

# Solar lights now light up 'Alpona Gram'

RABIUL HASAN, Chapainawabganj

Tikoil village, popularly known as "Alpona Gram", in Chapainawabganj has got another feather in the cap with installation of solar street lights.

Now its traditional artworks done by female inhabitants of the village, in Nachole upazila, will be visible at night too.

Earlier this month, Chapainawabganj Deputy Commissioner (DC) AZM Nurul Haque inaugurated 17 solar street lights in Tikoil village where power outage is a common occurrence.

"There are 1,135 villages in the district, but the district administration picked Tikoil [for installing the solar street lights] because people there have strong aesthetic sense. They are talented and creative. We installed the lights to enrich the village further," said the DC.

Located about 27 kilometres away from the district headquarters, Tikoil village has earned the name "Alpona Gram" as more than 50 houses there are decorated with colourful motifs drawn by women.

The Bangla word alpona refers to colourful motifs, sacred art or painting done with hands and a type of paint on auspicious occasions in Bengal.

Visitors from near and far come to the village to see the art. Around one-third of its

inhabitants are Hindus. The Hindu women usually decorate their houses with alpona during religious festivals like Durga puja, Swaraswati puja, Laxmi puja, Kali puja and other festivals such as Nabanna Utsab, Pahela Baishakh and wedding ceremonies.

The new street lights in Tikoil village have come as a respite to people of all ages, especially the women. "We used to be scared to go outside alone at night as this is a remote area. Now we can go out without any hesitation," said Dekhan Bala Barman, a homemaker of the village.

"Now that the solar lights are there, my children can play in the yard in the evening as well," said another resident Anita Rani, who has a daughter and a son.

Robin Barman used to stumble in darkness while returning home from work every night. It took him about 25 minutes to walk the half kilometre-long pothole-riddled road of the village.

"The road condition is not good. Before, I had to be very careful with every step. But lately, the street lights had been greatly helpful. It has lit up the area," Robin told this paper.

"Electrical outage is frequent here. Sometimes it is out for hours. Now the solar lights keep the area illuminated from evening till dawn," said farmer Proshanto Barman, another resident of the village.



Mawlana Bhashani Science and Technology University Teachers Association forms a human chain on the campus at Santosh in Tangail yesterday demanding revocation of the University Grants Commission's direction about the appointment and promotion of teachers at public universities.

PHOTO: STAR



Illegal sand lifting with dredgers from the Monu river triggers erosion, threatening agricultural lands and dwellings in Prithimpasha union under Kulaura upazila of Moulvibazar.

PHOTO: STAR

# Khagrachhari sugarcane farmers all smiles

SAIKAT DEWAN, Khagrachhari

Sugarcane farming is gradually gaining popularity among farmers in Khagrachhari as the farmers there have been making profits every year for its high demand in the rest of the country.

With an attractive colour on its outer skin, the sweet and long sugarcane grown in Khagrachhari is high in demand throughout the year. Farmers in the district however are making good profits especially when the crop is not available in other parts of the country during floods.

According to Bangladesh Sugarcrop Research Institute's (BSRI) Khagrachhari office, an estimated of 2.5 crore pieces of sugarcane is expected to be harvested from 340 hectares of land in Khagrachhari this year and about 3,500 families would directly benefit from the cultivation.

Last year, the crop was cultivated on 320

hectares of land in the district.

Senior Scientific Officer Dibakar Chakma of BSRI in Khagrachhari said sugarcane farming is on the rise in Khagrachhari because the land is not flood-prone and its soil is suitable for cultivation of the long and highly sweet variety of sugarcane.

Paltu Chakma, a farmer in Kamalchhari village of Khagrachhari Sadar upazila, said he started sugarcane farming two years ago and this year he spent Tk 1.5 lakh to cultivate sugarcane on one acre of land.

He hoped that he would earn Tk 3 lakh from sale when the crop will be ready to harvest in two to three months.

Seasonal fruit trader Chhabi Marma, said after buying a piece of sugarcane at Tk 10 to 16 from farmers in Khagrachhari, he sells it for around Tk 30 at markets in Noakhali, Cumilla and Dhaka.

# SEXUAL HARASSMENT Teacher suspended

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

The authorities yesterday suspended a teacher of Shamsbagh Dakhil Madrasa in Manirampur upazila of Jashore on charge of sexually harassing a fifth grader girl.

Earlier in the day, several guardians of students attacked accused Abdul Aziz, an Arabic teacher of the madrasa.

Parents of several students of the madrasa said they earlier complained to the madrasa superintendent as Abdul Aziz sexually harassed several students at different times, but no action was taken.

