

Zobra village pagoda needs support

SHAHADAT HOSSAIN

'Bishwa Shanti Pagoda', only religious place for the Buddhist community of Zobra village under Hathazari upazila in Chittagong, is yet to be established as a pagoda due to financial constraint, said Prosanta Barua, secretary of Pagoda Managing Committee.

Prosanta, also a resident of the village, said during the 15th to 17th century, there was a Buddhist temple in the top of the hillocks which has turned into a cremation centre of the local Buddhists through the passage of time. It was called 'Kiang Tila', he added.

Prosanta said the Buddhists have become united to save their hundreds of years old heritage 'Kiang Tila' and took an initiative to turn it (Kiang Tila) into a social, educational, cultural and religious place for them.

They formed the 'Bangladesh Sangharaj Bhikshu (Buddhist mendicant) Mahamandal', a regional organisation in 1980 to materialise their initiatives.

Sangharaj Bhikshu Mahamandal and the local Buddhists jointly formed a committee in March in 1982 to expedite their activities and protect the reminiscence of Kiang Tila.

The Patriarch of the Bangladeshi Buddhists, 10th Sangharaj and world citizen Sri Jyotipal Mahathera, was made president of the committee, said Dharmobodhi Bhikshu, caretaker of the museum of Bishwa Shanti Pagoda.

Later, various plans were taken for implementing the objectives for installation of Bishwa Shanti Pagoda (World Peace Pagoda). The plans include establishment of Bishwa Shanti Pagoda, Bi-darshon Bhabna Kendra, religious training centre, hostel, printing press and a library, pagoda sources said.

A hostel was established with the financial help of mass people irrespective of caste and creeds along with local Buddhist community. Later, Italian Red Cross, a private organisation, came forward with its helping hands and established a new hostel enriched with architectural design in 1996.

Father Pietto Luize Lupi, representative of Italian Red Cross, played pioneering role in establishing the artistic hostel titled 'Gobinda-Gunalonkar Buddha Chhatrabash'. The hostel was named after two great men of this region Gobinda Thakur and Gunalonkar Mahaschobir.

A total of 84 Buddhist students of Chittagong University (CU) and around six Buddhist mendicants are enjoying residential



Chittagong University (CU) pagoda

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

facilities at the hostel, Pagoda sources said.

Various religious, educational, recreational and cultural festivals are being arranged in the hostel regularly since its inception.

With the help of benevolent people, the development activities of the Bishwa Shanti Pagoda would be going on. The main portal of the complex has been constructed with the financial support of Babu Joyraj Barua and the

prayer hall by Babu Prodip Kumar Barua. But the main purpose of establishing a Pagoda is yet to be implemented, said Prof Dr Jinobodhi Bhikshu of CU Oriental Languages Department and principal of Bishwa Shanti Pagoda.

The pagoda complex has also a library, a museum (Pandit Jyotipal Smriti Museum) and a prayer hall, he said.

The local Buddhists as well as the Buddhists from across the country gather here to perform rituals, he said, adding that the dream of building a pagoda is yet to be materialised.

Seeking financial support from all for establishing the pagoda, Prof Dr Jinobodhi said it will be the holy place of the Buddhists from home and abroad.

Besides, such Buddhist religious structure

also can be the unique attraction for the tourists, he added.

Dr Jinobodhi said for creating good and patriotic citizen, there is no alternative to such religious organisations. Government as well as affluent people should come forward to protect such kind of organisations for the greater interest of the country as well as the Buddhist people, he added.

No respite from extra fare

PRABIR BARUA CHOWDHURY

A chaotic situation has been continuing in transport sector as the passengers and the transport workers have altercations over realisation of new bus fare everyday.

It is now a regular incident at every route. In some places these altercations turn into clashes. Most of the incidents have been occurring between the passengers of short distance and the staff of the buses and mini buses. The passengers said the incidents began as the staffs demand extra fare from them.

Situation went from bad to worse when government fixed a new fare for the vehicles affective from May 19. According to the new chart, the lowest fare was fixed at Tk 5 for minibus and Tk 7 for bus per head. From the next kilometre (km) the charge will be Tk 1.45 for minibus while Tk 1.55 for bus.

Nazrul Islam, a banker, said it took only Tk 3 to go to Second Gate intersection from his residence at Bahodderhat. But now the bus staffs charge Tk7 for the same distance, he added.

Nazrul said the city dwellers know the cause of bus fare hike and they have already accepted this. But the staffs demand extra fare for lack of government's surveillance, he said, adding that the government should fix fare for the short distance. Taking its advantage, the owners and staff of the buses and the mini buses are doing the same, he said.

Naima Islam, a Chittagong University student, said the fare from the campus to Kazir Dewari intersection was Tk 15, new fare is Tk16, but the bus staffs are charging Tk18.

Another passenger of the minibus Sarwar Hossain who travelled from Chittagong University to New market had no objection about the fare as he said according to the new chart the fare was Tk 26 and he paid Tk 20.

When asked why they are taking less fare, Rafique, helper of the minibus, said it is a decision of the Minibus Owners' Association.

Rafique refused to answer when he was asked why they demand different fares for the same stoppage of this road.

