



Aminul Haque, *inset*, built this park in front of the Bhitbarband Union Health and Family Welfare Centre in Kurigram's Nageshwari upazila.

PHOTO:STAR

# Fun and learn

Set up by Bhitbarband UP chairman in 2016, the park is now a recreational spot for people of all ages, especially children

ABDUL WAHED, Kurigram

Not a single moment is wasted inside the Bhitbarband Shishu Park in Kurigram's Nageshwari upazila.

While visitors can enjoy park amenities such as a swing, a slide, merry-go-rounds and a boat ride, they can also acquire knowledge about trees, flowers, birds, animals, great personalities, scientific inventions and many more.

The park, located on about 30 decimals of land of the two-acre Bhitbarband Union Parishad (UP) Complex, has been decorated with varieties of flowering plants and fruit trees and sculptures of birds, animals, and national symbols.

Each plant and sculpture, carries a plaque with its English, Bangla and scientific name and its origin.

Even the walls, surrounding the park, have painted pictures of freedom fighters, politicians and litterateurs along with their short biographies.

Portions of the walls display basic and pictorial information on scientific inventions like the motorcar and airplane. There is even a poster showing the currencies of different countries.

"Young people, who are going abroad will be able to get acquainted to the money of different countries," said the park's creator Aminul Haque Khandaker, chairman of Bhitbarband UP.

Aminul established this park in 2016 in front of the Union Health and Family Welfare Centre for children whose mothers come to the centre for health advice and medicine.

"Sitting in my office across the health centre, I used to watch the children cry, wail and raise havoc, while their mothers would wait for medicine," Aminul remembered.

He wanted to do something to keep these

underprivileged children engaged in some sort of entertainment while their mothers remain busy at the centre.

Thus, he filled up the ditch in front of the centre, and installed a swing, a slide and a spinner using his own money.

Consequently, the children, accompanying the mothers, started playing happily in the health centre premises while their mothers completed their visit, he said.

"When I saw how the children would laugh, and the mothers would hug and kiss their kids upon their return, I felt really good and decided to expand the park," related Aminul.

However, he wanted the children to learn while having fun.

Spending Tk 20 lakh, half out of his own pocket and half from multiple donations, Aminul commissioned sculptures of animals and birds, had the walls painted with informative pictures, planted trees, and erected other structures and facilities.

He said, one individual donated Tk 20,000 and various species of bird that has been kept inside a netted shed along with a small aquarium of colourful fish.

Visiting the park last month, this correspondent saw that most of the young visitors of the park gathered around the bird shed to look that the colourful cockatoos and parrots, and an adjacent cage with a monkey inside.

The UP chairman also acknowledged locals' help to build the park. Many of them worked for free, he said.

There is also a concrete shed for visitors to sit down and cool themselves. Similar cement umbrella-sheds have been installed on one side of a road along a pond, which is part of the endowed property of Bhitbarband zamindar. The four-acre property lies next to the UP complex.

Chairman Aminul also has provided a battery-powered boat, shaped like a peacock, naming it 'Pangkhiraj Boat'. Visitors to the park can take one to two rounds free boat ride around the 1.5-acre pond.

An eighth grader of Noonkhawa High School under Ghogadaho union, Harun-Or-Rashid, claimed that Bhitbarband Shishu Park is the only park of its kind in this area.

"I visit the park once or twice every month and enjoy the amenities including the boat. Some of us, students, requested the chairman to expand its space with more items," he said.

Another visitor Rafiqul Islam, 62, said, "Many of the visual displays are educational even for the elderly."

In his opinion, the children's park has become a recreational spot for people of all ages.

Around 2,000 visitors, including children and their guardians, come to visit the park every day, claimed a vendor who sells snacks near the park gate.

Some small stationery and snack shops have also been set up by locals inside the complex, he said.

UP Chairman Aminul said he personally spends about Tk 1,500 to Tk 2,000 each month to run the park.

Yet, he dreams of setting up a museum-cum-library in a 200-year-old tin-roofed house with eight rooms, the only remaining edifice from Bhitbarband zamindar's era.

Currently, the structure is used as union parishad's office. One room is used as a library with a collection of 7,000 books, informed Aminul.

"Once the new UP building is handed over to me in about six months, I will repair the Zamindar Bari's building following its original design and set up a museum-cum-library there," wished the chairman.

# Pabna won freedom today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Today, the 18th of December, marks the day when Pabna was liberated from Pakistani occupation forces in 1971.

Pabna saw the long-awaited victory two days after the enemy forces surrendered to the joint forces of Bangladesh and India in Dhaka on December 16.

While the Pakistani occupation forces surrendered in most parts of the country by December 16, they did not do so in Pabna until December 18, fearing retaliatory attacks by freedom fighters, said local freedom fighter and journalist Robiul Islam Robi.

The enemy troops had holed up in Wapda premises in Pabna and in Ishwardi and put up resistance against advancement of the Mukti Bahini until the former finally surrendered to the Indian forces on December 18.

