



Several workers are busy making blankets at a factory in Shimuldair Bazar under Sirajganj's Kazipur upazila. Factories like this have turned the northern upazila into a major blanket-manufacturing hub.

PHOTO: AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU

Sirajganj backwater turns into blanket-making hub

Brings solvency to thousands

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, *Pabna*

Taravanu Begum, a middle-aged woman in Paikartoli village in Sirajganj's Kazipur upazila, lost her homestead to river erosion and was compelled to take shelter at the flood protection embankment area a few years ago.

Her husband is a physically challenged man so they had endless suffering. When the family was struggling to make ends meet, a few relatives inspired Taravanu to sew blankets with old clothes as it has demand among the poor.

Taravanu did not have enough money, so she turned to a blanket trader, who lent her an electric sewing machine. She started sewing blankets at her home immediately.

Since then, the family has not had to look back.

Currently, she, along with her family members, now works from home and makes 10 to 12 blankets from old cloths every day. The blankets are sold in the Shimuldair Bazar blanket market in Kazipur, earning the family Tk 500 to Tk 600 daily.

"Blanket making from old cloths has brought solvency to my poor family," Taravanu said.

Anjana Begum, a resident in Shimuldair village, also started sewing blankets from the wastage clothes a few years ago. After carrying out all the household chores, she can make three to four blankets a day that fetches her Tk 200 to Tk 300.

She often buys garment waste from the Shimuldair market and makes blankets at her home and sells them in the market.



Like Taravanu and Anjana, there are around 30,000 blanket makers, most of them female, who make the product from old garments in Shimuldair, Kunkunia, Borshivanga, Shampur, Goraber, Maizbari, Chaltidanga, Meghai, Nayapara, Gandhail and 25 to 30 other villages in four riverbank erosion hit unions in Kazipur, bringing solvency to their poor families.

In the past, erosion-hit people and people living in the char areas were used to making blankets for their own use. Now they make blankets to sell in the market.

Around 300 traders are also involved in the business.

"There are thousands of home-based workers who are making blankets from garment waste and we are selling them across the country," said Md Abdul Latif, a trader.

"Each blanket is being sold at Tk

100 to Tk 170 while the poor and the lower-income people being the majority customers."

Latif said he is selling 400 to 500 blankets across the country from Shimuldair Bazar, where several thousand blankets are being sold every day as winter has hit the country.

The making of blankets from old clothes at household levels began at Shimuldair Bazar a decade ago. Today, Kazipur is the only place in Bangladesh where such blankets are produced.

Md Sohel Rana, one of the top blanket traders in the Shimuldair blanket market, says 15 to 16 factories in Shimuldair Bazar make around 25,000 to 30,000 pieces of blankets every day during the peak winter season.

He established a blanket-making factory in Shimuldair Bazar five years ago.

"Now, 21-power-run sewing machines are used to produce 2,000 to 2,500 pieces of blankets a day. We are selling blankets at Tk 300 to Tk 1,200."

The middle-income groups buy blankets in the range of Tk 450 to Tk 500, he said.

Narayanganj is the country's largest blanket-producing hub. Sirajganj's Kazipur is second-placed in the blanket making business.

As the blanket business has thrived in the upazila, many people have got new job opportunities while more than 30,000 people are involved in the trade.

Md Sumon Hossain, a weaver, lost the business he inherited many years ago and became jobless. Now he works at a blanket-making factory.

"Now I am happy to earn Tk 500 to Tk 600 a day," he said, adding that each worker can easily sew 200 to 250 pieces of blankets a day using an electricity-run machine.

During a visit to Shimuldair Bazar, it was found that many students and people of various ages are working in blanket-making factories.

Md Abu Taher, president of the Shimuldair Bazar Association, said at least 30,000 blankets are supplied daily across the country from Shimuldair Bazar during the winter season. During normal times, it stands at 2,000 to 3,000.

Small entrepreneurs have created job opportunities for thousands of people in the riverbank erosion hit upazila, and if they get financial support from the government, the blanket business may expand, said a number of traders.

PPP projects attracted \$6.74b investments

ADB says in report on Bangladesh

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Public Private Partnership (PPP) projects in Bangladesh have attracted investments of \$6.74 billion, with a majority in the energy sector, according to the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

The energy sector accounted for 76 per cent of the investments, while the port sector attracted more than 12 per cent of investments, it said.

It was disclosed in the PPP Monitor, a flagship publication of the Manila-based lender aimed at monitoring PPPs. It will be launched at a programme in Dhaka today.

