

Negligence cripples treasure trove of knowledge

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Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) Public Library with a collection of hundred year-old rare books has failed to draw the attention of the people thirsting for knowledge due to negligence by the city corporation.

The library lacks a proper building, good display of books, good card and catalogue systems and sufficient yearly budget.

The knowledge house is located on the first floor of a two-story building in the southern side of the historical Laldighi in the port city.

It contains over 30,000 books with gazette and patents of 1902, printed copy of William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet first published in England, many ancient hand written manuscripts and books of 15th and 16th centuries like 'Western Side of India' and 'Imitation of Ancient and Modern Drawings.'

In the late 19th century, a progressive English educated young group was raised to spread education in the city. The group imbued with the spirit of the homeland movement set up libraries in the city.

The then all Indian Congress General Secretary Jatindra Mohan Sengupta's father Jatra Mohan Sengupta, Kedarnath Dasgupta, Abdul Karim Sahitya Bisharad, Congress leader Haris Chandar Datta and Moulvi Abdus Sattar led the movement. British government allotted the Laldighi pond bank to establish the library.

Earlier, Buckland mooring (ghat) and hall room were constructed in memory of English magistrate Buckland here. Later, it was named Buckland ghat public library and reading room, the only standard library in Chittagong.

Municipal public library was established in January 1904. The then municipality chairman E Good Esq played a vital



Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) Public Library building on the southern side of the historical Laldighi in the port city.

role in establishing the library during the British rule. New Lieutenant Governor Bamfield Fuler of East Bengal and Assam visited the library.

Till the First World War, district magistrate was the municipal chairman and ex-officio chairman of the library.

A group of businessmen of Chittagong set up 'Chattal Prasun' in Kolkata in 1910 and transferred its books and furniture to the library the same year. Chittagong Sahitya Parishad, a branch of Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, donated all of its books in 1913 to the library.

Sahitya Parishad arranged its study circles and monthly and annual session at the library hall room.

Prof Anupam Sen said Prof Shashanka Mohan Sen, a teacher of Calcutta University, passed away in 1928. After his death, his wife Manikuntala Sen gave 3,000 books to the library from their family library. Poet Jibendra Kumar Datta and poet Ramani Ranjan Sen also gave huge books to the library, Prof Sen said, adding that the prime authors of British and Pakistan eras donated their books to the library.

Sen said he used the library in the early fifties and sixties.

"I think there are a huge number of world class and exceptional literary, history and science books in the library".

Termining it a treasure trove of knowledge, Prof Sen urged the CCC to preserve the rare collections by building a computerised modern library.

Sayedra Parvin, a librarian at the library, said in rainy season many books are destroyed due to old structure of the building.

"We do not get sufficient budget from the CCC to buy new books," she said, adding that they get only Tk 50,000 a year, which is inadequate to maintain the library.

She said the library has no room to display the rare collection of books, manuscripts and computer to maintain catalogue of the books.

"Our prime need is a building where we will ensure preservation of the store of the invaluable resource," she told.

When asked, CCC Secretary Md Shamsuddoha said they have formed a 14-member sub-committee to construct a new building for the library.



the week that was

Dr Jahangir Complex opens

"If proper respect is not shown to the sage, no wise men will emerge in the society." Premier University Vice Chancellor Dr Anupam Sen said this while he was inaugurating Dr Mohammad Jahangir Complex in city's North Kattoli on Friday.

To preserve the memory of Rotarian, social activist and Dr Mohammad Jahangir, UTSA -- a voluntary development organisation, established the complex.

Ward Councillor Nisar Uddin Ahmed, special guest of the function, said Dr Jahangir Complex is an asset for the residents of North Kattoli and they should come forward for its proper use. Visually impaired Mohammad Hasan presented life history of Dr Mohammad Jahangir at the programme.

UTSA Vice-president Dr Shahana Begum, Anwarul Kabir Chowdhury, Dastagir Alam and Abida Azad also spoke at the function.

