



Photos of ancient Shib Mandir, taken from its two sides, at Toilokup village in Kaliganj upazila of Jhenidah.

PHOTO: AZIBORRAHMAN

## Historic temple crumbling, who cares?

*The temple is not included in the government's list of heritage sites*

AZIBOR RAHMAN, Jhenidah

An ancient Shib Mandir at Toilokup village in Kaliganj upazila of Jhenidah is heading towards complete ruination for want of renovation.

The temple was built by a zamindar of Naldanga in 1656, said sources at the Department of Archaeology's Khulna office.

During a recent visit, this correspondent found that the temple with artistic

terracotta, situated near the Begobati river, is in a dilapidated condition.

Its wall is 35 inches thick and height 80 feet.

Large cracks have developed on the wall and chunks of plaster often fall off.

Shrubs and plants have grown on the wall and roof.

Stray animals often enter there as there is no boundary wall.

Jagannath Sarkar, secretary of the temple committee, said Hindu community people

of nearby villages come to worship here.

On the last day of Bangla month Chaitra a big fair is held, which attracts thousands of people from all walks of life.

"In 2009 Jhenidah Zila Parishad gave us Tk 50 thousand which is too scanty to repair this temple. I went to Kaliganj upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) for help but to no effect. At least Tk 10 lakh is required for its renovation," he said.

A villager named Krishna Roy said, "We worship at the temple all the year

round. The traditional temple requires urgent repair to preserve it for our future generation."

Kaliganj UNO Subarna Rani Saha said she will take necessary steps in this regard if allocation is available.

This temple is not included in the government's list of heritage sites, said Afroza Khan Mita, regional director of archaeology department in Khulna.

"I will send a team to look into the matter," she said.

## Changing fate by cultivating unused land

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

Some 30 unemployed youths in Kamalganj upazila have improved fertility of about 90 bighas of fallow land following organic method.

The soil in Patrokhola area is losing its fertility day by day due to paddy cultivation for years, said local farmer Ramen Das.

Due to this, huge high lands in the border area have remained uncultivated for long, he said, adding that as the growers in the area used to cultivate paddy on the land, they never tried to grow other crops.

But the unemployed youths from Adampur village, about 20 km away from Patrokhola, have successfully produced tomatoes there following organic method of cultivation, said Ramen.

Inspired by the youths, local growers are now cultivating tomatoes on their land and getting bumper yield.

The youths took lease of each bigha of fallow land from farmers in Patrokhola area paying them Tk 5,000 to Tk 7,000 two years ago and since then they did not look back.

One of the youths, Khalku Mia said it was really tough for me to run their five-member family alone as they have no land. In 2018, he and some of his friends took lease of the land from the farmers in the border area and planted tomatoes

there following organic method of cultivation.

They are now getting bumper yield and good prices for the vegetable, he said.

Khalku's friend Tawhidul Islam said he has been cultivating tomatoes on the lands for the last two years.

This season, he cultivated early variety of tomato plants on five bighas of land spending Tk 4 lakh, said Tawhidul, adding that he has already sold tomatoes for Tk 3 lakh till now and the sale will continue till March.

Vegetable traders from different areas of Habiganj, Sylhet and Dhaka are coming to buy tomatoes from the fields in Patrokhola area, said Tawhidul.

Another youth Md Shimul said earlier, he cultivated paddy on the land, but it did not bring any profit for him. Later, tomato was cultivated on the lands and he is now getting good yield for the vegetable.

Kazi Lutful Bari, deputy director (DD) of Department of Agricultural Extension in Moulvibazar, said the young farmers have really taken a good initiative by improving fertility of the fallow land following organic method.

He further said tomatoes have been cultivated on 1050 hectares of land this year. Kamalganj is the highest tomato producing upazila.

Those young farmers are also getting fair prices for the vegetable, said the DD.



A vigilance team of Rangpur Sugar Mills seize an abandoned power crusher in Chandpara village under Gobindaganj sub-zone of the mill. Above, using sugarcane juice extracted with power crushers, a man makes molasses batter on a large skillet in the same village. The photos were taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

## Illegal power crushers threaten production target

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Instead of selling their sugarcane to Rangpur Sugar Mills, a section of growers has been selling nearly 150 tonnes of sugarcane every day to illegal power crusher operators in exchange for upfront cash payment.

At least 58 power crushers, used for producing molasses, are being operated this crushing season by influential locals in remote areas where sugarcane are grown for the sugar mill, located at Mohimaganj of Gobindaganj upazila.

Last month alone, an estimated 3,000 tonnes of sugarcane were consumed for producing molasses and if the practice goes on unabated, the sugar mill might face a shortage in supply of sugarcane this season, said several growers.

Sometimes it takes months to get payment for sugarcane after delivery at the mill and that is why some of the growers prefer selling their sugarcane to the power crusher operators for instant cash, the also said.

Jinnat Ali Prodhon, president of a sugarcane growers' association based in Mohimaganj, said they were working on to create awareness of growers on the negative impact on sugar production at the factory if the growers continue

Last month alone, an estimated 3,000 tonnes of sugarcane were consumed for producing molasses and if the practice goes on unabated, the sugar mill might face a shortage in supply of sugarcane this season, said several growers.

to sell their produce to the molasses producers.

Besides, the growers should refrain from selling sugarcane to the molasses makers because the latter use a harmful chemical or a cleaning agent called hydrosol in the molasses to make it brighter and more attractive so they can sell their molasses at higher prices, he also said.

Rangpur Sugar Mills General Manager (Agriculture) Dilip Kumar Sarker said they traced 58 power crushers in different areas under eight sub-zones of the sugar mill and 14 power crushers were seized during drives conducted by their vigilance teams last month.

In order to expedite the payment process, the mill authorities already introduced a digital payment process, through which a supplier now receives payment within a week, he added.

According to a research made available online on March 19, 2015, on the website of Asian Pacific Journal of Tropical Biomedicine, "hydrosol has a toxic effect to impair kidney function".

The research was conducted by a team of researchers from Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, University of Rajshahi; Department of Pharmacology, Rajshahi Medical College; and Department of Pathology, Rajshahi Medical College.

Gaibandha Civil Surgeon Dr ABM Abu Hanif said hydrosol should not be used in food items as it is harmful for human health and it is considered poisonous for children. It might cause a number of diseases including cancer.

Rafiqul Islam, managing director of Rangpur Sugar Mills, said they filed a case after seizing a power crusher and some hydrosol powder in the area recently.

He also said their vigilance teams are patrolling mill zones and their targeted sugar production this season is 38,500 tonnes from 55,000 sugarcane.



PHOTO: STAR

A farmer tends his tomato plants at a field in Moulvibazar's Kamalganj upazila.