

Narsingdi Zamindar Bari left to decay

BENAZIR AHMED BENU with ENAMUL HUQ

The Balapur Zamindar Bari in Paikarchar union in Narsingdi that witnessed pomp and grandeur during its glorious past is a deserted house now.

Conch shells were blown at the mansion in a solemn manner in the morning and evening as if to announce its glory. The women of the Zamindar Bari used to come to the adjacent pond together to have a bath. After the bath they used to go to the temple to perform puja rituals.

The temple too has lost its glitter. Trees and bushes have spread their roots here and there. Vagabonds have replaced the idols of gods and goddesses where snakes have now settled down. Ordinary people dare not visit the temple in fear of those snakes.

Balapur village under Paikarchar union along the Meghna river is situated on the south of Sadar upazila. Nabin Chandra Saha, father of zamindar of Balapur Kali Mohan Saha (Kali Babu) established the Zamindar Bari along the river around 17 kilometres off the upazila headquarters. Nabin Chandra Saha had three sons

-- Kali Mohan Saha (Zamindar Babu), Ashutosh Saha and Monoranjan Saha. Their estate included a big decorated mansion built on about 320 bighas of land. The mansion has 103 rooms including 31 rooms for accommodation, dining and sleeping for guests.

The east side of the building is three-storeyed, the north side one-storeyed, the south side two-storeyed and the west side two-storeyed along with a nicely built arch.

The whole mansion was built with decoration and motifs on all sides. Each of the rooms is fitted with mosaic and tiles. The doors and windows were also decorated.

There is also a big pond on the west side of the Zamindar Bari and a Durga Puja mandap on the east.

Academic activities of the village were at the helm of this Zamindar Bari. Balapur High School is situated near the mansion. An incomplete college building with antiquities stands on the north of the mansion with another big pond in front of it.

During a visit to the mansion it was learned that the Zamindars left their estate for Kolkata after India and

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The Balapur Zamindar Bari in Narsingdi. The decorative structure is now on the verge of collapse for lack of maintenance and repair. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

Lawachhara trees won't be felled

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

The railway authorities have withdrawn its proposal to cut down 25,000 trees along the Dhaka-Sylhet railway tracks in Lawachhara National Park in Moulvibazar.

The railway ministry yesterday held a meeting with the forest department and took the decision for the protection of the biodiversity and environment of the forest in Kamalganj upazila.

However, a three-member committee, including members from the local railway and forest departments and the upazila nirbahi officer, would be formed to identify the trees posing risks to railway passengers, said Arman Hossain, divisional engineer-II of Bangladesh Railway.

Only those trees would be cut down, he added.

