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clientele. Traders believe that consumers are more interested in Indian saris, since they are getting them at low prices. Manik Mia, a 65-year-old weaver and entrepreneur says, "In Mirpur the housing problem is getting worse everyday. Here, people living in Bihari refuge camps use the same roof for dual purposes: for living and making saris. At night we sleep, but the home becomes a factory in the morning. Moreover we need proper lighting to produce good quality work, but unfortunately we work in small rooms with no ventilation or proper lighting facilities."

According to traders, in Mirpur there are nearly 110 shops at the *Palli*, through which weavers directly sell their product to the customer. The manufacturers and traders say the annual sales of the 110 shops would be between Tk 40 crore and Tk 50 crore, which is much lower than it is supposed to be.

At present these ornamental Karchupi clothes cater to high end stores. Prices are quite reasonable for these customers: saris from Tk 1,500 up to Tk 15,000 and a wedding sari costs Tk 10,000 while formal saris start from Tk 1,500. Depending on the quality and price a weaver gets Tk 600 to Tk 6,000 for a single of sari.

In 1977, to develop the living standards of weavers the Ministry of Textiles and Jute established Bangladesh Handloom Board (BHB) as a Statutory Public Sector Organisation. The Board has been assigned to promote the overall development of the handloom sector with emphasis on making the lives of the people engaged in it better.

Historically, handloom is considered part of our heritage. The artistry achieved in handloom fabrics is unique. Handlooms can be delicate fabrics for special occasions or less expensive cloth for daily wear. The industry has shown an innate resilience to withstand and adapt itself to the changing demand of modern times.

To ensure the development of the handloom weavers, BHB has been initiating a number of package programmes covering the supply of input, innovation of suitable designs, financing of