



A good number of people take risky ride on the roof of vehicles to go to village homes for celebrating the Eid with near and dear ones. The photo was taken at Gharinda in Tangail Sadar upazila yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

SPACE SHORTAGE IN GOVT GODOWNS

Boro paddy procurement in Naogaon suspended

UNB, Naogaon

The Food Department has suspended purchasing Boro rice and paddy in 19 LSD godowns of the district due to space shortage during the peak time of food grains procurement.

Consequently, the mill owners and farmers are counting heavy losses. The mill owners and farmers fail to supply food grains to the 19 LSD godowns, including those in Naogaon Sadar, Mahadebpur, Manda, Badalgachhi and Raninagar due to the space shortage.

Sources at the district's Food Department office said the department set a target to procure 63,949 tonnes of rice and 6,228 tonnes of paddy in the current season.

The government fixed Tk 32 and Tk 22 for each kilogram of rice and paddy respectively as per the official procurement rate.

Besides, the officials concerned of the government food warehouses

also signed agreements with 1,200 millers for supplying rice and paddy.

Accordingly, the mill owners started sending rice to the food warehouses from the second week of May.

As there was enough open space in the godowns, 10/12 percent rice was supplied within two weeks.

In the meantime, the stocks pile up soon and created a space shortage within a few days.

Toufiquel Islam Babu, president of the District Rice Mill Owners' Association, said they were counting heavy losses for the Food Department's decision.

The traders bought paddy by taking bank loan but now they have to keep their rice in their own godowns which causes a trouble for them to bear the production cost, workers' wages and other additional expenses, he said.

Instead of gaining profit, the traders are facing trouble as the Food Department has issued a

notice to keep their trading suspended in all the 19 food godowns from June 19, he added.

Arun Kumar Pramanik, acting officer of Naogaon Sadar food godown, said the warehouse has a capacity of storing 7000 tonnes of rice and paddy.

Although there had been a deal to buy 389 tonnes of paddy, they failed to buy paddy from the farmers due to space shortage, Arun added.

However, 52 percent rice has been purchased under the government food procurement programme, he said.

Admitting the space shortage in the food warehouses, district food controller Anwar Hossain, said there are 19 government food warehouses in the 11 upazilas of the district with a capacity of 39,250 tonnes.

But as the target of food procurement has been extended against the capacity, they are facing the shortage

problem during the current Boro season.

During the government drive of food procurement, they shifted the food crops to another district through internal schedule, he said.

They have already shifted some food grains to Santahar CSD food godown in Bogra, which is far less than the amount collected, he added.

He also urged the farmers and rice traders not to be frustrated as the Food Department has suspended food procurement only for ten days.

Already, they have purchased 60 percent rice of the total target and the rest 40 percent will be purchased soon in the next two months, he said.

He hoped that the higher authorities will take steps to clear the godowns crammed with previous stocks of food grains and help achieve the target of Boro procurement after Eid-ul-Fitr.

Auto-rickshaw driver found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Police yesterday recovered the body of a CNG-run auto-rickshaw driver from the bank of Jamuna River at Chardulai point in Bera upazila of the district.

The deceased is Imran Hossain, 22, son of Kalu Sardar of Jagannathpur village.

Police said Imran went out of his house along with his cousin Kalam Hossain on Tuesday evening and did not return home.

Locals spotted the body in the area yesterday noon and informed the police, said Jasim Uddin Sarkar, officer-in-charge of Aminpur Police Station.

KUAKATA BEACH

Tourist police take special security measures ahead of Eid

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

The Tourist Police has taken different security measures in Kuakata sea beach area ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr, the greatest religious festival of the Muslims.

"We have already made a strict security plan ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr considering the interest of tourists from home and abroad. Teams will be deployed at different important points of the beach and we will show zero tolerance to any kind of harassment to tourists," said Mir Foshur Rahman, in charge of Kuakata Tourist Police out

post.

