

Illegal houses sprout on govt land in Pabna

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At least 170 new houses have popped up on both sides of the Bonpara-Dashuria highway in Muladuli of Ishwardi upazila on Roads and Highways Department land.

The occupiers have set up a mosque, and a temple and named the area Dilunagar after Land Minister Shamsur Rahman Sharif Dilu who is from the area.

The occupiers have named the mosque "Dilunagar Jannatul Ferdous" and the temple, "Dilunagar Shib Kali Mandir".

A group of extremely poor people, backed by local ruling party leaders, made shelters on the sides of the highway with corrugated iron sheets, sources said.

"Although this is a piece of government land, but there is no problem in setting up a mosque because hundreds of Muslim residents here need a mosque," said Moulaana Nazrul Islam, imam of the mosque.

The temple was constructed for the Hindu community because of the necessity of the residents and to make their homes permanent, the Imam said.

Around 200 persons from different villages of Muladuli and Dashuria unions have moved to Dilunagar with permission from Muladuli Union Parishad Chairman Selim Uddin Malitha.

"The chairman allows us to live on the government land free of cost. I got an allotment of two katha of land free," Ramesh Kumar, a resident of Dilunagar, told The Daily Star.

"I have built a tiny house and live with my family."

Muladuli Union Parishad Chairman Selim said the area along the highway from Dashuria to Muladuli was deserted and highway robbery was common there.

According to the wishes of the people, the extremely poor have been settled there, he claimed. "Now that people live beside the highway, criminals do not dare to commit crimes."

The chairman also said the people were extremely happy to have new homes and they have named the area Dilunagar.

The people living in Dilunagar feel happy although living right next to the highway was unsafe. "We were homeless but now we have a new shelter in Dilunagar. We are happy with our homes," said Dulal Mollah.

The residents said the houses were built over the last few months and 40 to 50 more were to be built soon.

Tuhin Al Mamun, sub-divisional engineer of Roads and Highways Department, Pabna, said they served several notices on the squatters and one on the Muladuli Union Parishad chairman in 2014, asking him to remove the squatters.

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Houses mushroom on two sides of Bonpara-Dashuria highway in Muladuli of Ishwardi upazila on the land of Roads and Highways Department. A mosque and a temple have also been set up, bottom row, in the place now touted as Dilunagar, named after Land Minister Shamsur Rahman Sharif Dilu who is from the area. PHOTO: STAR

Heatwave sears Southeast Asia

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from foodborne illness to drowning, both of which rise every April when Thailand's hottest month coincides with school summer break.

Several countries surrounding Thailand have also dealt with the searing temperatures.

Cambodia and Laos set new all-time record highs for any day of the

year during April, Burt reported. In addition, Malaysia, Singapore, and Vietnam have all come very close to setting new national heat records.

The new all-time record high for Cambodia was set on April 15 when the mercury soared to 108.7 degrees Fahrenheit (42.6 degrees Celsius) in Preah Vihea, beating the previous record set just two days early in Bantey

Ampil.

Burt reported that prior to those unprecedented temperatures, the all-time record high in Cambodia was 106.5 degrees Fahrenheit (41.4 degrees Celsius) in 1960.

Southeast Asia typically sees warm and dry conditions during El Niño, which is consistent with the extreme heat they've seen. The current El Niño

is now fizzling and may transition to La Niña later this year.

In Dhaka, the highest temperature was 39 degree, Met office said.

Some rain is expected in the first week of May in some places in Dhaka, Rangpur, Sylhet and Chittagong and later on in other parts of the country.

(Information from the Associated Press was used in this report.)

Of delectably different guy

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surprise. They praised me a lot and asked me to pursue the trade. My painting career took off," said the father of a son.

One day, his friends were discussing the contributions of Rabindranath Tagore and Sukanta Bhattacharya to the society.

"One of my friends lamented that we would be forgotten soon after our death. So everyone should do something for people. This struck me," Jahir said.

He started thinking of doing something for people. Then came the idea of tree plantation.

It was in 1990 when he planted some trees along a village road. He was disheartened initially as people uprooted the trees. He stopped planting for a few years.

Jahir resumed tree plantation in a smaller scale. "Then I noticed a change in people. They were not harming the saplings and I continued planting trees," he said.

His love for tree plantation became a compulsion in 2002. So far, he has planted over 6,000 trees, including fruit and medicinal plants, at schools, colleges and different government and non-government institutions in Jhenidah. Some of them are Jhenidah KC College, MA Khalek College, Bangladesh Television relay centre, Primary Teachers Training Centre and fire service office.

In 2010, he started a nursery on a small plot of land he owned. Then he started distributing saplings to his neighbours for free. The nursery fetches him around Tk 40,000 a year from commercial sales.

"I'm not after name and fame. I love planting trees and I will do this as long as I live," he said.

Jahir said he got his motivation from the famous song -- "Ami bhalobashi tomake, tumi bhalobasho amake, amader dujoner bhalobasha aaj esho biliye di ei deshtake" (I love you, you love me; let us extend our love to the country) by acclaimed Indian singer Bhupen Hazarika.

"My country gives me much more than what I give to it," he said.

Tayeb Hossain, assistant teacher of Dhublia High School, said Jahir

planted trees at his institution also.

"This man tries to do something for the people's welfare," he said.

Jahir has another unique initiative.

He set up a "mobile library" on his bicycle. With a basket under the handle, he goes to students' houses in his village every other day with books of different categories like history and novels.

"I loan a book for 15 days. After that period, I visit them again with new books."

He has now around 50 readers who borrow books regularly.

"It's my small endeavour to develop a reading habit among the young generation," he said.

Jahir cares for the students who could not continue their education due to family or financial problems. He buys stationary for them and pays their fees. So far, he has supported seven students up to the higher secondary level.

"I am not an educated person. But I think everybody should come forward to help such students to continue their education," he said.

In October last year, he took the responsibility of a girl named Halima.

A class-IX student of Nagarbathan Secondary School, she lost her mother at the age of two and had spent her life at one of her relative's houses as her father could not take care of her.

"I never imagined that I'll have such a family to live with. I'm very happy as they are trying their best to ensure my education," said Halima.

Jahir also cares for birds. In his own way, he builds bird houses, setting up clay pots on tree branches.

"The first day I set up a clay pot in a tree, a martin made its nest in the pot," he mentioned.

Haider Ali, chairman of Kumrabaria Union Parishad, said Jahir is a dedicated soul and a person worthy of praise.

"The plantation of tree saplings at many institutions bears the testimony to his selfless work. People love him for his simplicity, sincerity and honesty," he added.

(Our Jhenidah correspondent Azibor Rahman contributed to this report.)

This time, a tailor killed in Tangail

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However, the victim's wife Arati Rani said the 2012 dispute was resolved with the help of locals. She said her husband had no known enemy in the area.

The man detained over the killing is Maulana Amirul Islam, who had filed the case against Nikhil for "his derogatory remarks" about Prophet Muhammad, UNB added.

Hours after the incident, global terror outfit Islamic State (IS) claimed responsibility for the killing. US-based SITE Intelligence Group, which monitors terrorist activities globally, said in a post.

"By way of its 'Amaq News Agency, the Islamic State (IS) claimed credit for the hacking death of a Hindu trailer [sic] in Tangail district in Bangladesh," reads the post.

The authenticity of the claim could not be independently verified.

Nikhil is the fifth victim of suspected militants in April alone. The four other victims are Nazim Uddin Samad, a law student of Jagannath University, Professor Rezaul Karim of Rajshahi University, Xulhaz Mannan, an USAID staff member and editor of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) magazine Roopbaan, and his friend

Mahbub Rabbi Tonoy. They all were hacked to death in a similar fashion.

The so-called IS claimed responsibility for the killing of Prof Rezaul while militant outfit Ansar-al Islam claimed credit for the killings of Xulhaz, Tonoy and Nazim Uddin, according to SITE.

Contacted last night, Home Minister

Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal stoutly denied, like in the past, presence of IS in Bangladesh.

"There is no presence of IS in this country. The claim has no basis. A vested quarter in the name of IS has been trying to destabilise the country," he told The Daily Star by phone.

The Home boss said the claim was

part of a local and international conspiracy.

"Only the foreigners are talking about IS because they want to infiltrate the terror group into Bangladesh," he said. "Such killings are committed by home-grown militant outfits".

Saleh Mohammed Tanvir, superintendent of police in Tangail, said they suspected militants were behind the killing but investigation was on to identify the perpetrators and determine their motive.

The assailants left a bag containing three to four objects that look like crude bombs, two machetes, a lungi, and a towel. A bomb disposal team was examining the objects, Additional SP Aslam told this newspaper.

Dubail area where the killing took place is several kilometres from the Gopalpur municipality and is relatively quiet. Nikhil was alone at the shop when he was killed, reports our correspondent in Tangail.

Harunur Rashid, a local, said he saw three youths, aged between 20 and 25, leaving the area on a motorbike around the time the killing took place.

Nikhil had been living in the area with his family for several years.

Following the murder, police set up checkpoints in different areas.



The criminals left 3 to 4 bomb like objects in a bag at the scene. PHOTO: STAR



Bonya Rani, centre, the eldest daughter of slain tailor Nikhil Joardar, in tears after hearing about the murder of her father in Gopalpur upazila of Tangail yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

2 Bagerhat Hindu teachers

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Associated Press late Tuesday.

The students, aged 17 to 18, along with others from a nearby Islamic school became incensed when the high school's head teacher backed up his colleague. A mob including students, parents and villagers attacked the teachers with sticks, forcing them to lock themselves in a room until police intervened, Parvez said.

"The situation went out of control," Parvez said, adding the mob "wanted to take law in their hands."

The magistrate of the quick-ruling court said the assistant teacher pleaded guilty to publicly insulting religion, and the two were sentenced to six months behind bars.

The law against insulting religion, imposed when Britain ruled the Indian

subcontinent, is rarely used and aimed at preventing communal clashes and inciting violence.

Bangladesh has been roiled by an ongoing wave of deadly attacks on atheist writers, religious minorities and activists over the last two years.

On Monday night, a gang of young men stabbed two men to death in Dhaka, including the editor of a gay rights magazine who also worked for the US Agency for International Development.

It was the fifth such killing this year, after nine were cut down in 2015. International governments including the United States and aid groups have implored the Bangladeshi government to do more to safeguard free speech and protect members of civil society.