

Second presidential palace in search of a caretaker!

From Anwar Ali



The main gate (L) and the original palace (R).

front of the main palace. At the entrance of the palace there is a bronze armour, then the large 'Darbar' room. There is a star-studded dome on the roof of the 'Darbar'. The large French crystal chandelier at the centre of the roof is a beauty. Besides, there is the king's bedroom, queen's dressing room, throne, sofa, couch, dressing table, marble-stone made table and many other artistic furniture inside the historic palace. Once

there had been a throne with gold handles. It has now been shifted to the National Museum in Dhaka. In the surrounding garden, there are four life-sized marble statues and four more statues made of iron. If anyone looks at those marble statues, it is hard for him to withdraw the eyes.

The kings of Dighapattia had been great admirers of aesthetics. Almost all the kings and their family members be-

came highly educated. Some of them often visited various European countries and brought back with them many prizes. Among the kings, names of Raja Prasannanath Roy, Promodanath Roy, Sarat Kumar Roy are worth mentioning.

Moharaja Dayaram Roy, founder of the palace died in 1760 AD. During the reign of Raja Promodanath Roy, the fifth successor of King Dayaram Roy, in 1897 AD, the 10-12th

June session of the Provincial Congress of Bengal was held in Natore. Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore was present at the session. On June 12 in 1897 AD, the last day of the session, an earthquake jolted Natore damaging the whole Dighapattia palace except the two-storied *Kumbha* which went underground.

Later within a short period Raja Promodanath Roy rebuilt the palace according to the styles

of the Mughals and the Englishmen. He employed foreign engineers and artisans along with locals for reconstruction of the palace. He built a beautiful garden inside the palace along where there had been a number of local and foreign trees, sculptures of valuable stones and two artificial fountains. He named it the 'Italian Garden' as it was built on the patterns of the garden of the Roman Emperor. A large and deep canal encircling the palace was dug alongside the tall boundary wall of the palace for security and protection.

On April 24, 1967, the then governor of East Pakistan Abdul Monayem Khan had declared the palace as government house.

After the independence of Bangladesh, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman renamed the palace as Uttara Gonobhaban on April 9 in 1972. He had a dream to make Uttara Gonobhaban the centre for development of the northern part of the country. He wanted decentralisation of the state affairs from the capital.

For implementation of his dream, a full-fledged meeting of Bangabandhu's cabinet in 1974 had been held for the first time at Uttara Gonobhaban. A sub-station of BTV with a full-fledged studio had also been established in Natore in 1974. But since the assassination of

— Star photo

Free eye camp at Banglabazar

By Staff Correspondent

A three-day free eye camp for the poor eye patients at Banglabazar, Luximpur, was organised jointly by The Rotary Club of Dhaka North West, Innerwheel Club of Dhaka North West and Islamia Eye Hospital Dhaka, from 20-23 February 2000.

Around two thousand four hundred patients were examined by a group of eight prominent eye specialists of the Islamia Eye Hospital in two camps and 95 patients were operated upon for removal of cataracts. The patients were lodged in the Shamsunnahar School for three days and were provided with free food, medicine and spectacles by the Rotary and Innerwheel Clubs. The surgical and medical teams were headed by Dr. Mubibul Islam and assisted by Dr. DM Chisty, Dr. Kisholoy Chakma, Dr. Shahriar Hassan, Dr. Ansarul Haq, Dr. Ali Akbar, Dr. Syed Abul Hasan and Dr. Mostafizur Rahman. The doctors were kind enough to offer their services free of charge for the poor people of Banglabazar. The free camp was organised by Ann Majeda Ahmed on behalf of the Innerwheel and Rotary Club of Dhaka North West. Ann Majeda was assisted by Rtn PP A K Rafiquddin Ahmed, Rtn PP Shamsuzzoha Chowdhury, Ann Maliha Chowdhury, President, Innerwheel Club, Ann Parvin Zaman, Dr. Soheli Sattar, Shar-milee Ahmed, Kauser Ahmed and Ann Suraiya Khan.



Rotarians and Anns of Rotary Club of Dhaka North West before the start of the Free Eye Camp at Banglabazar.



Doctors operating upon patients in a makeshift operation theatre.



Patients, operated upon, wait for their turn to be examined by doctors.

Ramsagar increasingly becoming popular among tourists

Delwar Kabir back from Dinajpur

JHENIDAH, Feb 28: Ramsagar in Dinajpur is increasingly becoming popular among tourists of all ages and nationalities.

Ramsagar is one of the largest man-made ponds in the country. It is about ten kilometres from Dinajpur town. According to historians, King Ramanath of Dinajpur kingdom excavated the huge water body in the period between 1750 AD and 1755 AD.

Popular legend says Ramanath ordered his men to excavate the tank to help meet acute water crisis his subjects were facing due to prolonged draught during the period. People named the pond after

their beloved king. Because of its huge size they called it Ram sagar, or sea in Bangla.

Thousands of people took four or five years to dig the sagar.

The length of the tank is 932.69 metres and width is 260.33 metres. The depth of water of Ramsagar is usually 315-355 inches, while in the rainy seasons it stands between 394 inches and 472 inches.

