



Panamnagar, a township set up by Hindu merchants in the colonial era in Sonargaon on the outskirts of the capital, losing its unique architectural features due to improper restoration and conservation measures taken by the Department of Archaeology.

PANAMNAGAR

# Unscientific restoration defacing heritage

TAWFIQUE ALI

Panamnagar, a township set up by Hindu merchants in the colonial era in Sonargaon, is virtually losing its originality and uniqueness as an architectural heritage site, in the name

of restoration and conservation.

The Department of Archaeology (DoA) has not involved any historian, archaeologist or an architect in the conservation work, rather hired masons are carrying out the job, distorting and defacing a proud heritage of the

country, experts said.

The government's approach is just arbitrary, unplanned and aimless, said conservation architect Dr Abu Sayeed M Ahmed adding that the government is carrying out

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PHOTO: STAR

## Phasiakhali sanctuary declared protected area

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has declared Phasiakhali wildlife sanctuary in Cox's Bazar as 19th protected area of the country recently.

The newly declared sanctuary covers 3,217 acres of forestland under Phasiakhali, Ring Vong and Dulahazara forest blocks.

Currently, protected area covers 0.5 percent of Bangladesh's total surface land. The figure is 5.1 percent in India and 9.6 percent in Sri Lanka.

Forest department sources said they have declared three new protected areas in the last two years as part of its move to expand such areas.

National parks, wildlife sanctuaries and game reserves are collectively referred to as protected areas.

The ten national parks, which have been declared as protected

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## Khaleda's health condition improving

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, who is suffering from various health complications, was learnt to be improving, a source close to her family said.

She is under the treatment of Brig Gen (ret'd) Mahtab Uddin Ahmed. Doctors yesterday collected blood samples for test.

The source said the former prime minister is having problems of blood pressure and diabetes. Recently, the condition of her health deteriorated owing to anxiety and sleeplessness, he added.

## Ex-BNP MP Salahuddin sued for extortion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former BNP lawmaker Salahuddin Ahmed and one of his sons were sued in an extortion case on Tuesday night.

Shahinul Haque Shahin, a construction contractor of Dhaka Wasa, filed the case with Shyampur Police Station in the capital.

In the case the complainant mentioned that a gang of seven including Salahuddin's son Imran Ahmed came to his site Uzala

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# Wilted boro spells gloom

PINAKI ROY

Unusual behaviour of weather has caused 'sterility' of Boro paddy affecting its production in different regions of the country with output of rice falling about 10 lakh tonnes short of the target this season and more than two lakh farmers facing losses, official sources said.

Boro paddy cultivated in at least 53,755 hectares of land out of the 43,37,736 hectares would be 'sterile or unfilled' this season, said sources in the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE).

They pointed out that marginal farmers, particularly those in low-lying regions where just one crop a year can be cultivated, are the worst-hit in this situation.

The government had initially fixed Boro production target at 167.40 lakh tonnes but later slashed it to 157.55 lakh tonnes because of the sterility problem.

Actual production might be even less than the reduced target, DAE officials said.

Production of Boro rice totalled 155.21 lakh tonnes last year, DOE estimates said. But according to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), Boro production stood at 139.75 lakh tonnes last year.

Explaining the impact of the sterility problem, a senior DAE official said, "Besides reducing over all production of Boro rice, it virtually means a disaster for marginal farmers, especially in low-lying areas, where farmers can cultivate only this crop."

Some DAE officials said farmers who had grown Boro seedlings starting from mid-October to first week of November last and planted those earlier have been the worst affected due to cold wave.

Experts are however trying to confirm the reasons behind sterility problem that has affected hybrid rice varieties including BR-29, BR-28 and BR-14 more than other varieties.

Agriculture experts said rainfall was less than normal last year. So, swamps and wetlands especially in

haor basin region where farmers go for seasonal Boro cultivation, dried earlier than usual. But farmers in the region -- Brahmanbaria, Mymensingh, Netrakana and Kishoreganj -- started growing seedlings as soon as water reduced from their lands.

"So, paddy seedlings were affected due to cold wave. If temperature falls below 20 degree Celsius at certain critical stages, it might affect those," said Dr Nur E Elahi, director general of Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (Bari). "If paddy seedlings do not get appropriate day duration and temperature at certain times, it might hamper photosynthesis process, and sterility problem may arise" he added.

Meanwhile, DAE officials have collected data on rainfall, duration of daylight, rise and fall of temperature from 2002 to 2006 in Kishoreganj, Netrakona, Brahmanbaria and Mymensingh from the Department of Environment.

