

Construction of mother language institute resumes after 4 years

DURDANA GHAS

Construction work of International Mother Language Institute (IMLI) resumed last month after it remained stalled for around four years.

Following the declaration of International Mother Language Day by Unesco on November 17, 1999 the then government took a decision to set up an institute where research will be done on international languages.

About one and a half years later, on March 15, 2001, the foundation stone of the institute was laid by then Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan. Before that a plot was allocated at a nominal price by the government.

The construction of the proposed institute began on January 21, 2003 but it came to an abrupt halt in September 2003, said sources linked to the institute.

With a foundation of 12-storied high-rise including a basement, at initial stage it will be a three-storey building. At present construction of the building is underway on a 1.3-acre plot at Segunbagicha in the city.

The functions of the institute will be to conduct researches, develop and coordinate the languages of the world by gathering books, alphabets, cassettes etc; preserving extinct languages by bringing together information on them; opening websites on different languages of the world and collect latest information on those languages like a museum.

The institute will also translate technology related write-ups into different languages; train up skilled interpreters; help government form language policies; bring experts from different countries and set up network with different international universities.

Besides, it will arrange cultural shows on different cultures and make people interested about other languages.

"With much enthusiasm the construction work started on April 1, 2003 but on September 30, 2003 the PD (project director) was summoned by the secretary of the then (education) ministry. The secretary asked the PD to stop the construction work of the institute 'immediately' as per a verbal order from the PMO

(prime minister's office). According to that order the work remained stalled until December last year. But we were never given any written order on this issue. Till now we do not know what really happened," said a source working on the institute.

The institute's manpower was initially set to be 21 including three no-work-no-pay staffs but in August 2006 the project was slashed and manpower was reduced to nine - three officials, two staffs, three peons and one driver.

"In 2002 and 2003 we celebrated International Mother Language Day but after that we could not do that because our project was stalled. This year we could not plan out anything because of poor manpower and

we are all busy with the construction work," said the source.

After the present caretaker government took over the then culture and education adviser Ayub Quadri took special initiatives for resumption of the project.

The present staffs work under the project implementation unit (PIU) whose job is to carry out the project and then hand it over to relevant persons like language experts, said Shirin Akhtar, project director of IMLI.

"As the PIU our job is to supervise the construction work, finish the building within stipulated time, appoint experts who will deal with the project in future and create new posts by consulting with persons working in relevant areas," said Shirin.

The PIU is planning to recruit a consultant in this regard within the next few months.

"We are hoping to publish a circular by a consultant within March-April. We expect to appoint him by June this year," Shirin said.

"After the consultant is employed he or she can give us directions on how many experts we may need, what would be the qualifications of the experts, the number and formation of language laboratories, language archives and language museums."

"IMLI is a unique institute where various researches on language will be done. There are only around 10 such institutes in the world and none of its kind in the Subcontinent. Therefore, it will help us learn more about languages and its presence will boost the image of our country and language in the world," she added.

In paper the project ends in December this year. But the construction work that resumed last month already witnessed a four-month delay in implementation of the decision due to bureaucratic tangles. According to the construction firm it will take at least another 18 months to finish the building.

"At this stage we are trying to extend the deadline. Hopefully the higher authorities will consider it," said an official linked to the institute.



Plainclothes cops hound unruly cab drivers

RIZANUZZAMAN LASKAR

Traffic police officials have been working undercover in their renewed effort to ease the chaos and misconduct that gripped the city's taxicab and autorickshaw service sector.

After being spectators for years, the plainclothes traffic officials are finally conducting operations at the city points where taxicab and three-wheeler drivers refuse to go to desired destinations of the passengers or demand extortionate fares from them.

Around 25 traffic officials from four different zones of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) have already hit the streets to ensure that the drivers of taxicabs or CNG three-wheelers conform to the policy set by the government.

Several teams of roughly six traffic officials are out on the streets to apprehend violators of the taxi service rules.

