

Unwritten restriction on cultural activities?

Kazi Nazrul Islam Auditorium at RU silent for months

RU CORRESPONDENT

Kazi Nazrul Islam Auditorium at Rajshahi University, which used to hum with life, is silent and desolate for months as the authorities allegedly imposed an 'unwritten restriction' on holding programmes there by university cultural groups.

The auditorium, the only memorial mark of the national poet at RU, is also losing its glamour due to alleged neglect by the authority.

At least 20 cultural organisations including drama and recitation groups, debate clubs, folk song and dance troupes remained inactive as they are not allowed to perform in the auditorium.

Campus sources said, the auditorium remained crowded and wore

festive look earlier and cultural groups had to wait for days for booking to stage programmes. Now, it looks barren and rarely seen open.

Talking to this correspondent, some progressive cultural activists alleged that they requested the university authorities to open the auditorium for all the cultural organisations. But the authorities prefer organisations aligned with Islami Chhatra Shibir.

The massive three-storied auditorium building can accommodate 2,404 guests and has several dressing, rehearsal and make up rooms, a broad wide stage, car parking lots and spacious corridors on both sides. The first convocation of the university was held at the auditorium in 1969.

Sources said, a good number of chairs have been damaged. The building was not renovated for several years. Most of the ceiling fans and the sound systems are inoperative. The corridors remained unclean for long, which has now become den of bat and other insects. Chairs and glasses of the first floor windows are also either damaged or broken.

A hasty and partial repair was done for the university's Golden Jubilee celebration in 2003.

Acting director of RU Teachers Student Cultural Center (TSCC) Prof Abdur Rahman Siddiki could not be reached for comment.

Vice-chancellor Prof Altaf Hossain said, the auditorium, which is witness to many historical events,

can not be renovated for lack of funds. Funds will be allocated in the current budget for its renovation, he said.

Farhana Rahman, a member of recitation group Shanon said the university can also earn money for its renovation by renting it out to outsiders.

Mahmud, a member of RU Drama Association (RUDA), alleged that the auditorium is mainly used for programmes of Shibir and its cultural outfit Bikalpo Sangskritik Sangstha.

The Progressive Teachers Association (PTA), cultural activists and students' organisations earlier demanded withdrawal of the unwritten restriction and opening its door for all cultural organisations.



One of the many houses at Dudlia village in Tala upazila damaged in the attack allegedly made by ruling party activists.

Border meet in Joypurhat not held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

A scheduled District Magistrate level boarder conference at Joypurhat Circuit House was not held yesterday as the Indian team did not come.

The conference was supposed to discuss issues including smuggling of drugs and other items, cross-border movement, killing of Bangladeshis by the BSF and land dispute, official sources said here.

A nine-member team including district officials and BDR commanders were scheduled to attend the conference.

Yesterday morning, a reception team led by ADM A K M Monower Hossain Akanda went to the border to receive the Indian team. They were told by Indian officials that the Indian team did not get the home ministry permission to attend the meeting, the Police Superintendent told this correspondent when contacted over phone.

ATTACK ON HOUSES IN TALA None arrested, no case filed yet

AL claims Krishak Dal leader was murdered by outlaws

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sathkira

None has been arrested in connection with Sunday's attack on houses of some Hindu families at Dulai village in Tala upazila in the district. Police said they could not arrest any body as no case was filed.

However, the victims said they are not filing any case fearing retaliation and harassment.

The victims said Sunday's onslaught on them was made, allegedly by local BNP activists, following the murder of Krishak Dal leader Mirza Masud Jewel on Saturday.

Meanwhile, four persons were arrested on Monday in connection with the murder of Jewel. They are Nepal Gain, Aftab Moral, Subhas Sarkar and Kaushalya Rani Sarkar of Dudlia village. Police produced them before court, which placed them on a four-day remand.

Jewel was gunned down by unidentified criminals Saturday night in the village.

Sathkira district Awami League leaders after a visit to Dudlia village yesterday claimed that that Jewel was killed by outlaws belonging to Janajuddha faction of Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBCP).

A nine-member team led by Sathkira AL secretary Nazrul Islam visited the village.

At a press briefing at the party office in the afternoon, Nazrul

demanded an impartial probe into the murder of Jewel and the attack on the minority community people.

At least 17 houses and 5 business establishments were destroyed or burnt to ashes by BNP cadres, he said.

While talking to this correspondent, Namita Rani Sarkar, whose houses and rice mill were destroyed, alleged that a group of BNP cadres attacked their houses and looted all their belongings.

Claiming the villagers innocent, she demanded arrest and punishment to the culprits involved in Jewel's murder and attack of their houses.

Panic gripped the people of the village though there is a police camp about one and a half kilometres away.

On contact, Sathkira Police Superintendent Fazlur Rahman said, some unruly people attacked the houses of minority community people. On information, police rushed there and brought the situation under control, he said.

He said proper action will be taken against the attackers after investigation.

Sathkira district Workers Party general secretary Mustafa Lutfulah and JSD general secretary Obaidus Sultan Bablu also visited the affected families at Dudli and demanded punishment of the culprits.



The fallen Chlorophora Excelsa tree at Lawachhara Reserve Forest.

PHOTO: STAR

COLLAPSE OF RARE LAWACHHARA TREE Samples of rotten roots sent to laboratories for test

RAJAT KANTI GOSWAMI, Moulvibazar

The century old, rare and 'endangered' Chlorophora excelsa tree at Lawachhara Reserve Forest, locally known as 'chloroform' tree, fell as its roots got rotten, forest officials said.

