



The ruins of 15th-century Rezakhoda Mosque, a World Heritage Site declared by Unesco in 1985, remains uncared for and covered with moss and undergrowth at Sundorghona village near Bagerhat town. The photos were taken recently.



PHOTO: STAR

REZAKHODA MOSQUE

World Heritage Site on verge of decline

PARTHA CHAKRABORTY, Bagerhat

Time has not been kind to the Rezakhoda Mosque, one of the historic relics from the group of monuments in Bagerhat, declared as World Heritage by Unesco in 1985. Yet, the apathy of the Department of Archaeology is pushing the historic ruins into further state of decay.

Khoda mosque, situated at Sundorghona village, about five kilometres away from Bagerhat town, was built in the 15th century in the ancient city of Khilafatbad, founded by the Tughlaq ruler Khan Jahan.

Visiting the site in early August, this correspondent found the ruins of Rezakhoda covered in moss and undergrowth. Some portions of the archaeological asset also appeared to be missing.

According to the website of the Department of Archaeology updated on July 13, 2015, the remnants of the ancient mosque include four

walls, three mihrabs and some broken stone pillars.

“Only the four walls and three mihrabs survive upto certain height,” the website states.

However, this correspondent saw only two walls and one mihrab. The brick pilasters and terracotta decorations on the sole mihrab is still visible, a residual reminder of the mosque’s unique architecture.

Within the periphery of the ruins, a tin-roofed building with brick pillars and a cemented floor has been built. Some of the ancient pillars also support a portion of the tin-roof.

The shed, built 50 years ago, is used for prayers by locals. Md Liakat Ali, 68, secretary of the tin- roofed mosque said Muslims from far away come to offer prayer at the Rezakhoda mosque but they get disappointed seeing its dilapidated condition.

The Department of Archaeology had cleared the moss and did some repair work some eight to 10 years ago, he claimed.

“The condition of the tin-shed mosque is not good either. Muslims pray here under bad weather condition such as rain and heat. In this situation, the Rezakhoda mosque should be repaired anyway by the department of the archaeology,” he demanded.

Hashem Beg, 88, from Sundarghona village, said the archaeology department has not been repairing this mosque for a long time.

“Even if we want to renovate and expand the mosque locally, the law will not permit so,” he added.

According to Unesco website, the Department of Archaeology should ensure that activities which may affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property such as buildings or infrastructure cannot be

constructed within or close to the property, and no one can alter or deface monuments.

When asked if construction within the periphery of a monument is allowed under the country’s law Golam Ferdous, custodian of the Bagerhat Archaeology Department on August 14th, said, “As per the Antiquity Act, this is definitely illegal.”

According to the Act, distortion, destruction, change, augmentation or expansion of any portion of any monument is punishable by law, he observed.

“Considering religious sensitivity and with approval from proper authority, the Masjid committee can apply to the Department of Archaeology for construction of a temporary shed, an alternative to facilitate prayers by local Muslims,” he said.

“I have not heard if they had applied to the authority in writing or orally,” he said about

the tin-roofed shed built by locals.

Regarding the condition of the remnants, he said, “I don’t know if there were supposed to be three mihrabs.”

“I have not heard of any mihrab that broke down,” he added also ascribing the oversight in maintenance to lack of workers.

The custodian claimed that Shait Gambuj Mosque, one of the prominent relics of the World Heritage site, alone requires constant supervision of 28 people.

He also informed that a decision has been taken to renovate and preserve the 18 coastal structures listed in the World Heritage, including the Rezakhoda mosque.

“In France and Japan, historical structures are reconstructed based on similar architectural monuments of the same region from the same era,” he said, adding they will follow that principle during reconstruction.

NATIONAL MOURNING DAY
Programme marred by
Jaldhaka AL factional clash
3 cops, 17 others hospitalised with injuries

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

A clash between two factions of Awami League (AL) in Jaldhaka upazila during yesterday’s National Mourning Day programme left at least twenty people including three policemen injured.

Former Nilphamari-3 lawmaker Golam Mostofa was chief guest at the programme organised by Jaldhaka upazila unit of Bangladesh Chhatra league (BCL) in association with AL’s Jaldhaka municipality unit, said Nolini Bikash Roy Joy, president of the BCL unit.

The clash erupted after a rowdy procession led by Ansar Ali Mintu, president of AL’s upazila unit, entered the venue at Bangabandhu Chattar in Jaldhaka Bazar, alleged Nolini Bikash.

The rivals attacked each other with bamboo sticks, iron rods and stones during the clash that continued for around two hours, said police and locals.

Sub-Inspector (SI) Mamunur Rashid of Jaldhaka Police Station and two other members of police were injured when police arrived at the scene and attempted to bring order, said Mostofizur Rahman, officer-in-charge (OC) of the police station.

Police fired eleven tear gas shells and same number of rubber bullets to disperse the clashing activists of the two factions.

All the injured including the police personnel were undergoing treatment at Jaldhaka Upazila Health Complex. SI Mamunur Rashid was later transferred to Rangpur Medical College Hospital as his condition deteriorated, the OC said.

Although the OC said a large number of police personnel were deployed in the area to restore calm, sporadic clashes between the two groups, wielding sticks, continued at various locations of the town till filing of this report around 5:00pm.

Ansar Ali Mintu, the president of AL’s upazila unit, claimed that it was a premeditated attack by Jamaat-Shibir men, who joined different units of AL and its front organisations with the blessing of former lawmaker Golam Mostofa.