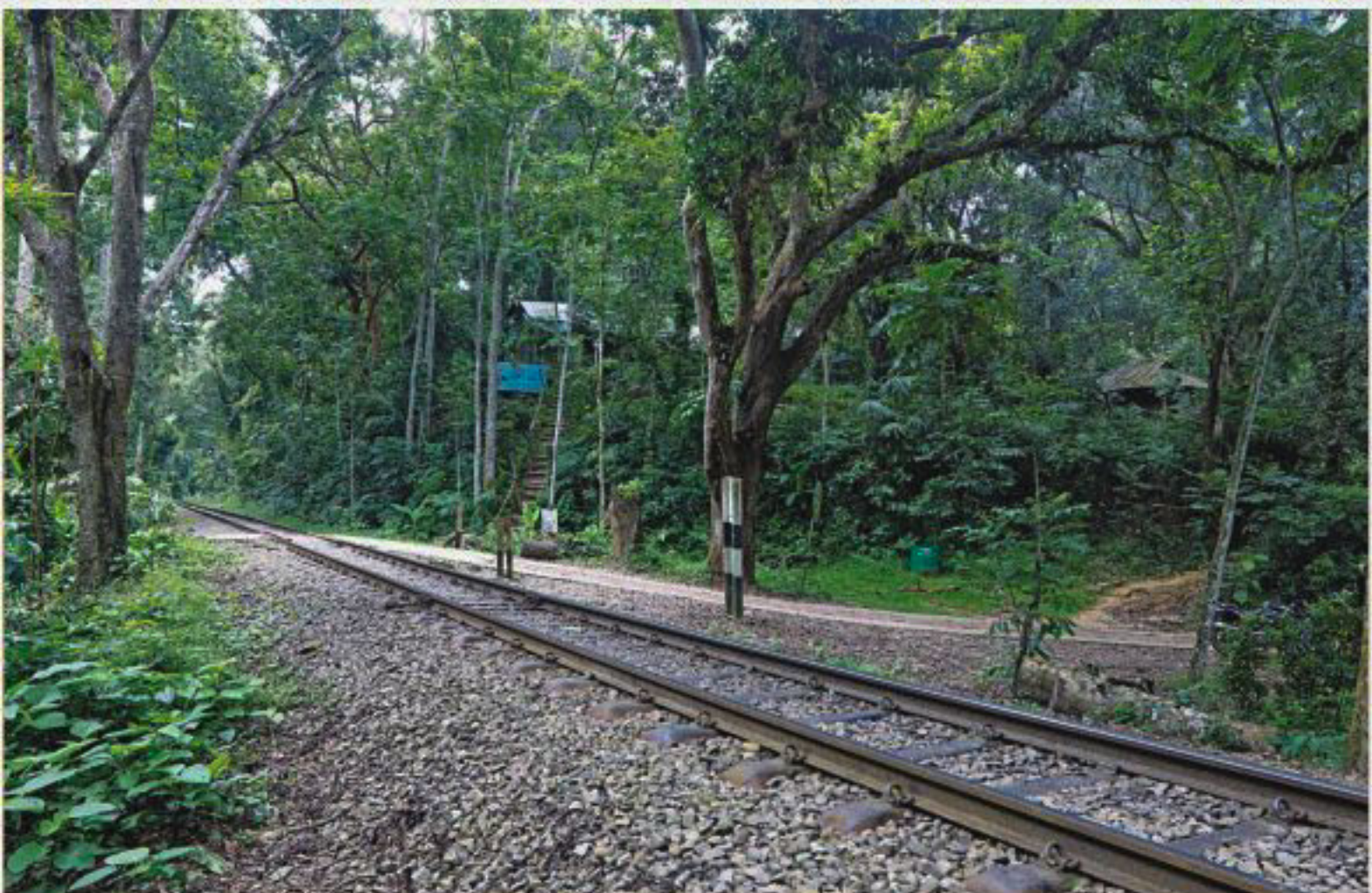
Some other issues were also discussed at yesterday's meeting held at the railway ministry.

In recent times, several organisations, working for wildlife management and nature conservation, formed human chains, held press briefings and organised signature campaigns against the proposal to cut down the trees.

On April 9, a letter signed by Arman Hossain, was sent to Kamalganj Forest Range office, asking the forest department to cut down trees along the rail tracks of Srimongal-Bhanugachh section's 5km area, according to railway sources.

The letter said rail communications during summer becomes risky as trees uprooted in storms sometimes fall on the railway tracks which could lead to fatal accidents.

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FILE PHOTO

DNCC mayor warns

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concerned of the two city corporations to explain whether they have taken any step for removing unauthorised billboards, banners, posters and other publicity materials from Dhaka.

The court had also asked the authorities to report to it by August 22, explaining if they have employed magistrates to take necessary actions against those violating relevant laws.

The HC bench of Justice Md Rezaul Haque and Justice Muhammad Khurshid Alam Sarkar passed the order on August 14 following a petition by Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela).

The DNCC organised yesterday's press conference to talk about its actions taken over the issue.

"We've removed 200 banners and billboards from the city after the High Court order. We will continue removing the others," Annisul said yesterday.

