



Most sculptures at DU losing grandeur for lack of attention

SHAHNAZ PARVEEN

Precious sculptures on the Dhaka University campus, symbol of many glorious historic events of the nation, are losing grandeur due to lack of proper maintenance.

Created by famous sculptors of the country, most of these art works are gathering moss and

their plasters are falling as the authorities are not taking initiatives for their repair and cleaning.

Theme of majority of these works is the nation's struggle against tyranny, the movement for independence, the War of Liberation and the fight for democracy.

The Central Shaheed Minar, a

monument built to commemorate the martyrs of the historic Language Movement, is only taken care of during the month of February. For rest of the year it remains without any attention.

Aparajeyo Bangla (Invincible Bangla), a masterpiece created by Syed Abdullah Khalid in 1979 in front of the university's Arts Building is eroding and has lost

its original colour.

Shamim Shikdar's Soparjito Swadhinota, another sculpture at the TSC road island narrating the history from 1952 to '71, has also lost its colour.

Some of the tiles at the altar of Raju Bhashkorjo, the sculpture against terrorism in the TSC intersection, are missing while the nose of Madhu Dey's sculp-

ture chipped off. Plasters of 'Amor Ekushey' on the Fuller Road is crumbling.

Dr Milon Smriti Bhashkorjo is a popular sitting area for both students and outsiders.

Among other important sculptures, there are Shantir Pakhi by Hamiduzzaman, statue of Begum Rokeya at the Rokeya Hall, Swami Vibekando at the Jagannath Hall, Tarunya near Shamsunnahar Hall. There are several other sculptures inside the fine arts institute.

All of these sculptures are in a sorry state. Moss is growing in absence of regular cleaning.

Sculptor Hamiduzzaman Khan said, "These sculptures are precious assets of the campus and the country upholding our glorious past. They should receive better care."

"These sculptures should be maintained properly. At least a yearly maintenance and cleaning is important, otherwise they will lose their magnificence," he added.

"Dhaka University authorities should take the responsibility for these," he said.

Hamiduzzaman suggested that a committee should be formed to do the job. The sculptors concerned should be included in the committee and the maintenance job, he said.

However, confusion prevails about who would be responsible to maintain these sculptures.

Ameer Hussain, DU chief engineer, said, "Taking care of these sculptures is a complex issue. The sculptures are on our campus but not all of them are DU property."

"Since independence many artists have created sculptures on the campus often without permission from the authorities. We don't have a complete survey on them," he added.

"Restoration and maintenance of these sculpture need expertise which DU engineering division does not have. The materials used in these sculptures are different. It is not that we could fix them just with a coating of cement and bricks," he said.

"Artists should come forward to restore them. DU authorities are ready to help anytime if they approach with a concrete proposal," he said.



Three magnificent sculptures at DU: (from top left clockwise) Aparajeyo Bangla, Raju Bhashkorjo and Soparjito Swadhinota.

STAR PHOTO



STAR PHOTO

Winter vegetables disappearing fast

Prices to start soaring soon

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Supply of winter vegetables has drastically decreased in the city raising the fear of sharp rise in prices in the next few weeks.

Most of the seasonal items are disappearing fast while there is no supply of any summer items showing the sign of a recess for at least a couple of months.

Winter is gone, taking with it the season's all the riches and grandeur, lamented Rahimuddin, an elderly government official who regularly shops at Karwan Bazar.

"Cabbages are almost inedible, cauliflowers lost their taste and flavour and tomatoes have become discoloured," he said.

Although the prices have not increased much, but I am afraid they will go up in the next few weeks," he added.

"Summer vegetables, except for a few varieties, will not be available before July-August," vegetable vendor Nurul choed Rahimuddin.

"But it all depends on weather condition," he added. Wholesalers at Karwan-Bazar said, they are not getting sufficient supply of fresh winter items in the countryside.

"If available, they are not plentiful and if in plenty they are not edible," remarked Abdul Haq, a wholesaler.

"Look at the fresh leafy vegetables. They are becoming pricey everyday, whereas a patta (five

kilograms) of tomato now sells at only Tk 25 or so."

"Similarly, the cabbages are selling at Tk 4-5 a piece but still there is no buyer for them", Abdul said.

The cost of living will be further unbearable if the prices of vegetables also start soaring", said Ahmed, a shopper at the kitchen market.

"People who could not afford meat or fish could at least opt for some vegetables. But where will they go?", he posed.

At Karwan Bazar kitchen market, prices of leafy vegetables like lalshak, puishak or palong went up and yesterday they were selling between Tk 15-18 a kilogram.