Visiting the beach on Wednesday, this correspondent found several teams of tourist policemen patrolling the area.

A 40-member team of the Tourist Police including an officer-in charge, three sub inspectors, nine assistant sub inspectors and 27 constables started its work on February 2 this year, much to the happiness of Kuakata businessmen.

They are stationed at Ananda Bari, a guest house in Kuakata.

"We feel better secured now as special police

activity started considering the interest of local businessmen and tourists from home and abroad," said Motalab Sharif, secretary for Kuakata Hotel-Motel Owners Association.

Tourists will feel more comfortable to visit the sea beach as security system has been developed, said Rumman Imtiaz Tushar, a development worker.

Both tourists and local businessmen are now satisfied due to the better security measure, said Md Monir Sharif, councillor of Kuakata municipality.



PHOTO: STAR

Members of Tourist Police team patrol Kuakata sea beach as the authorities have taken strict measures ahead of Eid to ensure security of tourists. The festival holidays see arrival of a large number of tourists in the picturesque spot.

Wading into Mysterious Kudum Cave

BY ANDREW EAGLE

There once was a Buddhist seer who lived in Myanmar, when it was called Burma in the time of the British. He was a simple fellow, except that his eyes could see the whole world simultaneously; but he was old. His pending death concerned him.

As it happened, what people say is he embarked upon a journey to the estate of Whykeong's landlord, nowadays in the north of Teknaf upazila.

The seer sought to visit a cave he had seen, where a porimei, a creature not dissimilar to a fairy, lived.

Today that cave is called Kudum Cave and it lies within Teknaf Game Reserve beyond the Chakma village of Harikhola.

The British era the landlord, a Rakhine, presided over a great area of forest which is now the game reserve. He had six hundred buffaloes running free.

Each year the landlord ordered cowboys to fetch some buffaloes from the forest, and long before the seer arrived, one stumbled upon that cave and saw the porimei.

"Son of man, come here!" said the porimei, "I have something to discuss." The porimei offered a mohor, a gold medallion, on the promise the cowboy wouldn't tell anyone he had seen her. The cowboy accepted and spoke nothing of the encounter.

It's unclear how long it must've taken the cowboy to reach Harikhola from Whykeong Bazar but these days it's a thirty-minute CNG ride through picturesque countryside.

It's an attractive village with Buddhist temples, called kyangs, including one dating from 1903 which features a large wooden bell and a monk from Myanmar, asleep after lunch.

According to Moni Sowpun Chakma, 37, a villager who's worked as a guide for a decade, 1903 is when the first seven families arrived, pursuing slash-and-burn jhum agriculture. Many of their descendants still reside in Harikhola.

Across the road from the kyang is a raised wooden platform called a serang, the perfect spot to rest out of the sun. Further inside on the crests of minor hills are several chingghar, pagodas.

After consulting Birandan, 52, headman of Harikhola, Chakma is ready to lead us on the twenty

minute walk to the cave.

Many years back when the seer arrived he made his way to the landlord's residence to stay as a guest. He took the opportunity to ask about the cave and the porimei; but the landlord said he knew nothing. The cowboy stayed silent.

However, on the following morning the cowboy relented, perhaps out of fear of the seer's power; thus as the seer was taking a morning bath he confessed that he knew the cave and had seen the porimei. The seer asked the cowboy to accompany him there.

The track to the cave traces muddy overgrown gullies with high clay hills rising on either side. There's a bit of jumping over streams required. In front of its entry is a small pool that continues inside, to chest-height, depending on rainfall.

"Nobody knows how deep the cave goes," says Chakma. "They say it runs right through the hills to the Bay of Bengal." In other accounts, the cave, unique for being clay-mud rather than stone, is 38 metres long.

He explains that far

inside is a high cavern with a platform reached by ladder. He says it's not advisable to go there since a large, black python inhabits the platform, descending to feed on the several fish species in the pool.

