

Handloom industry incurs Tk 200cr loss due to flood in Sirajganj

Over 1.20 lakh looms still inoperative

GOLAM MOSTAFA JIBON, *Sirajganj*

Flood has caused an extensive damage to handloom industry in the district.

Officially the loss has been estimated at about Tk 200 crore in this sector.

Over 1.20 lakh handlooms remained inoperative for the last two and a half months here. At present, no possibility is in sight to make the looms operative as the owners turned pauper after the deluge.

At least 80,000 looms are still under knee deep or waist deep water in different areas. Rest 40,000 others have been damaged fully or partially.

Sirajganj Sadar, Kazipur, Belkuchi, Shahzadpur, Chowhali, Kamarkhanda and Ullapara upazilas are famous for handloom industry, according to the District Relief and Rehabilitation Office and local Bangladesh Tant Board office. Lakhs of people are engaged in the industry for years together. Sari, lungi, napkin and other items are produced and supplied all over the country and abroad.

About 1.5 lakh people used to work at the handlooms before flood. About six lakh people of the weaver families were dependant on the profession. Of them, many women were involved in handloom related work like cotton rolling, cutting and dyeing.

But the devastating flood washed away many looms and damaged other raw materials causing heavy loss to the loom owners and rendering thousands of weavers jobless.

Sources in the Handloom Owners and Weavers Association said about six lakh people of the weaver families are now in miserable condition. Production of sari, lungi, napkin and items has been stopped creating their short supply



PHOTO: STAR

The owner gives a bleak look at his loom damaged by floodwater at Gopinathpur village in Sirajganj.

in markets.

Association sources said weavers used to earn good profits selling their products during Eid and puja festivals. But this year they are being deprived of the opportunity.

Mokaddes Ali, 45, son of late Namdar Ali at Ranigram in Sirajganj town said it was the prime time of business for weavers. Each weaver used to weave cloths to sell those before Puja and Eid. But this year flood has made the weavers unemployed. Although floodwaters started receding, but the weavers have been facing manifold problems. He said he had 29 looms and it was his paternal profession. Flood has destroyed his house and looms. He will not be able to reoperate the

looms without government help. He needs about Tk 1 lakh for the purpose.

In the meantime, he started thinking to shift to any other profession, he added.

Firoz Alam, 35, of the same area said he incurred a loss of Tk 80,000 as flood damaged his 20 handlooms. He is now jobless and passing days along with his family members in misery in the holy month of Ramadan. He said his family members including children will be able to enjoy the Eid festival.

Jakir Hossain, 55, of Belkuchi said his eight power looms were damaged while cotton, yarn and other raw materials amounting to Tk. 5 lakh were damaged by flood.

Sultan, 45, an owner of handloom industry at Naggati village in Belkuchi upazila said he had eight hand looms. Eight weavers used to work there regularly. But the flood has damaged his two looms completely and six others partially. At present he has shifted his six looms beside Sirajganj-Belkuchi road. Six weavers are working there. Two others left the job and became rickshaw-pullers.

The government should come forward to patronise the weavers by giving them loan free of interest or at easy term, a district administration official said.

BNP leader sued for extortion

RU CORRESPONDENT

An extortion case was filed with Rajshahi First Class Magistrate's Court against Nawhata municipality Chairman Mokbul Hossain, commissioner of ward no-1 Wasef and six others on Thursday.

Aslam Khan, a contractor of Rajshahi city, lodged the case against Mokbul, who is also Nawhata municipality BNP president, and others.

The accused demanded Tk one lakh as toll on March 20 this year and threatened to stop the work of a drain construction under Aslam in Nawhata municipality in case of failure to pay the amount, the complainant said in the case.

Aslam paid Tk 51,000 and Tk 49,000 on two occasions to the accused as toll, he added.

Lawyers demand withdrawal of judge

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

The Lawyers' Association of Nilphamari, at an emergency meeting here, demanded withdrawal of the special judge of the Women and Children Repression Prevention Special Court here within a month.

In a resolution adopted at the meeting, the association brought allegations of irregularities and misbehaviour against Special Judge Abdur Rashid Mia of the court.

The association will also send copies of the minutes of the meeting to the chief adviser, law advisor, chief justice Anti Corruption Commission chief, and others.

