



Sylhet's Jaintiapur upazila administration installed such information boards, which contain a brief historical description, at five archaeological sites in the upazila. The photo was taken recently.

# Steps to protect heritage sites

Jaintiapur upazila administration put up information boards which present history of the archaeological sites once unmarked and difficult to find

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, Sylhet

Jaintiapur upazila in Sylhet is known as the land of the lost kingdom of Jaintia. Ruins of the still standing kingdom are considered archaeological heritage of the greater Sylhet region.

Over the years, these uncared-for ruins, which are of great tourist interest, were unmarked and difficult to find in the upazila.

In a move to promote the sites, the upazila administration installed sign boards around the area to direct tourists with ease.

In addition, they have put up information boards at the sites itself that contain a brief historical description of the site so that people are aware of the true past.

In the first phase of the project, the sign boards have been set at five spots -- Jaintia Rajbari, Jainteshwari Bari, Dhupi Moth and Panshala, The Tomb of King Bijoy Sing and Megalithic structures.

Abdul Hye Al-Hadi, coordinator of Save the Heritage and Environment, said, "These archaeological heritages represent the cultural history of the land and these were supposed to be cared for

with the highest possible dedication. But unfortunately, these were uncared for a very long time."

"We are glad that the upazila administration has finally taken an initiative to put up signs and information boards so that people can understand that these are not just some broken structures, but it is a part of history that must not be removed."

Maureen Karim, upazila nirbahi officer of Jaintiapur, said, "This upazila hosts amazing archaeological sites which were left unmaintained for a very long time, were being destroyed or the lands were even being grabbed."

"There is confusion with the history behind these archaeological sites as well. For example, people identify Jainteshwari (a temple of goddess) as the Rajbari (palace), but the palace is actually in some other place," the UNO said.

"So, we decided to put up the boards at the historically important archaeological sites with a brief and true history. Sign boards were put up in some places under the first phase. The rest will be marked soon."

PHOTO: STAR

GOVT SOCIAL SECURITY PROGRAMMES

## 120-yr-old woman still out of coverage

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

After her day labourer husband died 30 years ago, Chan Banu, now aged 120, became a dependent of their three sons and three daughters. But all these years, she was left out of the government's Widow Allowance scheme.

Being a dependent elderly woman, she had been drifting from one place to another, including the capital Dhaka, to stay with a son or a daughter.

As Chan Banu could not live in her home village, in Neelganj under Neelganj union of Kalapara upazila, during most part of the time, she was again left out of Old Age Allowance -- another social security scheme of the government.

Three years ago, she moved to Sukhdugi village in neighbouring Dalbuganj union in the same upazila to stay with her eldest son, Aiyub Ali, 80.

Aiyub, like his departed father Ashon Ali, is also a day labourer. Now he is too old to provide for his family as well as for his mother. His siblings do not have the financial solvency to support their mother either.

Rawson Ara, Aiyub's daughter-in-law who looks after him and Chan Banu, hoped that the departments concerned would bring the two senior citizens under the social security net soon.

Aiyub said his mother has been suffering from various illnesses and he cannot afford to bear the expenses of her medical treatment.

"At this old age, I can't even earn enough to run my family of six, but my mother does not get any coverage from the government's social security system."

"Many are receiving government support under different social security programmes. I am a helpless 120-



Chan Banu

year old, but I neither get the old age nor the widow allowances," said Chan Banu.

When asked how an elderly widow like Chan Banu could be excluded from the list of the government's social security programmes in the union, Dalbuganj Union Parishad (UP) Chairman Abdus Salam Sikder said it might have happened due to her moving out of her permanent residence in Neelganj union.

After Chan Banu moved to his union in Neelganj three years back, they could not enlist her for the Old Age Allowance as she did

not have her National Identity Card (NID) or birth registration certificate.

Contacted, Mizanur Rahman, social welfare officer in Kalapara upazila, said he came to learn about Chan Banu recently and he has already taken steps to bring her under the coverage of Old Age Allowance.

