

DU disfigures famous central library building

Dhaka University rents out space on the central library roof for installation of a mobile phone transmission tower, which experts believe is set to destroy the sanctity of this building designed by legendary architect Muzaharul Islam in the early fifties

TAWFIQUE ALI

The Dhaka University authorities have recently made a deal with a private mobile telephone company to erect a huge transmission tower on the rooftop of the central library building, sparking widespread criticism.

The company has already started work to install the tower. Country's leading architects and academics have expressed their frustrations and anger over what they termed thoughtless move of the university authorities to rent out the rooftop of the landmark building designed by Muzaharul Islam.

They alleged that the DU authorities have already destroyed the greenery, serenity and the pleasant landscape of the campus by allowing hundreds of gigantic commercial hoardings at every nook and corner for commercial gain.

"I'm just hurt having learnt it, what else can I do?" said

Muzaharul Islam, the architect. The building is one of the works of his career's very first phase, built during 1953-54.

President of the Institute of Architects Bangladesh (IAB) Mubasshar Hussain said that the library building is one of the pioneering works of architecture accomplished during Pakistan period.

"This is an outstanding example of modern architecture that created a distinct trend in the postcolonial era," he said. "This is a foremost example in the study of modern architecture in Bangladesh."

A salient feature of the building's architecture is that it is designed in congruity with the climate of Bangladesh to make it library-friendly.

The IAB president demanded that the authorities should immediately stop the move to erect the telephone tower.

Prof Muzaffer Ahmad, chairman of Transparency International Bangladesh, said

the DU had originally been an architectural unity. "There is no such example at any other university in the world," he said.

"This is an example of degeneration of an aesthetic sensibility any academic mind should have." Such degeneration started in the 60s, 70s and 80s.

Character of a university is supposed to be reflected in its physical features, Prof Ahmad said, adding that at any university in the world, architectural uniformity of the buildings is a common phenomenon.

Honorary chairman of Centre for Urban Studies Nazrul Islam said the DU central library building is one of the three most outstanding works of Muzaharul Islam. The other two are the Institute of Fine Arts and the Science Laboratory building.

"Any addition, modification or alteration to a building of high architectural value in this manner is not acceptable at all," said Nazrul Islam. "This is an aes-

thetic work. The university authorities have no right to spoil such a building."

Professor Serajul Islam Choudhury said commercial encroachments have occurred on the Dhaka University campus in many ways. But such encroachments are not desirable at all.

"Such commercial indulgence is obviously inconsistent and disharmonious with the concept and history of Dhaka University," Choudhury said.

He also said that the inner vitality of the university with academic and cultural activities and its outer atmosphere are being consistently destroyed.

DU Vice-chancellor SMA Faiz said he does not know what kind of structure is being erected on the library building rooftop as the pro-VC deals with it.

"But probably it is for a mobile telephone transmission tower, which the university syndicate



SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

Construction of the transmission tower is set to deface the importance of the central library building at DU campus.

has approved," said the VC.

Asked whether such commercial act is in keeping with the sanctity and decency of a university campus, Faiz said, "It is impossible to answer this question in a word. You could not

answer if you were in my position."

Pro-VC Prof AFM Yusuf Haidar said two mobile phone companies GrameenPhone and Aktel needed such a site to install transmission towers

to improve their network. One of the towers will be erected on the library building rooftop.

"I don't find anything in it that may spoil the sanctity of the university campus," he said.

There is no other suitable site for the towers, he said. "The deal is mutually beneficial."

It is a 5-year contract with two companies with the provision for Tk 10 to 12 thousand rent per month, the pro-VC said.



SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

A child takes a ride on his father's shoulder during the celebrations of Pohela Falgun, the first day of spring, at Bakul Tola in the Charu Kala premises yesterday.

Pahela Falgun welcomed

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Spring is in the air. People clad in yellow and red outfit greeted the day with songs and merrymaking on the Dhaka University campus.

They spent the day in jovial mood milling about DU's verdant campus celebrating Pahela Falgun, the first day of spring in the Bangla calendar and one of the biggest cultural festivals of the city.

Women mostly in yellow sari and men in punjabi flocked to the campus in the morning to join a cultural programme at the Institute of Fine Arts as part of spring celebrations. Fine arts students welcomed the season with songs and dance.

"I came here in search of my cultural roots and here find what I am looking for," said Tamim Jahan who came to Fine Art to celebrate the *Bashanto* at dawn.

Jatiya Basanta Utsab Udjapan Parishad, a celebration council, held a daylong programme at Bakul Tola, Institute of Fine Art's of Dhaka University, which began in the morning with serene instrumental tunes, recitations and plays.

Shamogeet organised a musical programme in front of the Kalabhavan.

Festivity intensified as the morning sun shined brighter. More visitors thickened the crowd joining the merrymaking. The queue grew longer at the entrance point of the

Fine Art building. Security measures were strict to manage the crowd at the entrance. The security men were checking bags and the visitors had to enter Fine Art through an archway.

As people were busy in celebrating the spring, a class of working people have also joined in the celebration but in different way. Women and girls are sold bangles and garlands mainly of Marigold flower. Some students of Fine Art were busy in painting motif.

Sudden rain in the evening troubled visitors and hampered them in their celebration of Pahela Falgun.

