



The Benarashi Palli in Pabna's Ishwardi upazila has become covered in overgrowth as the specialised production zone lacks maintenance amid the absence of production units. With the project set to end by 2024, just two factories have been set up so far.

PHOTO: AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU

Pabna's Benarasi Palli being reclaimed by nature!

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, Pabna

The Benarasi Palli in Pabna's Ishwardi upazila has remained inactive since its establishment in 2004 due to a serious lack of initiative among the authorities and weavers involved.

The specialised production zone was set up by Bangladesh Tant Board on 5.5 acres of land in a bid to keep the region's heritage of making Benarasi, Katan and other luxurious clothing items alive for the foreseeable future.

However, it has made little progress in this regard and is slowly being reclaimed by nature as most plots remain unused.

Some 90 plots were allotted to various weavers for building production units at the Ishwardi Benarasi Palli between 2004 and 2007 but only five are making use of their space as the rest lack enough funds to do so.

According to Bangladesh Tant Board, Benarasi weavers got five-decimal plots by paying Tk 4,200 as a down payment and Tk 650 as a monthly instalment for 20 years beginning in 2004.

Similarly, three-decimal plots were allotted for Tk 2,500 as down payment with Tk 390 monthly instalments for the same period.

In addition, only plot owners were allowed to establish factories in the commercial area in a bid to prevent them from subletting their allotments to other entrepreneurs.

"Only five people have paid their instalments and established factories in the last 18 years," said Obaidur Rahman



Jilani, a field supervisor of Bangladesh Tant Board and in-charge of Ishwardi Benarasi Palli.

As such, the board has decided to cancel the allotments of plots that have remained unused if the awardees fail to pay their dues and set up units by the time the project expires in 2024.

During a recent visit to the state-owned estate, this correspondent found that only two factories have been running in full swing while weeds and other plant life have covered the entire area due to a lack of maintenance.

"Bangladesh Tant Board has so far issued notices among 85 plot holders as of March this year, asking them to pay instalments and establish factories to avoid their allotments being cancelled," Obaidur added.

On the other hand, weavers claim that they have lost interest in investing in the Benarashi Palli due to a fund crisis resulting from poor business.

"Benarasi, Katan and other luxurious saris are made by handloom, but we are struggling to survive with our inherited business due to poor sales of these costly

cloths as cheaper Indian cloths rule the market," said Javed Benarashi, a one of the key Benarasi traders in Ishwardi upazila.

Besides, soaring raw material costs have cut the scope for making profits and so, weavers have no scope of investing more in the Benarasi Palli, he added.

Javed's father, Abdul Mazid Benarasi, introduced Benarashi sari manufacturing in Ishwardi in early 1950 after coming from India.

Javed has since inherited the factory at his house, where only 5 of 14 handlooms are being operated.

"I have a plot in the Benarasi Palli, but I do not have enough funds to establish a new factory considering the current situation," Javed said.

Wakil Ahmed, president of the Ishwardi Poura Primary Weavers Association, said there are 196 listed weavers in the upazila that make Benarasi and Katan products.

There are more than 500 handlooms for producing such clothing items but only 200 to 250 are in use as many workers have left their inherited profession to ensure survival, he added.

Due to the lack of funds, many weavers are unable to run their looms at home, let alone go for investment in the Benarasi Palli.

"So, the government should provide financial support to help keep this heritage," Wakil said, citing how establishing a factory, engaging manpower and paying utility bills would be a huge burden for weavers.

READ MORE ON B2

How to build an employer's brand?

MAMUN RASHID

When I joined ANZ Grindlays Bank in the mid-eighties from a local bank, it was more to do with the social prestige the British legacy bank commanded in this part of the world. When I joined Standard Chartered in mid-1993, it was repositioning an erstwhile lousy bank.

I moved to Citibank N.A in 2001 and it had more to do with joining the investment banking 'guru'. My joining the Brac business school in 2011 had more to do with refocusing a business school under the leadership of nobody less than Sir Fazle Hasan Abed. My joining PwC in mid-2015 had all to do with my learning mind.

