

EKUSHEY BHABAN

Construction finally begins in January

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The construction work of Ekushey Bhaban under its new name Bangla Academy Bhaban will, after eight years of its conception, commence in January 2006 on a 12-storey structure instead of the proposed 21-storey building.

"The building was expected to house 21 storeys in keeping with ekushey meaning 21 as the figure is significant to our history. But with the change of plans of the number of storeys the name Ekushey Bhaban will bear no relevance," said an academy official.

Initially construction of nine

storeys and the basement will commence. This work is expected to complete by end 2006.

"The total budget for the entire project is Tk 25 crore funded by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs. Initial work will begin with a fund of Tk 1 crore and rest will be available in the years 2007 and 2008 with Tk 12 crore sanctioned each year," said Murshid Anwar, co-ordination and public relation officer of Bangla Academy who is also an assistant director.

The BNP government during its previous tenure planned to construct a building to signify the spirit of Ekushey following a proposal by the Bangla Academy.

It was on February 7, 1998 the then prime minister Sheikh Hasina laid the foundation stone for the building on the Bangla Academy premises.

But the present government abolished the name Ekushey and the project was on ice for reasons unknown.

Most officials of the institute prefer the name Ekushey as it is related to the memories of the 1952 Language Movement. They said that political jealousy and mudslinging resulted in the change of name.

"The name Ekushey Bhaban still remains in the Project Proposal (PP) and has not changed

officially," said Abul Kalam Monjur Morshed, director general of the same institute.

The ground floor in the original plan was designed for administrative work while the other floors were planned to house the library, rooms for research on language and folklore, and organise fairs.

At present one building houses the academy's press and the Burdwan House serves both as the library and administrative departments.

"The Bangla Academy does not have any administrative building of its own and the new building will serve as one," said the assistant director adding that the name of the building in the pre-Executive Committee of National Economic Council (Ecne) still stands as Ekushey Bhaban.

He also said this area is not suitable for high-rise buildings hence the decrease in the number of floors.

On completion of the new building Burdwan House will be used as a memorial centre to display portraits of literati, artists and folklore artefacts.

The Bangla Academy was established in 1955 to promote, protect and conduct research on the Bangla language. It now needs some extension. The function of the building will be curtailed if it is only 12-storeys.

"February 21 is now International Mother Language Day but we are yet striving for a decent building of our own," said Nurul Huda, director of the Academy.



The original spot inside the academy where Ekushey Bhaban was supposed to be built.

STAR FILE PHOTO



Winter vegetables still costly

IMRUL HASAN

Despite being the peak season the price of winter vegetables in the city kitchen markets are out of the purchasing capacity much to the frustration of the common people.

According to traders, new winter vegetables entered the markets late as heavy rains at the time of sowing vegetable seeds damaged most crops.

On a visit to the different city kitchen markets including Karwan Bazar, Rampura, New Market, Polashi and Hatirpool kitchen markets it was found that the price of different kinds of vegetables were exorbitant.

"Many farmers were compelled to start cultivation of vegetables late because of untimely floods resulting in the lack of varieties in the market," said Mominul Islam, a wholesaler of Karwan Bazar Kitchen Market adding that they are unable to explain the reason for this uncharacteristic price situation.

Traders of other kitchen markets also said as the transport cost with the hike in fuel prices and fertilisers have become high, they are forced to sell the

vegetables at higher prices.

"The price hikes of fuel and fertilisers add to the high prices of the vegetables even in the peak season," said Md. Mahbub, a retailer in Newmarket kitchen market.

Abdul Latif, chairman of Karwan Bazar Group Number 2 Kitchen Market Cooperative Association, said they have not increased prices for excessive profits, but retailers taking advantage of the situation unethically hike prices.

"A team should be appointed by the government to regularly control and monitor prices. This will leave no room for anyone to increase prices according to each one's wishes," he added.

"I have to pay labour costs, tax, salaries to employees and then there are sundry expenses, I am left with no alternative but to hike the process," said Habibul Islam, a Rampura kitchen market retailer.

"Though there is an increase in price, we always try to serve our customers with fresh vegetables," he added.

The price hike has not hampered the availability of winter vegetables, including cauliflower, cabbage, beans, tomato; new potato, gourds, local onion

and radish, which are found in plenty.

In city markets, the wholesale price of beans is Tk 8-10 a kilogram (kg) while the retail price ranges from Tk 20-25.

"The price is quite dear despite the peak season," said Md. Abir Ali, a bank officer, at New Market after he had paid the vendor Tk 25 for a kg of beans. "I bought one kg of beans last year at Tk 12 only," Ali added.

The wholesale price of a medium size of cauliflower is Tk 10 while the retail price is Tk 20-25. However, traders said with the arrival of larger quantities the price of cauliflower would come down in two weeks.

The wholesale price of a medium-sized cabbage is now Tk 10 while the retail price ranges between Tk 18 and Tk 20.

In retail market, the tomato prices begin at Tk 45 a kg, new potato at Tk 20 and radish at Tk 10. Local onions are sold at Tk 35 and the imported ones at Tk 28. The wholesale prices of vegetables are about Tk 10 less than in the retail market.

9x3

9x2

9x3