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## ACC yet to start probe into allegations against Hasina

UNB, Dhaka

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has not yet begun inquiry into the allegation of corruption against Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina, as there is confusion whether the ACC can at all work on it.

"The inquiry has not begun yet...there is confusion whether we can at all work on this case because the sections under which it was filed are not under our jurisdiction," ACC Commissioner Habibur Rahman told reporters yesterday when asked about the Tk 3 crore

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### NOTICE

Today's issue contains a two-page supplement on page 12 & 13 on The Daily Star roundtable on "State of our polity: views of the young generation" held on March 17, 2007.

### Prayer Timing

| April 26                   |       |        |
|----------------------------|-------|--------|
|                            | Azan  | Jamaat |
| Fajr                       | 4-20  | 4-55   |
| Zohr                       | 12-45 | 1-15   |
| Asr                        | 4-45  | 5-00   |
| Maghrib                    | 6-29  | 6-34   |
| Esha                       | 8-00  | 8-30   |
| Source: Islamic Foundation |       |        |

## 2 ex-MPs sued for attack on journalists

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A case was filed yesterday against two former BNP lawmakers and 10 others for their alleged involvement in an attack on a journalists' convention on May 29, 2006 in Kushtia.

Samim bin Sattar, southwestern correspondent of Daily Khabar, filed the case with Sadar Police Station.

According to the case, at least 100 cadres and activists came out

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## Iraqi govt held casualty figures

States UN in human rights report

AP, Baghdad

The Iraqi government withheld recent casualty figures from the United Nations, fearing they would be used to present a grim picture of Iraq that would undermine the coalition's security efforts, UN officials said yesterday.

Working with its own figures, the UN released a new human rights report yesterday saying that sectarian violence continued to claim the lives of a large number of Iraqi civilians in Sunni Arab and Shia

neighborhoods of Iraq's capital, despite the coalition's new Baghdad security plan. Begun February 14, it has increased US and Iraqi troops levels in the capital.

The Iraqi government quickly responded by calling the UN report "inaccurate" and "unbalanced."

The UN Assistance Mission for Iraq report said civilian casualties in the daily violence between January 1 and March 31 remained high, concentrated in and around Baghdad.

The agency also expressed

concern about the treatment of detainees under the US-Iraqi operation to pacify the capital, saying that families and other people often were randomly taken into custody, with more than 3,000 people in detention by the end of March.

For the first time, UNAMI said, its assessment of the human rights situation in Iraq did not contain overall death figures from the Iraqi government because it refused to

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## No barbed-wire fences to be made within 150 yards of border

BDR-BSF meet agrees

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

With a renewed pledge for strengthening cooperation to establish peace and security in the bordering areas, a three-day meeting between Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and Border Security Forces (BSF) concluded at a hotel here yesterday.

The border coordination conference also agreed to keep 150-yard of the border in both countries free of barbed-wire fences or any estab-

lishment. Ways and means for handing over absconding terrorists and trespassers to each other were also discussed in the meeting.

Deputy Director General of BDR Brig Gen SM Golam Rabbani led the 11-member BDR team, while the 15-member Indian delegation was headed by Assam-Meghalaya Frontier BSF Inspector General PK Mishra.

The meeting decided on measures to put an end to land dispute,

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## 17 ex-MPs sued for phone bill arrears

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) in Rangpur filed cases against 17 former members of parliament from eight northern districts for their outstanding telephone bills of around Tk 40 lakh.

BTTB earlier had filed cases against 38 former members of parliament (MP) including the 17 ex-MPs for their outstanding telephone bills totalling nearly Tk 53 lakh.

Out of them, 21 had paid off BTTB Tk 19, 20,522 while the other 17 still owed BTTB Tk 39, 16,847.

BTTB sources in Rangpur said,

the bill defaulters were elected in the 5th, 7th and 8th parliament. The defaulters did not pay heed even though the BTTB had served several notices on them.

Among the defaulters, Karim Uddin Varosha, former lawmaker of Jatiya Party (JP), remains on top the list with an outstanding bill of Tk. 17 lakh. BTTB filed two cases against Varosha.

Another former JP MP Abdur Rashid Sarker of a Gaibandha constituency is next on the list with Tk. 6,70,507. Sharfuddin Ahmed Jhontu with Tk 3,74, 476 outstanding is third on the list.

Other defaulters include Begum

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