



Public development centre in Shadhupara, Right, cockfight at a rural fair focusing on biodiversity

PHOTO: MUKUL HOSSAIN

Sharing skills and ideas

Farmers have set up a Public Development Centre in Shadhupara to share their knowledge about agriculture

SHYKH SERAJ

Farmers of Mymensingh's Shadhupara have always been progressive in nature. I have observed them and found out that their minds are full of innovative ideas. Adding to that, they are also always inclined to uphold the ancient agricultural methods.

Farmers, fishermen, blacksmiths and potters—these people gather here at the centre. They are preserving crops, methods and tools that are outdated and they're learning from the farmers of other localities and vice versa. It's a great exchange of knowledge.

Shadhupara Farmers' Association is a group of sensible people with great knowledge about the nature and soil. Their attempts in reducing farming costs and increasing production are fairly noticeable. Many farmers of Shadhupara including Abdul Hekim have set plausible example in rice development research from such a remote area, steering a great illustration for the farmers and agriculture in Bangladesh.

A traditional Bangladeshi house that belongs to the farmers of Shadhupara—the house of enlightenment that I came to know. I was more impressed entering it. Only innovative and well-

structured agricultural minds can give birth to such a venture. The club entitled, 'Public Development Centre' has been adorned with ancient agricultural objects. I talked with the founders of the club.

"We built this house because we, the farmers needed a place to gather and sit."

"You could sit under the tree or a farm house."

"No, it's a place entirely for farmers."

"What do you intend to do in here?"

"We will find solutions for many problems that we face."

Farmers are also keeping traditional tools like plough, cutters, axes, hoes, scythes, etc.

"So you are preserving these tools?"

"Yes we are, because these are going extinct"

I can tell you about Haripada Kapali, another farmer from Jhenaidah's Shadhurhati union. Hope you've heard about Haridhan. He once found a rice plant while working in the field that was relatively longer in length than other breeds. He tried to figure out the reason, did a lot of research and finally pollinated a new breed of seed that eventually gave birth to a new breed of rice called 'Haridhan'. You must have heard about Kartik

Pramanik from Chhapinawabganj who started planting trees in the neighbouring alluvial lands from the age of ten? These are our golden farmers...keepers of environment who made this country more and more sustainable.

These farmers of Shadhupara have been putting their ideas together for biodiversity as well. A fair has been arranged specially focused on biodiversity. This place is not only eye-catching, but it also exhibits many objects that are essential for the farmers. For example, one of the stalls was only having organic pesticides. Anwarul Islam, a local man has put up a stall to introduce bananas of different varieties. A woman named Rokshana Akhter was seen busy with selling rural cosmetics at her 'Bodhua Grameen Proshadhoni'. Azizul Haque, an elderly local man was displaying fishes of various local breeds. I was taken aback after arriving at Mahbub Alam's organic pesticide stall. There was a

cockfight at the end, an inevitable element of ancient Bengal ritual.

I found the diversity fair very much interesting and a very timely initiative which would definitely help protect our farming and would gather more and more farmers in one place. It would also lift up the spirit and heritage of the rural Bengal. It was a glorious day of experience for sure—first visiting the Public Development Centre and then the rural fair of farmers. It was such a fruitful day for me and I am sure you'll also be inspired to see farmers gathering in such effective manner.

Our farming sector is greatly related with environment and biodiversity. It's important to educate the grassroots and make the proper use of that knowledge. We believe that the paradigm of knowledge sharing and expanding between the farmers of Shadhupara, Mymensingh will certainly inspire farmers from other parts of the country as well.



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Ancient artifacts found in Naogaon

RABIUL HASAN, Chapainawabganj

Four Fourteen bronze-made Gautama Buddha sculptures and some other artifacts, including an ancient brick-built structure with a lotus-shaped inflorescence have been found recently during an excavation at Jagaddal Budhha Bihar archaeological site of Dhamurhat upazila, some sixty five kilometers away from Naogaon district town.

Though many Buddha Bihars (Buddha monastery) have been discovered in the country, all of them were square or geometrical in shape, only this bihar is shaped like a lotus inflorescence, said archeologists.