The vigilance team will take legal action against taxi or autorickshaw drivers who refuse to go to the passengers' desired destinations or harass them by turning the meters off and demanding exorbitant amounts of money from them,

After being spectators for years, the plainclothes traffic officials are finally conducting operations at the city points where taxicab and three-wheeler drivers refuse to go to desired destinations of the passengers or demand extortionate fares from them.

said sources at the traffic wing of the DMP.

"The official will report the vehicle (driven by the offender) to the control room and hold it until a sergeant gets there and take legal action against the offender," said Jashimuddin, joint commissioner of DMP traffic wing.

They may approach the vehicles in the guise of passengers to check whether they are abiding by the meter policies, said the sources adding that four such teams are filing

around 100 cases against violators everyday.

The main objective of this initiative is to reduce public sufferings caused by the unruly cab drivers, said a DMP official.

This initiative, launched earlier this month, will also enable the traffic officials to get a grasp of the real situation first-hand and record on-the-spot versions of the dispute from both the passenger and the driver for future reference, said traffic department sources said



Construction of the International Mother Language Institute resumed last month. The builders hope to finish the job in 18 months.

FOLLOW-UP

A little attention changes a life

Nur Ullah now can walk and earn his bread

CITY CORRESPONDENT

"It is the grace of the Almighty that I can walk with my own feet again," said Nur Ullah.

Nur's case is an example how a little attention can change a life.

On December 2, 2007, Star City published a story on Nur Ullah, a rickshaw puller who had lost his right leg and left arm in a train accident five years ago. He was twelve when he

met with the tragedy. Before that studied till class five in a madrasa.

An elderly local, who used to beg in the capital, brought him to the city to assist him on street. But Nur could not mould his mind for begging.

"I did not like begging. It was insulting and derogatory. Every night when I said my prayers I cried to the Almighty and requested him to show me a

better way," he said.

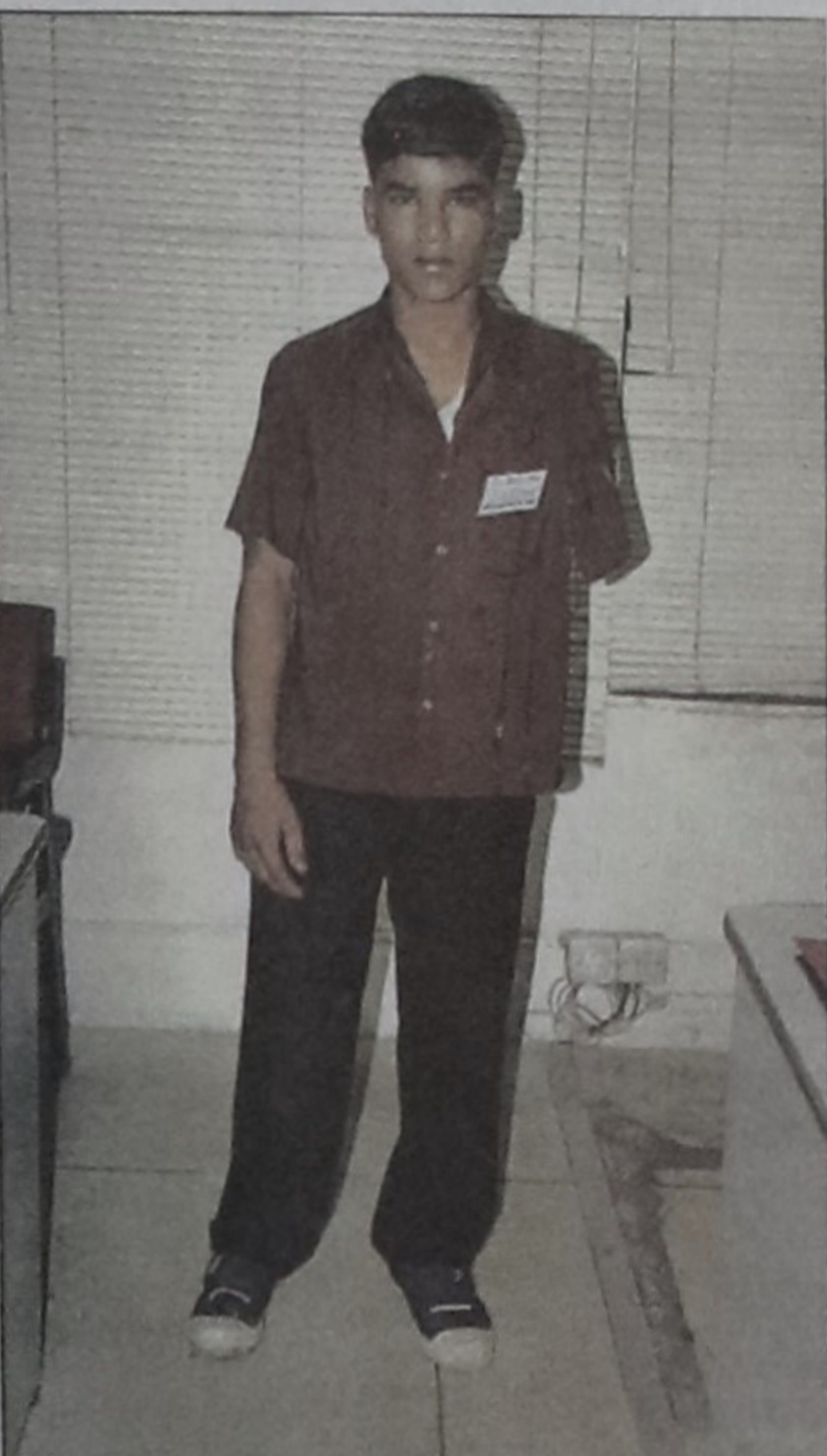
"When I tried to plead poverty I felt offended and tears came to my eyes."