When the cowboy and seer reached the cave, the seer told the cowboy to wait outside to catch the porimei that he would chase out. "How do I catch a porimei?" asked the cowboy; and the seer gave two handfuls of sand to throw at her.

When we reach the cave I'd happily wait outside too but Chakma is taking off his shirt to go in. Cautiously we wade into darkness, torches in hand and a polythene bag over my head on account of the hundreds of bats who relieve themselves like rain.

With the entrance but a sliver of sunlight behind us Chakma asks if we wish to continue. "The water ends shortly but beyond that, somewhere is the python." I'm more concerned the python might be in the water looking for fish. We head back.

We didn't see the porimei but the cowboy did. As it tried to escape, it flew out of the cave and the cowboy threw sand at it. When the sand hit, the porimei transformed into a great tiger and ran into the forest, the seer in pursuit. "They say the porimei was killed at Colemamarang, some distance from here," says Chakma. "There's a rock which looks like a girl fallen that people say is the porimei in stone."

The seer took the porimei's eyes for eating as her eyes could do the one thing his couldn't: grant eternal life.

"Doesn't the cave python scare you?" I ask Chakma as we walk back to the village.

"No, but the wild elephants do. It's easy to encounter them along this track."

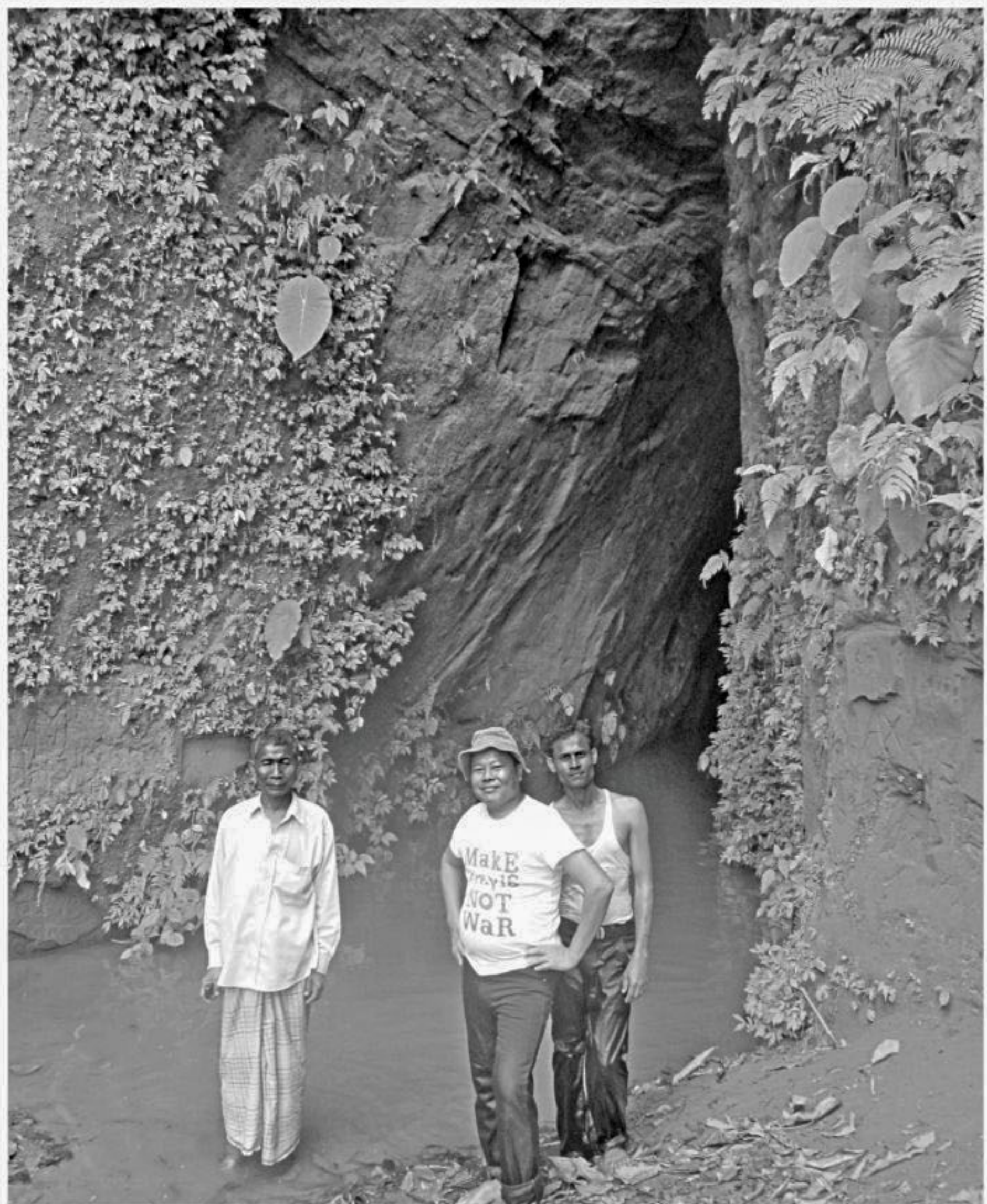


PHOTO: STAR

Mysterious Kudum Cave in Teknaf Game Reserve under Cox's Bazar district.

LALMONIRHAT-BURIMARI HIGHWAY

Illegal toll collection from vehicles goes on unabated

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Illegal toll collection from vehicles continues ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr at different points on the Lalmonirhat-Burimari Highway and some local roads in five upazilas of the district.

A group of people identified as belonging to the ruling party, with the help of some motor workers' leaders, have been collecting illegal toll from the drivers and helpers of vehicles in the name of a welfare fund for transport workers and for observing Eid. Transport workers protested strongly against the illegal toll collection at Burimari land port of Patgram upazila on Tuesday.

The collected toll money is shared among the ruling

party men, said transport workers at Burimari.

Javed Islam, a truck driver, said he was forced to pay Tk 1,500 as illegal toll on Tuesday morning. Drivers and helpers face harassment if they refuse to pay the money, he said.

