



PHOTO: STAR

A partial view of Bangabandhu Jamuna Eco Park at the west end of Jamuna bridge in Sirajganj.

JAMUNA ECO PARK Good initiative, gross negligence

MIRZA SHAKIL, *Tangail*

The Bangabandhu Jamuna Eco-Park in Sirajganj, which could become a lucrative spot pulling in local and foreign tourists, has been in a sorry state for years.

The park, about 125 kilometres north-west of Dhaka, has over 50 varieties of timber, fruit and medicinal trees and a zoo, but fails to draw many tourists due to a lack of necessary facilities and publicity, said visitors and officials concerned.

The 600-acre park on the western end of Jamuna bridge at Soyadabad in the district was opened to public in 2008, but the authorities have not taken any initiatives to attract tourists.

During a recent visit, this correspondent found the park in a state of neglect, with only a handful of visitors.

The park has a small zoo with only four cages that accommodate only two sick porcupines and a few monkeys and hares.

Seven spotted deer were released into the park when it was opened, and their

numbers redoubled in five years. But the animals have been suffering due to a severe shortage of drinking water, with no ponds dug in the forest, sources said.

Ibrahim Khalil, in-charge of the park's wildlife and biodiversity, said there were two peacocks in the park, but they were shifted to Dhaka after they fell sick a few months ago.

"Visitors, especially children, love to see animals and birds. Therefore, more of these creatures could be brought to the zoo," Khalil said, adding the government could earn huge revenues from the park if it was taken care of.

Businessman Masudur Rahman of Tangail, who went on a visit to the park with his family, said it had lush vegetation, with a lot of trees on the river Jamuna, but it did not have a guest-house for visitors.

"If there were accommodation facilities with food, tourists could spend the night and enjoy the moonlight that reflects in the river," he added.

Mahbubur Rahman and Labonyo

Akhter, who went to the park along with their two children from Sirajganj town, appreciated the park's location and natural features, but expressed unhappiness about the shabby condition of whatever facilities it had.

"The three toilets available for visitors are unusable," Mahbubur said, adding that the park authorities had installed nothing for the entertainment of children.

Forester Mohammad Ripon Miah, acting in-charge of the park, said it was imperative to construct a research centre, a museum, a guesthouse, a watchtower and some cottages and to increase sitting facilities by the riverside in order to attract tourists.

"Arrangements for a vehicle are very important for tourists so that they can take rides to explore the entire park," he added.

Harunur Rashid, divisional forest officer in Pabna, said they would build an office in the park this year while a rest house, a research centre and some cottages gradually.

Most SC judges

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On December 30, 2010, Justice Khairul Haque submitted his wealth statement to the then president Zillur Rahman. At a meeting on January 3, 2011 at the SC, Khairul urged all the judges of the two divisions to submit their wealth statements to his office.

SC sources said Justice SK Sinha, a senior judge of the Appellate Division, and 17 judges of the HC division submitted their wealth statements to Justice Khairul, who sent those to the president's office.

Justice Khairul retired on May 17, 2011, and Justice Md Muzammel Hossain was sworn in as chief justice the next day. A number of HC judges who submitted their

wealth statements have retired in the meantime.

Former chief justice Mohammad Fazlul Karim on February 7, 2010, told the media at his office that SC judges should publish their wealth statements in the interest of a transparent judiciary.

He had also said that judges in India placed their wealth statements and that he felt judges in Bangladesh should do the same.

But Justice Mohammad Fazlul Karim himself did not submit his wealth statement, nor did the present CJ, the sources added.

Contacted, SC Registrar AKM Shamsul Islam told The Daily Star last week that he could not say whether the present CJ had submitted

his wealth statement.

Khandker Mahbub Hossain, vice-chairman of Bangladesh Bar Council, said all SC judges should disclose their wealth statements for the sake of transparency, as allegations of corruption in the judiciary are often raised.

If judges disclosed their wealth statements, people's faith in the judiciary and the judges would be enhanced, he added.

Since the 2008 elections, no minister or ruling party lawmaker, except for Finance Minister AMA Muhith, has disclosed wealth statements to the public, although the Awami League had promised to do so in its election manifesto.

NSA pays £100m

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The funding underlines the closeness of the relationship between GCHQ and its US equivalent, the National Security Agency (NSA). But it will raise fears about the hold Washington has over the UK's biggest and most important intelligence agency, and whether Britain's dependency on the NSA has become too great.

In one revealing document from 2010, GCHQ acknowledged that the US had "raised a number of issues with regards to meeting NSA's minimum expectations". It said GCHQ "still remains short of the full NSA ask".

Ministers have denied that GCHQ does the NSA's "dirty work", but in the

documents GCHQ describes Britain's surveillance laws and regulatory regime as a "selling point" for the Americans.

The papers are the latest to emerge from the cache leaked by the American whistleblower Edward Snowden, the former NSA contractor who has railed at the reach of the US and UK intelligence agencies.

Snowden warned about the relationship between the NSA and GCHQ, saying the organisations have been jointly responsible for developing techniques that allow the mass harvesting and analysis of internet traffic. "It's not just a US problem," he said. "They are worse than the US."