The teacher on Saturday sexually harassed a fifth grader in the classroom and the girl later informed her mother of the incident.

Several guardians, including the parents of the victim, went to the madrasa yesterday and demanded justice.

At one stage, they attacked the accused teacher Abdul Aziz.

Afterwards, the superintendent hurriedly closed the madrasa for the day.

"The madrasa managing committee in a meeting today [Sunday] suspended Abdul Aziz, who has confessed to the incident," said madrasa Superintendent Maolana Shawkat Ali.

He claimed that he did not get such a complaint before.

Upazila Secondary Education Officer Bikash Chandra Sarker said, "The madrasa superintendent has informed me of the incident. The accused teacher has been served a notice to show cause. If the allegations are found true, action will be taken."

# Tale of a risky school in Madaripur

Students had been attending classes in nearby shabby tin-shed house for decade

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

Students of Kalinagar Hawldarkandi Government Primary School in Madaripur's Kalkini upazila had been attending their classes in a nearby makeshift tin-shed house for a decade as the school building was declared abandoned due to its risky condition in 2009.

It has turned into a virtual cowshed as a number of cattle are now roaming in the school building, said locals.

Established in 1995, the school was nationalised in 2013. There are 105 students and five teachers in the school.

During a recent visit, this correspondent found that the

tin-shed house is not a dwelling anymore as the windows, door, tin-roof and walls have been broken down. Cows and goats were roaming in the school building.

Gias Uddin, headmaster of the school, said the tin-shed house was built for students and teachers since the school building was declared abandoned due to its risky condition in 2009.

Since then they have been taking classes there but the tin-shed house was damaged by a storm two years ago, he said.

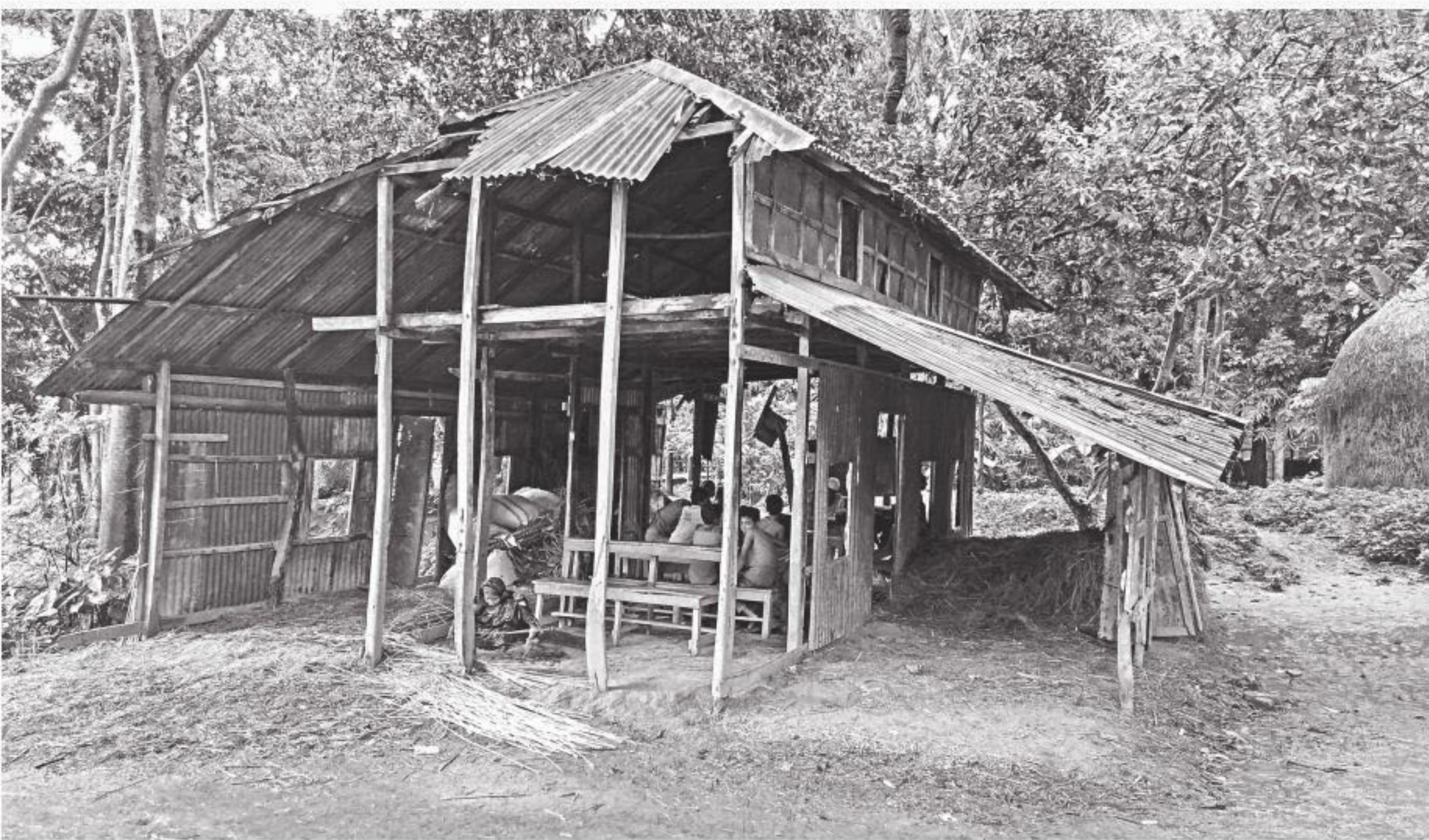
They informed the higher authorities about the matter several times but any step is yet to be taken in this regard, said the headmaster.

