The First Court of Ctg

Historic site left in ruins

|| ARUN BIKASH DEY ||

PORT CITY CHRONICLES

The historic Darul Adalat, bearing testimony to Mughal and colonial era architectural features, is in a dilapidated condition. The two-storey building, which used to be the first court building of Chattogram, is in dire need of preservation. PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

It's built quite strategically -- on a hilltop -- so that someone approaching could be identified clearly from the structure's two towers.

Legend has it, the 200-year-old building was constructed by Portuguese pirates. There was a tunnel from the building that connected Karnaphuli river through which they would frequent secretly. From the towers, guards would conduct surveillance all around.

As a homage to that legend, locals still call it "Portuguese Fort".

Experts, however, say the myth does not have any historic evidence. Instead, it is a British colonial building that was used as the first court of Chattogram. Hence, its name is "Darul Adalat".

Although built by the British during their rule, the name -- Darul Adalat -- is a Persian word which means "court building". This is because soon after the British took over the rule from Mir Kashim in 1760, they continued to use Persian as their official language till 1837, according to historians.

Pirate fort or first court, this historic building has been left in a dilapidated condition for years, due to a lack of initiative by the authorities concerned.

This British colonial structure, belonging to Government Hazi Muhammad Mohsin College, was declared risky by the college authorities in 2002. Prior to that, it used to house a library, said college sources. They said the building was also being used as the office of the college division of Bangladesh National Cadet Core.

In 2003, Department of Archeology (DoA) visited the site and wrote to its director general for the building's preservation and declare it a heritage site, but to no avail.

"The building was constructed by the British and was being used as the first court in Chattogram," said Shamsul Hossain, antiquity researcher and former curator of Chittagong University Museum. There is no historic evidence to support the myth, he added.

Historian Abdul Haque Chowdhury in his book "Bandar Sahar Chattogram" (Port City Chattogram) said the building was constructed soon after the British took over in 1761.

"During the early period of British rule, they constructed the building to establish their court. There are two towers in the two-storey building built in Mughal and western traits. There is a dome on top of each tower from which watchmen used to observe the movement of ships in Karnaphuli river," said Chowdhury.

The building was used as a court until the British rulers shifted it to Lalkuthi (Red Building) beside Laldighi around 1857, he added.

During a recent visit, this correspondent saw that the rooms and entrance to the staircases of the building were sealed off. In many places, plasters have been replaced by moss and weed.

Despite its derelict condition,

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Khan Sarwar's anniversary of death today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the seventh death anniversary of prominent educationist and intellectual Prof Khan Sarwar Murshid.

To mark the occasion, floral wreaths will be placed at his grave in the capital's Mirpur Martyred Intellectuals' Graveyard at 10:30am, prayers will be offered and food will be distributed among the destitute, says a press release.

All were requested to attend the programmes.

Murshid was at the forefront of the 1952 Language Movement, Six-Point Movement and 1969 Mass Upsurge, and an organiser of the Liberation War.

He also served as the Bangladesh ambassador to Poland and Hungary, and an adviser to late Prime Minister Tajuddin Ahmad.

Murshid was the first chairman of Transparency International, Bangladesh (TIB) and a former vice chancellor of Rajshahi University.

Bidyapeeth book fair ends

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With an effort to develop reading habit particularly among youths, Gyantapas Abdur Razzaq Bidyapeeth organised a three-day book fair on its premises in Dhanmondi, that ended yesterday.

The fair also aimed at upholding the life and works of the late Gyantapas Abdur Razzaq, a distinguished scholar.

Arranged at a niche scale, it featured 10 reputed publishing houses -- including University Press Limited, Adorn Publication, Shahitya Prakash, Prothoma Prakashan, Daily Star Books and Bengal Publications.

The fair drew interest from a host of bookworms from different parts of the city.

Books of different genres including novels, essays, biographies, books on Bangladesh's Liberation War, and translations of world classics were on display.

