

Netaji comes alive in box artwork

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PAINTINGS CELEBRATE CITY HERITAGE

Calcutta: A day before his birth anniversary, the road outside Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's house is dotted with electricity distribution boxes painted with his portraits and slogans.

Several such boxes along various roads have been painted with pictures of famous people associated with the roads as part of an initiative to celebrate the city's heritage.

One of the boxes on Elgin Road has Bose's words "freedom is not given, it is taken" along with his portrait in signature military uniform.

Bose in the picture looks at the slogan as if to drive home the message. The picture also has a line saying he lived at 38/2 Elgin Road.

"Netaji was a man of many parts. We want to celebrate him and, at the same time, make people aware that he lived along this road," communications consultant Mudar Patherya, the man behind the project, said. "The road itself is part of history."

Artists Santosh Das and Ranjit Das have been painting the boxes in the city.

Santosh Das, 55, who lives in Howrah's Salkia has been painting for various advertising agencies for a decade. "This project is exciting. People often walk up to us to know more about the campaign," he said.

There are two more such painted boxes on Elgin Road. One highlights Bose's army, Azad Hind Fauj, while the other his face with the words "still alive".

The colour combination lends a certain degree of spunk to the artwork that is



Electric distribution boxes along Elgin Road painted with pictures of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and (below) of Usha Uthup, Surrendra Paul and Biddu on boxes along Park Street. Pictures by Pradip Sanyal



see mostly in university and college posters.

The project, which is still to have an official name, started in September with boxes along Lake Temple Road, Patherya, whose agency, Trisys, is behind the artwork, said.

"Few people know that Satyajit Ray, Soumitra Chatterjee and Hemanta Mukherjee lived along Lake Temple Road for a substantial time.

We painted the boxes with their portraits and there was an instant connect." The road has more than 10 painted boxes, he said.

Patherya thanked the CESC, which gave permission to use their boxes, for their co-operation. The only condition: the number of the box should be prominent even after the artwork.

Park Street is not far behind in the celebration of

neighbourhoods. The boxes on either side of the road celebrate people and institutions associated with the road.

Right in front of Oly Pub, a box has the portrait of Arathoon Stephen. Born in Iran in 1861, Stephen was an Armenian in Calcutta. He is believed to have spent a huge sum in shaping the city's growth. Stephen was a shareholder and the first managing director of Stephen Court Ltd.

He founded the Grand hotel in Calcutta.

From Usha Uthup to Surrendra Paul and from Skyroom to Someplace Else, the boxes have been painted with various subjects.

Patherya said he was inspired by the artwork in public places in London, celebrating the city's past.

Next in line are Mirza Ghalib Street and Theatre Road, he said.