



A Rakhine woman shows clothes to a customer at her shop at Kuakata Rakhine Mohila Market in Kalapara upazila of Patuakhali district. Inset, another woman passes idle time in absence of customers at her shop at the same market.

PHOTO: STAR

Kuakata businesswomen face capital crisis

SOHRAB HOSSAIN with ANDREW EAGLE

Domen Rakhine, 45, has run a clothing stall at Kuakata Rakhine Women's Market since 2003. She is one of fourteen women entrepreneurs at the market. With proceeds from her small business she covers the daily expenses for her two-daughter family. Yet to see her half-empty shop one could barely imagine that her business is in relatively good shape. Like the other women entrepreneurs in the market, Domen lacks the capital to properly stock her shop, and to fund its expansion. Moreover, she says, there is no easy means to access the desperately needed capital.

"I just can't buy enough goods to make a really attractive display at my shop," she says. "I have no capital and there isn't any government or other facility available where I could borrow the money at reasonable interest rates. I have customers, but a really good range of goods on display would attract more."

Another businesswoman Mamase, Domen's neighbour at the market, has

the same problem. "I can't run my business well due to insufficient capital," she says. "And it's a pity since this business is my family's sole income source. We face competition from local businessmen, most often Bangladeshis, who have the capital and are able to fund attractive displays. If any authority stepped forward to help us with access to capital on reasonable terms, there's no reason why we could not succeed."

The market was built in 2003 by the Patuakhali district administration, with the fourteen Rakhine women allocated stalls in order to encourage them in business. While such initiative is well-appreciated by the women, the lack of capital facilities is now proving a stumbling block.

"We have only stalls but no cash to establish our businesses well," says Luma Rakhine, a local community leader. "Our community isn't rich so finding the funds from within it isn't an option for most families. We have raised the issue with the local administration, thus far in vain."

She says that during a recent visit to

the area, Kalapara upazila's nirbahi officer ABM Sadiqur Rahman assured them that bank loans at low interest rates would be managed for all the businesswomen. "He doesn't seem to have taken any step with regard to doing this," she says.

When contacted, Rahman told The Daily Star that any Rakhine woman could receive a bank loan from any bank in accordance with the usual procedures banks use to run their businesses. "Only the bank authorities could implement a project with special loan terms for them considering their socioeconomic condition," he said.

The manager for Krishi bank's Kuakata branch Sultan Mahmud Nadim says they indeed have a special loan programme for women entrepreneurs. "Three of the Rakhine traders have already received Tk 1 lakh loans each under this programme. The others can also apply."

It is unfortunate that the majority of Rakhine traders at the women's market would seem to be unaware of such facilities.

Smart swindlers!

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

They are smart cheaters, involved in defrauding people by introducing themselves as police officers, journalists, doctors, BRTA officers, BSTI officers and BCL leaders.

Tipped off, police detained three members of the gang from Akhaura upazila of the district on Friday night, Brahmanbaria Superintendent of Police (SP) Mizanur Rahman said at a press conference yesterday noon.

The arrestees are Abul Kalam Azad, 34, son of Abul Hashem and Monir Hossain, 32, son of late Madon Bhuiyan of Boro Kuripaika village of Akhaura upazila, and Imtiaz Ahmed Khan Jony, 32, son of Sirajul Islam Khan of Shahbajpur Pathan Bari of Sarail upazila of Brahmanbaria.

"The three arrestees introduced themselves as officers of different departments and virtually extorted money from innocent people," the SP said.

"Recently I arranged the marriage ceremony of an orphan girl of Sharkari Shishu Poribar (government orphanage) in Brahmanbaria. One of the three arrestees asked for Tk 10 thousand from Dulal Khadem, caretaker of Akhaura Kharampur Kolla Shaheed Mazar (shrine), in the name of the SP. And Dulal sent him the said amount of money through bKash.

"After receiving the money, another member of the gang again claimed money to Dulal for the same purpose and told him to send the money to his nephew working in Bangladesh Police.

"Suspecting them as cheater, Dulal informed me of the matter. Later police arrested them through an inquiry concerning the bKash number," the SP said.

One of the three arrestees, Imtiaz Ahmad Khan Jony was involved in various cheating incidents including brokerage at hospitals and arranging fake bail bonds at the court, said Additional SP of Brahmanbaria Md Iqbal Hossain.

Cattle farmers eye good profit

Traders likely to count loss if sacrificial animals are allowed to come from India ahead of Eid-ul-Azha

KONGKON KARMAKER, Dinajpur

With the decrease in cattle supply from India, cattle farmers of eight northern districts under Rangpur division are expecting good profit from locally reared sacrificial animals during Eid-ul-Azha this year.

The demand for sacrificial animals this year is around 4.5 lakh in eight districts of Rangpur region, said Rangpur Department of Livestock Deputy Director (DD) Mir Faruk Hossain.

There are 1,10,520 large and small commercial cattle farms in the region, of which, 33,155 are in Rangpur and 17,586 in Nilphamari. Around 5.7 lakh cattle, including 1,76,125 goats and sheep, are being reared at these farms, he added.

There are more than one lakh cattle surplus in Rangpur region, so there will no shortage of sacrificial animals this year, Faruk said.

Rafiqul Islam, a cow farmer of Kamalpur

village under Sadar upazila, said he is rearing 10 cows and fattening them the natural way. Traders are already communicating with him to buy his cows, he added.

"Dependence on Indian cattle must go," Rafiqul said, adding that they are expecting good profit, but traders could suffer huge losses if sacrificial animals come from India.

Buying and selling at cattle markets are yet to gain momentum due to the flood, farmers said.

Traders said prices of sacrificial animals could be high due to shortage of fodder caused by excessive rain and flood in the region.

Selim Uddin of Shakhata village under Kaliganj upazila of Lalmonirhat said he spent Tk 20,000 in the last two months for fodder for one cow, adding that he has been rearing it for seven months using natural fattening method. "I have got an offer of Tk 90,000 for the cow," he added.

Mizanur Rahman of Kaunia upazila of

Rangpur said some people are allegedly using pills for fattening their cows. He urged the local administration to look into the matter.

Joyal Abedin of Nilphamari Sadar and Fazlul Haq of Kaliganj upazila of Lalmonirhat said rearing cost has gone up this year due to the high price of fodder. If cattle come from India, their dream of good profit will be destroyed, he added.

DD Faruk said his office is working round the clock to ensure healthy cattle for this festival, adding that field level officials are working to prevent use of cattle fattening pills.

Commanding Officer of Joypurhat BGB-20 Battalion Lt Col Imtiaz Choudhury said smugglers along the border districts are becoming active to bring cow fattening pills from India illegally, adding that members of Joypurhat and Dinajpur Border Guard Bangladesh seized nearly 5 lakh pills in the last two months.

Man burns wife to death for dowry

Another stabbed to death by husband

STAR COUNTRY DESK

A woman was burnt to death and another stabbed dead allegedly by their husbands in Lalmonirhat and Dinajpur on Friday.

Police arrested Mominur Rahman, 28, son of Ershad Miah of Sahebda village in Lalmonirhat's Patgram upazila, on charge of killing his wife for dowry, reports our correspondent.

The deceased was Morsheda Akhter, 21, daughter of Mokarram Hossain of Fakirhat village in the upazila.

The couple got married two years ago, said family members. The victim's father said Mominur often tortured Morsheda for dowry.

On August 20, Mominur poured kerosene on Morsheda's body and set her on fire in presence of his family members as she refused to bring dowry money from her father, said police.

She was taken to Patgram Upazila Health Complex and then referred to Rangpur Medical College Hospital as her condition worsened. Morsheda succumbed to her burn injuries at the hospital on Friday night.

The victim's husband was held from Rangpur, Aboni Shankar Kar, officer-in-charge of Patgram Police Station, said.

Meanwhile, a woman was stabbed to death allegedly by her husband in Khansama upazila of Dinajpur the same day, reports our correspondent.

The deceased was Touhida Begum, 36, wife of Monju Rahman of Kachinia village. She was mother of two children.

Police and family members said the couple locked in an altercation over a family issue.

At one stage, Monju stabbed his wife, leaving her seriously injured and fled the scene. Critically injured Touhida later died at M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital.

OC Motin Proddhan of Khansama Police Station said the couple doubted each other of having extramarital affairs.

Kid drowns in flooded home yard

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

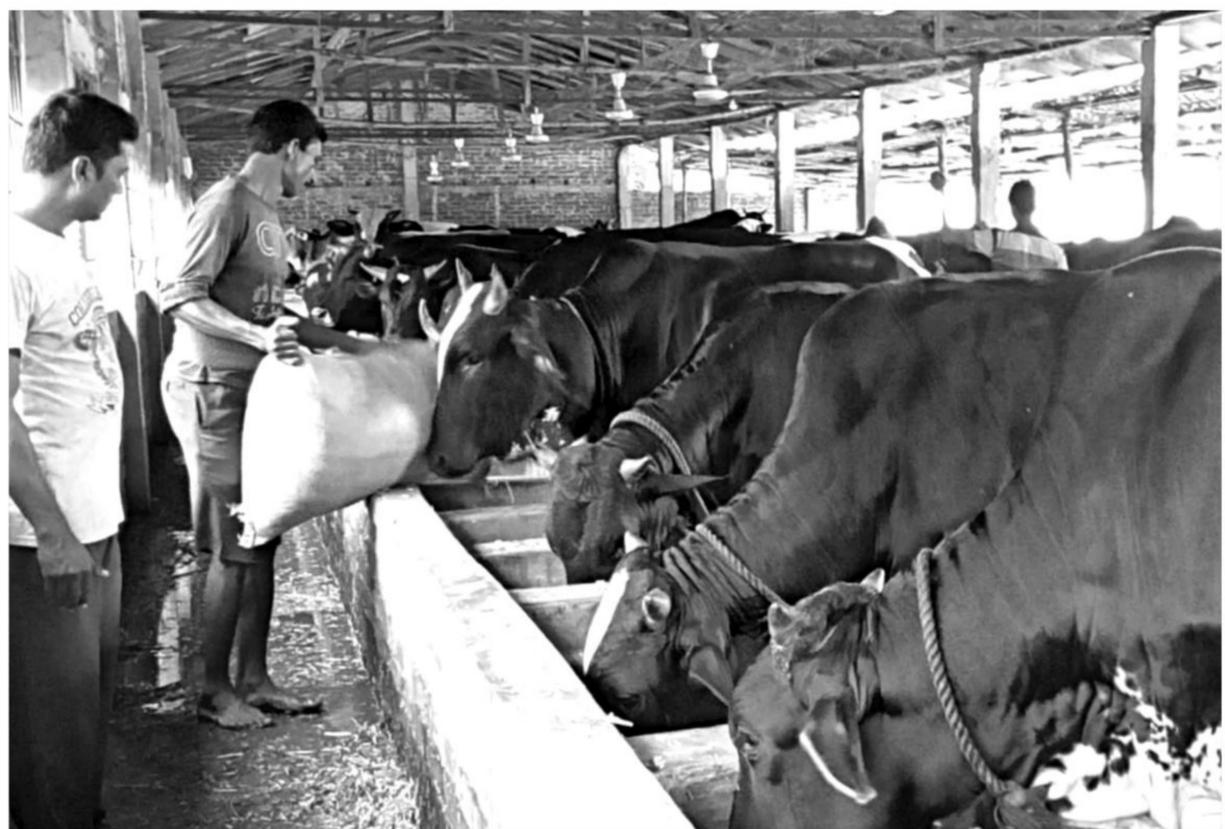
A two-year-old kid of a flood affected family fell into a hole and drowned in Hatibandha upazila of the district on Friday.

Villagers recovered the body of Jannati Akhter, daughter of rickshaw-puller Anwar Hossain and Jahanara Begum of Madhya Gaddimari village in the upazila, from a hole filled with flood water at their house yard.

Locals said Jahanara went out to collect relief materials from a relief distribution centre about two kilometres from her house, leaving her daughter sleeping alone at home on Friday afternoon.

As Jahanara was late collecting the aid the baby girl woke up, stepped out from her cot and drowned in the water-filled hole, locals said.

Gaddimari UP Chairman Atiar Rahman said floodwater created such holes at many inundated homesteads in his union.



Cattle farmers use natural fodder to feed their cows in Bochaganj upazila of Dinajpur ahead of the Eid-ul-Azha.

PHOTO: STAR



Bangladesh Cricket Board President Nazmul Hasan Papon distributes relief materials to flood victims in Sirajganj Sadar on Friday. On his right is Chittagong City Corporation Mayor AZM Nasir Uddin and on his left is local lawmaker Dr Habibe Millat Munna.

PHOTO: STAR

Lawmaker in action against sand lifters

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Action against illegal sand lifters was taken by a local lawmaker in the district yesterday.

Awami League lawmaker Ekabbar Hossain, also President of Parliamentary Standing Committee on Road Transport and Bridges Ministry, saw a group of people lifting sand with powerful dredgers from the Banshai river in Nishchintapur area of the Mirzapur upazila while he was going to Fotepur by a boat for distributing relief among the flood-affected people.

The lawmaker immediately took his boat to their dredgers and caught four of the sand lifters red-handed while the rest managed to flee the scene, said Fotepur Union Chairman Abdur Rouf.

The detainees are Toriqul Islam, Maznu Miah, Jafar Iqbal and Abdur Hakim.

Assistant Commissioner (land) Rumana Yasmin as executive magistrate of a mobile court, fined them Tk 3 lakh in total, Rouf said.

Idols of two Dinajpur temples damaged

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Unidentified criminals damaged several idols of Hindu goddesses at two different temples in Dinajpur municipality area early yesterday.

The incidents triggered panic among the local Hindu people as they occurred at a time when Durga Puja, the biggest festival of the community, is only a few weeks away.

Quoting locals, police said two unidentified criminals on a motorcycle, equipped with sharp weapons, came to Fultola crematorium around 1:30am.

Later, they entered the Kali Temple of the crematorium by breaking open the door and vandalised three idols of the Hindu goddess before leaving the place hurriedly.

The duo later went to Roypara Durga Temple in Mashimpur and vandalised several idols, including those of goddess Durga and left the spot around 2:30am.

Swapna Mohanta, a housewife of Roypara village, said such incidents took place for the first time at the village as there is strong harmony among the people from Hindu and Muslim communities.

Meanwhile, police detained one Bappy Shahriar, 32, a former army man and son of late Moslem Uddin of Hamzapur village, for his alleged involvement in the vandalism.

However, Bappy's brother Ayub Ali said his brother lost his job from Bangladesh Army in January this year due to mental illness.

'Provide masks to stone workers'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Speakers at a programme in Panchagarh yesterday urged the owners of the stone crushing machines to provide masks among the workers to prevent health problems.

The demand was made at a workshop on preventing health risk to the workers and owners of stone industry in the district.

The two-day workshop began at Tetulia Upazila Parishad Auditorium in Panchagarh yesterday.

The upazila administration organised the event with the assistance of Upazila Management and Development Project and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).