



PHOTO: STAR

Anil Deb of Berakshi village under Magura Sadar upazila milking his cow purchased with the support of Rural Organisation for Voluntary Activity.

# Poor fishermen no more poor

Rural Organisation for Voluntary Activity (ROVA) comes to the aid of 446 marginalised fishermen in Magura

AZIBOR RAHMAN with Andrew Eagle

The lives of 446 economically marginal fishermen and their families in Magura used to be without hope. With water bodies in Sadar, Mohammadpur and Shalikhapada upazilas under the control of local influential people the traditional fishing community found itself with nowhere to fish. But thanks to the initiatives of the non-government organisation, the Rural Organisation for Voluntary Activity (ROVA), the future for Magura's fishermen looks bright.

"We used to pass days unfed and half-fed, especially during the dry season when we couldn't fish," says Sanjoy Biswas from Akshi village in Sadar upazila. "Nowadays we face no difficulties."

"Our poverty is over," agrees Bijoy Biswas from Bunagati village in Shalikhapada upazila.

Change arrived in 2013 when ROVA launched its project, funded by Manusher Jonno Foundation, to assist the fishermen, not least to access local water bodies. It had been the case that whenever the government invited tenders to lease the water bodies, the fishermen found that due to poverty they were unable to raise the necessary funds for a competitive bid.

ROVA organised the fishermen into cooperative societies and granted access to interest-free loans for water body tenders; thereafter the fishermen successfully leased

eleven of them, including Alukdia Baor, Ghope Baor and Rampur Tank. The Alukdia lease, which was secured by a cooperative of 45 fishermen with the help of a Tk 2 lakh loan, has returned the families involved to economic solvency, with half of the loan already repaid. At Rampur Tank meanwhile,

In addition, to combat the challenge of low water levels in the spring and summer months, ROVA has involved several fishermen in other income generating activities, including by providing 32 families with sewing machines and involving 25 families in cattle-rearing. "I can earn up to Tk 150 daily from

to complete their examinations due to a lack of money to pay enrolment fees. Nowadays project funds support 145 students in general and have helped 34 students to cover the cost of exam enrolment.

"I wouldn't have been able to pass my Secondary School Certificate exams this year without project support," says one beneficiary Mitaly Joarder. "I have also been promised assistance for higher education, which brings much optimism to my life."

In light of the inability for fisher families to access private tuition, the project has opened 12 learning centres as well, which cater to 180 students from classes V to X, free of cost.

"My father can't afford a private tutor for me," says Sathi Biswas from Tiorkhali village in Shalikhapada upazila. "Without the learning centre I could not have achieved my A+ result in the Primary School Certificate."

"Fishermen contribute a lot to society," says ROVA's Executive Director Kazi Kamruzzaman. "They were being deprived of their basic rights, so we took on the challenge of bettering their economic circumstances. If we can continue the project for a further five years, all the fishermen in Magura should achieve sustainable solvency."

Magura district's Fishery Officer Chandra Shekhor Nandi agrees that ROVA's initiative has brought remarkable change to the lives of



PHOTO: STAR

Bijoy Biswas of Kuchia Mora village under Sadar upazila sewing clothes.

where 35 fishermen formed the Bunagati cooperative society to secure the lease with the assistance of a Tk 5 lakh loan, earnings have been similarly lucrative with Tk 3 lakh of the loan already repaid. Bijoy Biswas is one of the fishermen involved. "Obtaining the lease for Rampur Tank has changed our lives," he says.

milk sales," says Sanjoy Biswas, who has one cow as a result of the project.

ROVA's engagement with the community has also targeted improving education outcomes. Only a few years ago many Secondary and Higher School Certificate candidates were unable

## BGB to raise

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Indian villages within the fence," it said in a statement the next day.

That time, Senior Secretary to Bangladesh home ministry Mozammel Haque Khan said that international law does not allow any establishments to be set up within 150 yards of the zero line. "If they make a move to build anything violating the rules, we will protest it," he told The Daily Star.

Bangladesh shares its border with five Indian states -- West Bengal (2216.7 Km), Assam (263 Km), Meghalaya (443 Km), Tripura (856 Km) and Mizoram (318 Km).

The issue of border killing will also get priority at the meeting against the backdrop that 28 unarmed Bangladeshis have been killed until now this year by Indian Border Security Force (BSF). Of them, five have been killed in this month.

Earlier, the Indian authority repeatedly assured Bangladesh of bringing an end to the killing of innocent Bangladeshis. The last BGB-BSF meeting in Dhaka in May decided to bring down the border killings to zero and that Bangladesh and Indian border guards would jointly investigate border killings.

According to the agenda of the upcoming meeting, arrest of Bangladeshi nationals by the BSF and Indian police and illegal border crossing or intrusion into Bangladesh by BSF members will be discussed in New Delhi.

# Weaving offers income for indigenous women

ANVIL CHAKMA with Andrew Eagle

Since before anyone can remember, the women of Rangapani village in Rangamati municipality have woven their own clothes at home, by hand. Nowadays, the production of traditional Chakma pinon-hadi outfits has a commercial purpose; weaving is helping many to better support themselves and their families.

