

BANGABANDHU NOVO THEATRE

Stumbling to take young minds to the stars

|| HELEMUL ALAM AND HASAN MEER ||



DHAKA VIBE

Bangabandhu Novo Theatre requires proper attention. Many of its displays have become non-functional while the place needs more interactive exhibits to attract young minds. The photos were taken recently.

PHOTO: HASAN MEER

It's dead of night. There's an eerie silence all around. In the limitless, cloudless sky above, millions of stars can be seen glittering. There's the constellation and that one in the distant is the Orion -- all seem to be moving in a rhythmic and orderly way -- that too in an almost touchable distance!

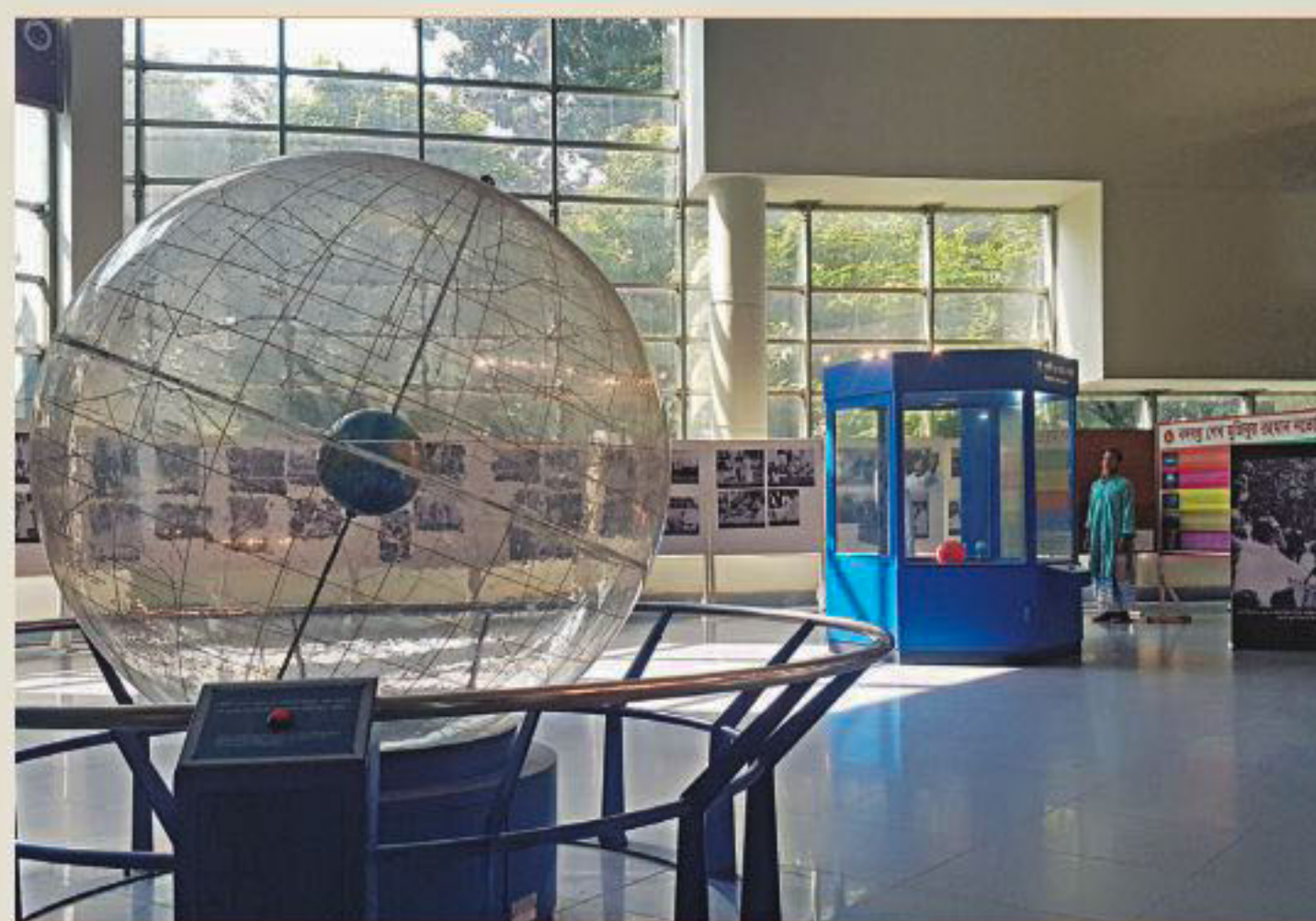
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Novo Theatre is supposed to take one on such a journey to the stars.

