



Bricks removed from the proposed archaeological site of 175-year-old 'nilkuthi' at Notkhana village in Polashbari union of Nilphamari Sadar upazila lie in front of the historic building on Sunday. The district police, who employed labourers to break the structure on December 24, stopped the work shortly afterwards following objection by villagers led by the local union parishad chairman. PHOTO: STAR

## Archaeology dept, police at odds over damage of historic building

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

The government's archaeology department and the district police are at odds now over damage of historic 'nilkuthi' (house for indigo business) at Notkhana village, three kilometres from the district town.

The department in last year declared the 175-year-old brick building at Notkhana in Polashbari union of Nilphamari Sadar upazila as a proposed archaeological site but a few days ago, labourers engaged by police broke a part of it to collect bricks for constructing a sales centre.

"On December 24 morning, some labourers sent by the police started breaking the 'nilkuthi' although the department concerned declared it a proposed archaeological site a year ago and set a signboard to the effect," said Mamta

Ali Pramanik, chairman of Polashbari union parishad.

"Locals objected to the labourers' work but a police team went there and the sub-inspector concerned said the bricks were being collected to make a sales centre of Women Police Welfare Association, as per directive from the authorities.

"Finally we persuaded police to stop the work but by this time, labourers damaged a portion of the structure's roof, separating around 250 bricks," he added.

According to 'Nilphamarit Itihas' (History of Nilphamari) published by Bangla Academy in July 2018, British traders established the 'nilkuthi' in 1845 as a centre for cultivation and business of indigo during the colonial era.

The traders also used a portion of it as a torture centre to punish the farmers who

refused to cultivate indigo for low pay, mentions the book written by Jahangir Alam Sarker.

Local historian ATM Mozibar Rahman said, "We're stunned to know that the district police sent men to collect bricks by destroying the 175-year-old historic structure to make a sales centre."

"As per authorities' directive, I on Thursday talked to the additional SP, who was then serving as acting SP, and requested making arrangement for repairing the 'nilkuthi' but yet to get satisfactory response," said Sanjoy Kumar Roy, assistant custodian of Rangpur museum.

Contacted, the additional SP, Abul Bashir Mohammad Atiqur Rahman said, "We were unaware that the old building is a proposed archaeological site. The

department concerned did not inform us officially although the land on which it is situated is owned by district police."

"The matter is now a settled one as our workers instantly stopped removing bricks, which occurred as a result of misunderstanding," he added.

Nahid Sultana, archaeological department's regional director in Bogra, said, "We set a signboard beside the 'nilkuthi' a year ago, describing it as a proposed archaeological site but the notice disappeared later without our knowledge. We set another signboard there on Saturday."

"Our officials visited the spot and after getting report we will send letter to the higher authorities of police to take step to repair the historic structure, maintaining its archaeological impact," she added.

## Make roads safe, avoid harmful drugs

Two scouts convey the message in awareness campaign, walking 150-km from Gopalganj to Kuakata

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Two Rover Scouts made a 150-kilometre journey on foot from Gopalganj to Kuakata sea beach as part of an awareness campaign about road safety and bad effects of drug abuse.

Sakib Hossain Redoy, a fourth year student of law department of Gopalganj Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Science and Technology University, and Md Alim Mollah, a third year student of the same department, started from Gopalganj on December 25 morning and reached Kuakata Khanabad College premises around 4:00pm on December 29.

On the way they visited many historic and famous places in Gopalganj, Barishal and Patuakhali districts, said Sakib Hossain.

They carried the messages 'Madok porihar kori, sustho jibon gori' and 'Traffic ain manbo, nirapod sarak gorbo' ('Let's avoid drugs, build a healthy life' and 'We will obey traffic law, make roads safe').

"At different spots on the 150-km way to Kuakata, we talked to people about road safety and the bad effects of drug abuse. We are committed to working for building a better Bangladesh and welfare of people," said Alim Mollah.

## 'Comrade Moni Singh Mela' starts in Netrakona

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

'Comrade Moni Singh Mela', a week-long fair marking the 29th death anniversary of Comrade Moni Singh, began in Netrakona's Durgapur upazila town yesterday.

Durga Prasad Tewari, convener of the fair organising committee, inaugurated the fair at MKCM Govt Pilot School ground in Bagichapara area of the town.

Handicrafts, household and agricultural products made of bamboo, cane, wood and traditional food items will be available at over 200 stalls and there will also be discussions and cultural shows at the fair that is being held in Durgapur since 2000, said Dhruva Sarker, a member of the organising committee.

In the morning, floral wreaths were placed at Tonko Shaheed Smriti Stambha in the town and a colourful procession, participated by hundreds, marched through the main streets of the town.

Durgapur municipality Mayor Maulana Abdus Salam, former chairman of Durgapur Upazila Parishad Abdullah Haque and communist leaders from Netrakona and Mymensingh joined the procession.

Preeminent communist politician Comrade Moni Singh is especially remembered for his role in "Tonko Movement" in Durgapur during the British rule. He was the founder of the then Communist Party of East Pakistan.