The Guardian reveals that

GCHQ is pouring money into efforts to gather personal information from mobile phones and apps, and has said it wants to be able to "exploit any phone, anywhere, any time".

Some GCHQ staff working on one sensitive programme expressed concern about "the morality and ethics of their operational work, particularly given the level of deception involved". The amount of personal data available to GCHQ from internet and mobile traffic has increased by 7,000 percent in the past five years – but 60 percent of all Britain's refined intelligence still appears to come from the NSA. GCHQ blames China and Russia for the vast majority of cyber-

The last kings

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every bit the archetypal African kings.

Nigeria's traditional Monarchs may have been stripped of their powers half a century ago, but they appear to have lost little of their regal pomp and splendour as this fascinating portrait shows.

Photographer George Osodi toured the west African country extensively for a series of photographs entitled "Kings of Nigeria" which is due to be exhibited at London's Bermondsey Project in October.

As a well-known and celebrated Nigerian photographer, Osodi was granted rare access to the palaces and throne rooms of these hereditary rulers who now serve as living repositories of Nigeria's enormous cultural heritage.

He told Al-Jazeera: "There are frequent clashes among different ethnic groups ... Lots of people have lost trust in their identity."

"I felt it was important that we see this diverse culture as a point of unity instead of seeing it as something that should divide us as a nation."

"The easiest way I could approach this was to look at the monarchy structure in the country because they are closer to the people than the governors."

While their ancestors ruled over vast tracts of Africa, following the abolition of the monarchy in 1963 the regional monarchs were stripped of all their constitutional powers.

But far from fading into obscurity, they mostly remain popular leaders and are held in great regard by their hundreds of thousands of loyal subjects.

And despite lacking any formal powers they continue to wield considerable influence and serve as unofficial intermediaries between their subjects and the Nigerian government.

Youths build

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the others concerned had demanded a monument at the site.

At least 13 youths had formed a committee to build a monument there and on May 28 erected a temporary structure.

The planning, selection of the site and the construction work were done on the initiative of the students of different bodies, like Lamppost, Dabanol, Gana Muktir Gaaner Dal, Chhatra Gana Mancha, Propad, Marksbadar Prothom Path.

Yesterday, 100 days after the building came crashing down, they placed wreaths at the monument and held a cultural programme.

In a small rally held there, speakers said the monument would be the centre and symbol of workers' movements in future. They also demanded a day be designated as martyrs day on which workers who had lost their lives in tragedies like Rana Plaza, Tazreen Fashions, and Hameem Group disasters would be remembered.

Antu Modak, who designed the monument, said it represented the working class, including farmers and factory workers.

Two rockets explode near Beirut

AFP, Beirut

Two rockets fired from an unknown location exploded early yesterday outside Beirut, a security source told AFP, with one landing just metres from an entrance to the presidential palace.

"Two rockets landed in Baabda but there were no casualties," the source told AFP, without offering further details.

According to an AFP photographer, one rocket fell in the garden of a house located just 100 metres (330 feet) from the secondary entrance of the palace.

Official news agency ANI said the second rocket fell near a Lebanese army training camp in the region of Baabda, around eight kilometres southeast of the capital.



PHOTO: STAR

A group of youths constructing a monument at the Rana plaza collapse site in Savar yesterday.

Qatar sends gas aid to Egypt

AFP, Doha

Qatar yesterday announced it has shipped a consignment of liquefied natural gas as aid for the Egyptian people, in its first such gesture since president Mohamed Morsi's overthrow.

State news agency QNA said the LNG shipment was loaded on Thursday and was headed for Egypt on a gas tanker.

The shipment was part of aid decided by Doha "to help reduce the impact of the energy crisis on the Egyptian people" in the midst of their country's political unrest, an official said, quoted by QNA.

He said the shipment would help "supply power plants hit by gas shortages during the summer season and at a time of high electricity consumption."

Investigation going

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prepared, it should not take more than a week to match it with the profile of a suspected killer, said a DNA scientist, requesting anonymity.

For example, the matching of DNA profiles of as many as 321 bodies from the Rana Plaza building collapse, with 550 relatives claiming the bodies, was due in six months, said Prof Sharif Akhteruzzaman, chief of National Forensic DNA Profiling Laboratory in the capital.

Asked about the reason for the unusual delay in matching the DNA profiles, Lt Col Ziaul Hasan, Rab's intelligence wing director, could not give any clear answer.

He said, without elaborating, "The investigators have contacted the laboratories in the USA, but they could not get any satisfactory explanation for the delay."

Commander Habibur

Rahman, director of Rab's legal and media wing, said, "The interrogation of the eight people arrested in connection with the case produced nothing 'credible'."

"However, investigation is going on as we wait for the DNA matching reports from two US laboratories."

He added that the motive behind the murder still remained unclear.

In two phases, one in June and another in July last year, Rab sent to the laboratories some evidence – including two knives, the victims' bloodstained clothes and hair – for forensic testing and DNA profiling.