The PPP Monitor has been upgraded to provide a "one-stop" information source, derived from a consolidation of the previous PPP Monitor, leading PPP databases of multilateral development banks, such as the World Bank and the International Finance Corporation, and organisations like the Economist Intelligence Unit, and the Global Infrastructure Hub, reports of a country's PPP unit, a country's legal framework, and consultations with leading technical experts and legal firms as well as financial institutions.

The PPP Monitor is expected to become a knowledge base for assessing a country's PPP environment for the government and the business community.

It said Bangladesh has developed its foundation for the PPP Authority in a structured manner.

A policy and strategy for PPPs were introduced in 2010, which improved the regulation of PPP projects and established an office to promote PPPs.

"However, the PPP Authority has no statutory authority."

A PPP Act was enacted in 2015 to facilitate the development of core sector public infrastructure and services.

Following the PPP Act, the institutional set-up improved as the Office for PPP became the PPP Authority under the Prime Minister's Office, with responsibilities including appointing advisors, developing and approving PPP contracts, and supervising the progress of PPP projects.

A new PPP unit was established under the finance ministry, and it approves government funding to a PPP project.

The review said the development of PPP projects in Bangladesh is reflected further by the Economist Intelligence Unit Infrascope Index.

Among the 19 countries evaluated, Bangladesh scored an overall rank of 7th for PPPs, with strong showings in institutional structure and market maturity.

After the enactment of the PPP Act in 2015, the government has taken further measures to strengthen the regulatory framework and institutional set-up in the country, said the PPP Monitor.

The country has also put in place clear guidelines and rules related to project screening, technical assistance financing, viability gap funding (VGF), and handling unsolicited proposals.

"Owing to the well developed institutional structure and regulatory framework, Bangladesh has been able to successfully close several PPP transactions."

A total of 69 PPP projects across various sectors were implemented from 1990 to 2019. The energy sector has seen widespread interest in PPP in Bangladesh.

Except for one project in the airport sector that was awarded and cancelled, the PPPs have largely been successful.

According to the PPP Monitor, of the projects awarded in the information and communication technology sector, two were rated as distressed assets as of June 2020.

"The ADB is ready to provide technical support to monitor PPP projects and provide updated information to help investors and the PPP Authority," said Mohammad Abdul Awal, director for investment promotion at the PPP Authority.

"This would help mobilise funds for PPP projects."

Most stocks fail to attract buyers

Rumour plays a part

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Most of the stocks failed to attract any investor yesterday as the buyers think share prices may fall further if the rumour on the stockmarket regulator lifting the floor price becomes true.

The DSEX, the benchmark index of the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE), edged up 4 points, or 0.07 per cent, to 6,233.

The DS30, the blue-chip index, edged up 0.07 per cent to 2,207 while the DSES, the index that represents shariah-based companies, fell 0.03 per cent to 1,363.

However, turnover slightly increased from the previous day's 28-month lowest position.

It rose 14 per cent from the previous day to hit Tk 311 crore yesterday. Among the traded 312 companies, 43 advanced, 28 declined and 241 remained the same.

Among 312 tradable securities, prices of 241 or above 77 per cent of the total did not change due to the absence of buyers.

Morning's positive trend in indices caused by a buying spree reverted to a fall

because of a selling pressure post mid-session.

The investors' confidence remained shaky amid a liquidity crisis in the market, International Leasing Securities said in its daily market review.

Most of the institutional investors having fundamental stocks preferred holding their funds on floor prices, it said.

Among all other sectors, services advanced 1 per cent, jute rose 0.4 per cent whereas travel fell 1.1 per cent, IT shrunk 0.5 per cent.

The investors' activity was mostly centred on IT (22 per cent), pharmaceuticals (20.9 per cent) and engineering (7.9 per cent).

KDS Accessories posted the highest appreciation, rising 9.6 per cent. Orion Infusion surged 7.49 per cent.

Aamra Networks, Jute Spinners, and Sonali Life Insurance rose more than 2 per cent. ADN Telecom suffered the sharpest fall, sliding 5.12 per cent.

Advent Pharmaceuticals lost 4 per cent and BD Thai Food & Beverage declined 3.2 per cent.

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A late variety of Aman paddy awaits transportation on being cut earlier in the day in Tangail's Madhupur upazila. This rain-fed crop accounts for nearly 40 per cent of the total annual rice production in Bangladesh. Farmers are already cultivating mustard plant and forming seedbeds in preparation of planting the upcoming Boro season paddy in January. The yield of Aman paddy in the country increased 3.6 per cent year-on-year to about 1.49 crore tonnes in fiscal 2021-22, as per the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. The amount of land used for the purpose had also increased 1.67 per cent to 57.2 lakh hectares. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: MIRZA SHAKIL