An untoward incident happened at the Women and Children Repression Prevention Special Court on Tuesday. Following refusal of the special judge to extend interim bail to an accused, lawyers became perturbed and threw files hither and thither creating a chaotic situation in the courtroom.

Lawyers began a court boycott programme since Tuesday. They said the boycott would continue till withdrawal of special judge.

Judge Abdur Rashid joined the Women and Children Repression Prevention Special Court only two months ago.

Union livestock service centre opens in Noakhali today

STAR NATIONAL DESK

The launching ceremony of "FoSHoL Union Livestock Service Centre" will be inaugurated at Awabalia Union Parishad Bhaban in Noakhali Sadar at 12 noon today.

The launching ceremony is organised by FoSHoL-NRDS under FoSHoL Project of ActionAid, an international NGO working for poverty alleviation in over 40 countries.

Dr Sunil Chandra Ghosh, Director General, Directorate of Livestock (DLS), Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock will inaugurate the centre as chief guest.

Dr Mohammed Zainul Abedin, IRRI Representative for Bangladesh and Team Leader FoSHoL-Coordination, Masud Alam Khan, Project Manager, FoSHoL-ActionAid, NRDS Chief Coordinator Md Abdul Awal, Dr Abdul Malek, District Livestock Officer, Dr Lutfar Rahman, Upazila Livestock Officer, Upazila Chairman Abu Jaher and FoSHoL-NRDS Team Leader, IDO, Paravet, Vaccinators and farmers representatives of FoSHoL will be present on the occasion.

Kabir Mallik, Associate Coordinator, Livestock, FoSHoL, ActionAid has coordinated the programme.

FoSHoL-ActionAid has taken the initiative, in collaboration with the Livestock Department of government and Union Parishad, to establish 18 union livestock service centres in 18 different unions under the project area by December, 2007.

The objectives are to promote intensive livestock support and services to farmers at their doorsteps in remote villages, close and intensive vaccination activities against bird flu and other contagious diseases, create a base at union level to provide scientific livestock keeping management, create a "one stop service centre" at union level for protection of poultry and cattle at farmers level along with the community, create an ideal model for more livestock production at household.

Timber smuggling rampant in Netrakona

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Netrakona*

Unabated smuggling of timber is going on along Durgapur border here.

About 1,000 cubic feet (CFT) of timber is being smuggled out of the country every month through the border, local people said.

A gang of 30 timber smugglers

are running the illegal trade allegedly with the help of some unscrupulous forest officials here, they said. Nizamuddin of Mukterpara in Durgapur Pourasabha is leading the smugglers, they said.

Forest officials seized over 2,000 cubic feet (CFT) of smuggled timber worth about Tk 30 lakh with the help of local people

in last one year, according to Forest Range office. Cases were filed against 54 people.

Durgapur forest officials seized 308 CFT Indian Sagun and Gazari timber worth about Tk 4 lakh from the Sumeshowary in Mukterpara Wednesday night.

In another drive, they seized 168 CFT Sagun and Gazari timber from Chandrigor Bazar.

On contact, Durgapur Sadar forest bit officer Nuhus Hajong said he filed two separate cases accusing 18 persons including Nizamuddin.

When contacted, Durgapur Police Station sub-inspector (SI) Amzad Hossain, also investigation officer (IO) of the cases, said an investigation is going on to find out the actual culprits.

1 killed, 20 hurt in Pabna clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Pabna*

One person was killed and 20 others were injured in a clash between two rival groups at Satiakola village in Santhia upazila of the district on Thursday afternoon.

The deceased was identified as Anwar Hossain Babu, 20, son of Jamal Uddin of village Satiakola in Santhia upazila.

Supporters of Nazrul Islam and Abdul Awal, who had previous enmity, used iron rods, bricks, bamboo sticks, axes and sharp weapons during the clash, police and locals said.

Among around 20 people injured in the clash, 11 were admitted to Pabna General Hospital and Santhia upazila Health Complex. Of them, critically injured Babu died on his way to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital on Thursday night.

Additional police force has been deployed in the area as a tense situation is prevailing there. Officer-in-Charge of Santhia Police Station Rejaul Haque said.

Medical students demand restoration of old exam system

RU CORRESPONDENT

Students of six medical colleges yesterday demanded restoration of the previous examination system that gave several chances to sit in the supplementary examination in case of a student's failing in any subject.

The new medical professional examination system risks medical students' education life, said the students in a written statement at a press conference at Metropolitan Press Club.

