

Shilpakala makes drama manuscripts mandatory

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The Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation protested the mandatory rule of submitting manuscripts to book the new experimental hall of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy.

The Group Theatre activists said the government re-imposed the Dramatic Performance Control Act of 1876, which had been scrapped in 2000 after a movement of all theatre activists.

"We have introduced the submission of manuscripts to see that no-one says anything against our nation, religion and Liberation War," said Ahmad Nazir, director general of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy.

But the activists have different views.

"During the British period manuscripts were submitted to the police station before a performance and we succeeded in withdrawing the act, but now we have to submit it to

Shilpakala instead," Liaquat Ali Lucky, general secretary of Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation.

"If a writer has to submit his manuscript to the government, he will have to conform to the wishes of the authorities. How could he then come up with originality?" Lucky asked. "The situation would be the same with poets as well," he said.

The theatre activists believe the government will have the authority to ban a play, book or music if they think it is violating the constitution. This act has blocked 'freedom of expression'. It is a pity that an elected government is behaving autocratically.

The experimental theatre hall was opened on December 3, 2003. But authorities waited for almost five months to prepare new mandatory regulations to make a booking, which included the submission of the manuscript in advance. It was finally opened for performances on April 25.

The hall will highlight

performances of dramas, recitation, dance drama, musicals, mime, training and workshops. The rent is fixed at Tk 4,000 per show, which includes modern lighting and sound systems.

The concept of the mandatory submission of manuscripts, it by itself a farce.

"The hall made to experiment performances of different forms of drama and art may not be possible under the new regulations, if government feels that words and text are satirical and against the government," a group theatre activist said.

Many believe that the regulation has implemented to protect government from criticism.

Meantime, the Group Theatre activists met the director general of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy and submitted a proposal to revise and remove the controversial regulation.

"The theatre activists just submitted their proposal and we in turn, will submit it to the ministry," the DG said.



The new experimental theatre hall at the Shilpakala Academy.

city express

The latest crop of quotes from the city's press -- words worth repeating, we feel, for their humour, insight or sheer outrageousness. Star City does not necessarily support the opinions

"Stern steps have been taken after sensing the conspiracy. The government will take tougher stand if necessary."

-- Khaleda Zia

Prime Minister and BNP chairperson

Tells BNP parliamentary party meeting alleging opposition conspiracy to dislodge the government by disrupting law and order and explaining the reason behind mass arrests, on April 25. Source: Prothom Alo

"You may call it a failure of the deadline, but not the movement."

-- Sheikh Hasina

Leader of the opposition and AL president

Tells press hours before expiry of her party's "deadline" to oust the government, on April 30. Source: The Bangladesh Observer

"Abdul Jalil and his leader Sheikh Hasina should apologise to the nation."

-- Abdul Mannan

Bhuiyan

BNP Secretary General

Tells press alleging that Awami League's April 30 "deadline" for toppling the government disrupted people's life and misled AL activists, on April 30. Source: The Daily Star

"The government could not be dislodged by April 30 as the plan went into reverse."

-- Abdul Jalil

AL General Secretary

Tells the Prothom Alo while explaining his party's position on the April 30 deadline, on April 29

"Donors have praised economic progress but criticised law and order downside and corruption."

-- M. Saifur Rahman

Finance Minister

Tells press on his return from a meeting with the World Bank top officials, on April 26. Source: Prothom Alo

Chhayanaut Bhaban awaits fresh plan

CITY CORRESPONDENT

The construction of Chhayanaut Sangskritik Bhaban, which stopped following a Rajuk notice in September 2002 after a deviation in the original design was detected, may restart in the "foreseeable future".

"We have submitted a revised plan to Rajuk which is awaiting approval," said Chhayanaut President Sanjida Khatun.

However, when asked about the revised plan, LT Foyez, Member Development of Rajuk responsible for the planning of Dhanmondi expressed his ignorance.

"I was not in this office when Chhayanaut was given the notice and I don't know anything about the revised plan. If they come with a fresh design, I will certainly look into it."

The housing and public works ministry in 2001 allotted a one-bigha land on Dhanmondi Road 26 (old) to Chhayanaut on a 99 years lease at Tk 1,001 for Sangskritik Bhaban.

Rajuk approved the architectural plan of the building, prepared by Bashirul Haq, in May 2002. However in September



Construction work of Chhayanaut Bhaban remains suspended for not following Rajuk code.

that year, Rajuk issued a notice telling Chhayanaut to suspend construction work for not maintaining Rajuk's code in the plan.

The land for Chhayanaut Bhaban was allotted inside a residential area. Under the residential area code, individual entrance and exit ways for a

building is not allowed but Bashirul Haq's plan kept separate provisions. "Though the land was allotted at only Tk. 1,001 Chhayanaut

had to spend Tk. 20 lakh just to get the permission for a commercial structure. We had already dispensed with another 20 lakh in the construction before Rajuk stopped the work," said Sanjida.

The estimated cost of the six storied cultural centre is Tk 4 crore 20 lakh. Chhayanaut is expecting to cover the cost from donation once work resumes.

"We have started with our own funds which amounts to Tk. one crore. We managed to save that money from fees paid by students," the president said.

The organisation has also received great response from the masses. More than Tk 1 crore has already been collected from people living at home and abroad.

"Our artists contribute through various programs. The theatre and recital groups give from their appearance money. Individuals send cheques. People are contributing in whatever way they can. Even a peon of a government office gave Tk 100 for the Bhaban," Sanjida said.

Chhayanaut has also marketed a 60-minute cassette consisting of the recitation of Golam Mustafa and songs of

Nilufar Yasmin at Tk 60.

"This was the last performances by Golam Mustafa and Nilufar Yasmin for the Bhaban's trust fund before their death," Sanjida said.

The fund collection has been hampered due to the Rajuk notice and the delay in approval of the revised plan.

When completed, the building will have an auditorium for cultural programmes, classrooms and a recording studio.

Chhayanaut was established in 1961. In the beginning, it participated in traditional Bangla festivals and occasions like Basanta Utsab, Pahela Baishakh, Rabindra and Nazrul Jayanti and Srotar Ashor.

The Chhayanaut school came into being in 1963 and till date has presented some 40,000 graduates. After independence, Chhayanaut's classes were held at the University Laboratory School and when students increased, it rented the Kalabagan Girls' School in Lake Circus.

"We have been taking classes in makeshift arrangement for more than 40 years. We desperately need a building of our own," Sanjida said.

FAX-PHONE SHOPS YET TO CHANGE RATES



The new reduced rates for Nationwide Dialling (NWD) and International Subscribers' Dialling (ISD) became effective May 1. Yesterday, (from left) clients were seen making calls from BTTB office at reduced rates. But, when visited, most of the fax-phone shops were still found to be charging the previous rates.