Land grabbers ‘trying to
drive elderly man away’

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Influential locals, endorsed by a union parishad (UP) member, forcibly took away his land a couple of years back. Now, the same people are threatening the elderly day labourer so he leaves his village home for good.

The allegation was made recently by land owner Dinanath Roy, 60, from Fakirtokeya Balapara village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila.

In a case filed with Lalmonirhat Sadar Police Station on February 2 in 2018, Dinanath alleged that five villagers including Majnu Miah and Sirazul Islam, a member of Panchagram UP in the same upazila; encroached on his seven decimals of land in the village on January 29.

Dinanath said he had a dream of building a house for his family. With that objective in mind, he bought the piece of land on January 26 in 2016 with money sent by his two sons, who also work as day labourers in Dhaka.

While trial of the case had been going on, he was trying to make ends meet by working at agricultural farmlands in the village. But now, after taking passion of the land, the accused have been trying to drive him out of his village by making repeated threats on his family, he also said.

Ever since he bought the land, Majnu Miah had been asking him to sell it to him. As he refused to do so, Majnu and his accomplices, backed by UP member Sirazul, forcibly took possession of the land and sold bamboo groves and other trees on the land.

“We didn’t dare to protest as the land grabber and his men had sharp weapons and sticks,” he said adding that Majnu within a few days built a structure with corrugated iron sheets there.



Day labourer Dinanath Roy lost his land to influential locals in 2018. Now the same people are ‘making threats to him’.

PHOTO: STAR

Now Dinanath and his family members are living in anxiety as the encroachers have been threatening of dire consequences unless they leave the village.

“I don’t know where else to go and don’t know how I will afford the legal battle to get my land back,” he said frustratingly.

Speaking with this correspondent over phone recently, Panchagram UP Member Sirazul said Majnu and his men took over the piece of land as Dinanath did not keep his previous promise of selling it to Majnu.

Asked about threats made on Dinanath,

Sirazul said he was unaware of such incident.

Justifying his actions, Majnu also said he took possession of the land because Dinanath had backtracked on his previous commitment of selling the piece of land to him.

He, however, said he was still willing to pay Dinanath for his land. “If Dinanath comes to me, I will pay according to [running] rate of the land.”

Contacted, Sub-Inspector Mainul Islam of the police station said the case over the land was still pending at the court and he, on various occasions, asked the accused not to threaten the complainant.

7 schoolgirls
saved from
early marriage

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Seven schoolgirls were saved from early marriage in Sirajganj Sadar upazila on Wednesday, thanks to the timely taken initiative by the local administration.

They are eight graders Tanjila Khatun Sima, 14, Moyna Khatun, 14, and Meem Khatun, 14, fifth grader Masuda Khatun, 12, ninth graders Farzana Khatun, 15, Jannati Khatun, 15, and Kabita Khatun, 14. They all hail from different villages in the upazila.

On information, a mobile court led by Sadar Upazila Assistant Commissioner (AC Land) Mohammad Anisur Rahman conducted separate drives in different areas of the upazila on Wednesday and saved the girls from the curse of underage marriage.

During the drive, the court also fined all the guardians a total of Tk 75 thousand for arranging girl’s marriages before legal age.

AC Land Anisur said despite different public awareness programmes and restrictions on arranging early marriages, many people in the rural areas are still doing such deeds.



Led by the chairman of Kochashahor Union Parishad in Gobindaganj upazila of Gaibandha, concerned citizens form a human chain at the union’s hosiery industrial area on Wednesday demanding uninterrupted supply of electricity in the area. Frequent power cuts have been causing extensive damage to the hosiery industry as well as livelihoods of others, speakers said at the event.

PHOTO: STAR

Two die in
Habiganj boat
capsize

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Two women drowned as a passenger boat capsized in the Kasti river in Habiganj’s Madhabpur upazila on Wednesday night.

The deceased are Syeda Banu and Sayera Banu of Nasimagar upazila in Brahmanbaria.

Quoting witnesses, police said a passenger boat capsized in the Kasti river while it was heading for Nasimagar from Madhabpur’s Bulla area around 8:00pm.

Although other passengers of the boat managed to swim ashore, Syeda and Sayera went missing in the river.

On information, fire fighters recovered the bodies after an hour of hectic search, police said.

Robbers kill night
guard, injure another

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

An elderly night guard was killed and another injured when a gang of robbers attacked them at Boilor Bazar in Trishal upazila early yesterday.

The deceased, Lal Mia, 60, was son of late Hafez Ali of Sammukh Boilor village in the upazila.

Quoting another guard Jasim Uddin and locals, Officer in Charge (OC) of Trishal Police Station Mohammad Azizur Rahman said a group of some six to seven robbers came to Boilor Bazar on a mini truck and asked night guard Lal about location of a battery shop around 3:30am.

As Lal denied to indicate the shop, the robbers’ gang became furious and started to beat him up with sticks, leaving him critically injured.

At one stage, when two other guards—Tara Mia, 60, and Jasim, 50,—tried to save Lal the gang also swooped on them that left Tara injured, the OC said.

Hearing screams, when locals rushed to the spot the robbers’ gang fled the scene, sensing the presence of the villagers.

Later, locals rescued Lal and Tara and took them to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital where Lal succumbed to his injuries around 8:00am.

Injured Tara was referred to a hospital in the capital yesterday as his condition deteriorated, the OC added.