DCC begins computerised birth registration

SHAHNAZ PARVEEN

The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) launched computerised birth registration from February 11. Till July 2, 2008 the corporation will provide the certificate free of charges.

Sources in DCC Birth and Death Registration section told Star City that necessary software and equipment have already been installed at all its 10 zonal offices and concerned staffs received special training to provide the

service. UNICEF and Plan Bangladesh provided technical support to set up appropriate system.

After July 2008 computerised version of Bangla certificates will cost Tk40. However for English version the charge will be Tk100. The corporation will charge Tk20 for any corrections. It will take maximum 15 days to issue a certificate.

To issue a certificate for adults, one must live in the DCC area for at least three years to receive the certificate.

According to a survey conducted by UNICEF, only 7 to 10 percent birth is registered in Bangladesh. The rest of the 90 per cent of the country's total population remain unregistered. Because of the absence of birth registration system it becomes extremely difficult to ensure child rights in the country.

The Births and Deaths Registration Act, 2004 was enacted on July 4, 2006. Government of Bangladesh is planning to register all births by the year 2008.

Under the new law parents are required to register the birth of their babies within 45 days.

Birth registration will be possible even without the name of the newborn. However, parents must provide the name within 45 days.

Government earlier decided that birth certificates would soon be mandatory for admission in educational institutions, appointment in government services, for issuance of passport and driving licenses, enrolment in voters' list and land registration.

An hour in Karwan Bazar kitchen market

Difference between retail and wholesale prices shrinks

DURDANA GHIAS

Spending an hour in Karwan Bazar kitchen market, the largest of its kind in the city, revealed that the price difference between retail and wholesale prices of vegetables has shrunk considerably.

Plenty of buyers were seen in the dank alleys while sellers were busy selling and arranging their commodities.

When this correspondent walked into the market, retail sellers were selling potato at Tk 10 per kg while it was Tk 8.50 at wholesale market -- only 20 feet away. Retail price of tomato was Tk 20 while the wholesale price was Tk 17. Retail price of onion was Tk 15 while the wholesale price was Tk 14. Gourd was selling at Tk 17 apiece while wholesale price was Tk 15. Green chilli was selling at Tk 32 while the wholesale price was Tk 28. Beans were selling at Tk 14 while the wholesale price was Tk 11. Retail price of eggplant was Tk 10 while the wholesale price was Tk 7. Both retail and wholesale price of ginger was Tk 30. Large Papaya was selling at Tk 50 and small ones at Tk 20.

Before the present caretaker government took over, retail prices in kitchen markets were up to 70 percent higher than wholesale prices.

Vegetables coming mostly from Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Comilla, Kushtia and other parts of the country contain chemicals -- 'medicine' is what it is called by the traders.

These 'medicines' are injurious to

health and change the natural taste of the produce, said a vegetable trader.

"Here you won't find a single piece of tomato, eggplant, gourd or any vegetable which does not contain 'medicine'. See these tomatoes? These are sweet and red inside, but these will harm you," The trader added.

"If you spray the 'medicine', it

only like vegetables with beautiful colours.

At the chicken market, broiler chickens were selling at Tk 100 per kg and layer chickens at Tk 85 per kg while wholesale price was Tk 75 per kg. At the fish market, lobsters were being sold at Tk 800 to 900 per kg while the wholesale price was Tk 750 to 780.

Fresh fish from the Meghna are

Katol was selling at Tk 220 whereas wholesale price was Tk 160.

Beef was being sold at Tk 160, mutton Tk 230 per kg.

At rice section of the market, prices of Miniket and Najirshail were for sale at Tk 27 and Tk 24 respectively.

Moktar Hossain, a rice trader, made a couple of suggestions to help reduce the price of rice -- subsidise rice and allow all licensed rice stores to buy directly from government warehouses.

"At present, only one dealer from this market is allowed to buy from the government warehouses. But if all of us are allowed to buy directly, the price would go down," Moktar added.

"TV and newspaper reports say that transportation, fuel and other costs raise prices of commodities, but these costs will always be there because we have to transport the goods if we want to sell it. A very serious reason behind the increasing price is reduction of per capita land due to considerable increase of population coupled with significant decrease in production capacity of land," said Moktar.

"If the government can subsidise electricity, gas and water, then why not rice?" asked another rice trader.

A betel leaf seller was sitting in front of a price board installed by Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) next to one of the entrances of the market where not a single price was written on it.

"Last week they [DCC] wrote some prices on the board, but it was washed away in the rain," he said.



STAR PHOTO

gives a nice colour to the green ones and they seem ripe. The colour is important because people judge the vegetables by their colour," he added.

When asked why he sells vegetables contaminated with chemical although he knows that it is harmful to people, he said he sells vegetable with chemicals because customers

tastier and a bit pricier as well, claimed sellers. Retail price of a Meghna ruhi were selling at Tk 450 to 600 and wholesale price was Tk 400. Burmese ruhi was priced Tk 120 while wholesale price was Tk 110 per kg.

Boal (pike) was priced Tk 350 to 550 and wholesale price was Tk 340 to 400. Hilsha Tk 4,000 per hali (4 fishes), wholesale Tk 1,200 to 3,800.