

CU Arts Faculty bldg on verge of collapse

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ATAUL GANI SUMON

The students of the Arts Faculty of the Chittagong University may meet the fate of those perished in the "Jagannath hall tragedy" at any moment.

Established in 1966 the Arts faculty is the oldest building of the university. It is now on the verge of collapse as the authorities had not repaired the four-storied building in decades. The building has become a matter of grave concern for

lone centre for academic activities of the students of the three faculties till six months ago. It provided room for 9000 students of the faculties.

After construction of the commerce and social science faculty buildings, the burden on the Arts Faculty has reduced.

Though constructed in eye-catching design, the Arts Faculty building is now losing its beauty. Due to negligence of the authorities for decades the walls and the floors

The sources in the engineering department of the university said, "the construction plan was also faulty".

The sources said not only this faculty building but also several other buildings that were built during the Pakistan regime have structural faults.

"The structural design for the building was not suitable for a country like ours where there is plenty of rains," they added.

The rooftop of the building does

building.

In rainy season, sufferings of the students of the faculty go beyond description as the water leaks through the roof of the building.

The toilet facilities and sanitation system are in a very bad condition. Both the male and female students suffer a lot due to shortage of toilets. Moreover, most of the toilets always remain unusable. The students cannot enter the toilets for stench.

With the conservancy cost increasing, the toilets of the university are also becoming dirtier.

The expenditure for conservancy has reached above Tk 5 lakh now as against only Tk 2.61 lakh in 1997-98.

Most of the toilets of the arts faculty were unusable for stench. The toilets always remain damp and flooded with dirty water. The condition of the toilets for female student is also the same. Though the expenditure is increasing day by day the services in this sector are deteriorating.

But the authorities have no headache despite being informed of the problems repeatedly. Irregular water supply very often puts the students in trouble.

The windowpanes of most of the rooms of the faculty are broken. The hooks of many doors do not work. So the teachers have to take classes keeping the doors open that causes disturbance with the sounds coming from the corridor.

Rainwater comes through the broken windowpanes to drench the students in the classrooms. The condition of the furniture is also very wretched. Many of the classrooms do not have adequate number of desks or benches for the students to sit. Sometimes, the teachers face trouble while giving lectures as there is no dais in the classrooms. Many of the lights and fans remain out of order. The switchboards in the classrooms have become dangerous for want of repair. The students have to take their lesson in the heated rooms in absence of the fans.

Sometimes snakes enter the classrooms.

The previous administration made an effort to construct a new Arts faculty building. The administration decided to renovate the building as they failed to select

land for the structure.

It would cost only Tk 2 crore to repair the building including plastering, lime wash, renovation of electric lines, the toilets and the furniture.



PHOTO: ZOBAER HOSSAIN SIKDER

Chittagong University Arts faculty building

thousands of students of different departments of the faculty.

The students of the faculty also face problems of toilet, water, electricity, and furniture in the classrooms. The teachers' room has no adequate furniture for long while plasters falling from the walls and ceiling are a risk.

Arts Faculty building was the

of the building have become soggy.

Sources said, the university authorities made several requests for monetary help from the government for its repair and renovation, in vain. And since the building has been left in a floor condition.

Besides, the construction flaws are also blamed for the present wretched condition of the building.

not have good arrangement for draining out rain water which get stuck for hours as the sanitary pipes are too narrow, they said.

There are about 5000 students of the ten departments of the faculty who attend classes in the dilapidated building at great risk on life. Cracks have developed in many parts of the ceiling and walls of the



PHOTO: STAR

Worn-out roof of the faculty building



PHOTO: STAR

Hawkers capture the footpaths at Chittagong New Market area.

Vendors occupy city roads

NURUL ALAM

Thousands of vendors illegally have taken control of roads, lanes and sidewalks at different places of the city and its surrounding areas.

The vendors sell vegetables, fish, other essential commodities and products on busy roads or footpaths which draw huge customers, witnesses said.

Consequently, traffic movement is frequently hindered at those points of the city as they occupy large portion of the roads.

Even the footpaths in most of the city areas are under their illegal occupation causing untold sufferings to the passers-by who have to face immense difficulties to walk on foot.

Such a scenario on the city roads and sidewalks triggered a chaotic situation in addition to traffic jams, witnesses said. According to police, there are over 7,000 vendors

engaged in such practice in the city.

Police evicted some vendors from the roads and footpaths recently. The vendors protested against the drive and tried to draw sympathy of local politicians, sources said. Even those evicted vendors threatened to launch movement in the city in a bid to stage their comeback on the city roads and footpaths.

Some local politicians helped their agitation. Later, those evicted vendors started coming back to their previous locations gradually reportedly in connivance with some patrol police and extortionists, sources said.

The patrol police earlier reportedly collected huge tolls by allowing the vendors to do business on the roads and sidewalks. But police officials denied the charge.

The eviction drive was actually conducted at different point in the city at the instruction of higher

authorities of Chittagong Metropolitan Police, sources said. But the evicted vendors reportedly having clandestine links with local thana and patrol police force are making frantic bids to reoccupy the lost positions on the roads and footpaths.

On the other hand, some of the evicted vendors have returned to lanes and by-lanes to run their trade, witnesses said.

CMP commissioner Shahidullah Khan said, "we have evicted the vendors from most of the places in the city to clear the roads and footpaths and we have advised them to sit at the open square of CRB area and pologround premises for three days in a week".