When Chittibi Chakma, an eighth grader of Moanoghar Residential High School returns home from class, she starts to weave. "When I sell pinon-hadi," she says, "I can maintain my expenses easily." She earns up to Tk 3,000 per month, which means the family can afford her education. "But it takes longer to produce an item," she says, "because I also have to study."

Her neighbour Kalabi Chakma, 42, is able to pay for schooling for her sons due to weaving. "Weaving is our livelihood," she says, "even at times like now when the price of raw materials has risen and is eating into profits."

With around 200 local families involved in the craft, such that looms are almost a prerequisite for any village home, as a source of traditional clothes Rangapani has gained quite a reputation.

To visit of a weekend, when time is more abundant for many, is to see, house to house, weavers busily working on a skirt-like pinon or the shawl-like hadi; and the younger generation is, if anything, more enthusiastic about the tradition than their older relatives.

Durgapudi Chakma is a yarn-and-cloth trader benefiting from Rangapani's success. "I collect yarn

from the market and deliver them to weavers directly," she says. According to Durgapudi, a weaver can earn up to Tk 3,000 for a completed pinon, which will subsequently fetch a retail price of up to Tk 5,000 in the local market.

"Cotton prices are higher now," Durgapudi says. "Profits are a little less, especially for the more intricate

provide an easy loan facility."

The Rangamati office of NGO Proshika Manobik Unnayan Kendra has also, by tradition, helped local weavers' association to organise loans for their members. "We sometimes give loans to local weaving organisations," says area coordinator ABM Ahsan Ullah, "though nowadays it's less common for us."



PHOTO: STAR

An indigenous woman weaves Chakma pinon-hadi on traditional handlooms at Rangapani village under Rangamati municipality.

pinon designs which require more work and yarn to produce."

Weavers are also supported by a number of local organisations able to offer loans for start-up capital. "Many women can't afford the yarn but they are interested in the business," says Suraja Chakma, president of the local weaving association, the Champaful Mohila Samiti. "I started our association with them in our village to

Despite fluctuations in cotton price and the need for continued favourable loan access to finance capital, Rangapani's pinon-hadi industry looks to have a bright future, especially as the merits of traditional Chakma fashion are increasingly recognised by Bangalee women too, which means the nationwide demand for pinon-hadi outfits is continuing to grow.

## Key accused in 2 Kushtia AL men murder held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Police on Monday arrested a local Awami League (AL) leader, prime accused in connection with Saturday's factional clash in Kushtia Sadar upazila, which left two men of the ruling party killed.

The arrestee is Jhaudia union AL President Bokhtiar Hossain, also former chairman of the union parishad.

With this, a total of eight people have so far been arrested in the case.

Detective Branch of police arrested Bokhtiar from in front of a hotel in the town in the afternoon.

Kushtia Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court sent him to jail at night, said police.

Two activists were killed and 30 others injured in a clash between two factions of AL at Majhpara village in Sadar upazila on Saturday.

# Wild elephants destroying crops

Locals guard houses, croplands by turn in Moulvibazar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A herd of seven wild elephants continued destroying crops in Natun Samanbag tea garden area of Barlekha upazila under the district for the last couple of days, much to the worry of locals.

After destroying paddy plants and vegetables at night, elephants return to deep forest in the morning, said Mohon Santal, a local.

Amid the situation, male people started guarding the crop fields in the tea garden area while many women and kids are moving to safer places.

"Holding sticks, small groups of people are guarding the houses and fields at night to ward off possible attack by elephants," said Monoronjon Das, a tea worker of the garden.

Visiting the area on Monday, this correspondent saw that paddy plants in large area are already destroyed by wild elephants.

"We have been living here for generations, but elephants didn't disturb us before," said Charan Bunarjee, a tea worker. Md Ali Khan, manager of Natun Samanbag tea garden, and Azir Uddin, chairman of Dakkhinbag union parishad, admitted that elephants are destroying crops in the area.

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☎ ৮১১৭৪০৫-০৭, ৯১০৩১৭১-৩, ৯১০৩১৭৮ (পিএবিএস)			
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<b>12. Human Resource Management, &amp; Labour Laws</b>			
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<b>14. Effective Leadership in Change Management</b>			
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<b>20. Project Monitoring and Evaluation</b>			
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<b>21. Public Procurement Processing And Approval Procedure</b>			
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<b>22. Microsoft Access</b>			
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<b>24. Marketing &amp; Salesmanship</b>			
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উপযুক্ত প্রশিক্ষণ কোর্সসমূহ সরকারী, বেসরকারী ও এনজিও প্রতিষ্ঠানসমূহের ব্যবস্থাপকদের জন্য উপযোগী। যে কোন স্নাতক ও স্নাতকোত্তর ডিগ্রীধারী ব্যক্তি উল্লিখিত কোর্সসমূহে অংশগ্রহণ করতে পারবেন। কোর্সসমূহে অংশগ্রহণের জন্য কোর্স ফি মহাপরিচালক, বিআইএম - এর অনুকূলে যে কোন তফশিলী ব্যাংক হতে ব্যাংক ড্রাফট/পে-অর্ডারের মাধ্যমে প্রদান করতে হবে। বিস্তারিত গণের সাইট দেখুন: www.bim.org.bd

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