

# A new beginning for jute

## 5 small private sector mills running profitably in Rangpur, 3 more coming up

RAFIQUE SARKER, Rangpur

Some small jute mills in private sector in greater Rangpur, mostly set up with old machinery of closed state-owned big mills, have created new hopes for the sector while big public sector units are being closed one after another with heavy losses and financial burdens.

Investment in such small profitable units is increasing in the area despite a number of setbacks at different levels.

About Tk 100 crore has been invested in five such small jute mills in Rangpur, Kurigram, Panchagorh and Nilphamari in last five years. The mills having 50 to 100 looms are running profitably, their owners told this correspondent.

Most of the machinery and equipment of these mills were purchased from Adamji Jute Mills, closed about four years ago, while some others were procured from India. The jute mills include Jem Jute Mills Ltd. in Panchagorh, Poddar Agro Based Industries in Sayedpur, Nayeem Jute Mills, Bhai

Bhai Jute Mills and JK Jute Processing Works in Rangpur.

At least three more units are coming up soon in northern districts.

Different banks have shown interest to give loan to the proposed jute mills as it has emerged as a potential sector in northern districts, a jute growing area.

The proposed ones include Kurigram Jute Mills in Kurigram, Azad Jute Mills in Lalmonirhat, and ND Jute Mills in Sayedpur.

At least 3000 workers and employees are employed in the five mills now in operation. Each skilled worker earns at least Tk 3000 a month.

Raju Poddar, one of the directors of Poddar Agro Based Industries in Sayedpur BSIC industrial area, said job opportunities can be created for at least 5000 people if the proposed jute mills start operation.

The mills mainly produce jute bags and fibre. About 40 tonnes of bags and fibre are produced in the mills a day.

Poddar said, wall mat, carpet, rugs, windows curtain, cushion

cover, vanity bag, suitcase, briefcase, travel bag and some other fashionable items can be produced from jute, which have good export market.

Demand for these jute goods is growing abroad as these are environment friendly, Poddar added.

"What we need now is financial as well as technical support from government," said Gokul Poddar, director of proposed ND Jute Mills at Sayedpur.

The mills should be given loan at 7 to 8 per cent interest but all commercial and specialised banks except Basic Bank charge 12 to 15 per cent, he said.

Load shedding is another major hurdle, said Orup Kumar, director of JK Jute Processing Works at Rangpur Jummappara. "We are at the initial stage now. At this stage we need to earn more profit. Frequent load shedding and inadequate technical hands are the major problems," he said. One hour's load shedding causes a loss of about Tk 4000, he said.

Kolimullah, another director of JK Jute Processing Works, said reduce production cost can be reduced if they can have local technicians. Now they have to hire technicians from Dhaka or other areas at higher pay, he explained.

Kolimullah said the newly-set up mills now need uninterrupted power supply and skilled workers and technicians for smooth running.

Kolimullah said, Basic Bank gave Tk one crore loan for their mill and about half of it has been repaid in three years.

The initiative by entrepreneurs in setting up small jute mills is appreciated by different quarters. Talking to this correspondent, Rangpur Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Mostafa Azad Choudhury said the government should frame a policy for small jute mills.

A number of entrepreneurs in Rangpur are willing to set up small and medium scale jute mills. But high interest rate and load shedding discourage them, he said.

Executive Director of Jute Diversification and Promotion Centre Dr ABM Abdullah said there is scope for more such small jute units in greater Rangpur region.

About 15000 jute bags are needed a day in eight northern districts but the five mills can hardly supply two-thirds of the demand, he said.

Replying to a question, Dr. Abdullah said, "We are thinking to start a training programme to create skilled jute workers and technical hands in northern districts."

JDPC in Rangpur is also trying to diversify jute products, he added.

This correspondent also talked to agricultural scientists and experts, who look forward to small jute units positively.

Chief Scientific Officer of Rangpur Jute Research Institute Ayub Ali said, the government should promote setting up of more small jute mills in northern districts as the area produces the main raw material.

According to Ayub Ali, about 4 lakh hectares in the region are suitable for jute cultivation. But farmers are now less interested to cultivate jute because of low price as most big mills are closed.

The golden fibre may get back its glorious days if the government takes up a suitable policy, he said.



Farmers with boatloads of guava at Atghar market in Swarupkanthi in Barisal, known for producing the summer fruit. But prices are low Tk 60 to 80 a maund.



Workers are busy producing jute bags at JK Jute Processing Works in Rangpur.

