



Problems beset Khagrachhari Bouddha Bihar

JASIM MAJUMDER, Khagrachhari

The 102-year-old Younga Bouddha Bihar in Khagrachhari is beset with a lot of problems.

It has no prayer hall, accommodation for Bikkhus (monks) and waiting room. Besides, it has no wall to maintain its sanctity.

Bikkhu Sumita, caretaker of the Bihar, said it has been running without any assistance from the government.

Roy Bahadur Remrachai Chowdhury, a landlord, built the Bihar on six acres of land on the bank of the river Chengi in January in 1904 for practising the Buddhist religion, said Phaila Farue Chowdhury, circle chief of Khagrachhari.

It is the oldest Bihar (prayer house) in the Khagrachhari district, said Buddah Lal Chakma, 70, at Pankhaiya Para in the district.

Prof Dr Sudhin Kumar Chakma, former teacher of Khagrachhari Government College, said it is the only prayer hall for the Buddhist people during the British regime.

It was built on the bank of the river Chengi so that Bikkhus can get fresh air, fresh water for bath and continue their prayer without any disturbance, he said.

The Bihar was reconstructed by the Khagrachhari Army Zone on September 9 in 1996. But still there are a lot of problems as there is no Upashik (prayer hall for men), Upashika (prayer hall for women), no hostel for

Bouddha Bikkhus to stay at night.

Caretaker Sumita said they need minimum two prayer halls for Upashik and Upashika immediately.

The Bikkhus, who come from distant areas, are to stay here as they can't complete their prayers in a day. So they suffer a lot for lack of hostels, he said.

The cows, goats, buffalos and vagabonds enter the compound for lack of high wall around it and damage the purity of the Bihar.

Sumita said he discussed twice the problems facing the Bihar with State Minister for CHT Affairs Moni Swapan Dewan without any result.

He assured me of financial assistance for the Bihar but it is still a commitment.

He urged the minister and authorities concerned to do something to protect the sanctity of the Bihar and help develop the Buddhism.



102-year-old Younga Bouddha Bihar.

Incidents of fire on rise

35 killed, properties worth over 176 crore damaged in three years

DWAIPAYAN BARUA

Fifty-year-old Ratna Bishwas still can't get relieved for a moment as the traumatic experience haunts her even 15 days after a devastating fire that took away all she earned in her life.

The devastating fire that took place at a slum adjoining Chatteshwari Kali Mandir (temple) in the city reduced all her belongings along with 19 other families to ashes in the early hours of January 31.

Ratna said it forced my family and many others to live on the mercy of local people for food and clothing.

There are numerous tales of sorrow like that of Ratna as incidents of fire continue to destroy and devour the properties of people and take invaluable lives as well.

Over 2,000 incidents of fire occurred in the city and district claiming 35 lives and damaging properties worth over Tk 176 crore in the last three years, fire service source said.

Eight people were roasted alive and properties worth over Tk 15 crore gutted in 616 incidents of fire in 2003, sources said.

Some 729 incidents of fire took place in 2004 claiming 12 lives and destroying properties

worth over Tk 34.33 crore.

The loss of life and properties in fire marked a serious rise in 2005.

Fifteen people were burnt alive in 680 incidents of fire this year when loss of properties stood at as high as 126.64 crore.

With at least two incidents of fire every day, 63 took place in the city and district only in January this year. Of them, 14 were reported in the city and the rest 49 in the district, fire service sources said.

Lack of public awareness and unplanned urbanisation were blamed for the frequent incidents of fire.

Increasing rise in loss of properties and lives was attributed to lack of water reservoirs and construction of houses with narrow entry or exit passages that hamper fire fighting seriously during the incident, sources said.

"In many cases absence of reservoirs and narrow entry passages, particularly in the market places, make the fire-fighting difficult for us and raise the loss of properties as well, said Rashedul Islam Mazumder, deputy director of Department of Fire Service, Chittagong region.

"To help emergency fire-fighting every market should

have water reservoirs, which can even be made beneath a small shop at a very negligible cost compared to the loss caused by fire," Rashedul said.

"We repeatedly ask the owners of shops or the markets to develop reservoirs in vain," he regretted, referring to the meetings with the shops owners' associations of Reazuddin Bazaar and Zahur Hawkers' Market on different occasions.

There are 17 fire stations, including a floating one in the Chittagong region. Eight of them are in the city while the rest are in different areas of greater Chittagong.

The Fire Station at Agrabad,

also the regional headquarters, is equipped with three water tenders (with 1000 liter capacity) for the first call, one vehicle with two pumps for second call and Emergency Tender (ET) required for salvation after earthquake or landslide, a huge vehicle with carrying capacity of 4000 liters of water for the third call and two vehicles with 11,000 capacity each for the fourth call, said the sources.

The Agrabad Station provides services with the help of 60 fire fighters. The rest seven stations in the city have 30 fire fighters and are equipped with one first call and one second call vehicles each, they added.

theweekthatwas



Chittagong City Corporation Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury visits bookstalls after inaugurating the book fair, Ekusher Boi Mela, at Laldighi Moidan on Sunday. Chittagong City Corporation organised the fair.