In 1974, the tank and its surroundings stretching on 146.44 acres of land came under the jurisdiction of Forestry Department.

The department has constructed children's park on the bank of the tank to attract visi-

tors. In the park, concrete hippopotamus, crocodile, gorilla, zebra, bear, spotted deer, fox, crane, elephant, bison, penguin, tortoise, ass, eagle and tiger are attracting visitors, especially children.

Tourists can reach the tank by auto rickshaw and rickshaw from Dinajpur town. But the road leading to the site is in pitiable condition.

Abdus Samad, Divisional Forest Officer (DFO), said the Forest Department had submitted a plan to the authorities concerned for the development of the site. The plan includes a bridge over the sagar and a guesthouse, he added.

The officer said thousands of tourists, including a good number of foreigners, visit the site every year. The number of tourists is increasing every year, he added.

This correspondent found a good number of tourists while visiting the site recently. Nilufar Yasmin lovely of Dinajpur town and Sharmin Nahar of Raipur said the authorities should provide more facilities to the visitors. Sufia Kabir of Jhenidah and Kamrul Islam of Thakurgaon echoed them, saying authorities should take immediate steps to develop the site as Ramsagar is one the prime tourist spots in the country.



Visitors enjoy the feel of cold water at Ramsagar.

— Star photo

News snaps

Tank collapses

BARGUNA, Feb 28: A tank set up in a surface water treatment plant of the town spending Tk three crore collapsed as it was filled up with water for test on Friday night, reports UNB.

Witnesses said the tank collapsed with a big bang at midnight on Friday as it could not take the load of water. The plant was set up under 18-District Water Supply Project with financial assistance from the Netherlands Government. The project works, launched in February 1999, were scheduled to be completed by this month. Now it will take Tk 1 crore to reconstruct the tank, officials said.

Youth commits suicide

BAGERHAT, Feb 28: A young man, married and father of a child, failing to marry his sister-in-law committed suicide in village Shirkhal of Kachua thana on Saturday, reports UNB.

Neighbours said Rakho Hari, 27, had illicit relation with his sister-in-law Debika, 20, since his marriage six years ago and was preparing to marry her soon. But last week Debika marriage was given to another boy by her guardians that cut Rakho Hari deep in his heart and he committed suicide by taking poison at 11-30 pm.

Box culvert to be built

KISHOREGANJ, Feb 28: roads and Highways Department will construct a box culvert on Kishoreganj-Bajitpur connecting road at a cost of Tk 3.16 lakh, reports UNB.

The department will renovate another box culvert on the same road with an estimated cost of Tk 3.39 lakh, officials said. R&H Executive Engineer Aminur Rahman Laskar here said works on the culverts would be completed by June this year.

3 alleged terrorists caught

SIRAJGANJ, Feb 28: Villagers caught three alleged terrorists red-handed from near Chandidasgati Bailey Bridge on Sirajganj-Bogra road early Saturday, reports UNB.

Witnesses said the villagers caught Alamgir, 27, Harun, 25 and Hasan Ali, 26, of Kalia Haripur village in sadar thana along with a big knife. Of them, Harun is an accused in two murder cases. They were later handed over to police.

Agri loan programme

KHULNA, Feb 28: Bangladesh Krishi Bank (KKB) has taken up a Tk 48.65 crore farm loan disbursement programme in 10 southwestern districts of the country, reports UNB.

The loan distribution programme has already begun and is expected to continue till June, officials said.

Donation

BANDARBAN, Feb 28: Bandarban Press Club has donated Taka 5,000 for the treatment of Rafiqul Islam. Director-in-Charge (Training) of PIB recently, reports BSS.

General Secretary of the club Monirul Islam Monu has sent the money by DD from the press club. Members of Bandarban Press Club, Rangamati Press Club and Khagrachari Press Club in their joint statement said that every one should come forward to help for the treatment of Rafiqul Islam.

Imam conference at Tangail

TANGAIL, Feb 28: Islamic Foundation, Tangail held a conference of the trained Imams of different mosques of the district on Thursday at local Mahila Krira Sangstha auditorium, reports BSS.

Deputy Director of Islamic Foundation Abdul Kalam Azad, eminent Islamic thinker Maulana Nural Islam Abdullah and Secretary, District Imam Samiul Hafez Shamsul Hoque were the speakers. Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Abdul Quayum presided over the conference.

Faridpur scouts' rally

FARIDPUR, Feb 28: Environment and Forest Minister Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury has said there is no alternative to scout movement to make the new generation of the country disciplined and self-reliant, reports UNB.

The minister was speaking at the inaugural function of the district scouts' rally here on Saturday. The role and importance of scout movement introduced by Lord Baden Powell is recognised everywhere in the world, she said adding that the rally would inspire the juveniles to build up a happy and prosperous Bangladesh by creating fraternity and patriotism in their minds.

Later, the minister went round different tents of the scouts and talked with them.