Prices of 'fresh' cauliflower also increased as it was selling at Tk 18-20 a piece in place of only Tk 8-10 only a couple of weeks ago.

Tomato supply increased heavily with price falling everyday. A kilogram of tomato sold at Tk 8-10 yesterday.

Besides, beans were selling at Tk 12-15 a kg, eggplant Tk 10-14, korola Tk 18-20 and lady's finger Tk 20-25.

Despite plenty in supply, gourds sold at Tk 18-20 a piece and pumpkin Tk 12-15 each.

Potato prices remained stable at Tk 10-12 a kg while green chilli sold between Tk 15 and 20.

Meanwhile, imported onion price rose to Tk 18 from Tk 14 only a week ago. Local variety was selling at Tk 22.

Bringing culture in old Dhaka to life

Zahir Raihan Sanskritik Kendra opens Saturday

ERSHAD KAMOL

At long last, the people of old Dhaka are going to have a boost in their cultural activities as the new auditorium built at Loharpool is opening on Saturday.

Zahir Raihan Sanskritik Kendra in Sutrapur (Ward 82) area will be inaugurated through a cultural function followed by a theatre festival the next day. The festival will be jointly organised by the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) and the Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation (BGTF).

The four-storied cultural complex includes a theatre hall, a gallery, a dance and music training centre, library, and a health service centre.

"Centrally air-conditioned Zahir Raihan Sanskritik Kendra has been built on half an acre land. The theatre has all the modern light and sound facilities and it offers over 400 seats for the audience," said Mujibur Rahman, an official of DCC Zone 1.

Upbeat cultural activists in old Dhaka termed the newly built complex as a 'fresh hope' as their activities were hampered over the years just because of venue crisis.

Delwar Hossain of Mohanagar 77, one of the six theatre troupes in old Dhaka, said, "Residents of the old Dhaka have no place for outdoor entertainment. Though we have Lalkuthi Hall (North Brooke Hall), we don't consider

it as an ideal place for any cultural activities.

Lalkuthi Hall is a traditional theatre venue at Farashganj. Built in 1880, it was recently renovated but the experts do not find it suitable for modern theatre.

"We hope the newly built Zahir Raihan Sanskritik Kendra will be an ideal place to gear up our cultural activities," Delwar said.

The DCC has built the cultural complex to bring cultural activities to life in old Dhaka, said Mayor Sadeq Hossain

Khoka.

"It's the duty of a city corporation to ensure scopes and venues for entertainment of the city dwellers. We planned to build the cultural centre at Loharpool around three years ago. I personally talked to the leaders of Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation (BGTF) to share ideas during its construction. I believe the auditorium will be able to satisfy the needs of the cultural groups."

"Eminent filmmaker Zahir Raihan represents the progressive society of the country. He used to live at Kayet Tola in old Dhaka and that's why it has been named Zahir Raihan Sanskritik Kendra," the mayor said.

Welcoming the DCC endeavour, M Hamid, chairman of BGTF said, "The DCC move is praiseworthy. We convey our special thanks to the Mayor. In fact, he did a great job for this will rejuvenate theatre activities in old Dhaka. We have six member troupes there but they are virtually inactive as they don't

get any infrastructural facilities. Now the modern venue will be an ideal spot for theatre activities and I hope it will help solve the venue crisis there."

Hamid said they requested the Mayor to open the hall through a nine-day theatre festival with a view to popularising the venue.

"We now plan to regularly stage popular plays at Zahir Raihan Sanskritik Kendra. It will help the theatre activities in two ways: decentralisation of the current Ramna area based theatre activities and creation of new audience in old Dhaka," Hamid said.

However, the theatre leaders believe that the city of millions needs more theatre venues. They say DCC should build new halls at least at Uttara and Mirpur.

Presidium member of BGTF Liqueat Ali Lucky said, "It's really difficult for a person from Uttara or Mirpur to come to theatre in Ramna area. If the DCC builds auditoriums, residents of those areas will make their own sources of entertainments. On the other hand, theatre troupes will also be able to stage shows for them."

According to the mayor, the DCC has a plan for a theatre hall at the Commercial Centre being built at the place of recently abolished Mirpur Town Hall at Mirpur 10. Besides, the city corporation arranged space for dance and music training for the children at eight major community centres in the city, he said.



STAR PHOTO

The newly built Zahir Raihan Sanskritik Kendra at Loharpool.



WAITING FOR CHANGES: Autumn has taken away leaves of these giant trees on the road in front of Salimullah Hall on the Dhaka University campus. But they will wear a fresh look soon as the spring has already set in.