This non-formal science educational institution was established with an objective

planetarium, combined with a large format motion picture system. According to ministry sources, the country's lone planetarium was constructed at a cost of Tk 123 crore.

However, during multiple visits over the last two weeks, these reporters saw only a handful of people visiting the place.

From afar, it looks grand with the dome and pillars next to it standing tall above ground. After walking along a wide space in front of the novo theatre with nothing but an unkempt lawn and



Disappointed, a child asked his father, "Can we go now?" "Let's try upstairs," replied his father, Saidul Hasan, a private service holder.

But the elevator did not work. A security guard looked around for the person in-charge but to no avail. "He must have taken a break," he said.

The father and son took the stairs. The second floor did not impress the eight-year-old either. There was more empty spaces and a lone 5D movie theatre, operated by an unresponsive staff member.

By this time, the child, Sajal, was quite hungry. The father-son duo climbed down two more stairs and went to the cafeteria. There was more empty space with a row of chairs next to a food stand, featuring bland and nondescript items.

But the saving grace was the planetarium shows, which featured five separate screenings relating to astronomy. A documentary on Bangabandhu and the Liberation War is also screened prior to those.

"My son enjoyed it immensely," said Saidul. "I

hope, they will add more shows like this."

There's also an exhibit called "Digital and Scientific Exhibits", where some features worked and some did not, and a "Nuclear Power Information Centre" that was closed. The novo theatre has a ride simulator, which has been out-of-order for years.

"I wish they would add more features," said Jahera Khanam Munia. The Bashabo resident visited the novo theatre with her six-year-old son on Friday.

Her son, Awanun Nabi Priyo, was busy trying out various functions of the displays. He became elated when some worked.

"I really wish they had some souvenirs or memorabilia that children could take home. The authorities could add a bookshop too with information on astronomy to attract eager little minds," said Md Arman Ahmed, a school teacher, who brought along his two daughters.

"This place needs to be upgraded," he said. "It looks and feels like a museum with

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to "provide all citizens and students with proper knowledge and information on astronomy and encourage study of astronomical science".

Unfortunately, due to lack of maintenance and student/children-friendly activities, it's not only failing its purpose, but also being unsuccessful in attracting visitors.

The project started in 1997 by the Ministry of Science and Technology. Inaugurated on September 25, 2004 at Bijoy Sarani in Tejgaon, the novo theatre has a tilted-dome

areas with stagnant dirty water which apparently were kept for fountains, and climbing a few stairs -- one will finally arrive at the place.

Once inside, another open space greets visitors. There's an exhibition -- Innovation Gallery -- on one side, showcasing models such as movements of planets around the sun, various space-related measurements and other replicas. All of them have multiple functions but none worked properly. The displays looked worn-out and uncared for.

AL LEADERSHIP

Joy yet to show any interest: Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's son Sajeeb Wazed Joy is not interested yet in taking any position in Awami League's central committee, party general secretary Obaidul Quader said yesterday.

The road transport and bridges minister also asked party-nominated MPs not to contest in the Awami League upazila councils.

Discussions surfaced in political arena regarding inclusion of Joy, also the prime minister's ICT affairs adviser, in the central committee after he was made a member of Rangpur's Pirganj upazila unit on Wednesday.

When Quader's attention was drawn to the issue at a press briefing at AL president's Dhanmondi office, he said, "It's also about his interest in the matter."

"When we ask our leader [Hasina] about it, she always says Joy does not want to join. He is yet to show any interest," Quader said.

"I keep telling her again and again about the issue of grooming Joy... It's her decision," he added.

Quader said Joy wants things to be the way they are at present.

He does not want to hold any official post in Awami League, added Quader. For example, demand was raised to nominate him [from Pirganj] in the December 30 national election, but he did not agree, he said.

"You can ask Joy when he comes to Bangladesh," the general secretary mentioned.

Regarding AL committees in the upcoming December 20 and 21 council,

Quader said it is the jurisdiction of AL president to decide whether those will be expanded.

"There is no alternative to Sheikh Hasina in Awami League. We need her for the country's development and for the greater good of people," he said.

Regarding change in the general secretary position, Quader said there could be aspirants for the post.

Everyone has a right to be a candidate for the position, but ultimately Hasina will take the decision, he stressed.

He said the upcoming AL national council will be held amid fanfare and festivity where leaders of the country's all registered political parties, including BNP, and diplomats from different countries will be invited.

About AL's Dhaka city councils, Quader said the two councils will be held on November 30.