Books were sold at discount prices, said organisers and salespersons at different stalls.

SM Rakibur Rahman, a salesperson at Bengal Publications, said apart from selling books, their aim was also to encourage people to read more.

"Samaj Rashtra Bibartan", a compilation of solo lectures delivered by reputed personalities at Gyantapas Abdur Razzaq Distinguished Lectures, was an attraction at the stall.

On the other hand, Daily Star Books displayed Syed Abul Maksud's "Bangali Musalmaner Buddhibrittik Bibhrom O Biswashinota" and Chenggish Khan's "Abul Mansur Ahmad-er Jibondarshan O Srijonbhuban", among others.

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PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Visitors browse books on the premises of Gyantapas Abdur Razzaq Bidyapeeth in Dhanmondi. Gyantapas Abdur Razzaq Foundation organised the three-day book fair.

Harsh backlash of protesting harassment

17-year-old beaten up by stalker in Gazipur

NILIMA JAHAN

The first time she stood up to her stalker, unable to take months of harassment, she was beaten up in public, where hundreds of bystanders stood by and watched.

Seventeen-year-old Samia (not her real name), was being stalked and verbally abused on her way to college by one Asif Morol, a local youth, for the last one year. This would happen regularly in Palashpur Bazaar, a small village market in Kapasia Upazila of Gazipur, she told this newspaper.

Samia had complained to her family about the harassment, but her mother advised her to ignore it. However, on December 3, she decided to protest when Asif and a few of his cohorts hurled dirty jokes and verbal abuse in her direction.

Instead of keeping her head down and walking away like she did usually, she confronted them. Taken aback, the stalkers got even more aggressive.

"One of them stood up and threatened to beat me if I didn't leave the place quietly. I yelled back at them and turned to leave," said Samia.

That's when one of the boys attacked her, took off his sandal and started beating her up. The blows kept falling, and a crowd gathered but nobody intervened.

"I was dumbfounded. It happened in the market, but nobody protested. Rather, a shopkeeper asked me to go home and leave everything to my guardians," she said.

Samia left the area in tears while the youths continued hurling abuse and threats at her, witnesses said.

Since then, the teenager is in severe mentally distress, and attempted to take her own life, said her mother. "She has refused to go to her classes or attend exams. She was unable to tolerate the humiliation."

"It was horrible. I cannot cope with what they said about me," said Samia.

Contacted, Kapasia's Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Ismat Ara informed this correspondent that she visited the spot on the day of the incident, and took statements of the victim, spoke to eyewitnesses and ordered the father of the attacker to report to her office. "When I realised they won't come, I handed the case to Kapasia Police Station," she said.

Samia's father filed a case at Kapasia Police Station accusing four -- Asif, Hridoy, Rajib, and Akash -- under the Women and Children Repression

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Army chief set to leave for Myanmar today

BSS, *Dhaka*

Chief of Army Staff Gen Aziz Ahmed will leave for Myanmar today on a four-day official visit.

He will meet with deputy chief of Myanmar armed forces and its army chief Vice-Senior General Soe Win, said an ISPR release.

The two army chiefs will discuss strengthening the relations between the two forces, exchanging training, goodwill visits, increasing mutual cooperation and repatriation of forcibly displaced Myanmar citizens from Bangladesh, it said.

During the visit, Gen Aziz will visit different military and civil installations in Myanmar. He is expected to return home on December 11.

BNP to stage countrywide demo today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP yesterday announced to stage demonstrations across the country today, demanding immediate release of party leader Khaleda Zia from jail.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir announced the programme at the party's Nayapaltan central office.

On Thursday, the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court deferred till December 12 the hearing on Khaleda Zia's bail petition in Zia Charitable Trust graft case, as a medical board formed by BSMMU for her treatment could not submit a report on her health before it as per a previous HC directive.

Referring to the deferment, Fakhrul at the press conference said the government has staged a heinous drama over the bail petition of Khaleda Zia.

