



PHOTO: SAYAM U CHOWDHURY



to be a mohkuma city until 1869, under the British colonial rule. It was well known for trade and industry, as well as for being an inland river port. It was also a central business district for the Marwaris, as the "Mohajoni" or wholesale boats would ply over the Mahananda river. There also used to be a trade fair here once, where traders from far flung areas would come to sell their wares. That is when the pukka houses sprung up, along with roads, temples and the racecourse for horses. But a sudden epidemic of Malaria and Black Fever (Kalajor) changed everything, leaving the port city bereft of people. It fell under the Jolpaiguri administration in 1870 but was placed within Panchagarh during the Partition of 1947. India surrounds the upazila on three sides.

The Daak Bungalow in Tetulia is old but sturdy and beautiful. It is said that the Raja of Kutch Bihar had it made. About 15-20

metres above the water level, the river flows right in front of it. The design bears the hallmarks of British architecture. It is now owned by the Zila Parishad. A pillar to mark our victory was built right next to it.

Tetulia has such peaceful and serene roads that moving about and taking in the scenes becomes very easy. And that is why it is better to not just stay stationary once you are here, rather, plan a trip to Buraburi, a place somewhere between Bhajanpur and Tetulia. There are ruins of an old fort there, the Bhadreshwar temple, a Shiv temple, and two mausoleums built in the Greek style. The second largest oil mine in Bangladesh is also here, at Tetulia's Shalabahan village. And then there is the landport, Banglabandha. While moving about the region, you can take a break anywhere to enjoy the hot Shingaras, Kachori, Jilapi, Gurer Mishti, and tea, both black and with buffalo milk. There are also plenty of local hotels, for proper

meals of rice and curry. The region has a low density of population, making it quiet and peaceful. There is plenty of light at night too, for the searchlights burning bright along the almost 288 kms of border region. The rivers and the tea gardens look great in that light.

The best thing is the open and free attitude of the locals. The women move about freely, without any extreme observation of the "purdah" practiced in many villages. Nobody even batted an eyelid when our group of quite a few people had fun and moved about with ease.

There are non-AC buses running on the Dhaka-Tetulia route. Those who want air-conditioned travel options will have to take the route through Rangpur and Dinajpur. It is also convenient to take the Nilshagor Express train to Nilphamari, and Tetulia is right next to it, easily reachable by car, tempo, or scooter. Scooters, microbuses and tempos are easily available to do the sight-

seeing in Tetulia. The Panchagarh-Tetulia buses run all day. There are quite a few simple and decent hotels in Tetulia, but with prior permission you can also stay at the Daak Bungalow by the Mahananda river, the Banglabandha land port, or the guest house of the forestry department. There are quite a few nice places to stay in the tea estates as well, and can be arranged if you know someone local.

We felt that this northernmost settlement of Bangladesh is a very nice place to travel to. It is true that we missed the Kanchenjunga for not going at the right time, but even then what we saw was good enough to make our souls happy. So get out and go now, not towards Teknaf, but rather to Tetulia!

By Shahana Huda, translated By Sania Aiman

Photo: Shahana Huda



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