"We, the drivers and helpers, are united in protesting against the illegal toll collection, but the extortionists are not afraid as they belong to the ruling party and have connections with the law enforcement agencies," said truck driver Dulal Miah.

Sabuj Miah, a local transport worker, said the illegal toll collectors collect money from at least 500 vehicles at the land port in Patgram upazila daily.

Seeking anonymity, a

so-called transport workers' leader said illegal toll collection from vehicles is a very old tradition. "Many political figures are directly involved in this sector, and are getting a share from the illegally collected money," he said, adding that the extortionists never face any obstacle from law enforcement agencies as the law enforcers also benefit.

Motahar Hossain, ALMP from Lalmonirhat-1, said he tried to stop the illegal toll collection but failed. He has ordered the police to take stern action against illegal tolls but there has been no result, the MP added.

Rezaul Karim, OC of Patgram Police Station, said police are active in resisting illegal toll collection.



Request for Concept Notes

Katalyst is a market development project that aims to contribute to increasing the income of poor men and women in rural areas. It does this by facilitating changes in services, inputs and product markets, which in turn increases the competitiveness of farmers and small enterprises. Katalyst is co-funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the UK Government, and the Danish International Development Agency (Danida). It is implemented by Swisscontact under the umbrella of the Ministry of Commerce, Government of Bangladesh.

Katalyst is looking to finance innovative ideas on the following topic:

Promoting early/late/off season vegetable cultivation in different areas across Bangladesh

Katalyst wants to partner with input companies who want to try innovative models in promoting modern vegetable cultivation techniques for early/late/off season. We will also focus on specific crops like tomato, cauliflower, cabbage, cucumber, etc. Relevant experiences of promoting early/late/off season varieties of vegetables will be an added advantage.

Details regarding the Request for Concept Notes and the templates for submitting the concept notes are available at: <http://katalyst.com.bd/procurement-of-services/>

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