Winter clothes distributed

Winter clothes were distributed among the destitute women at Shilpakala Academy auditorium by voluntary women's organisation 'Ananna Mahila Unnayan Samity'.

Social activist Md Shamsul Alam in his speech as the chief guest urged all to come forward to help of the destitute. He said such activities would encourage the others to come forward in humanitarian works.

Dr Shahadat Hossain inaugurated the programme with sports organiser Moshui Alam Swapan in the chair.

Dr Shahadat said young generation should come forward to distribute winter clothes among the cold-hit people.

Ananna Mahila Unnayan Samity President Nadia Tasmin Nipa, rights activist Neyamat Ullah Touhid and Iftekher Uddin Ahmed also spoke at the programme.

FFs' get-together on March 5



Leaders of Muktiyoddha Krira Chakra welcomes Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister Md Abdul Karim at circuit house in the port city on Thursday.

A team of Muktiyoddha Krira Chakra led by its convener and commander of Muktiyoddha Sangsad, Chittagong district unit, Md Shahabuddin made a courtesy call on Md Abdul Karim, principal secretary to the prime minister at circuit house in the port city on Thursday.

Shahabuddin briefed Karim about problems of freedom fighters and requested him to attend their get-together in Chittagong on March 5.

Karim said he would attend the get-together if Muktiyoddha Sangsad Chairman Major General (Retd) Helal Morshed Khan attend it.

Mabubul Alam Chowdhury, Sarwar Jaman Dulu, Md Abu Jafar Azad and manager of Krira Chakra were present at the meeting.

CU journos meet VC

Chittagong University (CU) Vice Chancellor Prof Md Alauddin called upon the newly elected CU Journalists' Association leaders to play role to increase image of the university.

Prof Alauddin made the call when the journalists meet him at his office on Sunday.

He said society expects objective reporting from journalists as they are mirrors of the society.

Later, the leaders placed wreaths at the grave of former VC Prof Abu Yusuf.

Association new President Omar Faruque, Vice President Mir Hosain Majumdar and General Secretary Sujan Ghose were present on the occasion.

Japan embassy official pledges support

Masayuki Taga, Counsellor of Japan Embassy, Dhaka met Chittagong Chamber President Murshed Murad Ibrahim at the latter's chamber on Thursday.

Appreciating the existing good diplomatic relations between Bangladesh and Japan, Masayuki pledged to work with Chittagong chamber to further improve the relationship.

Describing Bangladesh as a potential country, he said Japan would always extend all out support and cooperation to help socio-economic development of Bangladesh.

Chamber Senior Vice-President Mahbul Alam, Vice-President Nurun Newaz Salim, directors Shahin Alam and Morshed Arif Chowdhury, Consul General Md Nurul Islam and Chamber's member Abdul Qayyum Chowdhury were present on the occasion.

Call to eliminate child labour

Aparajeyo-Bangladesh, a non-government organisation (NGO), who are working with the disadvantaged children organised a roundtable titled "Consultation on global march against child labour" at a city hotel on Wednesday with Prof Dr AQM Sirajul Islam Chowdhury in the chair.

The Executive Director of Aparajeyo-Bangladesh and Chairperson of Child Rights Forum of Bangladesh, Wahida Banu moderated the roundtable.

Speakers at the discussion pledged to work together to eliminate child labour from the society. They also emphasised proper education for the underprivileged children.

Nurul Islam urges Mahiuddin to admit fault

Awami league lawmaker Nurul Islam Bsc on Saturday urged his rival ABM. Mahiuddin Chowdhury to admit his fault for division in the party.

He was exchanging views with the journalists in a restaurant in the port city on the eve of the completion of two years of his tenure as a lawmaker.

Nurul Islam blamed Mahiuddin for creating division in the party. He also briefed journalists about the development works in his constituency in the last two years. He sought cooperation of everybody, including journalists, so that he can take initiatives to start more development projects in his constituency.

