

# Renovation of Curzon Hall begins

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Legendary Curzon Hall, one of the marvels of British era architecture in Dhaka, is finally going to get its much awaited renovation work done.

Bits and pieces of the historical icon of Dhaka University (DU) had been falling apart due to absence of regular and timely maintenance or restoration work.

Moreover, the building lost many of its original features as numerous ill-conceived features were added to the building while some original features were even dismantled during earlier renovation.

"The present renovation work started in December last year. We have a budget allocation of Tk 30 lakh," said Ameer Hossain, chief engineer of DU Engineering Division (DUED).

"This time we sought help from the experts of Department of Archaeology (from DU) and Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet). We will not make similar mistakes by altering its original features -- the mistake our predecessors made," Ameer assured adding, "We are even restoring some of the original features dismantled earlier."

Ameer also said the DUED was expecting a donation from government of Japan for the restoration work.

Shafikul Alam, director of DU Department of Archaeology said, "We are providing technical assistance for the restoration as the DU engineers are civil engineers and are not trained to do restoration of historical structures."

"We suggested in our report that original features that were altered during previous renovation work should be restored. We are supervising the ongoing work," he added.

Originally meant to be a town hall, the foundation of the building was laid in 1904 by Lord Curzon, the viceroy of then British India.

Over the years, the building attained a special place in the history of Bangladesh. During 1911, Curzon Hall was the home to renowned Dhaka College for a while.

After the University of Dhaka was established in the year 1921, Curzon Hall became the main campus of the university and later the main building was designated for Physics Department.

Curzon Hall will always be a part of the history of the Language Movement that turned explosive in 1952. The first student protests against the Pakistani rulers' plot to downplay the Bengalis' mother language were sparked from a huge crowd at the Curzon Hall area in 1948 where Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the leader of Pakistan movement, declared, "Urdu and Urdu alone shall be the state language of Pakistan."

Legends of physics including professors Satyendra Nath Bose, who broke new grounds with the Bose-Einstein Theory, and Boson Ray taught physics at Curzon Hall under the Physics Department of DU.

Instead of repairing the tumbled down balconies of Curzon Hall, which celebrated its centennial in February 2004, the DUED removed five of them. The removal of the grandiose balco-



The Curzon Hall.

nies took away much of the beauty of the building.

There is a persistent pressure from the DU authorities to extend the existing structure and accommodate new construction.

A proposal to build a ten-storyed building on the spot of the workshop behind the Physics

Department was submitted a while back. If implemented, the tranquillity of this historical spectacle will definitely be diminished.

"I have a strong attachment to this building since I enrolled at DU as a student of Physics Department in 1962 and later I became a teacher in 1969. The

glorious edifice with rich historical background is in dilapidated condition without proper renovation," said Prof RIM Aminur Rashid, chairman of Physics Department.

"The last renovation took place long time ago in 1980. There are some minor work every

year. Several ill-conceived additions before changed some of the features of this building. The outside colour that we see today is not original either," he said. "We want correction of previous work."

"We are also trying to help out

## Blank cheques

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and outworn building adjacent to Gausia Market.

Mohammad Khasru, an employee of a garments factory said that they compensate a fixed amount of electricity bill to a certain influential quarter in the area. He however failed to provide any further information.

"It's not that we use it (electricity) free of cost, we pay Tk 6,000 monthly," said Khasru.

Nurul Huque, member secretary of Nurjahan Market Banik Samity, expressed his ignorance towards the haphazard allocation of electricity inside and around the market.

"As far as I am concerned no sub-lines going outside exist in the market. Some shops have sub-meters connected to our central meter and the others who don't have any meters pay a fixed amount of electricity charge," added Huque.

Sanau Huque, the local Executive Engineer of Dhaka Electricity Supply Association

(DESA), expressed his indifference towards the haphazard use of sub-lines in the designated places.

He said that DESA have allotted one meter for each of the markets and how they are distributing the electricity in and around the market is not his concern as long as the bills are paid.

"We are responsible for the allocation of electricity in the shops up to a certain point. It is Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) who is responsible for allocating electricity in New Market and adjacent areas and collecting bills," said Huque.

Due to lack of initiatives from the authorities to track down undocumented electricity connections, PDB incur an average of Tk 400 crore system loss each and every year. According to sources, annual loss of PDB will shoot up to around Tk 1,100 crore in the current fiscal year (2006-07) unless they take any initiative to check the system loss.

## Beware of sloppy

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explains the capacity of the cylinders. The cylinders must have specification engraved on it whether it can be used for CNG.

"Other equipment necessary for conversion also needs to be checked. General fitness of the vehicles must be maintained," he said.

"While refuelling, passengers must get off the vehicle for safety. Employees of the filling station also need to check the test certificate. Conversion workshop owners are the most responsible party regarding the safety of the people," he added.

Safiu Islam Kamal, president of Bangladesh CNG Filling Station and Conversion Workshop Owners Association, said, "Both the conversion workshop owners and the CNG users need to be aware of the situation. We are trying to warn users about the possible danger through newspaper advertisements."

"We use a medicine called Retenone when someone wants to prepare a pond for starting a fisheries project. The medicine kills unwanted fishes and animals which might pose a threat to fish farming," said an expert.

customers to identify genuine conversion kit and cylinders," added Kamal who heads the association having 56 members in the city.

## Fishes poisoned

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Department of Fisheries said that they never use poison to kill fishes. Using poison could expose the environment to pollution and also endanger people's lives.

"We use a medicine called Retenone when someone wants to prepare a pond for starting a fisheries project. The medicine kills unwanted fishes and animals which might pose a threat to fish farming," said an expert.

"In the way the fishes in the airport lake died clearly indicates severe poisoning and this is not acceptable at all. They should have consulted our experts before doing such a thing," said another fisheries expert requesting anonymity.

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