The new system gives only one chance for the supplementary examination if a third year student fails to qualify in a subject in professional examination, goes the statement.

If the student again fails in his supplementary examination, he will have to sit with the second year students as his third year results will be cancelled, it added.

Demanding change of the new examination system, the medical students earlier submitted memorandum to the authorities concerned, the students said.

Shahed Imran, a student of Bogra Medical College, read out the written statement while several students from Dhaka Medical College, Sir Salimullah Medical College, Chittagong Medical College, Bangladesh Medical College, Rajshahi Medical College and Islami Bank Medical College addressed the conference.

Growers' market set up in Rajshahi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Rajshahi*

Joint forces, in a bid to control price hike of essentials, have set up a growers' market at Bhuban Mohon Park in Shaheb Bazar here

Growers are selling agricultural products at lower prices at the newly established market.

City dwellers are thronging the market in large numbers to buy agricultural products at lower prices.

The market was set up here following complaints lodged by city dwellers against syndicates who were responsible for price spiral of essential commodities.

Following promulgation of the state of emergency and punitive action against corrupt people, some unscrupulous businessmen stopped investing in kitchen markets here.

Hoarders who used to stock vegetables and other goods in large quantity also stopped their activities creating crisis in markets.

At present, potato is being sold at the market at Tk 17 per kg while each kg onion is on sale at Tk 29.50, garlic at Tk 40, green chili at Tk 50, ginger at Tk 36 and papaya at Tk 6.

Rice, pulse and meat will be available in the market shortly, sources said.

Joint forces commander here Lt Col Sharif inaugurated the market recently. At the inaugural ceremony, he said similar markets would be set up in other parts of the city shortly.

Acting headmasters run 29 govt high schools in 8 N dists

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Nilphamari*

Twenty-nine out of 38 government high schools are being run by acting headmasters in eight northern districts, official sources said.

At present, full-fledged headmasters are running only nine government high schools in the region, they said.

Sources in Rangpur regional office of the Secondary and Higher Education Directorate said the government high schools are situated in Rangpur, Dinajpur, Gaibandha, Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Panchagarh, Thakurgaon and Nilphamari.

Twelve out of 29 acting headmasters are in rank of assistant headmaster and the rest 17 others are assistant teachers, they said.

They said two such government high schools in Dinajpur are Birampur Government High School and Bangla Hili Government Girls' High School.

In Panchagarh, four such government high schools are Panchangarch BP Government Boys' High School, Panchagarh Government Girls' High School, Deviganj Alodini Government

Girls' High School and Deviganj NN Government Boys' High School.

Four such government high schools in Thakurgaon are Ranisonkoi Government Girls' High School, Pirganj Government Girls' High School, Nekmorod Government High School and Thakurgaon Government Boys' High School.

In Lalmonirhat district, such high schools are five in number. They are Lalmonirhat Government Boys' High School, Lalmonirhat Government Girls' High School, Patgram Huzuruddin Government Girls' High School, Tushbhandar Government Boys' High School and Tushbhandar Government Girls' High School.

In Gaibandha district, there is no regular headmaster at Gaibandha Government Girls' High School, Sundarganj Amina Girls' High School and Abdul Majid Government Girls' High School.

Six such high schools in Nilphamari are Nilphamari Government Boys' High School, Nilphamari Government Girls' High School, Domar Government Girls' High School, Dimla Government Girls' High School, Syedpur

Technical School and College and Binta Rani Government High School.

On many occasions it was found that the teachers of influential group take English and Mathematics classes although they are supposed to take classes in different subjects. This is because the two subjects are regarded profitable to them for tuition purpose.

Many acting headmasters hesitate to take decision on important matters, guardians and students said.

On contact, acting deputy director (DD) of Rangpur regional office of Secondary and Higher Education Directorate Abu Noor Md Anisul Islam Chowdhury said as per government rule 20 percent headmasters are recruited from Education Cadre of the Public Service Commission (PSC) directly. Rest 80 per cent posts of headmasters are filled up on promotion of assistant headmasters. But in most cases, headmasters of this category have no requisite qualification.

He, however, said the situation improved much after takeover of present caretaker government.

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5X3



PHOTO: STAR

Brac officials exchange views with newsmen in Kushtia about their activities during the fiscal year 2006-07 when the NGO disbursed Tk 84 crore as micro-credit among the poor people in the district.