He added that he has asked the Dalbuganj UP chairman to issue Chan Banu's birth certificate that will enable them to enlist her as a recipient of the Tk 500 monthly disbursement under the Old Age Allowance scheme.

## Blame game bars road renovation work

Number of potholes developed on 400-metre-long station road in Lalmonirhat town, hampering movement of vehicles and pedestrians

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Local people have been suffering for the last seven years due to the awful state of the station road beside the district central mosque and Islamic Foundation office in the town.

The 400-metre-long important road is under the authority of Bangladesh Railway, said a railway official.

A number of potholes have developed on the road. Townspeople mainly use the road to catch trains in the Lalmonirhat railway station.

Vehicles and pedestrians cannot move smoothly on the road due to potholes, said locals.

Especially patients are the worst sufferers due to the bad condition of the road, said rickshaw puller Nazir Ali of the town.

During the monsoon, people

have to suffer more to use the road as the large potholes were filled with rainwater.

Atiqul Islam, imam of the district central mosque "Baro Masjid", said people who come to the mosque face immense trouble due to the bad condition of the road.

The busy road has been lying in such awful state for years, no step has been taken to repair it yet, said Sahedul Islam, a resident of the station road.

Lalmonirhat Railway Divisional Engineer Anwar Hossain said although the road is under Bangladesh Railway, they are not interested in spending fund for renovation of the road.

There are some railway staff quarters but the quarters are lying in an abandoned state for long and no railway staffers live there.

So, it is now no longer the most

important road for them, said Anwar, adding, that the municipality authority now can renovate the road in the greater interest of townspeople.

If the municipality authority seeks any help from them in repairing the road, they will give their full support in this regard, said the engineer.

Reazul Islam Rintu, mayor of the municipality, said they are not interested in spending fund for renovation of the road on railway land as it is under the authority of Bangladesh Railway.

However, locals questioned the role of the mayor for construction of a new road on the railway land just a few metres off the damaged road.

The mayor said a proposal was invited a long ago for construction of the road.



Station Road in Lalmonirhat town remains in awful state for years, causing immense sufferings to locals.

PHOTO: STAR



Marking the World Children Day and Child Rights Week-2019, Manikganj district administration and Bangladesh Shishu Academy jointly brought out a procession in the town on Monday.

PHOTO: STAR

## Encroachment puts Haor river in death throes

The river in Benapole used to be a crucial part of the local economy as it was the primary means of communications as well as source of fish and irrigation water for thousands

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Unabated encroachment has turned the Haor river, near Benapole land port, into a stagnant waterbody that now resembles a narrow canal.

The vital river is now in a chokehold as influential locals built numerous structures -- including large buildings and fish enclosures -- on both sides of it.

The encroachers with the connivance of unscrupulous land officials made false deeds to claim ownership of the river's land, alleged locals.

They also said their longstanding demand of conducting drives to reclaim the river by rooting out the illegal occupiers fell on deaf ears.

During a visit to the area recently, this correspondent found several multi-storied buildings constructed on the banks of the Haor river. A number of fish enclosures were also found, occupying the river.

Thanks to the encroachment, the once-flowing Haor river is now nothing but a shallow waterbody, the locals said.

Connected to various other rivers including the Ganges and Farakka in India and Kapotakhkho, Rupsha, Betna and Kudla rivers in Bangladesh, the Haor used to be a crucial part of the local economy as it was the primary means of communications as well as source of fish and irrigation water for thousands.

Master Shahidullah, president of

Benapole Nagorik Committee, said the government had launched drives to remove the illegal structures from the Haor, but the drives later stopped for reasons unknown to them.

The minister for shipping and the local lawmaker visited the area on various occasions, but the authorities are yet to take necessary steps to reclaim the river's land, alleged the locals.

Contacted, Pulak Kumar Mondal, upazila nirbahi officer of Sharsha upazila, said they already made a list of the encroachers and illegal structures built in the river.

"We will take legal action against them soon," he added.