Debate festival concludes

Silver Bells School became champion and Chittagong Government High School the runner-up at the Dhaka Bank-Drishy Debate Festival.

The two-day festival concluded at the Shilpakala Academy auditorium on Friday.

Prof Dr Muhammad Zafar Iqbal was present as the chief guest in the concluding ceremony with Drishy executive committee member and Chittagong Press Club General Secretary Kalim Sarwar in the chair.

Dhaka Bank Vice-president Mohammed Mujibul Quader, Regional Manager Mohammed Saifullah Chowdhury, Red Crescent Society Acting President Dr Shahadat Hossain, Sunshine Grammar School Principal Safia Ghazi Rahman and Bangladesh Math Olympiad Committee General Secretary Munir Hasan were the special guests.

Journalist Biswajit Chowdhury,

singers Kalpana Lala, Shahriar Khaled, cultural activists Delwar Hossain Majumder and Anchal Chowdhury also spoke.

Later, an anti-drug concert was performed by Orchid.

Drishy, a cultural organisation of Chittagong, organised the festival. A total of 21 groups contested the competition.

Blood donation programme held

A day-long blood donation programme of Abul Khair Goods Division was held in cooperation with Rotary Club of Chittagong Midtown and Sandhani Chittagong Medical College unit here on Thursday.

The programme was organised on the occasion of the 28th death anniversary of company founder Abul Khair and the third death anniversary of director Shah Shafiqul Islam.

A total of 175 bags of blood were collected on the day.

Chief of HR Division Saleh U Ahmed, Deputy General Manager of Beverage Lekam Wasam, AGM Ataur Rahman, Rotarian Rafat Parvez Khan and Sandhani members were present at the programme.

Disabled persons stage sit-in

National Forum of Organisations Working With the Disabled (NFOWD) staged sit-in and formed a human chain in Chittagong on Sunday to press the demand for the right to access of the disabled persons to every corner of the society.

A total of 300 disabled persons participated in the programme at the Laldighi-Kotwali Road. A memorandum was also submitted to the Chittagong District Commissioner demanding immediate implementation of the Disable Welfare Act-2001.

Chittagong Society for the

Disabled (CSD) leader Selim Nazrul and Nowjwan, an NGO, convener Imam Hossain Chowdhury were present among others.

View exchange on quality of edn

Speakers at a view exchange meeting here on Wednesday said the quality of education was decreasing due to increasing price hike of educational materials and lack of adequate teachers, class rooms, libraries, laboratories and dormitories for students.

Samajtantrik Chhatra Front (SCF) Chittagong city unit organised the meeting on "Crisis of National University and Students Responsibility" at its office with its convener Nasima Akhter in the chair.

Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal (BSD) Chittagong City unit coordinator Razekuzzaman Ratan, SCF General Secretary Saifuzzaman Sakan, Sumi Dutta, Saiful Islam, Biswamitra Chakma and Dipankar also spoke.

Trial of corrupt Rly officials demanded

Leaders of Bangladesh Railway Employees' League at its annual conference said repairing of railway tracks and importing new engine and coaches are badly needed to enable the state-owned railway to render better services in future.

The conference was held on the New Railway Station premises on Monday with Abdul Jalil in the chair.

Chittagong Metropolitan Workers' Welfare Federation President Ahsan Ullah was present as the chief guest.

The leaders demanded trial of the officials responsible for the financial loss of the railway. They demanded of the government for a separate ministry for railway.

League President Abu Taher Khan, General Secretary ABM Ehtesham Uddin and Ward Commissioner Iqbal Hafiz Yuvraj addressed the conference.

Cuta protests killing of Prof Taher

Chittagong University Teachers Association (Cuta) brought out a silent procession on the university campus on Wednesday protesting the

killing of Rajshahi University Prof Dr S Taher Ahmed.

Later, at a meeting at its office the Cuta leaders demanded immediate punishment to the culprits involved in the killing.

Associate Prof Mohammed Abu Taher Chowdhury presided over the meeting.

Cuta General Secretary Prof Dr Mozaffar Ahmed Chowdhury, Prof Dr Mohammed Shah Alam, Prof Dr Munshi Nazrul Islam, Prof Mohammed Afsar Ali, Prof Dr Ganesh Chandra Roy and Dr Mohammed Kamrul Huda were present at the meeting.

Prof Badiul new CU VC

Prof Dr M Badiul Alam of Political Science department was appointed Vice-Chancellor (VC) of Chittagong

University. Prof Badiul took over the charge at his office at around 6:00pm on Wednesday.

Former Pro-VC Prof Dr Mohammed Shamsuddin, scientist Prof Jamal Nazrul Islam and the deans of different faculties, senate members, syndicate members, proctors and other officials were present.

Earlier, Prof Badiul served as Pro-VC from 1991 to 1996 and chairman of the Political Science Department and syndicate member in the university.

Tenure of former Vice Chancellor Prof AJM Nuruddin Chowdhury expired on February 1. Prof Nuruddin handed over the charge to the acting Registrar M Idris Mian the same day.



Artistes of Bodhon, a recitation organisation, perform at a function titled "Basanta Utsab" (spring festival) at the Nazrul Square on Monday. Bodhon organised the function marking the Pehela Falgun, the first day of Spring.