He said, "We've done a lot of tasks. Dhaka city is now almost free of billboards. Even after that every day we see new banners and festoons, and many of these are political."

In the past, ruling Awami League directed its activists to avoid using photographs except those of Sheikh Hasina and Bangabandhu during any political publicity.

Referring to that, Annisul said the DNCC has a written copy of the direction. He also reminded everyone that no one could use his or her own photo in any billboard for political reasons.

He, however, said, "Political and government billboards will always remain there and the DNCC will always give permission for setting them up."

Later, the mayor requested the coun-

cillors from his city corporation to take steps for the removal of illegal banners and billboards from their respective areas.

At that point, a reporter told him that many councillors themselves put up billboards and posters for their own publicity.

In reply, Annisul admitted the issue, and said "three to four" councillors are involved in the practice. He also requested them to stop doing that.

Expressing frustration over unauthorised banners and posters, he said, "We make footbridges and paint them so nicely. However, we see posters all over them the next morning. Don't you feel sorry?"

"While an organisation is trying to clean the city, you are putting up posters everywhere," he said, addressing those who indulge in the illegal practice.

Billboards are also noticed on top of different local shops.

"Some companies try to publicise their brands on those billboards which is illegal," he said. He also drew everyone's attention to the use of graffiti for doing personal publicity.

Later, the mayor urged all city dwellers to take permission before setting up billboards and posters in any city corporation areas.

Contacted, Chief Executive Officer of Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) Khan Mohammad Bilal said they had been carrying out cleaning activities to remove unauthorised billboards and poster from the city corporation area.

The DSCC would publish an advertisement to raise public awareness about the issue, he told The Daily Star over phone.

Only thing

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eventually finishing the race at 19.78 seconds, almost a quarter of a second ahead of second-place finisher de Grasse.

Soon after the finish, Bolt was telling the world know who the best was, just in case anybody needed any more confirmation. "I don't need to prove anything else. What else can I do to prove to the world I am the greatest?" Bolt declared at the mixed zone. "I am trying to be one of the greatest. Be among [Muhammad] Ali and Pele. I hope after these Games I will be in that bracket."

The Jamaican revelled across the track with his country's flag draped over his shoulders; posing for selfies with his countrymen and strutting his moves to a Bob Marley song.

"There are no words to explain. Eight-time Olympic Champion. The 200 means a lot more to me and I have been enjoying it," the Jamaican champion later said at the press conference.

Bolt had sounded out his intentions of beating the world record he had set in Berlin seven years previously. Despite falling short of that target by 0.59 seconds, the Kingston resident was happy as winning gold was the most important thing, and beating 21-year-olds and 25-year-olds at the age of 29 years and 362 days was satisfying.

"My legs decided they aren't having it and I was so tired I lost my form in the last part of the race. But the key thing is that you guys know I won and the only thing that matters is the gold medal," Bolt said.

The Jamaican was hoping that his legs held up for one last run, and that his teammates put on a race to perfection as he was gunning for a record-equalling ninth track and field gold in the 4X100m relay final on Friday.

One held

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The arrestee, Nayeb Ali, has been sent to custody at Rangpur jail said Rezaul Karim, officer-in-charge (OC) of Pirganj Police Station.

The seven of the named accused were present on the spot as members of the village arbitration committee formed on Tuesday and Nayeb Ali took part in the caning, the OC added.

Locals said Nayeb Ali's wife is a ward member of Choitrakol Union Parishad in the upazila.

The names of the other six mentioned in the case are Aktar Hossain -- ward 9 member in the same UP, Delwar Hossain -- former chairman of the UP, Babul Mia, Abdul Baten, Halim Uddin and Emdadul Haque. All the accused are from Hajipara village in the upazila.

A team of police has visited the spot on Thursday night and all the other accused -- currently at large -- will be apprehended, OC Rezaul told this correspondent.

