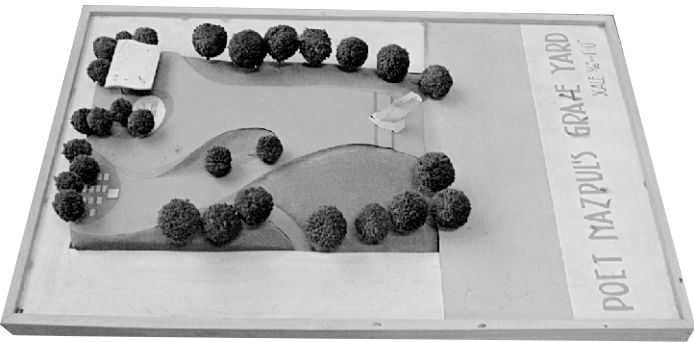


Will Nazrul Complex project materialise?



KAUSAR ISLAM AYON

The planned Nazrul Complex project on the Dhaka University (DU) campus is unlikely to see light due to non-availability of funds, according to officials of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs.

"The file on the project has remained shelved for the last three years and nowadays no one talks about it anymore. So you can easily understand that there is little prospect of fund allocation for this project," said an official.

Six years ago the then Awami League government took the initiative to construct the complex beside the graveyard of National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam. Under the plan, the complex would have a museum, a library and a research centre on the works of Kazi Nazrul Islam.

Former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina laid the foundation stone of the complex on May 25, 1999 at the graveyard compound beside the Dhaka University Central Mosque.

The authorities concerned had approved architect Mazharul Islam's design of the complex and estimated a budget of two crore Taka. However, there was no guideline about how the funds would be obtained.

The Dhaka University

authorities last year promised to start construction work of the Nazrul Complex from this year but so far no concrete steps have been taken towards that goal.

"Every year with the arrival of Nazrul's birth or death anniversary, the complex issue is raised. But as the day passes by, everyone forgets about it," said Rashedul Hasan, treasurer of DU.

DU tried to collect funds initially by requesting the public to donate through advertisements. But there was hardly any response.

"We were amazed at the public apathy. It is impossible to arrange the entire amount on our own," said the treasurer.

"The complex is not enlisted in the Annual Development Programme (ADP) and there has been a lack of coordination between the authorities concerned. These are the reasons why we failed to get the special allotment," Hasan added.

Sources at the ministry meanwhile, said that because of the unplanned steps taken by the university authorities, the funds could not be mobilised.

When contacted Selima Rahman, state minister for cultural affairs said that she would look into the present status of the project and take necessary action as soon as possible.



The foundation stone for the Nazrul Complex, laid six years ago beside the poet's graveyard at the DU campus (right). The proposed complex plan (left).

Desa cuts systems loss, raises bill collection

SABRINA KARIM MURSHED

Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (Desa) has witnessed an increase in its bill collection and decrease in systems loss in recent time after adopting different measures to cease power theft and modify the billing system.

The collection rose even after Desa ceased bulk sale of electricity to Rural Electrification Board (REB) and Dhaka Electric Supply Company (Desco) from January 2004, Desa Chairman Abdur Rob said.

He said Desa collected Tk 1,592 crore in one year until June 2003 that included Tk 925 crore from REB and Desco. "Only Tk 567 crore was Desa's own billing. But Desa realised Tk 562 crore in six months from July to December 2004," he said.

About Desa's success in bringing down systems loss, the Desa chairman said the number of feeders having more than 20 percent systems loss has been reduced to 144 from 164 in April. Desa has 367 feeders to supply electricity and the rest 223 feeders have zero to ten percent systems loss, he added.

Desa used to make bulk sale of power to REB and Desco who failed to make payments to Desa in time. "But Desa had to bear the brunt of the systems losses of REB and Desco," a senior official of Desa commented. He added that the government and donor agencies always blasted Desa for low collection of bills.

In January 2004 Desa stopped selling power to REB and Desco and asked them to purchase directly from Power Development Board (PDB).

Desa has been rebuked time and again for systems loss and poor realisation of electricity bills. Recently, a parliamentary body criticised Desa for losses amounting to Tk 1,576 crore in the last 10 years mainly due to irregularities and corruption.

To increase bill collection, Desa reorganised its meter reading and billing cycle. It ensured that subscribers get bills at least 15 days before the last date of payment.

Moreover, Desa intensified disconnection drive against illegal connection holders and bill defaulters from February this year. A mobile court has been set up and 17 magistrates have been engaged

in this drive.

Desa also made the metering system of "high-tension" consumers flawless to prevent theft of electricity. It also introduced, though in a small scale, "mother meter" and "child meter" in multi-storeyed apartment buildings to prevent power theft.

"Child meters or individual meters measure individual power consumption while the mother meter reads the consumption of entire building," said a high official. If there is any discrepancy in the readings, the excess amount in the total bill is equally distributed among all apartment owners, he explained.

The Desa chairman said Desa signed an agreement in last April with each of its 34 divisional offices to bring down systems loss to specific targets.

For example, Postogola division has been given a target to reduce systems loss to 17 percent. If the target is achieved, the divisional staff will get incentive bonus. Disciplinary action will be taken against them if the target is missed.

4x3

4x3

9x2

9x6