Mahbub Ul Alam, one of the members of the excavation team and custodian of Paharpur Buddha Bihar Archaeological Museum said that some rare sculptures of Gautama Buddha were found, including some ancient brick, granite and black stone built structures and four cells of Buddhist monastery have been found in an excavation at Jagaddal Bihar recently. "They also found precious stones, ornamental stone pieces, ancient brick built staircases and broken earthen pots", he said. The structure was

built in the tenth or eleventh century during Pala dynasty. "The locals had their doubts about the authenticity of the Jagaddal Bihar. After digging out some rare artifacts and ancient structures, like the lotus inflorescence, we are now sure that this is the original Jagaddal Bihar", he said. The archaeologist further added, "It is a rare discovery for our country."

Archaeologists said, Department of Archaeology started an archaeological excavation one of the ancient cities in the country, Jagaddal, from December 1st, 2012, aiming to find out the history of the archaeological site. The excavation continued till February this year.

Earlier, Archaeology Department excavated Jagaddal Bihar in 1996-1997 and 1997-1998 fiscal years. At that time, they found some rare ornamental artifacts from the archaeological site, they said.

Jagaddala Mahavihara was a Buddhist monastery founded by the later kings of the Pala dynasty, possibly Rampala (1077-1120), most likely at a site near the present village of Jagaddal in Dhamurhat Upazila in the north-west Bangladesh on the border of India, near Paharpur.

Little is known about Jagaddala compared with the other mahaviharas of the era. For many years, its

site could not be ascertained. AKM Zakaria inspected five likely locations, all called Jagddal or Jagadal, in the Rajshahi-Malda region—namely Panchagarh, Haripur upazila in Thakurgaon, Bochaganj upazila in Dinajpur, Dhamoirhat upazila in Naogaon, Bamongola of Malda in India. Of these, significant ancient ruins were present only near Jagddal in Naogaon district. Excavations under UNESCO over the past decade have established the site as a Buddhist monastery.

A large number of viharas (monasteries) were established in ancient Bengal and Magadha during the four centuries of Pala rule in north-eastern India (756-1174 AD). Dharampala (781-821) is said to have founded 50 viharas himself, including Vikramshila, the premier university of the era. Jagaddala was founded toward the end of the Pala dynasty, most likely by Ramapala (1077-1120). According to Tibetan sources, five great mahaviharas stood out, Vikramshila, Nalanda, Somapura, Odantapura and Jagaddala. The five monasteries formed a network under state supervision. Jagaddala specialized in

Vajrayana Buddhism. A large number of texts that would later appear in the Kanjur and Tenjur were known to have been composed or copied at Jagaddala. It is likely that the earliest dated anthology of Sanskrit verse, the Subhasitaratnakosa, was compiled by Vidyakara at Jagaddala toward the end of the eleventh century or the beginning of the twelfth.

Sakyasribhadra, a Kashmiri scholar who was the last abbot of Nalanda Mahavihara and instrumental in transmitting Buddhism to Tibet, is said to have fled to Tibet in 1204 from Jagaddala when Muslim incursions seemed imminent. Historian Sukumar Dutt tentatively placed the final destruction of Jagaddala to 1207; in any case it seems to have been the last mahavihara to be overrun.

In 1999, Jagaddala was submitted as a tentative site for inclusion on the list of UNESCO World Heritage sites. UNESCO reported that the excavation has revealed an extensive mound, 105 meters by 85 meters, which represents the archaeological remains of a Buddhist monastery. The findings have included terracotta plaques, ornamental bricks, nails, a gold ingot and three stone images of deities.



Several artifacts found during excavation at Jagaddal Budhha Bihar archaeological site in Naogaon



PHOTO: MUKUL HOSSAIN



PHOTO: STAR

Munshipara Government Primary School in Rajibpur upazila of Kurigram district is on the verge of collapse into the Brahmaputra as the river comes closer to the institution.

Brahmaputra devours 200 homesteads in Kurigram

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kurigram

Erosion by the River Brahmaputra devoured around 200 homesteads and 320 acres of cropland at different villages in three unions under Rajibpur upazila in the last four weeks.

The villages include Munshipara, Paschim Rajibpur, Karatipara, Uttar Kodalkathi, Shajai, Sankar Madhobpur, Beparipara, Nayer Char and Majher Bhita, said an official of Water Development Board (WDB) in the district.

During a recent visit, this correspondent found the erosion-hit villagers leaving their houses for safer places.

Chairman of Rajibpur union Nur-e-Shahi said, more than 10 homesteads and 50 acres of farmland were eroded in the area during the period.

Erosion by the river rendered at least 75 families homeless and devoured about 120 acres of land in Kodalkathi union, said Nazrul Islam, chairman of the union.

Chairman of Mohanganj union Anwar Hossain Anu said at least 95 families left their homesteads for safer

places due to further erosion. Besides, about 150 acres of land were washed away by the river, he said.

Abdus Sattar, a farmer of Uttar Kodalkathi village, said "The river washed away my 90 bighas of cropland".

Despite repeated pleas, the authorities are yet to take any steps to check the erosion, said Akbar Hossain Hero, chairman of Rajibpur upazila.

Contacted, executive engineer of Kurigram WDB Abu Taher said they wrote to the higher authorities for funds but yet to get any response in this regard.

Three kids electrocuted

STAR COUNTRY DESK

Three kids were electrocuted in Comilla and Jamalpur districts yesterday and the day before.

Two minor boys were electrocuted in Mahichil Bazar area in Chandina upazila of Comilla early yesterday, reports our correspondent.

The deceased were identified as Jasim Ahmed, 13, son of Omar Ali and Sajib Hossain, 10, son of Hossain Mia of the village.

Police and locals said, Sajib first came in contact with a live electric wire on the roof-top of a mosque during Shab-e-Barat night. Hearing his screams, Jasim came to the rescue of

Sajib but he was also electrocuted.

Both of them died on the spot at around 12:30am.

In Jamalpur, a minor boy was electrocuted while three others were injured while trying to give electric connection to a house at Dhatuakanda village in Bakshiganj upazila on Monday evening.

The deceased was identified as Zahid, 10, son of Tofazzal Hossain of the village, reports our correspondent.

The three other boys -- Raju, 8, Ratan, 10 and Julfikar, 10, of the village, injured by electric shock, were treated at the upazila health complex.

TIDAL SURGE, RAIN IN SEVERAL COASTAL DISTRICTS

Hundreds of villages flooded

STAR COUNTRY DESK

Tidal surge under the impact of full moon inundated several hundred villages in 12 upazilas of Patuakhali and Pirojpur districts yesterday.

Our Patuakhali correspondent reported that high tide coupled with heavy rain flooded over 100 char villages in eight upazilas of the district.

According to Patuakhali Met Office, 103.8 mm rainfall was recorded in the district in the last 24 hours until 12 noon yesterday.

Aman seedbeds on 2000 hectares of land have gone under water in the affected villages, sources in the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) said.

Communications with Kuakata, the only tourist spot in the district, remained cut off for four hours from 11:00 am to 3:00pm yesterday as gangways of four ferries on Patuakhali-Barisal Road were under water during the period. Vehicles, including passenger buses, remained stranded on both sides of all the four ferry terminals.

Local administration sources said at least 40 char villages in Galachipa 20 villages in Dasmina, 15 villages in Kalapara, 10 villages each in Baufal and Mirzaganj, five villages in Dumki and two villages in Sadar upazila have been flooded with tidal water.

Many areas in Kalapara, Galachipa and Mirzaganj upazila towns have also gone under water. Downpour also paralysed normal life in the coastal district.

In Pirojpur, villages beside Baleshar, Kacha and Sandha rivers in four upazilas of the district have been submerged by tidal surge yesterday.

Water entered the villages under Zianagar, Mathbaria,



PHOTO: STAR

A passenger bus ploughs through water on the gangway of Boraitola ferry terminal in Barguna district, right, flood water submerges a house and a cowshed at Tonga village in Zianagar upazila of Pirojpur yesterday. Tidal surge under the impact of full moon inundated several hundred villages in 12 upazilas of Patuakhali and Pirojpur districts on the day.



Bhandaria and Kawkhali upazilas in the afternoon, marooning thousands of people, according to our correspondent.

The gangway of Togra ferry terminal had gone under. Passengers were seen crossing the way, wading through knee-deep water.

Tube-wells at the flood-hit village have also been

submerged. Civil Surgeon (CS) Md Abdul Goni said if flood water remains stagnant for 2-3 more days, water-borne diseases like diarrhea may spread in the affected areas.

Fishes from thousands of ponds and enclosures have been washed away. Some fish cultivators were seen erecting boundaries with

nets around their enclosures.

Our Bagerhat correspondent adds: Tidal surge under the impact of full moon yesterday flooded many areas of Bagerhat town, BSCIC industrial estate and Mongla municipality.

Water entered the areas, overflowing the Bhairab River embankment

near the district town at noon. At least 100 Christian families at Maria Palli adjacent to the river have been marooned.

As the water level in the river has marked a sharp rise, the embankment of the Water Development Board (WDB) in four upazilas of the district is also under threat.