The role of the incumbent UP chairman Ziaur Rahman Sabuj is also under investigation as the locals have raised their concern over his indifference following the incident, the OC added.

On Tuesday night, August 16, in a clear violation of a Supreme Court verdict on religious edicts, the woman in Pirganj was caned 101 times and a man 20 times over an alleged extramarital affair after a village arbitration committee -- led by UP member Aktar Hossain -- gave a ruling to punish the man and the woman.

Tricking women into militancy

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Gulshan and Sholakia attacks.

Far more radicalised and far more dangerous than the old JMB, it has also changed its strategy on recruiting women, law enforcers say. The outfit is now looking beyond the families.

It is targeting female activists of different Islamist organisations, like Jamaat-e-Islami's female student wing Islami Chhatri Sangstha, according to a Rab official.

The militant group's female unit mostly prefers to pick members from students. Another source of the recruitment is Tablighi Jamaat, he said.

The official is investigating a case filed following Tuesday's arrest of four members of the militant outfit's female unit.

Of the four, Aklima Rahman Moni, Khadija Parveen Meghla and Ishrat Jahan are students of Manarat International University. Istishna Afroz Oishee is an intern at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Aklima was arrested in Gazipur and the rest in Dhaka.

Bolt has found around 25 females who used to communicate with the arrestees. At least 10 of them have already been radicalised, the official added.

Last month, police arrested seven other female JMB members -- four in Sirajganj and three in Tangail.

In December, detectives arrested two suspected female militants in Banani area. They planned to go abroad to join international terrorist outfits, according to police. Brother of one of the women was killed in Syria, said an official.

For recruitment, the female JMB activists use social media platforms like Facebook and encrypted apps such as telegraph and threema -- through which they not only discuss jihad but also share videos of IS or al-Qaeda to

radicalise other girls, said the Rab official.

Besides, there are the conventional ways.

"Also through direct and verbal communication, they invite girls to the path of Islam and discuss religion. At one stage, those who have been radicalised are asked to join jihad and start hijrat [migration]," said Abu Yusuf, additional superintendent of police in Sirajganj.

The SP interrogated the four arrested in three upazilas in Sirajganj on July 24.

They are Nadia Tabassum Rani of Sirajganj, Habiba Akter Mishu and Rumana Akter Ruma of Bogra, and Runa Begum of Gaibandha.

The arrestees are believed to have been radicalised by their husbands, who are suspected to be top JMB leaders and involved in the killings of individuals, he added.

On July 5, Tangail police arrested Sajida Akter, Jannati alias Jemmy and Rozina Begum. Sajida was the wife of notorious JMB member Nazrul Islam alias Bike Hasan, killed in "crossfire" in Rajshahi.

"While motivating the new recruits, the female JMB members say the number of men is decreasing in jihad. So females should come forward and join jihad," Yusuf told The Daily Star yesterday.

He also said they found names of other female operatives including those ready for hijrat to train in arms and explosives.

One Rab official, involved in the probe of the case relating to the four arrested in Dhaka and Gazipur, has found that for recruitment, senior female operatives also use Arabic language learning classes and group discussions.

They invite girls, who are known to have soft corner for Islam, to attend such discussions where they initially give

sermons on religion and afterlife, he said.

From the gatherings, they target those who seem potential candidates for the outfit's membership. The senior female operatives then start talking about jihad with the chosen ones.

The four operatives told Rab that their initial objective was to strengthen the female JMB unit and collect fund for terror activities.

JMB ameer of Southern region Mahmudul Hasan, who was arrested by Rab in Gazipur on July 21, initiated the formation of the female unit with the help of one of the arrestees, Aklima Rahman Moni.

Mahmudul and Aklima were about to get married.

Another Rab official told The Daily Star that Mahmudul had a plan to recruit males through female operatives.

"A female operative will find out a like-minded male through Facebook. After several stages of communications, she will tell him about her ideology and propose marriage if he is ready to join jihad," the official said.

