

## Making museums

**In conversation with Nazneen Haque Mimi: Designing museums**

Journeyman, a design company, has been involved in many museum projects' interior designing. Nazneen Haque Mimi, an interior consultant, and a key individual of the company, worked in a number of these initiatives.

One of the latest projects she was involved in is Toshakhana Museum, which inaugurated last month. The museum on Bijoy Sarani is home to a vast collection of gifts received by a number of prime ministers and presidents of Bangladesh.

For example, the floor dedicated to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman has a rare collection of his photographs and gifts, including soil samples from the moon gifted to him by Neil Armstrong.

They kept the large space open, and did not make separate rooms to create a strong visual impact, Mimi said. "So, if you are standing halfway on the ramp or walkway - when you are between two floors - you will be able to see much of both."

Her subtle use of Jamdani motifs on the false ceiling is also noteworthy, as she says it is a glorious part of our heritage.

Her first museum project was the renovation of four galleries (37-40) at the National Museum, which collectively focus on Bengalis' freedom and liberation war.

"From the British era to the War which gave us an independent country, the challenge was to present to the visitors the detailed history of Bangladesh within a limited space and budget," she said. "A mezzanine (i.e. intermediate) floor was introduced. Ropes and panels from the ceiling were hung to present numerous photographs of freedom fighters."

She also worked on the nakshi kantha gallery and the gallery of musical instruments.

"We got rid of many false ceilings to create larger spaces and made glass boxes to display exhibits more effectively," she said. She enjoyed particularly the gallery with the skeleton of a whale. "The exhibit was there before, but we painted a blue background and created a better suited ambience for the remains of the aquatic animal."

"I always try to incorporate e-kiosks as well, as a lot of information can be put in a small space," she further said.

Her other projects include 7 March Museum inside Rokeya Hall, Bijoy Ketan Museum and a folk museum awaiting inauguration - among many others.

"I am just a part of the teams involved," she humbly said. "A project is all about teamwork. I thank all the curators, historians, the authorities of the museums - everyone who I have worked alongside with."

**By M H Haider**



## In awe of uniforms of valour

To pay a tribute to the men and women who serve our country and make countless sacrifices – sometimes even putting their own lives at risk – visit Bangladesh Military Museum, Bangladesh Air Force Museum, and Liberation War Museum of Bangladesh Police.

The three institutions provide sneak peeks to the laymen about the valour and glory of these services, and the extraordi-

Museum in Bijoy Sarani celebrates the glories and heritages of our army. From kiosks containing rare footages and valuable information about the War, to a selection of weaponry and various other objects, the museum is surely an interesting one.

The notion of valour and pride – a sense of something larger than life – that is often associated with the armed forces



nary and adventurous experiences the men and women who are employed in such services face.

Bangladesh Air Force Museum is home to a collection of aircrafts, which includes aeroplanes that were used for training purposes, and a couple of historic planes as well. The Dakota aircraft, for example, was used as a war plane in 1971.

The museum allows you to get on board of a number of these vehicles, hence giving you the opportunity to explore more – although you will need to buy extra tickets for that.

The open-air museum is spacious, with a park and a gaming arcade inside the overall complex.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Military

is very much evident in the exhibits.

"I love seeing the monstrous vehicles kept at the museum," said Hasib Ahmed, a college student and a car enthusiast. "One of my favourites is a Jeep with a mounted recoilless rifle – looks strong and cold-blooded!"

He also admires a blue Jeep Wagoner, which was used by none other than General M.A.G. Osmani, Commander-in-Chief of Bangladesh Armed Forces during the Liberation War.

On the other hand, Liberation War Museum of Bangladesh Police (located in Rajarbagh Police Lines) features the actions of the police throughout the ages, and speaks of its contributions during the War.

A visit will be quite a unique experi-



ence as the museum offers you a look at different historic events through the eyes of the police. To illustrate, one of the display boards highlights its role in the general elections of 1970. "A platoon of security force deployed in each polling station consisted of six members of Ansar headed by a Police constable," it says.

Be it a selection of arms used by the police in the British era or the horse cart which was gifted to the police chief by the king of Bhawal and kept by the stable in Rajarbagh Police Lines, the museum has a wide array of relics.

An example would be the warning bell which was rung at the attack on the area by the Pakistani army on the night of 25 March, 1971. Also showcased is the historic transceiver that was used on that night to transmit the news of that attack.

The museum also pays tribute to several members of the police force who had lost their lives in the War – through a mix of words, photographs, and everyday objects owned by the martyrs.

Pay your tribute too, to the uniforms of valour, by visiting these museums – to understand and appreciate the lives of those who wear them.

### **Weekly closure**

Bangladesh Military Museum and Liberation War Museum of Bangladesh Police: Wednesday. Bangladesh Air Force Museum is open every day.

**By M H Haider**

**Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed/LS Archive**