On upazila councils, Quader said they are also instructing grassroots units so that MPs do not contest in the councils for top positions.

The AL president has already given an instruction in this regard. "But they can compete in the AL district councils," he said.

About BNP's demand for the release of Khaleda Zia, Quader said BNP leaders often say there is no alternative to waging a movement to free their chairperson. It proves that they have no trust in judiciary.

AL organising secretary and deputy minister for water resources AKM Enamul Haque Shamim, AL science and technology affairs secretary Abdus Sabur and its central leader SM Kamal Hossain, among others, were present at the press briefing.

Why no action against onion syndicate?

BNP asks govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP yesterday asked the home minister why the government is not conducting drives against onion syndicates despite the essential's soaring price.

"Onion price was Tk 200 on Thursday while it went up to Tk 250 today [yesterday]. The current trend suggests it will hit Tk 300 (per kg) very soon," said Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, party's senior joint secretary general.

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DHAKA TODAY

CONFERENCE

Engaging Youth in Ending Gender Based Violence
Organiser: Youth for Human Rights International Bangladesh
Venue: Northern University Bangladesh, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue
Time: 8am

WORKSHOP

Cinematography and Lighting
Organiser: International Academy of Film and Media
Venue: Lion Shopping Complex, Monipuripara
Time: 10am

FAIR

Tax Fair
Organiser: NBR
Venue: Officers' Club, Baily Road
Time: 10am

SESSION

Peace Summit: Fight against Internet Hate Speech
Venue: EMK Center
Time: 9:30am

FESTIVAL

International Theatre Festival
Organiser: Ministry of Cultural Affairs
Venue: Liberation War Museum, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar
Time: 6pm



Holding her 11-month-old child Kanta, Anita Rani of Barguna pleads to the prime minister to help find her husband Kamal Kanti Dey. On September 22, Kamal left for Dhaka and has been missing ever since. She was speaking at a human chain organised by Bangladesh National Hindu Parishad in front of Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



PHOTO OF THE DAY

ANISUR RAHMAN



Sitting side by side, a group of Santal women put stones on track at Moghbazar to form the trackbed. They said a contractor brought around 40 of them from Niamatpur of Naogaon to Dhaka for the job. They are being paid Tk 500 per day. These women were mostly involved in farming back home and earned around Tk 300 per day but they took this opportunity for additional income. Duration of work on the 3km stretch of track is three months, and the women are staying in a makeshift shed beside it near FDC. The photo was taken recently.

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Resolution on Rohingya rights situation adopted at UN

UNB, Dhaka

A resolution on the situation of human rights of Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar has been adopted at the third committee of the 74th UN General Assembly (UNGA) in New York.

The resolution, placed by the United Arab Emirates and Finland on behalf of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the European Union (EU), received 140 votes in its favour and nine votes against it with 32 countries taking no side.

The adopted resolution will be placed at the General Assembly plenary in the next month, said Permanent Mission of Bangladesh to the

'Rajuk mobile court forced us to sign statement'

Ain O Salish Kendra executive director claims

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rights body Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) yesterday alleged that Rajuk's mobile court, which fined and ordered the organisation to vacate its Lalmatia office in two months, forced them to sign a statement saying they have committed an offence.

"However, according to the Mobile Court Act, the accused can move the judicial court -- refuting the allegations," Sheepa Hafiza, executive director of the rights body, said at a press conference at its Lalmatia office yesterday.

She alleged that the executive magistrate threatened to seal the office and arrest ASK officials when they tried to refute the allegations against them.

"Without paying heed to any of our logic, the executive magistrate in a high-handed manner first charged us under three sections of the Building Construction Act, 1952. When we challenged them, showing the law, they charged us under one section -- 3(A) of the act," she said.

The mobile court led by Rajuk Executive

Magistrate Jesmin Aktar conducted the drive at the building that houses the ASK office on Thursday noon and demolished a part of its garage that was constructed flouting Rajuk-approved plan.

At one point, she went to the office and asked why the rights body was operating in a residential area, the ASK executive director said.

ASK authorities presented all the documents of renting the office and stated that they maintained all the agreements as tenant, and that it is not a commercial organisation but a non-profit rights body registered -- with the same address -- under the NGO Affairs Bureau.

Besides, there are many business entities, schools and other social welfare-related organisations in the area, they pointed out.

Despite that, the magistrate fined ASK Tk 2 lakh and ordered them to leave the building in two months. The magistrate did not give ASK a copy of the order, despite a written request, Sheepa Hafiza added.

She said such law is applicable to the

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