Raihanul Haque Chowdhury, Line and Publication Secretary of Chattala Bus-Minibus Human Hauler Transport Owners' Association said they have not enhanced fare like other parts of the



The people rush in to get into a bus at Agrabad intersection in the port city.

STAR PHOTO

country. Referring to the fare of Chittagong University to New Market route, he said they have been giving loss Tk 6 per head.

Raihan blamed the staff of the buses and minibuses for realising extra fare from the passengers which is resulting in an altercation.

This is not happening only in these routes but also a common picture of all the routes of port city. New Market is the centre point of the city. All buses move from there to different routes including Bahadderhat, Colonel Hat, Bandar Tilla, Katgor Patenga and Oxygen intersection.

Abul Kalam Azad, secretary general of District Road Transport Owners Group, denying the allegation, said they have been taking the fare fixed by the govern-

ment. He said a section of passengers do not want to give the government-fixed fare. He, however, admits that some times staffs of the buses demand extra fare.

He said to avoid the altercation and for a permanent solution to the problem bus owners already talked to the district administration to start counter bus service in the city to bring normalcy in the transport sector.

Deputy Commissioner of Traffic of Chittagong Metropolitan Police Faruk Ahmed said charging extra fare in the port city is a stray incident. Faruk said in some places the bus and minibus owners have been charging less fare from the passengers.

Faruk said a process is going on to launch the counter bus service in the city.

theweekthatwas

CCC plans streetlights from solar power

Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) decided to install streetlights from solar energy. Mayor Manjur Alam said this on Sunday when he was speaking at a meeting with Asian Development Bank (ADB) consultants at his office, said a press release.

ADB will give Tk 50 crore as loan for the project while CCC will implement the project with the help of Power Development Board (PDP). The city corporation will sign a contract with PDB after a survey.

Under this project city corporation will cover 350 kilometer road in the city, including Airport to Kalurghat, Karnaphuli bridge to Bahadderhat, Nimtala to City gate, GEC intersection to AK Khan, Dewan Hat to New Market and New Market to Chawkbazar.

Call to change law to control tobacco

Speakers at a meeting on 'World No Tobacco Day 2011' on Tuesday urged the government to amend the Tobacco Control Act on the basis of Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC).

Chittagong Civil Surgeon office organised the meeting in association with Young Power in Social Action (YPSA) at its office in the port city.

Chittagong Divisional Director of Health Dr M A Taher was the chief guest with acting Divisional Director (Health) of Chittagong Dr Morshedul Karim Chowdhury in the chair. YPSA Project Officer Dr Nur Uddin Mohammad and Md Ali Saheen also spoke at the meeting.

Speakers said due to some limitations the tobacco control act can not be implemented properly. They urged the government to follow FCTC to implement the law properly which will help free the country from tobacco.

25pc budgetary funds for edn demanded

Speakers on Sunday demanded of the government to allocate 25 percent of the national budget in education sector.

As education is the prime means of development of any country, Unesco suggested all developing and under-developing countries to allocate 25 percent of the national budget in the education sector, they said.

They were speaking at a rally following a procession arranged by Samajtantrik Chhatra Front at Chittagong University (CU) rail station.

Chhatra Front Secretary Tawhidur Rahman, Vice-President Utpal Kumar Sarkar and Organising Secretary Prasenjit Sikdar spoke at the rally with its President Prabal Majumder in the chair.

Selim new NCCB chairman

Md Nurun Newaz Selim, vice-president of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI), was elected chairman of National Credit and Commerce Bank Ltd.

Selim will take over as the bank's chairman on June 6. CCCI President Morshed Murad Ibrahim in a statement felicitated Selim on behalf of the board of directors.

According to the statement CCCI President hoped the newly elected Chairman of NCC Bank could be able to drive the reputation of private banking sector to its expected level as a pioneer.

'Ensure people's participation in budget making'

Speakers at a meeting in the port city on Sunday urged the government to ensure participation of mass people in preparation of the national budget.

They said government should implement district based budget.

They were speaking at a discussion titled "Decentralisation of national budget, district budget and participation of mass people", organised by Trinamul Janasangathan Parishad' at Chittagong Press Club (CPC) auditorium.

CPC President Abu Sufian spoke as the chief guest at the meeting with Gulshan Begum in the chair. Principal Anwara Begum of Agrabad Mahila College, word councillor Ismail Hossain Bali, ActinAid Bangladesh delegates Sad Ahmed Samim and UTSA Deputy Director Mostafa Kamal Jatra also spoke as the special guests.

Satyajit film festival held

A day-long Satyajit film festival was held in the port city on Friday, marking the 90th birth anniversary of the Bangalee great filmmaker organised by Chittagong Film Centre (CFC) at Theatre Institute, Chittagong (TIC).

Shaibal Chowdhury, chief director of CFC, in his speech said the film festival has been arranged with a view to introducing great works of Satyajit with the new generation.

Terming him a beacon of Bangla film industry, he said Satyajit's works take all film-loving people to our roots and help them find their tradition.

Shataranji Ki Khilary, Postmaster, Kanchanjangha and Agantuk were screened at the festival.