

Sanitarium for Freedom Fighters uncared for

SYED TASHFIN CHOWDHURY

Freedom Fighters residing at the Muktiyoddha Rogmukti Bisramagar (Sanitarium for Freedom Fighters) near Collage Gate in Mohammadpur are at constant risk of life-threatening accidents due to the dilapidated condition of the buildings.

Resident Freedom fighters, most of whom are disabled, also complained of the unhygienic environment at the sanitarium.

"Despite their sacrifices, some of the nation's greatest sons are living in the worst possible condition," said Bir Bikrom Golam Mostofa, a Grade A Freedom fighter and resident of the sanitarium.

Mostofa, who has to move on a

wheelchair, had been staying there since its inception along with Bir Protik Modasser Hossain Modu, Md. Shukoor Ali, and Shamsul Ali Mondol.

Apart from the main block, there are three other blocks each consisting of two to three buildings. Each block is spread over 12.5 katha land.

Family members of the Freedom Fighters also live inside the compound of the sanitarium. They have complained that concerned authorities do not maintain the sanitarium properly.

"All the building are over 40 years old and require extensive renovation," said one family member.

The Grade A freedom fighters and their families are living in cramped quarters. Most of the rooms in the buildings can not be used due to

numerous cracks and holes in the ceiling. Rainwater frequently seeps through.

"The dilapidated ceilings and walls may collapse anytime and there could be huge number of casualties," said a Freedom Fighter.

The sanitarium also lacks beds, causing serious accommodation problems.

"Freedom Fighters who live outside Dhaka and their family members and attendants have to sleep on the damp floors when they come to the capital for medical treatment," said Bir Bikrom Mostofa.

The Freedom fighters also complained that the sanitarium does not have suitable entertainment facilities. The books in the 'so-called' library are over 20 years old.

"Each block has only one Television which is not adequate for the entertainment of over 40 members residing at each block," said a Freedom Fighter. "We also do not get to know the current situation of the country as newspapers are not available."

The bathrooms and toilets are in a sorry state also.

"Sweepers do not clean the bathrooms regularly. That is why these are extremely dirty and stinky," said a resident.

Despite repeated complaints to the Muktiyoddha Kalyan Trust, renovations are yet to be done.

"We are currently facing tremendous financial constraints due to which we can not take necessary steps," said M A Hannan, general manager of the Trust.

The Freedom Fighters meanwhile suggested that the concerned authorities lease the blocks out to developers.

"In that way, at least we will have a place to stay which will be properly maintained," said another Freedom Fighter.

Rezaul Karim, state minister for the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs, however, claimed that proper actions are being taken to improve the current living conditions at the sanitarium.

"We have already issued tenders and waiting for the response from developers," said Karim.

"The construction of high-rise buildings at two of the blocks will be initiated as soon as we appoint a suitable developer for the project."

The sanitarium and the adjoining blocks were originally abandoned properties during the Liberation War. In 1972, Freedom Fighters treated and released from Suhrawardy Hospital sought shelter there.

The properties were handed over to the Muktiyoddha Kalyan Trust later.

In 1973 the sanitarium was turned into a vocational training centre for the Freedom Fighters through the joint efforts of the Muktiyoddha Kalyan Trust and the International Rescue Committee.

After the completion of the project in 1977, the sanitarium became a place to stay for the permanently disabled Freedom Fighters and those coming to Dhaka from other parts of the country and their family members.



Auvi, Mamur and Russel at work in the laboratory.

BUET students to take part in Robocon 2005

HASAN JAHD TUSHER

Three students of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) have developed robots with used motor parts, tissue papers and rollers made from bandage and will show off their invention at the Robocon 2005 competition in Beijing starting from August 27.

The students are scheduled to fly for the Chinese capital today. The Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU) are the organisers of the competition where around 22 teams from 21 countries of the Asia-Pacific region are expected to take part.

The young inventors, who are all from the mechanical engineering department of BUET are Mohammed Ashfaque-ur-Rahman Auvi, Mohammed Rashedul Islam Russel and SGM Hossain Mamur. The have named the robots Automatic Pentagon, Mothership, Scotship and Manual Machine.

The students collected the raw materials from the

city's Dholaikhal area. The computer chips and circuits were bought from different computer stores in the capital.

Prof. Zahurul Haq of the mechanical engineering department, who supervised the total project, said the most difficult part was to collect the parts for the robots.

"During the primary stages, the roller, which provides power to the robots, was made from tissue papers and bandage papers. Later

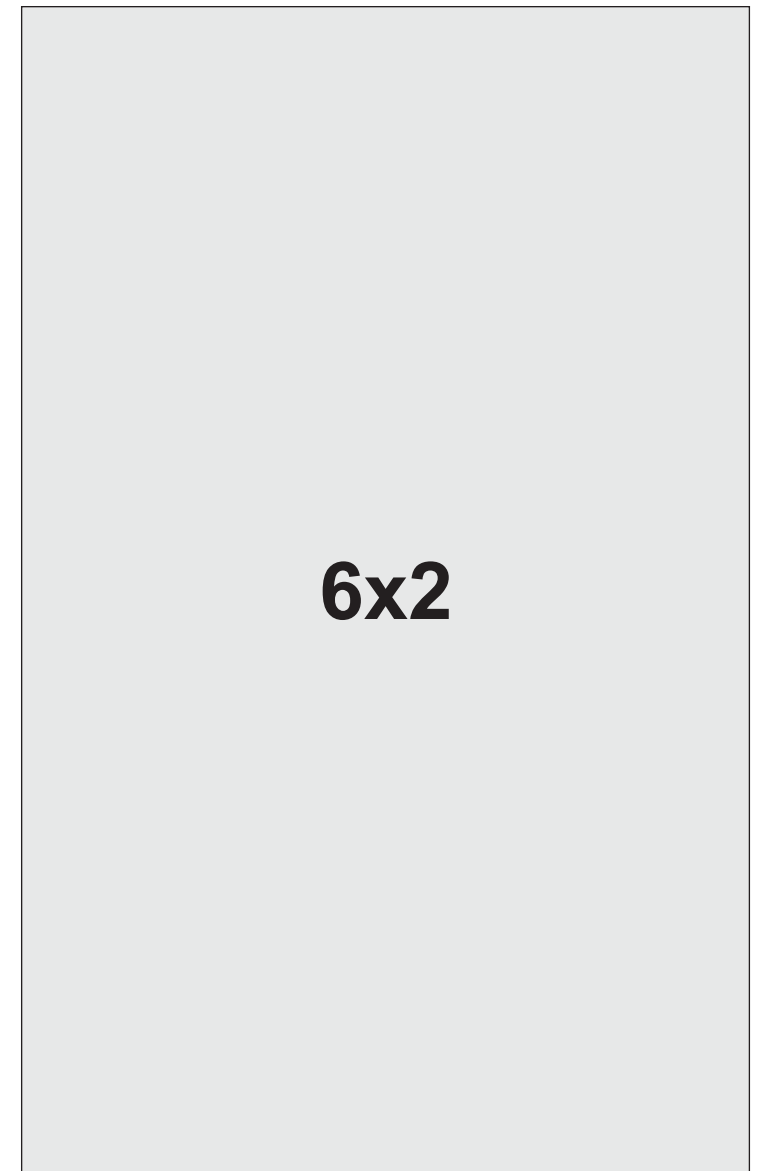
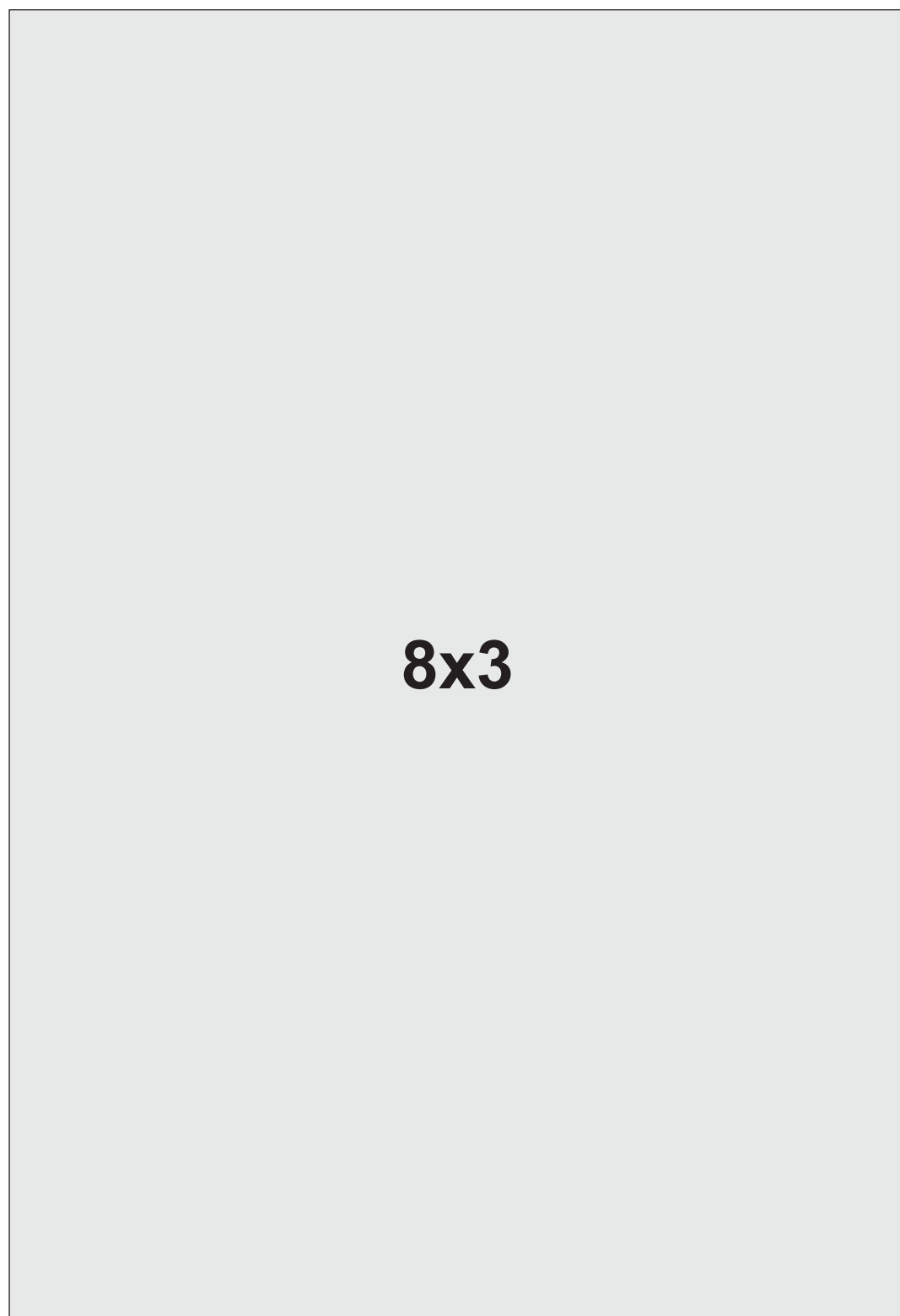
it was made from aluminium.

"The most important thing however is the fact that our students could take part in such a hi-tech competition. That is why results do not matter."

The inventors informed that the parts used to create the robots were from motorcars. The parts not available at Dholaikhal were collected from the university's workshop. A Japanese television channel provided the students with US\$ 1,000 to complete the project.



The freedom fighter's sanitarium at Mohammadpur in a very poor condition.



SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

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