Then he decided to quit begging.

Nur convinced Jamir, a rickshaw garage owner, to rent him a rickshaw.

"I told Jamir bhai that I will pray for him if he gives me a rickshaw," he said.

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Nur Ullah, left, who lost his right leg and left arm in a train accident five years ago has got an artificial leg now.

A children's park monopolised, turned into money-spinner

TAWFIQUE ALI

Dhanmondi Cricket Academy has kept a children's park in Dhanmondi occupied for years without authorisation from the authorities concerned, turning it into a potential source of making money through exclusive use.

The academy took over the park in the name of maintenance several years back and restricted access of the general public to the ground. For using the field, now one needs to become either a member of the academy or pay an amount to the academy.

The strip of open space at the intersection of road-3, 4 and 5 had long been a children's park meant for free use of locals. But now it is a restricted and exclusive zone.

A resident of Dhanmondi and president of the Institute of Architects Bangladesh (IAB), Mubasshar Hussain said, "The academy charges any aspiring sports team or club Tk 6 to 10 thousand for a day to organise a sports event at the ground."

Architect Iqbal Habib, another resident of Dhanmondi and member secretary of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa) said he once took his son to the park for playing but the club officials asked him to get his son admitted to the club. They charged Tk 6.5 thousand as admission fee.

"Maintenance must not mean such control over access," he said suggesting that local community must be involved in



Members of Dhanmondi Cricket Academy doing net practice on the park.

maintenance of a children's park or a playground to ensure free access of the general public.

He said Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) should give up its responsibility to maintain the parks and playgrounds unless it can discharge the responsibility.

This correspondent in the guise of an organiser of a local cricket team talked to the academy's joint secretary and

ground-in-charge Md Iqbal Shyamol on February 14, and enquired about the rate and procedure of using the field.

Shyamol said that the playground is booked throughout the month of February. "Rent of the playground is Tk 7,000 per day and the rate is fixed. One can take the field for a day and use it from 9:00am to 2:00pm paying the rent."

"We may consider some

discount on the total amount in case one takes the field for a longer period like ten days or more," he said.

Asked what one has to do to use the field for a weeklong tournament or a practice session, he said that it is not possible during March and April.

Another staff of the academy said that recently a mobile telephone company paid the club more than Tk 1 lakh to organise a

9-day cricket tournament there.

A former captain of the national cricket team said requesting anonymity that public use of a playground becomes restricted if exclusively occupied by a certain club or organisation.

Prof Serajul Islam Choudhury, a noted educationist and head of a high-level advisory committee on park development

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