In this evolving hybrid world, organisations are struggling to attract, hire, and retain their best people. Building and maintaining employer brand has become the biggest issue facing HR and organisational leaders today.

Introduced in 1990 by Simon Barrow (chairman of People in Business), the term employer brand is the image of the company as a potential employer. It's everything from how they conduct themselves in the market to what people think it would be like to work for their organisation.

Eighty-four per cent of job seekers say the reputation of a company is crucial when making decision on where to apply for a job, and 96 per cent of companies agree that employer brand and reputation can positively or negatively impact revenue. With so much focus on employer brand, the question remains as to why organisations are still struggling to implement the best practices that result in higher return on investments.

Employer brand is never entirely under organisation's control, and perceptions are shaped by multiple circumstances. However, organisations can take simple measures to make sure that they are doing their best to create a positive image for their brand.

START FROM WITHIN

Keep the employees happy. Happy and engaged employees result in a better employer brand for two reasons: lower turnover rate and positive word of mouth. They will make the company a positive place to work and become the evangelists representing the brand they work for to the outside.

ADAPT

Your branding is not a "set it and forget it" option. Change is the only constant. This is a good notion to bear in mind when monitoring the employer brand. It's crucial to be able to perceive the employer brand considering changes that might be taking place and adjusting actions accordingly. Flexible working hours, remote working setups and rewarding result culture are just a few aspects of the new work era.

GIVE BACK

Along with higher salaries, better benefits and advancement opportunities and work-life balance, job seekers and career changers cite purpose-driven work as a top priority. When people see their company cares about social upliftment and when the company allows them to participate in volunteer projects during work hours, they feel more engaged.

Engaged workers feel more fulfilled in their jobs and this radiates outward from the team, thereby, reinforcing the organisation's brand as an employer.

The ability to mix work and pleasure, aided by technology, will be a key factor in shaping people's lives in future. If employers don't keep up with this trend, they are likely to lose their best people, either to more agile organisations or to some form of self-employment.

The author is an economic analyst.

Knowledge on tech a must for smart economy

Experts say

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Enhancing knowledge on technology among people, the government and industry is essential to make a "Smart Bangladesh", experts said yesterday.

"People, industry and government organisations are still not prepared for 5G with sufficient use cases. So, we need to educate them first," said Shyam Sunder Sikder, chairman of the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC).

He then said 5G is needed for the automation of healthcare, industries, seaports, education, airports and agriculture as that is how the country will get a smart economy.

Sikder was speaking at a session of the three-day Bangladesh 17th Internet Governance Forum 2022 on "Smart Bangladesh: Opportunity and Challenge of Mobile Telecom Industry" at the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific.

He went on to say 5G will increase the use of the internet of things (IoT), which will connect devices and people.

"We have allocated 190MHz spectrum to the operators, but they need huge investment to deploy," he said.

Besides, consumers are not concerned about the price of availing 5G or the latest technologies.

"People's main concerns are centring on faster internet

READ MORE ON B3



People's main concerns are about quality of telecom services, faster internet speed, and data packages, said Shyam Sunder Sikder, chairman of Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission.

PHOTO: STAR/FILE

Rejoinder, our reply

Major (Rtd.) Abdul Mannan, chairman of Sunman Group, sent a rejoinder to a report headlined "Scam-hit BIFC suffers losses for sixth straight year" published in The Daily Star on September 15, 2022.

Here is the full text of the rejoinder:

In the article, the reporter alleged, "Moreover, a business group owned by Abdul Mannan, a former state minister, plundered around Tk 1,000 crore, showed a case statement of the Anti-Corruption Commission earlier. The Bangladesh Bank (BB) found that Mannan and his family members embezzled Tk 518 crore from BIFC between 2005 and 2015 in the form of loans against 53 fictitious companies and individuals."

These above allegations are false and defamatory in nature, which caused a fatal blow to my reputation and social status, and I am saddened by the fact that a renowned newspaper, like, yours, published such

READ MORE ON B2