PHOTO: STAR

## BARNALI GHOSE GANGRAPE AND MURDER IN KHULNA

# HR leader alleges lax probe by police

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Khulna district unit of Bangladesh Human Rights Implementation Committee (BHRIC) has accused Bagerhat Police Superintendent Shahidur Rahman of trying to skip his responsibility in monitoring college girl Barnali Ghose murder case, recorded with Rampal police station on last July 11.

Barnali Ghose (19), daughter of fish trader Bipal Ghose of Chitrea village in Rampal and a first year honours student at Khulna Government Azam Khan Commerce College, was gangraped and killed on the night of June 30.

Khulna BHRIC general secretary advocate Abdul Malek in a press statement alleged that nei-

ther the police superintendent nor the OC of Rampal police station so far took any meaningful step to identify and arrest the killers.

The police super did not visit the spot till Friday and take any interest to monitor investigation into the incident that has created sensation among people.

The BHRIC leader further alleged that SI Yasin Munshi who is investigating the case did not yet collect any evidence of the gangrape and murder of the girl who got GPA-5 in both SSC and HSC examinations.

The body of Barnali was recovered by police in the early morning of July 11 from a bush near the house of farmer Jaill Munshi of Chitrea village.

Bipul Ghose lodged an FIR with

Rampal thana as complainant naming college student Raju and Munmun as accused.

Police arrested Liton, Moktar and Kamal as suspects though the two FIR-named accused are yet to be nabbed, said Abdul Malek.

Moktar made a statement before Bagerhat court on August 6 under Section 164 confessing to his involvement in the incident. Moktar also said six others including prime accused Raju were involved in the gangrape and murder, Malek said.

Police Superintendent Shahidur Rahman, when contacted, said that he was aware of the process in investigation. The investigation is being done in a affair way, he said.

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## Voter listing begins in Rangpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Voter list preparation and national ID card registration with photograph has begun in Rangpur municipality area here yesterday.

The General Officer Commanding (GOC) of 66 Infantry Division Major General Fatmi Ahmed Rumi inaugurated the programme on Rangpur Teachers' Training College premises in the morning.

Acting Deputy Commissioner (DC) Amir Hossain, Deputy Election Commissioner Hamidul Alam, Rangpur Poursabha Chairman Abdur Rouf Manik, Sadar Upazila Nirbahi (UNO) Officer Siddiqui Rahman and Commanding Officer of 5 Signals Battalion Lt Col Shahariar Ahmed were present.

## Extortion case against Jhenidah AL leader

A CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

ATK 80 lakh extortion case was filed against Moheshpur Thana Awami League (AL) secretary Moyjuddin Hamid and 17 others yesterday.

Moheshpur Upazila Sreenathpur Baor (water body) Fisheries Project president Ezzat Ali filed the extortion case with Jhenidah magistrate court.

Other accused are: Abdul Mannan, Ashraf Ali, Ibrahim, Amir Hamza, Mohiuddin, Hannan, Golam Murtoza, Badiuzzaman, Moyyuddin, Khairul Islam, Momin, Haider, Bisharat, Sirajul, Eazul, Shukur Ali and Siraj.

The plaintiff alleged that the members of the project cultivated fish worth Tk 90 lakh after taking lease of the water body from government. But the accused demanded Tk 50 lakh toll from them. The accused also threatened to kill them for their failure to pay the amount. Accordingly, they paid to Moyjuddin Tk 30 lakh. As they failed to pay the rest amount, the accused looted fish worth Tk 50 lakh from the 'baor'.

The accused include Abdur

## GAIBANDHA FLOOD

# 600 wagons stranded as rail tracks damaged in Balashi

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

At least 600 wagons, some with food grains and fertiliser, are stranded at Balashi and Bahadurabad terminals as railway communication between Trimohoni and Balashi is suspended due to damage of eight kilometers of the railway track by surging flood water.

Western Railway authorities suspended train communication on the route on July 28 as the Balashi railway yard went under four to five feet water when Brahmaputra flood control embankment breached at Singria and Ratanpur in Fulchari on the night of July 26.

According to divisional office of Bangladesh railway (BR) at Lalmonirhat, about 80 meters of a bridge (6-TB) on Alai river collapsed due to strong current of the flood water. Besides, the tracks have become vulnerable at least at 10 points as water washed away the sand underneath, creating large ditches.

Out of nine and half a kilometers railway track between Trimohoni and Balashi ghat, eight kilometers are now damaged, which needs a major renovation to restore the railway link, said Divisional Railway Engineer Masudur Rahman at Lalmonirhat.

This correspondent during a visit to the yard on Saturday saw several large ditches under tracks displaced and twisted by water.

The tracks in the same area also suffered such damage by flood in July 2004 and the railway link remained disrupted for about six

months.