Tomato farming gains popularity

CHAPAINAWABGANJ, Feb 28: Tomato farming is gaining popularity as a cash crop as its demand continues to rise with the change of food habits of middle-class people, reports UNB.

According to Agriculture Extension Department, tomato was cultivated on 1200 hectares of land with an estimated production target of 60,500 mts in five thanas this season. Agriculture officials said if the weather favours it's possible to produce high yielding variety of tomato worth over Tk 77 crore from 96.8 thousand hectares of land a year. They said mango worth about Tk 100 crore are produced in the district from mango orchards on 9.5 thousand hectares of land a year. Almost the same amount of money could be earned by cultivating tomato on 1200 acres, they added.

Maize farming on 1700 hectares

SUNAMGANJ, Feb 28: A total of 1700 hectares has been brought under maize cultivation in 10 thanas here in the current season, reports BSS.

Official sources said, about 7140 tons of maize is expected to be produced. According to Agriculture Extension Department sources, seed, fertiliser and other agriculture inputs have been distributed among the farmers for successful implementation of the scheme. The cultivation of maize is now nearing completion.

Land reclamation scheme

FENI, Feb 28: Bangladesh Water Development Board has taken up a massive programme to utilise the newly formed shoal lands behind the Muhuri regulator at a cost of Taka 3.25 crore under its land reclamation programme, reports BSS.

Official sources said under the project, an 11-kilometre long embankment will be constructed on the southern bank of the Feni and Muhuri rivers under Mirsharai thana of Chittagong district. The construction work will be completed within the current financial year under the supervision of Operation and Maintenance Division (OMD) of Muhuri Irrigation Project (MIP).

6,000 ponds uncultivated

KUSHTIA, Feb 28: Some 6,000 ponds in different parts here are lying uncultivated due to lack of proper initiatives in both government and non-government level for quite a long time hampering fish production, reports UNB.

About 50 per cent of the ponds have been silted up and dried up and a large number are covered with water hyacinths owing to lack of maintenance, locals said. Experts said 7,000 metric tons of fish could be produced annually if the derelict ponds are utilised properly. The authorities should take schemes for re-examination of the silted ponds and scientific method of fish farming should be introduced to boost fish culture.

Cattle lifting up

RANGPUR, Feb 28: Farmers in Pirganj thana have run into trouble with their cows as cattle lifters have staged a comeback in the area, reports UNB.

Villagers said about 90 cattleheads were lifted from the area in last one month. But the farmers are reluctant to file case with police as they think it as futile efforts. In some cases, cattle lifters return the lifted cows to their owners in exchange of money through their agents.

10 shops gutted

TANGAIL, Feb 28: Ten shops were gutted in a fire at a market in Bhupur thana on Friday, reports UNB.

Local Fire Station office said the flame had originated from a burning cigarette in a shop and soon engulfed the adjoining shops at about 10 pm. The loss was estimated at about Tk 20 lakh. Local people extinguished the fire after two hours of frantic efforts. Fire fighters of sadar thana also joined them in putting the fire out.

LGED projects progressing

SUNAMGANJ, Feb 28: Local Government Engineering Department (LGED), Sunamganj has taken up 50 development projects at a cost of Taka 40 lakh in the current fiscal year, reports BSS.

The project include construction and reconstruction of bridges, roads, culverts, construction of fish sheds and repair of school building. According to officials sources, the projects have already been started and will be completed by June, 2000.

Malaria in Netrakona

NETRAKONA, Feb 28: In a sign of trouble for the health administration, malaria has staged a comeback in frontier areas of Duragapur and Kalmakanda thanas, claiming 10 lives in last one month, reports UNB.

Sources at the district Civil Surgeon office said 10 people died at Duragapur thana health complex while 60 more were admitted to the hospital during the period.

But unofficial sources put the number of malaria affected patients at 250 in the bordering areas of the two thanas.

Deputy Civil Surgeon of the district Dr. Abu Ishaque told that seven medical teams with adequate anti-malarial drugs have been working round-the-clock in the affected areas to curb the outbreak of the disease.

Traditional boatmen in misery

KISHOREGANJ, Feb 28: Hundreds of traditional boatmen have been passing their days in extreme hardship following the introduction of a large number of mechanised boats in the district, reports UNB.

The engine driven boats are rying passengers in Karimnagar, Tarail, Mitamoin, Itna, Ausagram, Nikli, Bajitpur, Kullarchar and Bhairab thanas replacing the traditional ones. Under the circumstances, the traditional boatmen are losing their daily income required for maintaining their family.

Journey by engine boat is more comfortable and less time consuming in comparison to the hazardous traditional boat journey. Hence, people prefer engine boat for their journey from one place to another.

The traditional boatmen urged the government to extend soft-term loan facilities to them to convert their traditional boats to mechanised ones.

Arsenic-free overhead tank

SHERPUR, Feb 28: Construction of an arsenic-free overhead tank under project No 18 of Sherpur Municipality has been completed, reports BSS.

A source of Public Health Department said, it took about one year and six months to complete the work at a cost of Taka one crore 40 lakh.

The Government of Netherlands financed the project. The capacity of the overhead tank is one lakh gallons.