

Liberation War Museum needs more space to display mementos

The Liberation War Museum exhibits valuable documents on the war of independence that attract lots of local visitors and foreigners alike (bottom). Newspaper clippings, which were published just before the war, are also exhibited (top left), along with photographs taken during the war. A picture shows General Niazi signing the document of surrender in the presence of General Arora, on 16 December 1971, the day on which the eastern command of the Pakistani Army surrendered to the joint alliance forces of Bangladesh and India at the Dhaka Racecourse, now known as Suhrawardy Uddyan (centre). Skulls of martyred freedom fighters and intellectuals, dug out of various battle fields across the country during the last 33 years, are also preserved and exhibited in the museum (right).

FAIZUL KHANTANIM

The only Liberation War museum in the country has recently collected many authentic and interesting artifacts and documents related to the Liberation War of 1971 but cannot display them properly due to insufficient space.

The museum opened in 1996 in a rented two-storeyed building in the city's Segunbagicha area has been displaying the historic documents of the nation's heroic struggle to the visitors, especially the younger generation.

Many historic documents and objects are now kept in a storeroom on the roof of the building due to lack of space.

The trustee board which runs the museum is now planning to shift to other place. Tariq Ali, a trustee board member, told Star City that they are looking for a suitable place with enough space for displaying all the things.

The museum recently acquired objects having both war values and national importance. "But it is the lack of space which prevents us from displaying them," explained Amena Khatun, documentation and display officer of the museum.

"We have plenty of objects—documents, pictures, books, exclusive footage in video tape and CD. These were collected mostly from individuals who donated their prized posses-

sions instead of showcasing them in their private drawing rooms," said Dr Sarwar Ali, trustee and member secretary of the museum.

A few interesting objects added to the collection of the museum in the past one year are awaiting for display. These include an *Ishtehar*, the declaration of the interim Mujibnagar Government, which was formed on April 17, 1971. The museum has collected a sword, which was used by Biharis in killing Bangalees at Mirpur.

Another collection is a *Dotara*, a stringed musical instrument used by Ayan Hoque who was martyred by the Pakistani occupation army on November 1, 1971. The village poet used to sing inspirational songs for the freedom fighters.

There are some photographs by Ustad Sirajul Islam Chowdhury who played a valiant role in the war saving many Bengali women from the torture of Pakistan Army. Other photographs were collected from Barrister Jatindra Mohon Sengupta and Neli Sengupta.

Another addition is a *one-paisa* coin, donated the son of Md Liakat Ali Miah of Muradabad village of Jamalpur district. Once the occupation army forcibly took Liakat to their camp and bought milk from him with two *one-paisa* coin. At the camp, Liakat saw a dreadful scene of tortured Bengali women lying on the floor.



SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

East-west link tunnel project proposed

CITY CORRESPONDENT

A kilometre long tunnel, the first of its kind, proposed to be constructed from Shaheed Jahangir gate up to Agargaon road intersection to ease the traffic congestion from Mohakhali and along Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue in front of the prime minister's office. The work on the tunnel is expected to begin in March 2005, said press release from the information department.

This two-year long project is expected to facilitate a smooth flow of traffic linking the east and west of

the city. Vehicles plying through Mohakhali by road and flyover, with destinations at Mirpur, Agargaon, Shyamoli, will not have to wait on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue and cause traffic congestion.

Experts said that a feasibility study on the proposed tunnel must be carried out prior to any firm decisions made.

But a Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) official told the Star City that such studies, if at all carried out, should be given to Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) and Dhaka University (DU) urban planning department teachers to get expert opinions on such projects. Authorities acquire these studies on an adhoc basis from foreign companies, that know nothing about our street situation, he said. "Expert opinions on the proposed tunnel must be sought from these two institutions to avoid making mistakes," he added.

Experts from urban planning departments of BUET or DU could not comment on how far congestion that would be eased, as they have not

been asked to make a feasibility study on the project.

Commenting on this issue, Dr KM Maniruzzaman, head of BUET's urban and regional planning department, told the Star City: "Proper planning should follow a feasibility study before any big project is implemented. We sensed that building a flyover would not ease the traffic problem, as there is no alternate lane to accommodate vehicle movement as they descend the flyover".

When asked why the department did not warn the authorities of the problem ahead, he said: "To carry out such feasibility studies properly a lot of funds are required. The authorities must take the initiative to assign us with the projects". Maniruzzaman however mentioned that this tunnel is expected to ease the pressure on the traffic bottlenecks.

Another part-time lecturer of the same institution, Khondaker M Ansul Huda told the Star City that, DTCB continues to remain and will take responsibility in implementing new projects. This is still a proposal and no decision on which body will implement the project has been taken. It maybe the DCC, Rajuk or any project under the DTCB, but this will be decided after a DTCB board meeting. Thus the cost of this project has not been estimated as well, he said.

"The flyover should have been built in a way that bottlenecks at certain junctions can be avoided. The Khilgaon flyover project with several layers addresses such congestions," said Ansul Hossain.

Professor Nazrul Islam, from DU's

department of Geography and Environment emphasised on the link between the east and west of the city. "As the cantonment stands in the centre, an underground road could be a good link without intruding the privacy of the cantonment. If this is a recommended project of Dhaka Urban Transport Project (DUTP), it will most likely solve the current problem," he said.

The press release of December 4 further stated the project will be undertaken by DUTP under Dhaka Transport Coordination Board (DTCB) and will be governed by the ministry of communications.

A top official from DTCB, when contacted, said: "The DUTP under DTCB will end by December 2004 and until the project is renewed, DTCB cannot implement any new ones. The DCC however will be the implementing body."

But Communications Minister Ansul Huda told the Star City that, DTCB continues to remain and will take responsibility in implementing new projects. This is still a proposal and no decision on which body will implement the project has been taken. It maybe the DCC, Rajuk or any project under the DTCB, but this will be decided after a DTCB board meeting. Thus the cost of this project has not been estimated as well, he said.

"Since the prime minister herself has emphasised on the project, it will be given priority and we will get it started as soon as possible," the minister added.

Students face a tall order

SYED TASHFIN CHOWDHURY

A large number of schools in the city have already announced their admission test dates. The tests will be completed over the next week or two which promises to make life very difficult for the majority of students and guardians.

In recent years, most English and Bangla medium private schools have been following a trend of arranging admission tests a month or a couple of weeks ahead of the final term examinations.

Parents pointed out that under the circumstances, it is usual for student to fare badly in both the exams. As a result, they stand to lose on both fronts as they may fail to get admitted in their school of choice or worse still, may not gain promotion to the next class.

"A student seeking admission in any renowned school is under a lot of pressure since he needs to study for both the admission test and the final examinations," said a concerned guardian.

In such situations, wealthy parents pay whatever the school authorities seek as 'donation' to get their sons and daughters admitted.

"Middle class parents are the sufferers as financial constraint often leaves them helpless even if the child has done well in the admission test," said Shahanara Haque, a parent from Kalabagan.

The school authorities turn a deaf ear to the pleas of students and guardians.

"We have to follow this routine as the

school authorities try to give teachers and staff a complete vacation after the final exams," said the vice-principal of a renowned English medium school in Banani.

Some other principals and vice-principals also echoed the same sentiment. But some teachers do not agree.

"Schools have been continuing with such a procedure so that they can be sure of the optimum number of students for the upcoming year," said a teacher.

But this tendency is preventing city-dwellers from getting their wards educated at the best institutions.

"It is clearly mentioned in our gazette that both private and public schools cannot hold admission tests before the completion of the final examination," said ANM Ehsanul Huq Milon, state minister for education.

"We would take strict disciplinary measures against schools that are going against this policy," said Milon.

Surprisingly most school authorities are unaware of this rule mentioned in the gazette.

"Most schools cannot abide by this law since the school has to ensure students up to its capacity for the next academic year," said a teacher of an English medium school in Gulshan.

She also mentioned the staff and teachers are discontented if this routine is not maintained which leaves the school authority does not want.