Sagar Sarowar, news editor of Maasranga television, and Meherun Rumi, a senior reporter at ATN Bangla, were killed in their flat in the capital's West Rajabazar in the small hours of February 11 last year.

The Detective Branch of

police was initially overseeing the murder case, which was later transferred to Rab on April 18, 2012, after the parliamentary committee expressed frustration over the branch's failure in identifying the killer(s).

In the murder case, the elite force had shown arrested six alleged killers of Narayan Chandra Nitai, a physician who was killed in his residence in the capital on August 23 that year.

Because Nitai was killed in a similar fashion, Rab thinks it is possible that the six are also involved in the killing of the journalist couple.

The force also detained Tanvir Rahman, a school-teacher and a friend of Rumi's.

Rab on February 9 arrested Humayun Kabir alias Enamul, the "prime" suspect in the case, as he was the fugitive security guard of the building where the journalist couple were killed.

Stand by Grameen

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off government control as the Grameen Bank Commission is set to recommend the future structure of the bank, majority owned by poor rural women.

He said the bank, whose success has been copied around the world and which has made Bangladesh and its people more familiar internationally, had recently come under attack, which has hurt him.

The commission, he complained, had been set up in an attempt to turn the private bank into a public one. "It's not acceptable. It's beyond our understanding why the bank has to be turned into a government bank."

The commission's suggestion to split the bank into 19 pieces sounds eerie, noted Yunus. "It seems that we don't know whether we are living beings or dead. We are having a bad dream."

The social business pioneer urged people to support the bank and its 84 lakh borrower-members until the "nightmare" ended.

Yunus also criticised another government commit-

tee's suggestion to amend the rules that elect nine directors from borrowers.

"Elections to the borrower-director posts are being held without any trouble. Nobody has raised questions about it so far," he mentioned.

The two-member committee suggested the government appoint an election commission, and also deputy commissioners as returning officer for conducting the elections.

Prof Yunus said the government was trying to change the rules and employ deputy commissioners in an organisation where there was no problem. "These are all unrealistic ideas," he added.

Grown out of savings from poor women, the bank now lends over Tk1,000 crore a month and holds Tk8,000 crore as deposits, said Yunus.

Language Movement veteran Abdul Matin, eminent jurist barrister Rafiqul Haque, former secretary M Moniruzzaman and convener of the reception organising committee MM Meheebur Rahman were present, among others.

Ban not on govt's plan

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why the government did not restore to the charter the 1972's constitutional restriction to this effect.

It may be mentioned that the government brought the 15th amendment to the charter in June 2011, restoring some articles of the original constitution. Through this amendment, the government also scrapped the caretaker government system.

"We had the opportunity to reinstate the constitutional ban [on religion-based politics] imposed in 1972. But we had to sacrifice it given the country's political situation," said the minister, preferring not to be named.

Two other ministers, also requesting anonymity, said the government would not ban Jamaat at the moment.

They added that the government's strategy to weaken Jamaat had been effective and law enforcers

had been directed to tackle Jamaat's street agitations.

On Thursday at an Iftar party at Gono Bhaban, a leader of a component of the ruling alliance drew Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's attention to the HC verdict.

To this, sources said, Hasina smiled and said: "Something needs to be done now." But the alliance leader, who himself has been demanding that Jamaat be banned, said the government would go slow on the issue.

He said the government had yet to begin legal proceedings against Jamaat under the International Crimes Tribunal Act, even five months after the law had been amended empowering the tribunals to try organisations for war crimes.

Thursday's verdict raised hopes among people that the government could now easily ban Jamaat.

But the ruling party

Rab continues

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Tarek's autopsy on Thursday.

According to the magistrate's inquest report, prepared after Tarek's death in a Rab "shootout" on Wednesday night, Tarek's body bore seven bullet marks – four in the abdomen, two in the head and one near the chest.

Sources at Dhaka Medical College morgue confirmed to The Daily Star that Tarek suffered no bullet wounds other than those during the Rab "shootout".

The inquest report also said there were two eight-inch bandages on both sides of Tarek's back. But morgue sources involved in the autopsy said those were minor cut wounds, not bullet injuries.

On Thursday, when asked to comment on the confusion, Rab Media Wing Director Habibur Rahman told The Daily Star that they had made the previous statement based on the statement of the doctors of the clinic in Uttara, where Tarek got admitted.

Tarek, who was the prime suspect in the Milky murder case, was killed in a "shootout" between his cohorts and Rab members at Kaola near the airport around 10:15pm on Wednesday.

According to Rab officials, the incident took place when they came under attack on their way to Gulshan Police Station to hand Tarek over to the police.

Following Milky's murder around 1:07am on Tuesday, Rab arrested Tarek at the clinic and kept him in its custody.

Meanwhile, Inspector General of Police Hassan Mahmood Khandker yesterday said his office would inquire into the death of Tarek in Rab custody.

He told this correspondent they would investigate the role of law enforcers in handling the Milky murder case.

He added that they would also see whether there was any negligence on the part of the law enforcers when they were taking Tarek to Gulshan from Uttara.