages and more than 100 hectares of additional lands have come under cultivation there.

They have also cultivated fishes and raised ducks in the swelled up water bodies, fulfilling their demand for food for at least two months, he said.

They were able to sell Tk 70,000

worth of fishes and Tk 20,000 worth of eggs and ducks because of the barrages.

The proceeds were divided among the members of a farmers' cooperative as all the water bodies at the creek barrages are under the supervisions of farmers' cooperative committees, he added.

Nalendra Tripura, a farmer from Lemuchhari said, due to the creek barrages built in his area, at least 275 farmers are benefited and at least 165 hectares of previously unused lands have come under cultivation.

"We have cultivated fishes in the water bodies created by the barrages, fulfilling our local demand," he said.

Amzad Hossain, sub-assistant agriculture officer of Matiranga upazila, said more and more farmers are now asking for creek barrages in their areas following the success of the method in their neighboring areas, he said.

Mohammad Rafiqul Islam, Mohalchhari upazila agriculture officer, told The Daily Star that the creek barrages brought new hopes for the hill farmers.

Deputy Director (DD) of Agriculture TM Monjurul Islam said,

"We are happy with the success of the creek barrages. Farmers are becoming financially solvent and poverty in the society has ameliorated."

Because of the creek barrages about 500 hectares of lands which used to remain fallow during dry seasons, are now being cultivated.

As a result more than 2,500 metric tons of food grains are being added to the usual food production in the area, meeting the food crisis for a few months in the hill district, Monjurul Islam said.

A two-member committee led by Rowshanara, joint secretary to the Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs, on June 28 visited the areas where the creek barrages are situated and expressed satisfaction with the result.

Farmers of different areas demanded similar barrages in their own areas from the visiting committee, the sources said.

The idea of building the creek barrages was taken from our neighboring countries Malaysia and Thailand, the DEO Office sources said.