Abdul Rahim, a student of Class IV, said "We cannot continue our class during the rainy season as the tin-roof was damaged."

Naimul Islam, a student of Class V, said "We cannot tolerate the heat for not having any electric fan in the tin-shed house although there is power connection in the dwelling."

Kohinur Begum, a guardian, said her daughter does not want to go to the school as there is no arrangement for toilet and tube-well.

Upazila Education Officer Md Shahidul Islam said "As I'm new here, I have no idea about the school. After visiting the school, I will take necessary steps."



Students of Kalinagar Hawldarkandi Government Primary School in Madaripur's Kalkini upazila have been attending their classes in a nearby makeshift tin-shed house for a decade as the school building was declared abandoned due to its risky condition in 2009.

PHOTO: SUZIT KUMAR DAS



People keep old clothes on the ropes set at the 'Wall for humanity' beside the Collectorate playground at Khordosaptana in Lalmonirhat town, allowing needy people to take the items as per requirement. A local resident took the initiative three months ago.

PHOTO: S DILIP ROY

# Patuakhali clinics on 3-day strike

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

All the private clinics and diagnostic centres in Patuakhali town started a 72-hour work abstention yesterday protesting attack on a private clinic and death threat to a doctor.

Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA), Diagnostic and Clinic Owners Association and Chemists and Druggists Association are jointly observing the strike.

Earlier leaders of these organisations gave an ultimatum on Wednesday evening at a press conference at Patuakhali Press Club.

Md Monir Hossain, president of Diagnostic and Clinic Owners Association, read out a written statement at the conference in presence of leaders of the organisations.

On the night of September 7, a gang ransacked Central Hospital, a private clinic at Kazipara in the district town, and gave death threat to Dr Moshir Rahman, associate professor (Medicine) at Patuakhali General Hospital, who also does practice at the clinic, said Monir Hossain.

"Nurul Islam Roni, manager of the clinic, submitted a complaint to Patuakhali

Police Station the next day in this regard but police hasn't taken proper lawful steps till now. Protesting the matter we called the 72-hour strike and all 38 clinics and diagnostic centres stopped providing services this morning," he said.

"We will go for further programme if local administration fails to take proper step in this regard," he added.

Around 8:30pm on September 7, Shakil Hossain, 40, came to Dr Moshir Rahman at his private chamber at Central Hospital with pain in liver. After giving primary treatment, the doctor referred the patient to Patuakhali General Hospital for better treatment.

Four to five people came to the hospital around 10:30pm the same night and looked for Dr Moshir Rahman, who was not there that time. Then they uttered death threat to the doctor and ransacked furniture and glasses of the treatment facility.

Contacted, Md Mostafizur Rahman, OC of Patuakhali Police Station, said, "We got an allegation in this regard and we are taking lawful steps after proper investigation."

# 2 teens held for 'murder'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Two teenagers have been arrested on charge of killing a battery-run auto-rickshaw driver in Kishoreganj.

The arrestees are Rifat Mia, 15, son of Dulal Mia, and Sujon Mia, 16, son of Kashem Mia of Rubberkandi village in Bajitpur upazila.

Victim Sagor was strangled in Kuliarchar upazila on Thursday, said Parvez Ahmed Selim, officer-in-charge of Kuliarchar Police Station.

Law enforcers arrested Rifat and Sujon from Bajitpur around 9:00pm on Saturday, he said.

During primary interrogation, the arrestees admitted that Sagor was killed following an altercation over repayment of Tk 1,500 they borrowed from him, said the police official.