BR sources said they will need at least five months to renovate the damaged tracks and restore railway communication on the route. Floating tender and other formalities will need three months and repair could be done in two months, they said.

A provisional proposal involving Tk one crore has been sent to higher authorities and work will begin as soon as funds are available, they

said.

BR's divisional traffic superintendent at Lalmonirhat however said they are trying to transship wagons through alternative ways.

Railway authorities in 2005 suspended passenger ferry services between Balashi and Bahadurabad ghats on the plea of recurring losses. Passengers of two inter-city trains running between Dinajpur and Dhaka now cross the river by country boats, taking risk.

The BR authorities however transship wagons through ferry between Balashi and Bahadurabad ghats as this is more profitable than carrying passengers.

But restoration of wagon transshipment between Balashi and Bahadurabad ghats is now possible now as it needs a major renovation of bridges and railway tracks between Trimohoni and Balashi.



A portion of the Trimohoni-Balashi railway track, badly damaged by flood.

PHOTO: STAR

## ALLEGATION OF ABETTING MILITANCY

# Charge framing against Dulu now on Aug 28

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Charge framing in a case against BNP leader and former minister Ruhul Kuddus Talukhdar Dulu and 21 others for allegedly abetting violence by Islamist militants and outlaws in 2004 was deferred yesterday till August 28.

The court of District and Sessions Judge Abdus Samad fixed the date as defense lawyers argued that a writ challenging the system of trying cases under the Emergency Power rules is pending with the High Court and its hearing would be held today.

Earlier, the court fixed August 19 for charge framing after Sub Inspector Zahangir Alam of Natore Sadar police station submitted charge sheet in the case against 33 people on June 5.

Selim Reja, a torture victim at Ramsa Kazipur (Dulu's native village) in Natore lodged the case against 22 people on April 8.

The accused include Abdur

Kuddus Mondol, identified by the investigation officer as a donor to Dulu.

Dulu's alleged cadres ward commissioner Sadrul Islam Dambel, Dalim, Dollar, Lion, Saiful, Tutul, Dablew, Minu, Malek, Babu, Golap, Dewan Shahin, Babul Chowdhury, Mostafizur Rahman Shahin, Sohail and alleged militants Abdur Razzak Shah, Amzad, Kawsar, Hazrat Ali, Makbul Mastar and Aatur Rahman were also accused in the case.

The plaintiff said Dulu's nephew Sabbir Ahmed Gama was killed on February 7 in 2004. To retaliate, Dulu let loose JMB militants and his cadres to torture and harass his political opponents in the area, the plaintiff alleged in the case.

He alleged armed cadres of Dulu kidnapped Selim from Old Bus Stand in Natore town on April 16 last year, took him to a field behind the PDB office and tortured him there.

## Shibir, students clash at BM College: 8 hurt

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

At least eight students were injured in a clash between the cadres of Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) and general students at a hostel in Barisal BM College yesterday.

The ICS cadres also ransacked four rooms of the hostel during the clash.

Witnesses said the clash ensued between the ICS cadres and general students following holding of a meeting by the ICS cadres at the BM College Sergeant Fazlul Huq Hall gate in the morning.

At first, the ICS cadres assaulted Rubel, a resident student of the hall. Then other students counter attacked them. At this stage both the clashing groups chased and counter chased each other.

The ICS cadres attacked and ransacked four rooms of the hostel injuring eight students including Rubel, Rajon, Sumon and Rezaul.

On information, hostel superintendent Bellal Hossain rushed to the spot and called police who controlled the situation. A tense situation is prevailing in the area although a meeting called by the college authorities on the college campus at noon to settle the dispute ended without any fruitful result.

The meeting was foiled as Lokman Hussein, an ICS leader, delivered provocative speech against the college authorities. Later, the college authorities called an emer-

gency meeting of the academic

council in the evening, which was

going on till filing of this report.

## Ex-BNP lawmaker Mozammel sued for extortion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A case was filed against former BNP lawmaker Mozammel Haque and nine of his acolytes on extortion and looting charges in Natore.

Awami League leader Mosharrif Hossain of Khakradaha village in Gurudaspur-Boraigram constituency, demanded Tk 8 lakh in toll from his brother Ahad Ali for doing business in his area, following which Ahad paid him Tk 1 lakh.

As Ahad failed to pay the rest, Mozammel's men looted bricks worth over Tk 3.97 lakh from his brick kiln at different times since March 2003.

Others accused in the case are Shariful Azam, Bablu Shah, Chantu, Mantu, Khokon, Swadhin, Swapan, Shariful Islam and Masud.



As the sea is turbulent, fishermen are lazing away mending nets. The photo was taken from Fishery Ghat in Chittagong.

PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA