Empty since mid-2020, jute mills across the country have become eerily similar to ghost towns. As many workers have been driven out of their quarters, the residential areas replicate that same, empty feeling. While almost no temporary and substitute workers are yet to have their dues cleared, even some permanent workers bear the same fate because of identification mistakes on their official documents.

Nat'l Jute Day NOT FOR WÖRKERS

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

Nilufa Akhter is a 36-year-old single mother of two who lost her husband six years ago.

For most of this time, she managed to provide for her family with her job at Khalishpur Jute Mill, though this was no easy task. Throughout this duration, her wages were often delayed, but she persisted, for her family.

But on July 1 last year, the mill shut down completely, and so began her days of misery.

While a few relatives stepped up to support her initially, it soon started running dry, to the point that Nilufa was having difficulty putting food on the plate.

Coronavirus made the situation worse, as Nilufa and women like her couldn't just go and work as house

She had no choice but to take up the harder life of a day-labourer, all for her 16-year-old daughter and 12-year-old son.

Her daughter was supposed to sit for SSC exams, but Nilufa can't even bear her educational expenses anymore. "All day long, all I can think about is how to manage food for the family," she told this correspondent.

In the 20 months since the mills closed, she has received no money, which includes six bills due from last year, racking up around Tk 2.5 lakh in arrears.

Nilufa is among over 22,000 jute workers from seven stateowned jute mills in the Khulna and Jashore industrial belt, all of whom have plunged into dire straits after the mills closed.

The government assured them of clearing their dues within two months of the closure, which the textile and jute ministry announced at a press conference, but none of that money has come

The notice issued by Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) at each mill gate around the start of the closure added further uncertai to their lives. Not mentioning closure, all the notice said was that the

mills were "stopping

production".

At the aforementioned press conference, the minister also said the mills will be reopened within three months after modernising their fixtures, in joint venture, PPP, or G2G agreements, but that has not materalised as well.

Besides the mills in Khulna and Jashore, there's another 18 mills across the country. In total, more than 50,000 permanent, substitute and temporary workers have been laid-off.

Visiting at least four jute mills of Khalishpur including Platinum and Crescent yesterday, this correspondent found the areas are mired in silence. But before the closure, these were some of the

most populous and crowded places in Khulna city.

According to BJMC and ministry sources, a decision has been taken up to lease the mills out for a period of five to 20 years through an open bidding system. They said five of them have already been leased to private entities.

> After the independence in 1972, 77 jute mills across the country were first brought under state ownership. Over the vears, they were gradually privatised again as per suggestions by IMF and the World Bank.

But leading up

the national polls in 2008, the to-be elected Awami League's manifesto featured the aim to take back the mills under state-ownership and make them profitable. In 2009, the new government reopened two closed mills and de-privatised another

But then on July 1, 2020, the government closed all state-run jute mills citing heavy losses and excessive production costs.

While most of the 25,000 permanent workers of the mills have received their wages and other benefits, the temporary and substitute workers have been left

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

At a time when price of essentials is getting out of hand again, the food directorate's subsidised rice programme is bringing some relief to life in the port city. But to access the department's pick-ups, from where the rice is sold, people of all ages are having to stand in long queues, withstanding the scorching heat. This photo was taken yesterday from Anderkilla area.

Stand up for migrants in int'l arena

Speakers urge govt STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday said Bangladesh needs to make sure the rights of its migrants abroad are being ensured and protected.

They said the first International Migration Review Forum (IMRF) on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) will be held in May this year, where Bangladesh needs to address migration-related gaps strongly.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1





Ruhul Amin Krishak-Sramik-Chhatra-Janata Oikva Parishad leader

Inclusive dev needed to ensure benefits for all Speakers tell CPD-YPSA dialogue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Speakers at a dialogue in the port city yesterday said inclusive development is a requirement to ensure benefits for all citizens.

Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) and Young Power in Social Action (YPSA) jointly organised the dialogue, titled "Chattogram Dialogue: Commitment for National Development - Education, Value-added Employment

Opportunity and Gender Equality" at a city hotel. Speaking at the dialogue, Dr Fahmida Khatun, executive director of CPD, said inclusive

development means people-centred development. While presenting the keynote, Avra Bhattacharjee, joint director, dialogue and outreach at CPD, said the term "commitment for

development" talks about what political parties commit in their election manifestos. The present Awami League government announced a bunch of commitments in their

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Can it be termed

true development?

hospitals have been

the past 50 years

election manifesto for the national polls in 2018, he While many of

those have been implemented, many are under implementation while many more are vet to even get going, Bhattacharjee added.

For Chattogram, the pace of releasing funds for major development

projects is slow, he observed. This has delayed many projects which were

supposed to be completed by 2021. Dr Jyoti Prokash Dutta, president of Bangladesh Economic Association, Chattogram chapter, putting emphasis on inclusive development said not a single government hospital has been established in Chattogram in the past 50 years but around 20 five-star private hospitals have been established here.

"Can it be termed true development?". Arifur Rahman, executive director of YPSA, said more than 20 percent people in the country are left out of major development programmes, adding that they must be brought under mainstream development programmes.

Among others, Awami League lawmaker and member of Parliamentary Standing Committee on Ministry of Finance Mostafizur Rahman Chowdhury was present as special guest.

Let's Build A Beautiful Tomorrow

Owners of land plots are invited to discuss their proposals

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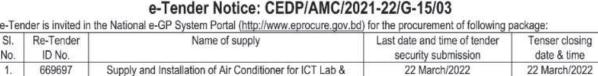
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College Education Development Project (CEDP)

IDG Sub-Project Ananda Mohan College, Mymensingh Email: anandamohan1908cedp@gmail.com

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This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copy will be accepted To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required.

Teachers Conference Room (G-15)

The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered banks' branches up to 06 March/2022. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk

> Professor Md. Aman Ullah Principal Ananda Mohan College, Mymensingh Phone: 091-66769 E-mail: anandamohan1908cedp@gmail.com

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