



PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Heritage at stake

Country’s lone Ethnological Museum neglected, outdated

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

The country’s lone Ethnological Museum, located in Chattogram’s Agrabad area, could be turned into one of the most sought after tourist destinations in the country, had the authorities concerned promoted it properly.

Although the museum was launched over 48 years ago, the representation of almost half of the ethnic minority communities listed in the government gazette is absent from the museum.

During a recent visit to the museum, this correspondent saw that the roof of the hall rooms and galleries was vulnerable, with plasters falling off at different places.

Staffers said rainwater leaks from the rooftop all the time and harm the objects in hall rooms and galleries.

Wishing anonymity, a staffer said most of the lights in hall rooms and galleries have gone out of order but have not been replaced for years.

The exhibits in the museum, consisting of 11 rooms and four galleries, represent the lifestyle and culture of 26 ethnic minority communities in the country, including 12 such communities from Chattogram Hill Tracts.

However, the government, through a gazette notification on March 23, 2019, listed a total of 50 ethnic minority communities in the country.

This implies that the representation of almost half of the ethnic minorities listed by the government is absent from the museum.

Rubel Majumder, a visitor at the museum, said, “This is a poor representation. Moreover, it is difficult to see the objects in the low-light rooms.”

The first room of gallery one displays the portraits of national heroes and intellectuals of the country. Village life of the Pathan community in Pakistan and ethnological objects of India, Australia and Kirghiz are also displayed.

The second room of the same gallery displays photographs of rural life in Bangladesh.



Minati Barua, a staffer at the museum, said she has been working there for 30 years. “I enjoy my job of helping visitors by answering their queries.”

She said foreign visitors crowd the museum during winter.

The entry fee for the museum is Tk 20. However, school students can enter the museum with Tk 5. The museum remains closed on Sundays.

Contacted, Dr Ataur Rahman, deputy director of the Department of Archeology and also the keeper of the museum, said due to a fund crisis, they could not replace the lights.

When asked about the roof’s condition, he said, “I have written to the head office for the renovation of the museum building.”

Ataur said he joined the museum on June 17 and since then, he has been taking initiatives to encourage people to visit the museum and know about the ethnic minorities of the country.

“I have visited around 400 educational institutions to invite students and teachers to visit the museum,” he said.

He said if a bus is allocated to carry the students to and from the museum, it could be helpful for its promotion and publicity.

“The National Museum has buses for students,” he added.

Contacted, Dr Saifuddin Chowdhury, a former professor of the folklore department at Rajshahi University, said although the government listed 50 ethnic minority communities, there are around 75 such communities in the country.

Ratan Chandra Pandit, director general of the Department of Archeology, said an ethnological museum should have representation from all the ethnic minorities in the country.

“I will write to the Ministry of Cultural Affairs for a project to renovate the museum under which, the representation of all ethnic minorities would be ensured. The building would also be renovated with the project,” he said.

Access road to be finally accessible

Traffic movement on Bakalia road may start from June next year

SIFAYET ULLAH

The long-awaited Bakalia access road, built to ease traffic and improve connectivity with south Chattogram from port city, will be opened for vehicular movements soon, said project officials.

Around 80 percent work of the road, being constructed under the Chattogram Development Authority (CDA), have been completed, said project director Kazi Kader Neawz.

He said the formal inauguration of the access road, recommended in the city’s 1995 master plan, is expected to be held in June next year.

Once it is implemented, residents of greater Bakalia and south Chattogram will be able to reach the central part of the city within a very short time, he added.

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecnc)



approved the road’s construction on September 6 in 2016, which will connect Siraj-ud-Doula road and Shah Amanat bridge.

Constructed at an estimated cost of Tk 206 crore, the deadline for the 1.5km and 60-feet wide road was June 2019.

But the project has been delayed due to conflicts surrounding a 10-storey building on the alignment of the project and land acquisition cases. Currently, the project has been extended till June 2023.

CDA had taken an alternative step for construction of the road, avoiding the existing building built on the way. The alignment of the access road will now be diverted to the northern side of the structure. The decision was taken following formation of a probe body over the matter, their report and recommendations from experts of Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology.

Based on their alternative proposals, the planning ministry approved the revised DPP (development project proposal) for the Bakalia access road, and construction works began again, said officials.

CDA sources said the project would cost Tk 7 crore more. If the authorities had stuck to their original plans, the building had to be demolished and the project cost would have jumped to Tk 15 crore more, as the building’s owner had to be compensated.



Diabetes summit on Nov 13

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

To observe World Diabetes Day 2022, an extensive programme has been chalked out in the port city on November 13.

Dept of Endocrinology of Chattogram Medical College, Disease Biology and Molecular Epidemiology Research Group Chattogram, and Next Generation Sequencing, Research and Innovation Lab Chattogram of Chittagong University will organise the event.

The summit will take place at the Theatre Institute Chattogram, said Dr Adnan Mannan, an organiser and associate professor, Dept of Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology at CU. A number of researchers from CU, CMC, Asian University for Women and Chattogram Diabetic Hospital will participate in the daylong event.

More than 500 students from 45 institutions are also expected to be present.

Quality shoes at an affordable price

VISITING PORT CITY’S LARGEST ROADSIDE SHOE MARKET

ARUN BIKASH DEY

Shahedul Azam was seen roaming in the footpaths of Chattogram’s Agrabad Commercial Area to buy loafers over the weekend.

After walking for a few minutes, he came to a place where at least hundred traders have set up makeshift shoe stalls on both sides of the footpath, selling shoes at an affordable rate.

Although the shoe hub has left little to no room for pedestrians to walk, no one seemed to be bothered by it. Most were seen stopping to see the shoes on display, trying on a few slippers and bargaining with the hawkers.

Shahedul, a private job holder, came to know about the shoe hub from a friend. He went from one stall to another to make sure he gets the best deal. Finally, he stopped in front of a stall, selected a pair of formal shoes and asked for their price.

The trader initially demanded Tk 2,500, but later the shoes were sold for Tk 1,700 after much negotiation.

Shahedul said, “I’ve



never bought shoes from here before, but some of my friends said quality shoes are available here at a cheaper rate.”

Echoing the same, Tapash Mallick, a schoolteacher, said, “I’ve been buying shoes from here for almost 10 years.”

“As a seasoned buyer, I know the

risks attached to buying products from such places,” Tapash noted. “They put foreign brand logos on locally made shoes and sell them...”

While visiting the area, this correspondent saw shoes of different brands being sold in the area. There is no way for an average customer to understand which one’s original and which one’s fake. However, the traders claimed that most of the branded shoes were original. The

shoes which are sold at Tk 4,000 to Tk 5,000 in showrooms are sold at Tk 1,200 to Tk 2,500 here.

WHERE DO THE ‘BRANDED’ SHOES COME FROM?

Traders said the factories of Chattogram Export Processing Zone (CEPZ) are the main source of shoes in this hub. Local shoe factories also supply shoes here.

When asked how branded shoes are sold here at a cheaper rate, trader Md Shahid said, “Shoes made for export in CEPZ factories are often rejected by foreign buyers over minor issues.”

“Those are then sold by factories at a low price. After going through a few hands, the shoes end up in the footpath market. For this reason, quality shoes are available here at low prices.”

Preferring anonymity, a trader said sometimes stolen shoes are also sold here.

Kamal Uddin, another trader, said, “Mostly people from middle and lower income groups and students come here to buy shoes.”

However, traders confessed that some hawkers scam customers by selling fake branded shoes.

The city’s largest roadside shoe market is open throughout the year from 10:00am to 10:00pm, but sales reach its peak during major festivals.