The lone tree of African origin in Bangladesh fell during rain on Friday. There was no storm or gusty wind in the area when the tree fell, forest officials in Moulvibazar and locals told this correspondent on Monday. Samples of rotten roots have been sent to laboratories in forest departments in Dhaka University, Chittagang University and Mymensingh Agriculture University, Forest Research Centre at Sholashahar in Chittagang and the Science Laboratory in Dhaka to try to find the reason behind their decay.

Fresh leaves and tender branches of the tree have also been sent to the laboratories for tissue culture or grafting in an effort to save the species, they said.

In 1994-95, forest officials tried to grow its saplings by grafting method but failed.

The 80-feet tree was propped up and its roots covered with soil to see if new roots come out, they said.

The tree is also known as teak although it does not serve the purpose of furniture making.

The tree was one of the attractions at Lawachhara Reserve Forest, which drew tourists from home and abroad. Botany department students of different universities in the country also came to the reserve forest to see the tree.

As the news of collapse of the tree spread, high officials of forest department rushed to the spot. Those who visited the fallen tree included Ali Kabir Hayder, forest conservator of central zone, Monuj Kanti Roy, forest conservator (wild life management and nature) of Dhaka zone and Sylhet Divisional Forest Officer Lasker Maksudur Rahman.

Quoting from records, Sub-divisional Forest Officer Haq Mahub Morshed in Moulvibazar said the tree was planted in 1900. It was the lone such tree in Bangladesh and possibly in Asia. It was an endangered species, he said.

He said it was a common belief with local people that that it was a chloroform tree and any body smelling its leaf would become unconscious. But it is not correct, Mahub Morshed said.

The tree was at the entrance of the forest bungalow of Lawachhara Reserve Forest.

BSF kills one in Kulaura

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

One Bangladeshi was killed in BSF firing in Chatlapur frontier in Kulaura Monday evening. Two others are missing since the firing.

Jabbar Miah, 30, and Kona Miah, 32, of Telibil village and Toimus Ali, 45, of neighbouring Chanpur village in Sharifpur union in Kulaura upazila had gone near border pillar No. 1862 at Chatlapur. All of a sudden, Indian Border Security Force opened fire on them, injuring Toimus Ali.

BSF personnel took bullet-hit Toimus Ali him to a hospital in Kollashahar town near the border in India, where he died later, BDR sources said.

Let Col Shaheed Musadek, Commanding Officer of BDR in Srimangal, confirmed the incident.

Jabbar Miah, 30, and Kona Miah and still missing, the BDR sources said quoting locals.

Train movement stalled for 3 days in Dinajpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Train movement from Dinajpur to Thakurgaon and Pancagharh is stopped for three days after a goods train derailed 200 meters off Thakurgaon railway station on Sunday.

Five wagons of the goods train derailed, causing damage to tracks and disrupting railway communication. Railway sources in Thakurgaon said yesterday they can not salvage the wagons due to want of relief train.

FULCHHARI, KAMARJANI IN GAIBANDHA

Port shifted 5 times but no move to stop erosion

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Erosion by the mighty Brahmaputra in Fulchhari and Kamarjani river ports on its western bank continued to devour areas while boulders and concrete blocks brought for protection of the river bank are piled up at a short distance.

The river has engulfed cultivable lands and structures including houses and business establishments. Kamarjani river port has been

shifted five times due to unabated erosion.

Demanding immediate steps to protect the river bank, local people held rallies, brought out processions and submitted memorandums to the Water Development Board (WDB) and the district administration but the authorities so far paid little attention to renovate the river bank.

During Awami League rule, the then water resource minister Abdur Razzak at a public meeting committed to take steps to check the ero-

sion.

Following agitation by people, WDB took up a programme in 2000-2001 financial year to protect the river bank in Fulchhari and Kamarjani by dumping concrete blocks and construction of spars. The Awami League government could not start the work as its tenure ended.

After the 2001 election, the four-party alliance government stopped the work on the plea of a feasibility study. This sparked agitation again by local people led by left parties.

The government then ordered the Institute of Water Modeling (IWM) to do a model test and conduct a feasibility study.

After survey the IWM gave priority to riverbank protection instead of construction of spars. Accordingly, the authorities sent a revised Project Concept Paper (PCP) to the Executive Committee of National Economic Council (ECNEC) for approval.

The ECNEC in January 2004 approved a project to protect the river bank in Fulchhari and Kamarjani and allocated over Tk 40.5 crore to implement it.

The work involved protection of 720 metres of the western bank of Brahmaputra in Fulchhari and 1,140 metres in Kamarjani by laying GO textile and CC blocks.

The work was started just before the monsoon. Whatever work was done was washed away by surging water of the river within days.

The authorities allocated more Tk 7.83 crore.

By now, a portion of the work in Fulchhari has been completed but that in Kamarjani is yet to start.

WDB sources said the work can not be done due to lack of funds.

"We received only Tk 19 crore so far", the Executive Engineer in Gaibandha told this correspondent.

Nominate 'clean' candidates in coming polls

Workshop in Sathkira urges parties

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sathkira

Speakers at a day-long workshop yesterday urged political parties not to nominate corrupt and inefficient candidates in the next parliamentary election for the sake of development and consolidation of democracy.

They said, nominating 'clean' candidates has now become a demand of the people.

The workshop on "Campaign for Democratic Reforms" organised by Sathkira district chapter of the Campaign for Good Governance, was held at Khan Bahadur Ahsan Ullah College auditorium in Debhata upazila in the district, with its Sathkira co-ordinator Madhab Dutta in the chair.

The committee members are not going to participate in politics but want to strengthen it as more acceptable and sound, they said, adding that civil society wants to mount pressure from outside and ensure a transparent and fair political process.

Demanding compulsory registration of political parties, the speakers said this will ensure transparency in political process and help flourish democracy.



Boulders piled up near the bank of Brahmaputra in Kamarjani while the erosion by the river continues.

PHOTO: STAR

5x2

15x2