Comrade Moni Singh led a guerrilla wing of the Mukti Bahini during the Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971 and was an advisor to the exiled provisional government of Bangladesh that year.

He was forced to go underground by the Pakistan government. He was jailed for long periods during the British and the Pakistan era and even after the independence of Bangladesh.

Born on July 28 in 1901 in Durgapur, Moni Singh died on December 31, 1990 in Dhaka.

## C'nawabganj growers see bumper mustard yield

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chapainawabganj

Farmers in the district are expecting a bumper mustard yield this season due to favourable weather.

Easy cultivation process and lower production cost compared to other Robi crops is also a reason behind popularity of mustard cultivation among the farmers in the district.

October to mid-November is the suitable time for mustard cultivation and it takes 80 to 85 days to get the yield, said Muhammad Nazrul Islam, district training officer of Chapainawabganj Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE).

The farmers in the district have cultivated mustard on 15,535 hectares of land against the DAE's target of 13,958 hectares of land.

Of the mustard fields, 4,485 hectares are in Sadar upazila, 3,120 hectares in Shibganj, 2,160 hectares in Gomostapur, 7,70 hectares in Bholahat and 5,000 hectares in Nachole upazila.

Most of the lands are covered with varieties developed by Bangladesh Agriculture Research Institute (BARI), including BARI Sharisha-14, BARI Sharisha-15 and BARI Sharisha-17.

A few local varieties have also been cultivated, said Nazrul.

Depending on soil condition, the

cultivation of mustard requires only one or two times irrigation while about Tk 1,800 to Tk 2,000 is needed to cultivate the crop on a bigha.

On an average six maunds of mustard is produced from each bigha of land, the official said.

The DAE authorities are trying to persuade the farmers to cultivate high yielding varieties of mustard invented by BARI between the gaps of Aman and Boro to earn good profit.

Farmers of Sadar upazila said they are hopeful to get bumper production of mustard and harvest will begin this month.

Selim Hasan of Mara Pagla village in Sadar upazila said "I cultivated mustard on two bighas of land in the current season, spending Tk 2,500 and I'm expect to get at least 12 maunds. I will sell each maund for Tk 1,800 to Tk 2,000."

I cultivated mustard on my two bighas of land this season and I am expecting to get six maunds of produce from each bigha," said Mizanur Rahman, a farmer of Shibirerhat village in the same upazila.

Masud Rana, another farmer of the same village, said earlier, he cultivated tomato on his three bighas of land, but flood damaged those.

Later, he cultivated mustard on his land due to lower production cost, said Masud.



A large amount of fish is kept for drying in the sun at Bhatipara village in Baniachong upazila of Habiganj. Inset, workers sort dried fish. PHOTO: MINTUDESHWARA

## Dried fish making now serves as their livelihood

People of haor village in Habiganj take to the trade as Boro cultivation no longer profitable

MINTU DESHWARA, back from Baniachong

Traditional fish drying serves as the means of survival for the people of Bhatipara Haor area in Baniachong upazila of Habiganj, especially after the recurrent damage of Boro paddy due to floods since 2017 and recent price fall of the crop.

Usually dependent on Boro paddy, people of Bhatipara village also catch fish in haor (shallow water body that dries up in winter) area during the rainy season.

Now they are engaged in making dried fish in a large scale.

During a recent visit to Bhatipara, some 15 kilometres from Habiganj district town, this correspondent saw Ranubala Rani Das keeping tengra, shrimp and other small fishes on bamboo and plastic mats for drying in the sun in front of her house.

"We are doing it for sale to maintain the family, otherwise we would face starvation," said the middle-aged woman.

Many other people including men, women and children were seen engaged in producing dried fish as the trade provides livelihood for around 350 families at the village.

"We were used to making dried fish for long to earn extra money. Now we are doing this as the main source of income due to repeated loss in Boro cultivation," said Shimul Biswas of the same village.

Dried fish is sold to buyers from different areas for Tk 150 to Tk 300 a kg, depending on the fish, said Radha Kanto Das, another villager engaged in the trade.

For drying fish, it is kept on large mats either on the ground or on bamboo platforms, he said.

"The income from selling dried fish supports our eight-member family. One gets Tk 200 to Tk 500 as daily wage for doing different works related to producing dried fish," said Amrit Lal Das, 55, who has been doing the work for 30 years at Bhatipara.

"We have five acres of cropland in haor. After recurrent damage of paddy due to floods, we are now living by making dried fish," said Sabita Rani Das, who with her husband, son and daughter-in-law was seen busy in the work at their field.

Abul Kashem Chowdhury, chairman of Baniachong Upazila Parishad, said, "Poor people of haor areas often go to other places in search of work. But villagers at Bhatipara have taken up dried fish making for living."

Fish is available in the area and so, the trade bears a good prospect, he added.



A field full of blooming mustard in Chapainawabganj Sadar upazila. PHOTO: STAR