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BOGURA MAHASTHANGARH Fort city open to destruction

Artifacts get damaged, new houses built on the site; 393 acres of its land still not acquired despite HC order

MOSTAFA SHABUI, Bogura

The Department of Archaeology continues to struggle to save one of the country's and region's most significant archaeological sites, Mahasthangarh in Bogura, due to the delay in acquiring 393 acres of land in the fort city.

Local villagers have constructed houses and other structures such as wells and drains on the land of Mahasthangarh over decades, despite these being a violation of the Antiquities Act-1968 and a 2012 High Court order.

They are also directly damaging the site and its archaeological antiques by taking bricks from the ancient structures, according to DoA officials.

The officials say they have been trying to obstruct new constructions there but locals managed to build around 1,000 structures including houses at the site over the years, taking advantage of poor monitoring by the department which has a manpower shortage.

Following the High Court order, the DoA beefed up vigilance and were able to halt the construction of new buildings. But its vigilance weakened again amid the pandemic and several unfinished brick houses were completed while construction of new structures began over these months.

Only 42.78 acres of land in Mahasthangarh fort city actually belongs to the DoA. The remaining small parts of land include 22.78 acres which constitute the fort city's

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A convoy of buses carry Rohingya refugees for being relocated to Bhashan Char in the Bay of Bengal from Ukha, Cox's Bazar yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

SK SINHA'S TRIAL His brother, nephew testify against him

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The elder brother of former Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha and one of his nephews yesterday gave their depositions before a Dhaka court in a money laundering case.

They are SK Sinha's brother Narendra Kumar Sinha and nephew Shankhajit Sinha.

Judge Shaikh Nazmul Alam of the Special Judge's Court-4 of Dhaka recorded their statements. The defence for the accused cross-examined Narendra, but could not complete cross-examining Shankhajit.

Meanwhile, Mahbul Haque Chisty, one of the accused, fell sick on the dock and he was taken to Dhaka National Hospital.

The judge then fixed January 13 for the next hearing of the case.

In their statements, Narendra and Shankhajit told the court that as per direction of SK Sinha, a joint account was opened

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ENCROACHING ON HIGHWAYS Cabinet okays stern punishment

Draft act says one could get 2 years in jail

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Anyone who erects a permanent or makeshift structure or sets up a market on the highways without prior approval may face a maximum of two years in prison or a fine between Tk 50,000 and Tk 5 lakh, or both.

This is according to the draft Highway Act-2020 approved in principle by the cabinet yesterday, with an aim to make the construction, development and maintenance of highways timely and to ensure discipline and safety of vehicular movement.

Under the draft law, even utility service providers -- both public and private -- may face similar punishment if they install utility services without prior approval, because such unapproved works would be considered "invasion".

Anyone operating a slow-moving vehicle on roads without a dedicated lane or driving a vehicle that is unable to meet the minimum speed limit will be fine up to Tk 50,000, says the draft of the new law.

Once passed, the law will replace the near century-old Highway Act-1925, said officials concerned.

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FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

Top priority given to agriculture: Bangabandhu



Indian Law Minister HR Gokhale calls on Prime Minister Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at the Gono Bhaban on December 29, 1972.

December 29, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

NATION FAST RECOVERING FROM DEVASTATION

Prime Minister Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman today says the country is fast recovering from devastation and destruction wrought by the occupation of forces during the Liberation War and is making steady economic progress. While talking to the representatives of Oxfam, the prime minister focuses on the destruction and devastation in different sectors -- industrial, economic, communications, food and agriculture in particular. Talking about the national reconstruction, the prime minister says his

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India lifts ban on onion exports

REUTERS, Mumbai

India yesterday decided to lift a ban on onion exports from January 1, as prices have fallen sharply in the last few weeks on expectations of a big crop.

Exports of all varieties of onion will be allowed, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry said in a notification.

India banned exports of onions in September to preserve domestic supplies after flooding in several states worsened seasonal shortages, leading to a spike in local prices.

India is the world's biggest exporter of onions, a staple of South Asian cooking. Countries such as Bangladesh, Nepal, Malaysia and Sri Lanka rely on Indian shipments.

Wholesale prices of onions have more than halved in the last four weeks, according to data compiled by the National Horticultural Research and Development Foundation, a government agency.

Ancient snack stall uncovered in Pompeii



REUTERS, Rome

Archaeologists in Pompeii, the city buried in a volcanic eruption in 79 AD, have made the extraordinary find of a frescoed hot food and drinks shop that served up the ancient equivalent of street food to Roman passersby.

Known as a termopolium, Latin for hot drinks counter, the shop was discovered in the archaeological park's Regio V site, which is not yet open to the public, and unveiled on Saturday.

Traces of nearly 2,000-year-old food were found in some of the deep terra cotta jars containing hot

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Hajj, umrah law approved in principle

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The cabinet yesterday approved the draft of "Hajj and Umrah Management Law-2020" in principle to bring more discipline in this sector.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina chaired the regular cabinet meeting, joining it virtually from the Gono Bhaban, while her cabinet colleagues attended the meeting at the secretariat.

Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam briefed reporters after the meeting.

He said the hajj management has been operating through a policy till date and that is why the government faces difficulties while going to take any measure against any agency, as the agencies bring stay order from the High Court challenging any action.

After the new law enactment, he said the government can bring any hajj and umrah agency to

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WUHAN VIRUS REPORTING Citizen journo jailed in China

AFP, Shanghai

A Chinese citizen journalist was jailed for four years yesterday for her reporting from Wuhan as the Covid-19 outbreak unfurled, her lawyer said, almost a year after details of an "unknown viral pneumonia" surfaced in the central China city.

Zhang Zhan, a former lawyer, was sentenced at a brief hearing in a Shanghai court for allegedly "picking quarrels and provoking trouble" during her reporting in the chaotic initial stages of the outbreak.

Her live reports and essays were shared on social media platforms in February, grabbing the

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A group of boys picking winter vegetables from a vacant land near Hatirjheel in the capital. With schools closed due to the coronavirus pandemic, they took the initiative to buy seeds to plant them here, and now are reaping the rewards. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

14-day quarantine must for all UK returnees

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

All the UK returnees must stay in a 14-day institutional quarantine as the cabinet yesterday made it mandatory in the wake of the spread of a new variant of Covid-19 in the United Kingdom.

The decision came at the cabinet meeting held at the secretariat when another 161 passengers from the UK landed in Bangladesh yesterday amid news of the spread of a new strain of Covid-19 in the US.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina chaired the meeting, joining it virtually from the Gono Bhaban, reports UNB.

"Every returnee, whoever arrives by London flights, will have to stay in quarantine. Even if he or she tested Covid-19 negative yesterday [a day before the journey], the person will have to stay in a 14-day quarantine compulsorily," said Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul while briefing reporters after the meeting.

There were two options -- suspension of flight operation with London or going for strict quarantine for London returnees -- at the meeting. Eventually, the cabinet decided to enforce stricter quarantine rules for them, he said.

The cabinet secretary said the returnees must stay in either the government quarantine or any hotel under supervision of the government.

A notification will be issued for the enforcement of the quarantine rule, said Secretary Anwarul.

After a meeting last night, Prof ABM Khurshid Alam, director general of Directorate General of Health Services, told this correspondent that the mandatory quarantine would be enforced from January.

Yesterday, 144 passengers landed at the Osmani International Airport, Sylhet, by a Biman flight from the UK and 17 others at the Hazrat Shahjalal International

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PRAYER TIMING DECEMBER 29

Fajr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 5:30 12:45 4:00 5:27 7:00
JAMAAT 6:05 1:15 4:15 5:30 7:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION