



## THE KING OF MATS

**I**n Aghoria in Sirajganj's Raiganj upazila, a change is creeping up. Rice fields are taking over jungles where once murta plants ruled. At times, there seems to be a harmony between the two, but looks can be deceiving. The murta plants are used to produce the traditional shitalpati, the naturally cold mat which is a blessing on most summer days. The mats come from the trees taller than men. The trees are cut, then boiled and finally individually coloured. Fold it as much as one wants, but it never breaks. The shitalpati is something special. But it is being replaced by plastic. And slowly, but surely, the locals are moving away from their heirloom pieces.

*Photo:*  
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