Soon afterwards, the freedom fighters entered in the district headquarters through various points and hoisted the national flag of Bangladesh atop the deputy commissioner's office building, he added.

During the Liberation War, the Pakistani forces and their local collaborators in the district killed several thousand freedom fighters and civilians.

They killed at least 900 people in Demra Bazar of Faridpur upazila, 400 in Satbaria village of Sujanagar upazila, 250 in Sagarkandi of Sujanagar upazila, 200 in Hadal village of Faridpur upazila and over 200 people in Handial village of



Durjoy Pabna

Chatmohar upazila.

A war memorial named "Durjoy Pabna" was built at the Pabna DC office, where people of Pabna gather to pay homage to the sons of the soil, said Habibur Rahman Habib, former commander of Muktiyoddha Sangsad's Pabna district unit.

Different organisations are celebrating the Pabna liberation day today in a befitting manner, he added.



PHOTO:STAR

'Lawachhara Bon O Jib Boichitro Rokkha Andolon' yesterday organised a human chain in Main Point area of Moulvibazar's Srimangal upazila headquarters, protesting a government plan to fell trees in Chautoli beat near the Lawachhara reserve forest.

# 'Abandon plan to fell trees beside Lawachhara forest'

Green activists urge authorities concerned

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A section of concerned citizens and green activists yesterday at a human chain in Srimangal town demanded withdrawal of a government plan to fell trees in Chautoli Beat near the Lawachhara reserve forest.

'Lawachhara Bon O Jib Boichitro Rokkha Andolon' (conservation movement for Lawachhara forest and its biodiversity) organised the event in Main Point area of the town.

Addressing the programme, Dipen Bhattacharjee, Srimangal unit vice president of Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), said the move is designed for personal gains.

There will be a negative impact on the environment if the authorities cut down the trees there. Such move will be equally disastrous to the wildlife as well as to the humans and the overall economy in the area, he added.

Joly Paul, convener of the organiser, alleged that the forestry department is least

bothered to save the Lawachhara forest.

Her organisation will continue its protest until the decision to chop down the trees is withdrawn, she also said.

Abdul Karim Kim, central member of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (BAPA), called upon the government not to undertake any project that may destroy the environment and affect free movement of animals in and around the forest.

Once the trees in the Chautoli Beat are cut down, rare trees in the Lawachhara reserve forest will be exposed and those will eventually run the risk of getting chopped down by unscrupulous people, he told this correspondent, adding that due to this risk, the authorities should not cut any tree in Chautoli beat.

Unless destruction of wild animal habitats, through felling of trees in the forests, is not stopped, the animals will be forced to look for food in adjacent human habitations, speakers at the human chain said.

# Mustard growers eye bumper yield

About 8,305 hectares in 9 Faridpur upazilas have been brought under mustard cultivation this year

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

Faridpur farmers are expecting a bumper production of mustard in the current season due to favourable weather.

According to Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) in Faridpur, about 8,305 hectares of land in nine upazilas have been brought under mustard cultivation this year, compared to 8,040 hectares last year.

Faridpur DAE Deputy Director Kartik Chandra Chakraborty said they are expecting bumper mustard yield due to favourable weather this season.

Besides, coming of more honey bees in mustard fields during the pollination period helped healthy fertilisation and pod formation of the crop, he said.

Low production cost and easy cultivation process compared to other Rabi crops is also a reason behind popularity of mustard cultivation among the farmers in the district, said Kartik Chandra.

October to mid-November is the suitable time for mustard cultivation and it takes 65/70 days to get the yield, said the DAE official.

This correspondent recently visited Sadar, Nagarkanda and Sadarpur upazilas

and farmers in the areas said they are hopeful of getting bumper production of mustard this year and harvest will begin in third or fourth week of next month.

Ripon Khan, a farmer of Purba Aliabad village in Sadar upazila, said "I have cultivated mustard on one and half bigha of land spending Tk 8,000. I hope I will get at least nine maunds of mustard. I will sell each maund of mustard for Tk 1,800 to Tk 2,000."

Kutishawer Roy, a farmer of the same village, said he has cultivated mustard on two bighas of land after the floodwater receded there.

"Mustard cultivation is easier and less costly compared to other crops. I hope I will get 12 maunds of mustard this year," said Kutishawer.

Another grower Sheikh Sayed of Aliabad area said he cultivated mustard on one bigha of land last year and got a profit of Tk 6,000.

He has cultivated mustard on two bighas of land this year, said Sayed.

Omar Faruk, chairman of Aliabad Union Parishad, said mustard cultivation is increasing day by day in their union as it brings good profit.



Lapal Kora of backward Kora community is all smiles as Bandhu Sangsad, a voluntary organisation of Dinajpur, gave him Tk 11,500 and a bicycle to facilitate smooth continuation of his study at a programme at Dinajpur Press Club on Monday. Lapal, a student of Borderhat College in Biral upazila of Dinajpur, is preparing to sit for his Higher Secondary Certificate examinations next year as the first person to reach the level of education from the small community living at Jhinaikuri village of the upazila.

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