Jati Sangha Park losing attraction

ARUN BIKASH DEY

Jati Sangha Park is losing its attraction gradually as it lacks amusement facilities for the visitors. They also feel insecure there as vagrants roam the park without any resistance.

Only five parks are available for the city dwellers. Of them, only two have free access for the people. Jati Sangha Park is one of the two.

Local Councillor Syed Golam Haider Mintu said the park has been established by filling a big pond in the Panchlaish Residential Area (PRA) in 1964. The Public Works Department (PWD) established the park with a view to providing some open space to the city dwellers. The pond including the open space was fenced in 1968. According to Ahmedul Huq, Estate officer of Chittagong City Corporation (CCC), the park was handed over to the then Chittagong Municipal Corporation in 1969. The park was called PRA Park. It was named Jati Sangha Park (United Nations Park) in 2002 in accordance with a proposal of the Ministry of Local Government.

The park situated on one acre of land is abound with trees like mango, jackfruit, black berry, coconut, nut, Mehagani, Gamari, Akashmani, Arjun, Rain tree, Raj Karai, Krishnachura and Shishu. A beautiful pond in the park enhances its beauty. There is also an amoeba-shaped tank inside the park. Fishes, specially Telapia, are seen playing in the tank water, charming the visitors. The visitors throw various food items like "muri," for the fishes into the tank.

The garden enriched the park with various attractive flowers such as dalia, ganda, sunflower, swarnakuthi, joba, red rose, white rose, rabon and daisy.

It remains open for the visitors from 4:00pm to 8:00pm managed by 11 staff.

Aziz Ahmed, a staff, said on an average around 100 visitors come everyday that increase on Friday or any public holiday up to 500. People from all age groups including men, women, children, students and workers visit the park. Most of them are from middle or low income group.



Entrance, top, and the interior, below, of Jati Sangha Park in the Panchlaish Residential Area.

Pushpita Chakrabarty, a visitor, said the park could be the most sought after place for amusement for the city dwellers. Due to the negligence of the authorities, its facet is not up-to-date and it falls short of minimum facilities for the visitors.

She said there is no bench to sit, security measure is very poor, the boundary wall is so low that any miscreant can enter the park by jumping the wall and can easily escape after committing crimes.

Raktim Chowdhury, a student of class three, was disappointed on not finding any sort of playing instrument for children. His father Pritam Chowdhury

said he could not fulfil his son's dream of riding a swing or a merry-go-round.

Shahedul Azam, an executive of Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE), said whenever he gets scope he visits the park as it is one of his favourite places in the city. The park is afflicted with many problems, including inadequate security measures, he added.

Sources said the park area becomes more vulnerable after 8:00pm as floating sex workers try to attract their clients creating nuisance. Drug addicts choose the area as it remains dark at night and get together to take drugs after 8:00pm. Police arrested a fugitive criminal from the area around 10:00pm on Friday.

Nobojyoti Khisa, officer-in-charge of Panchlaish Police Station, said two mobile teams regularly conduct drive in the area to maintain law and order.

Mayor M Manjur Alam said they have already taken some initiatives to renovate the park with modern facilities, including a swimming pool for the children. The boundary wall will also be elevated and swing and benches will be set up. Some additional lights will immediately be provided to the park area, he added.

Dr Tahmina Banu, a specialist on child health, said they used to play in the park in childhood and now the park is very pitiable. She emphasised having the availability of more open spaces in the port city so that the children can grow up well both physically and mentally.

The city dwellers have been demanding for open spaces and other amusement centres like parks for a long time. But the authorities do not bother to the demands of the city dwellers. Moreover in many cases it is seen that they put the existing parks rather in their dilapidated condition and do not take steps to modernise these. Jati Sangha Park is now struggling for survival. Authorities have given assurance several times for taking initiatives to renovate the park with modern facilities. But promises still remain to be fulfilled.



PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS