

Stage centre of drama

Mahanagar Natya Mancha, the city's first purpose-built theatre auditorium, remains devoid of any theatre productions because of mismanagement and bad design.

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka City Corporation has failed to achieve its aim of patronizing stage drama in the city because of the inappropriate design of the first purpose-built *natya mancha* (theatre stage) and the lack of security around it.

Costing 6.35 crore taka, the Mahanagar Natya Mancha was constructed to meet the demand of the Bangladesh Group Theatre for an air-conditioned auditorium suited to stage drama. Taking up a 54,962 square metre area within Gulistan Park, it was opened on 8th May 1999.

However, for unknown rea-

sons, the DCC did not consult with the Group Theatre Federation regarding the design of the auditorium.

"We don't know why, but at the time of design the government engineers did not consult with us, and now the auditorium is useless for performing stage drama," said Liaquat Ali Lucky, Secretary General of the Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation.

The group theatre activists complain that the auditorium has no proper sound system, the lighting controls are set at the side of the stage instead of at the front, and the height of the stage is not suitable to perform stage drama.

The security problem has also

become a matter of concern for Dhaka City Corporation and the theatre activists. "As there is no distinctive boundary for the Natya Mancha, people think it is part of Gulistan Park," said Md. Abdul Alim, in-charge of Mahanagar Natya Mancha. As a result homeless people who use the park at night also sleep on the auditorium's premises.

The auditorium is at present used for political meetings, conventions, seminars and workshops of government and non-government organizations during the morning session and cultural programs in the evening session. There have been complaints that some of the cultural programs are



Homeless people sleeping at the main entrance of Mahanagar Natya Mancha in Gulistan.

catering to vulgar tastes.

Dhaka City Corporation is currently earning two lac taka per month from the rent of the auditorium. Private organizations pay 10,000 taka per eight hours use of the auditorium; for government and semi government organiza-

tions the rent is 6,000 taka for eight hours; and for the Group Theatre Federation the rent is 2,500 taka.

These rental rates are reasonable compared to Mahila Shamitya and Guide House. But Group Theatre's performances have

been limited to these two halls due to the unsuitability of the auditorium and lack of security at Mahanagar.

"We need *natya mancha* in the city to spread the theatre movement. The Mahanagar Natya Mancha is the only official recog-

inition of our theatre movement, but ironically this is used for other purposes," said Liaquat Ali Lucky.

The irresponsibility of the government officials in managing public funds has created a "tragedy of error" for the Group Theatre Federation and the city's people

who have been deprived of their entertainment rights.

"If the group theatre come up with written suggestion for renovation of the auditorium we would certainly look into the matter", said Mayor Sadeq Hossain Khoka.

Free mixing frowned upon

The co-mingling of DU students is being strongly criticised from some quarters



Male and female students breaking past social barriers at D.U. campus.

SHIMU RANI DAS

The students of Dhaka University are a privileged bunch, privileged in the sense that they can mingle together within a healthy atmosphere irrespective of their gender.

Here, at the country's leading educational institute, young men and women are accustomed to feeling comfortable with relations between the two sexes which is such a taboo subject in many other co-education centres.

However, this wasn't the case even three or four decades ago. It is said that there was clear discrimination between male and female students with the latter even told to enter classes only after the teacher had gone in. Mixing freely with a classmate of the opposite sex or gossiping together were seen as social crimes.

Although the concept of male-female relationships have gone through a revolutionary change over the years, there are forces within the university's establishment who still look for ways to curb the sense of freedom and the bond of friendship the students develop on the campus.

A couple of years ago, a team led by the proctor attempted a crackdown on alleged 'indecent' behavior in the university campus. They banned male and female students sitting together and tried to discourage any interaction outside the classrooms. Innocent couples were caught unawares by the proctorial team and there were many instances of

harassment.

This controversial step to upset perfectly natural behavior only led to resentment among the students. Following protests by the student body, the authorities were forced to abandon their conservative ideas.

"For its image of freeness, the university is a popular destination for people in love. You can not deny the urge of youth and it is inevitable that some students would get romantically involved. It's true that a few do go overboard in public and cross the line of decency when expressing their affection but those are exceptions," says Nobina of the Department of Botany.

Rashed of Marketing believes that it is absurd to even think of separating the boys and the girls.

"We study in groups, do assignments together and enjoy wonderful friendships. Even if you consider it strictly from an academic point of view, free mixing is vital."

Sirajul Islam Khan, a retired professor of the Department of Psychology feels that denying the right to express their emotions can only have a negative impact on the young people.

"Free mixing of students at universities is very natural. If we create a barrier here, the result will be a harmful one. But students should be aware or made aware of their responsibilities too. They should not indulge themselves in behavior which may create unpleasant situations."

Budget blues

SABRINA KARIM MURSHED

While the economists or policy makers of the country are pondering over the budget at Jatiya Sangsad (JS), the common mass are found to be unaware about it.

Most of the people this correspondent spoke to, expressed their apathy regarding the coming up budget. They never follow the budget session at JS, they said. "I have better things to do rather than following all such things, said Abu Saleh Siddiqui, a student of Dhaka College. "But of course I experience the consequences following it," he added.

"Budget or no budget, life remains same for us," said Kamal Haider, an egg seller at

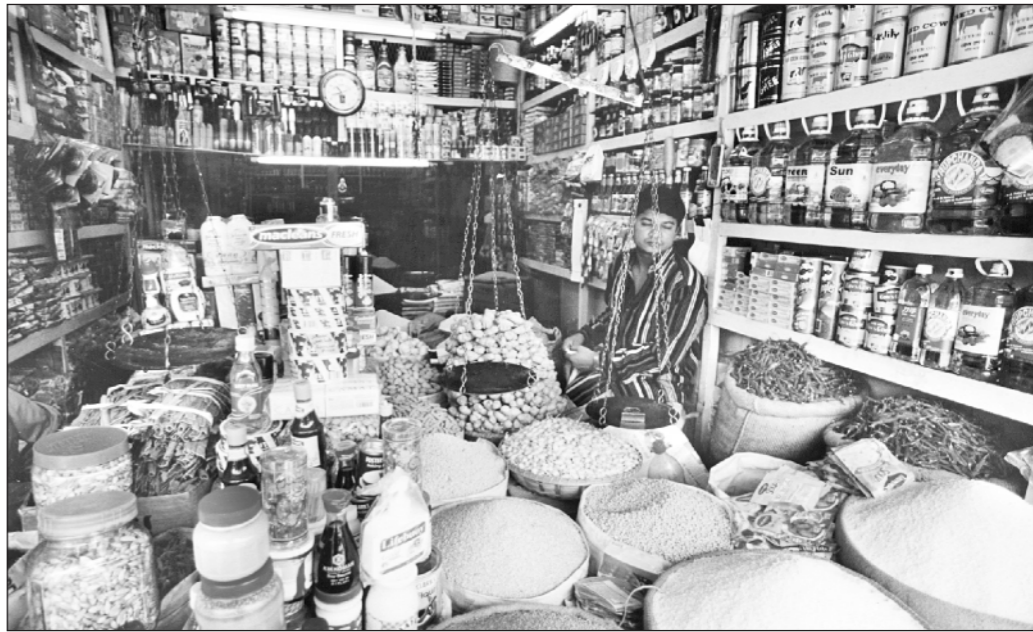
Mohammedpur. "The poor in the country have to suffer and there is no way out of it," he added.

For some people, the national budget means nothing but price hikes. They believe this to be inevitable. "The price of necessary goods will never cease to increase," noted Munira Hasan, a teacher of Siddheswari Girls' College. "We are doomed to meet new taxes or increased price of things after every national budget," she grumbled.

People like Humayun Kabir who runs a furnishing fabric store at Elephant Road spend less time thinking about the budget since it hardly affects his business. "These are luxury items and bought on people's personal preference," said Kabir. "Those who opt for foreign materials for curtains are financially solvent

enough to afford it even if the price is increased," he clarified.

However, it is the grocery shop owners who are found to be aware of the upcoming budget session. "We need to be cautious since we cannot ask increase prices for our customers all of a sudden," said Mohammed Gaib of Kamal Hossain Department Store at Government Market (Town Hall) in Mohammedpur. "There was an increase in the price of rice and pulse after the last budget and customers began to grumble with us," he noted. "We try to stock up goods beforehand because of a possibility of price hike," he added. This enables the sellers to offer those goods to people at previous prices for sometime after the budget, Galib explained.



Grocery shop owners are the most aware about budget matters.

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UTILITY

Electricity
Electricity Complex- PDB- 9566061-5, 9560170-9
Electricity Complex (DESA)-
8616737-43, 8617626
DESCO- 8123138-40
Complaints (Rural Electrification Board, Dhaka)- 8916424-8

Gas
Titas Gas Exchange (Emergency)- 9563667-8
Kawrnabazar-8112135-42
Mirpur- 8014132-3
Mohammadpur- 9117215,9113903
Mohakhali- 9884741, 9885922, 8824993
Motijheel-9667612

WASA
WASA (PABX)- 8117829-31
Mirpur- 9000519
Mohammadpur- 8120192
Fakirapool-9115343
Asad Gate- 8917492
Uttara- 9559142,
Segunbagicha- 7316348