Talking to this newspaper, a top official at the police headquarters said they still do not have a complete picture of the female JMB unit but they believe the number of its members would be very small.

He said they last week issued verbal instructions to the immigration police to keep vigil so that no female JMB member can leave the country.

Monirul Islam, chief of counterterrorism unit of the DMP, said earlier they found some female JMB members, who are either wives or sisters of male JMB operatives.

"We have noticed that the process to radicalise females is still going on," he told The Daily Star last night.

(Our Pabna correspondent Ahmed Humayun Kabir Topu contributed to this report)

IS claims first attack in Russia

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Arabic, announcing their support for IS and saying they had "taken the path of jihadi on the command of the emir".

They ended the footage by threatening more attacks on Russia and shouting "Allahu Akbar" ("God is great").

Russian security services announced the arrest of several suspected IS supporters in Balashikha in July, where they had been distributing propaganda and attempting to recruit militants.

It was unclear whether Mardalov and Israilov were arrested or linked to the suspects.

They were reported to be of Chechen descent. Separatists and Islamist groups from Chechnya, in the North Caucasus region, have been fighting wars and an insurgency against Russia for decades.

The attack came just a month after Russia started its campaign of air strikes

supporting President Bashar al-Assad against IS and rebel groups in Syria.

JEWISH MAN STABBED IN FRANCE

A Jewish man has been stabbed in France by an attacker heard shouting "Allahu Akbar" in the latest attack to shake the country.

The victim, Chalom Levy, was taken to hospital after the assault in Strasbourg yesterday morning and is expected to make a full recovery.

Police arrested the attacker at the scene and were holding him in custody while investigating his motives.

Mendel Samama, a local rabbi and good friend of Levy, told The Independent the 62-year-old victim was wearing a Jewish kippa when he was targeted.

"He had been shopping for Shabbat and he was walking back home when it happened, on the corner right by his

house," Samama said.

"He was stabbed once and the guy shouted 'Allahu Akbar', and when he took the knife out to stab him again he ran away."

"I don't know how he had the power but he managed to run to a bar. I think it saved his life."

The bar staff barricaded the doors and called the emergency services while helping Levy.

He has been taken to hospital to be treated for a stab wound to his abdomen, which missed any vital organs.

After visiting his friend, Samama said: "He's in shock, when I spoke to him he was crying. He told me he thinks it's a miracle, he told me 'I think God saved me today.'"

The suspect, said to be mentally ill, is believed to be known to police in relation to another attack on a Jewish victim in 2010.

3 'Ansarullah men'

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Emran completed diploma from Chittagong Polytechnic Institute, and Rony was a student of Shyamoli Ideal Technical College in the port city.

Acting on a tip-off, DB police raided a house in the city's Double Mooring area around 12:30am and arrested Farhad, he said, adding that another team conducted a drive in a house at Shikalbaha in Patiya upazila and caught Emran around 1:00am.

In another raid, detectives nabbed Rony from Dhalghat village of the same upazila around 2:00am, the DB official said.

During the drives, the DB police also recovered two laptops, three mobile phones and a good number of jihadi books from their possession, he claimed.

During primary interrogation, the arrestees admitted that they were members of ABT and had attended several meetings with ABT leaders in Chittagong, said the DB official.

Several months ago, the arrestees were recruited to ABT by Musa Ebne Omayer, a converted Muslim who is now in jail, said Nazmul.

"We are interrogating them for further information," he added.

Musa, who according to police used to look after the funds of ABT, ended relationship with his family after he married a Muslim woman and converted to Islam in 2013.

He was born in 1989 in a Hindu family in Chhanahara village of Chittagong's Patiya upazila. His name was Piklu Das before his conversion to Islam.

Musa and three other ABT men were arrested in Sitakunda's Barabkunda area when they were planning to attack law enforcers, mills and factories in Chittagong on July 10.