Ousting Outsider from SM Hall

Two groups clash at DU; one injured

DU CORRESPONDENT

Two factions of Dhaka University's Salimullah Muslim hall union yesterday clashed over evicting an outsider from the hall, leaving the outsider injured.

Witnesses said a group of resident students of the dorm led by its hall union general secretary Zulias Cizar conducted a drive to oust outsiders and non-students.

At the time, students found one Shujan at room-152, who was allegedly staying at the room under the "shelter" of hall union's social service secretary Milon Hossain Khan.

Agitated students beat up Shujan, and dragged his mattress and belongings out of the room, said witnesses.

Hearing this, Milon and some activists of hall unit BCL, chased the students with iron rods and sticks, triggering a clash between two groups.

Hall union vice president Kamal Uddin and hall unit BCL president Tahsan Ahmed Rasel later pacified the situation.

Cizar told this newspaper Milon was staying alone at a room that can house eight students, and Shujan was paying rent to Milon to stay there.

Milon could not be reached over phone for comments.

Asked, house tutor of the dorm Shabbir Ahmed said they would take action after investigating the incident.

'Resilience must be central to dev'

Buet professor tells conference

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Natural disasters are increasing in the country due to climate change, so resilience needs to be at the centre of all types of development at the present time, said a Buet professor yesterday.

Prof Farida Nilufar of architecture made the recommendation while speaking on the second day of the three-day Urban Thinkers Campus conference at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet).

Presenting a keynote on "Urban Design and Landscape", she said, "The earth's temperature is steadily rising, impacting the world's people, wildlife and natural ecosystems; so urban design and landscape approaches need to be aligned to resiliency while developing different types of open spaces," she said.

She also stressed on excavating waterbodies, and enhancing drainage and greenery in urban and rural areas.

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TIB says waiving VAT on imported coal 'suicidal'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Transparency International Bangladesh yesterday termed the government's decision to waive 10 percent VAT on imported coal for coal fired power plant as "imprudent".

In a statement, TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman called upon the government to withdraw this "suicidal" decision.

"The government is saying that the decision is aimed at reducing production cost of electricity. But we are doubtful of whether the benefits will reach the common people," said the statement.

Iftekharuzzaman said the government had earlier given such scope for furnace oil-based power plants. In reality, private stakeholders of those power plants pocketed the opportunities.

"The government is creating a suicidal dependence on coal-based power plants, arguing that they would make power affordable. The latest decision is just a continuation of said dependence," said Iftekharuzzaman.

He said such decision is in violation of the government's national pledge and sustainable development goals, and contradictory to the Paris agreement.

"We know that the government made a pledge to increase production of renewable energy to 10 percent by 2020, but they have so far achieved only four percent at present," said the TIB executive director.

Accidents kill eight

STAR REPORT

At least eight people were killed and 16 injured in accidents in three districts during the last two days, our correspondents and a news agency report.

In Jhenidah, two people were killed on the spot and four injured after a truck hit a rickshaw-van in Pirojpur Bus Stand area yesterday night.

The deceased are Aslam Hossain (40) and Tuhin Hossain (24). The injured were sent to Jashore General Hospital, said police and eyewitnesses.

On information, police reached the spot, recovered the bodies and sent those to Jhenidah Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy.

In Munshiganj, a man was killed and five were injured after a head-on collision between two launches in Meghna river early yesterday. The deceased is Humayun Ahmed, said police.

The Chandpur-bound launch "Bogdadia-13" collided with Dhaka-bound "Manik-4" at the estuary of Meghna and Dhaleshwari rivers around 2am, said Inspector Mostafizur Rahman of Bandar Kalagasia police camp.

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PHOTO: COLLECTED

Ten trained dogs arrived from India through Benapole border yesterday, as a gift from the neighbouring country's army. These dogs, that can detect drugs or criminals, are first of the 30 that will be given to Bangladesh Army.

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