OUTING

Pagla- 8113900-39
Fire Services
Siddique Bazar (HQ)- 9556667
Mohammadpur- 9112078
Khilgaon- 7218329
Mirpur- 9001055
Tongi- 9801070
Demra-7400111
Postagola- 7410771
Sadarghat- 7119759
Mirpur 10 Circle- 9002269, 9001055
Mirpur TVG Complex- 9001189

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999 is the helpline in Dhaka just in case you

MUSEUM AND ZOO

National Museum- 8619396-9
Open: 10 am 5 pm, Friday 3 pm- 8 pm, Thursday closed
Muktijuddha Jadughar- 9559091
Open: 10:30 am 6:30 pm, Sunday closed
Bangabandhu Smiti Jadughar- 8110046
Open: 10 am 5 pm, Wednesday closed
Ahsan Manzil
Open: 10 am 5 pm, Friday: 3 pm - 7 pm, Thursday Closed
Shishu Jadughar- 9666466
Open: 10 am- 6 pm, Sunday Closed
Sonargoan Jadugha

COURIER SERVICE

International
Air Borne Express- 9561371, 9561372, 9550724
Air Couriers Int'l (BD) Ltd.-8815970
Aramex International Courier- 9558003, 9559582, 9565075
Airspeed Express- 9563494
Asian Courier Services Ltd.- 8313543
Baishakhi Courier Service- 9558606
Bangladesh Express Co. Ltd.- 9565114
Bangladesh Courier Service- 9563989
Bengal Express- 9560642, 9552666
Bangladesh Int'l Courier- 953636
Continental Service Ltd.- 9552948, 9558425
DHL Worldwide Express- 9881703-7, 9886305-9, 9882057
Enem Express- 9330699
Fedex Bangladesh Express Co. Ltd- 9565114

LIBRARY & INFO

Libraries, Cultural and Information Centers
Central Public Library- 8626001-4, Shishu Academy- 9564128
Shilpakala Academy- 8614673
Bangla Academy- 8619550
Islamic Foundation- 9550280, 9556407
Nazrul Institute- 9114602
Ford Foundation- 8116133
Alliance Francaise- 8611557
British Council- 8618867-8, 8618905-7
Community Development Library- 8113769, 8113604
Goethe Institute Int'l- Dhaka- 9126525-6
Indian Information Centre & Cultural Library- 8615096
The Russian Cultural Centre- 9116314, 9118531, 9118314
Drik Photo Gallery- 9120125, 8112954, 8123412

CITY BUS ROUTE

Bus No.	Route	Starts from
1	Gulistan-Shahabagh-Banglamotor-Farmgate-Mirpur 10, 11, 12	Golap Shah Mazar
2	Gulistan-Shahabagh-Banglamotor-Farmgate-Mirpur 1, 2	Phoolbaria bus station
3	Gulistan-Shahabagh-Farmgate-Mahakhali-Airport-Azampur	Phoolbaria bus station
4	Shyampur-Motijheel-Shahabagh-Farmgate-Airport-Tongi	Shyampur
5	Sayedabad-Kamalapur-Motijheel-Airport-Joydebpur-Gazipur	Sayedabad
6 A	Kamalapur-Motijheel-Gulistan-Shahabagh-Farmgate-Gulistan 1, 2	Kamalapur
6 B	Kamalapur-Motijheel-Gulistan-Maghbazar-Nabisco-Gulshan 1, 2	Kamalapur
6 C	Motijheel Shapla chattar- Mailbagh- Farmgate- Gulshan 2	Motijheel Shaplachattar
7	Sadarghat-Gulistan-Maghbazar-Nabisco-Gulshan 2	Sadarghat
8	Chittagong-Motijheel-Shahabagh-Farmgate-Asad Gate-Kalyanpur-Gabtol	Chittagong Road
9	Demra Rani mahal-Motijheel-Kalbagan-Shyamoli-Mirpur 1, 10, 11, 12	Demra Ranimahar
10	Sadarghat-Gulistan-Kakrail-Mailbagh-Rampura-Biwa Road-Tongi Bridge	Sadarghat
11	Sayedabad-Motijheel-Fakirapool-Maghbazar-Mohakhali-Tongi Bridge	Sayedabad
11/A	Sayedabad-Khilgaon-Mailbagh-Rampura-Airport-Tongi Bridge	Sayedabad
12	Shanir Akhra-Shahabagh-Farmgate-Asadgate-Mohammadpur	Shanir Akhra
13	Motijheel-Shahabagh-New Market-Jigatola-Shangkar-Mohammadpur	Motijheel
14	Signboard -Motijheel-Shahabagh-New Market-Shyamoli-Mirpur 1, 12	Signboard (Chittagong Road)
15	Chittagong Road-Motijheel-Shahabagh-Farmgate-Mirpur 12	Chittagong Road
24	Gulistan-Maghbazar-Mohakhali-Airport-Uttara-Bipile	Gulistan