"But they are yet to follow the advice while some quarters are approaching me to consider their case on humanitarian grounds as they have many dependents to maintain," he said. "So it is really a

difficult thing to handle", he added.

Chief conservancy officer of Chittagong City Corporation (CCC), Shabuddin Katebi told this correspondent that those vendors were creating conservancy problems.

"But we can't do anything as our people were beaten by the vendors on many occasions," Katebi said. "It is duty of the police to drive the vendors out," he added. However, most of the common people prefer buying vegetables and other commodities from the vendors' markets because of cheaper price, sources said.

The sellers at the established markets of the city particularly at Kazir Dewri kutcha bazar that draws mostly the posh customers reaching there on board luxury cars and pajero, are demanding exorbitant prices against the vegetables, fish, meat and other essentials.

They now pollute Ctg city

SHAHIDUL ISLAM

The banned polluters of the capital Dhaka are surging everyday in great numbers in the port city. The environment-conscious citizens of Chittagong are beginning to worry for the future situation of this geographically exotic landscape of the country.

The government came down heavily-handedly to deal with the seriously smoke-emitting two-stroke three wheelers -- mainly auto-rickshaws and tempos -- in Dhaka city.

It accordingly, had imposed a two-phase complete ban on these polluters that already came into effect from September 1.

In fact, the environment situation in Chittagong had started getting worse much before the government's ban was imposed. Sensing an imperative prohibition against auto-rickshaws and tempos, the owners in Dhaka have begun selling out their 'outdated' and 'hazardous' vehicles to the markets of the port city. They still are reportedly making brisk businesses by selling the polluters albeit at a lower price.

According to the sources concerned, over five thousand banned auto-rickshaws and tempos were brought in Chittagong from Dhaka within a span of only three months. The polluters are being transported to the port city by railway wagons and trucks, they said.

However, the relocation of banned polluters from the capital took almost an exodus form just prior and immediately after the September 1 deadline. On an average, about 50 auto-rickshaws and tempos, more or less, are coming from Dhaka everyday in the port city. Around one thousand such banned polluters have arrived in three weeks till September 12, sources said.

These polluters have already been commuting freely alongside the Chittagonian auto-rickshaw and tempo on each and every thoroughfare of the port city, releasing thick amount of harmful black smoke and posing a threat to the sanctity to the city's air and overall environment.

Many conscious citizens while talking to this correspondent brewed their eyes with wonder as to how these banned polluters were allowed to commute on the city roads!

"Chittagong, being surrounded with natural combinations of hills, river, sea and lake, is still a beautiful place to live compare to other parts of the country, especially the capital

Dhaka. But this pride of the city is now facing a serious threat due to insensitivity and greed of a section of people as well as rise of pollution-producing commuters including banned auto-rickshaws and tempos of Dhaka," Fatema Khatun, a young housewife, from city's Kapashgola area said.

Kamrul Hasan Badal, a cultural activist who resides in Alkaran area, said, "The auto-rickshaws and tempos coming from Dhaka emit very solid amount of injurious smoke that the Chittagonian ones. Everyday we had to go through some hazardous experience here for this, he said. But the worst thing is that our school-going kids are getting sick by various pollution-borne diseases," he added.

Patrol police at different important points of the city are often seen stopping the polluters, chatting with the drivers, and looking and checking something nobody knows what! Shortly, the drivers are seen driving away with a big and wide smile.

It is learnt that some police officials have provided the drivers with tokens of different categories to run the banned polluters freely through the city roads in exchange for an amount of money.

The owners of the polluters have also been resorting to a trick to bluff the authorities or patrol police. Upon arrival of these banned vehicles from Dhaka, they, in most cases, change the model and colour completely to give those polluters to a relatively brand new look. Later, they approach the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) for the necessary permit and license, sources said.

Sources said, a total of around 30 thousand auto-rickshaws and tempos, of both legal and illegal, now ply on the roads in Chittagong city and its suburban areas. The banned polluters coming everyday from Dhaka is adding further misery to the gradually endangered environment-scenario of the scenic port city, environmentalists and experts said.

Of relevance, these polluters, seemingly in search of new routes, are springing up 'slowly but steadily' all over the district.

"The environment of Chittagong is degrading fast as the administration here is either quite negligent or keep their eyes mysteriously shut to the gravity of the future disaster," environmentalist Hasan Ferdous

told The Daily Star.

The director of Department of Environment (DOE) Mohammad Ismail said the matter of stopping the exodus of polluters from Dhaka or to control their free movement in Chittagong is primarily a matter of administrative decision and action.

He, however, said the DOE here did not receive any circular or directive from the ministry yet regarding the banned polluters of Dhaka. "We don't have any statistics or study about the number of auto-rickshaws and tempos that currently commute in Chittagong," he added.

Meanwhile, a senior police official also said "we too are yet to receive any such circular from the ministry concerned. Once the circular is issued, we surely would go into action," he said.

State Minister for Environment and Forests Jafrul Islam Chowdhury at a meeting with the members of Chittagong Press Club back in July assured the journalists of imposing a ban on the two-stroke auto-rickshaws and tempos soon in Chittagong, too.

But, the people of the port city are yet to see a government decision in this regard.



PHOTO: STAR

A two-stroke three-wheeler carried by rail wagon from Dhaka is being unloaded at Chittagong Railway Station.