

DOWN TO EARTH

Architectural Conservation in City

By A S M Nurunnabi

Lately our interest has been aroused by the new concept of architectural conservation which is the subject of a book recently published by the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh on the basis of the proceedings of a seminar on the subject held in April last. In this book, our interest centres, among other things, on the future proposals, problems and prospects of conservation study of Dhaka.

We learn that in the context of Bangladesh, the expression "architectural conservation" suggests the maintaining of the presence of the past in the present that involves preserving, restoring and/or adapting old buildings; designing new ones that respect their neighbours and the continuity of history; weaving old and new together in an urban fabric of variety and richness. The advocates of conservation claim that it is through the dynamic act of conservation that we can observe and develop a regard and knowledge of traditions and the guiding principles that constitute a tangible link with the past. In other words, a reflection and knowledge about our own selves.

Architectural conservation is viewed as a tool of socio-economic re-vitalisation and community uplift. It is regarded as a concern of urban design and urban planning. This has necessitated a multi-disciplinary approach towards conservation. Today architectural conservation draws the skill of archaeologists, ethnographers, sociologists, historians, architects, landscape architects, engineers and the town planners.

ment of Architecture, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET), formulated a project proposal for a conservation study entitled the 'Conservation Study of Dhaka City - Its Historical Buildings'. The study which is being financed by the Ford Foundation with a three-year project period, will identify, select and document significant buildings of old Dhaka.

The study which is already underway is the first of its kind in Bangladesh. Conservation initiative has begun with a listing of significant built forms and environments in need of conservation, to be followed by inventory analysis for priority selection. It is, however, felt that the present knowledge gap on existing building stock is a major constraining factor.

Among the important problems encountered in course of the study are that in many cases the original urban fabric, immediate surrounding to historical structures or monuments have either been destroyed, lost their original use and character or have been hidden by relatively new structures.

As a consequence, there is a possibility of structures of greater conservation value being left over unintentionally. Another unfortunate aspect highlighted is that our buildings are constant victims of various destructive processes.

Ruplal House in Farashganj has been vandalised by virtue of its present use as a wholesale market and godown. Outrageous excesses of construction have totally engulfed the oldest mosque in Dhaka, the Mosque of Binat Bibi. Old buildings of Shakhari Bazar are being pulled down to make way for new constructions, destabilising its socio-economic structures and the traditional milieu.

We are told that the destructive forces are so rampant and powerful in replacing and defacing old buildings and historical places that the future of our past is indeed seriously at stake. The most serious issue faced today in the architectural conservation is the conflict of interest between the aims of conservation and the desire for modernisation. The problem is more acute in the urban areas of the developing countries where there is increasing rejection of traditional values and architecture by many classes of society. Contemporary city administrators are said to be reluctant to become involved in architectural conservation because of problems and complexities of land ownership, rehousing and political wrangles.

It was emphasised that architectural conservation is yet to be a wider public and professional concern, and the contemporary philosophy and concepts of architectural conservation is yet to gain currency. What is practised here is archaeological preservation based on the principles and legislations introduced a century ago. Due to the restrictive policy followed in archaeological preservation e.g. a building must be 100 years old to be designated as historic property, significant portion of the country's architectural heritage remains outside the scope of architectural conservation.

In view of the promise that the concept of conservation holds for the future of the urban environment, it was underscored that it is only the greater awareness among the general public, politicians, administrators, researchers, historians, professionals, and users and their combined efforts that can help to arrest the threat to our urban and architectural legacies.



A procession of 14-party anti-communal students' organisation towards the Engineers' Institution to protest a meeting of the Islamic Chhatra Shibir was confronted by police at the Shahbagh crossing in the city yesterday.

3 killed, 17 injured in separate incidents

By DMCH Correspondent

Three people including a minor boy were killed and 17 more injured in separate incidents in the country yesterday.

An auto-rickshaw driver Shah Alam, 25, was killed when a speeding truck knocked down his auto-rickshaw at Tejaon area in the city in the afternoon.

Fatally injured Alam was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where he succumbed to his injuries at around 2:30 pm.

Tejaon police seized the truck from the spot, but the truck driver escaped.

At least six persons suffered bullet injuries when two groups of people clashed and exchanged gunshots over a football match at Malibag Chowdhurypara yesterday evening.

Hasina

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Sheikh Hasina also Leader of the Opposition in Parliament said such gesture and activities of the government party leaders are not only against the free and fair elections, but also designed to unlawfully influence the voting.

More than 500 leaders and workers of Mohammadpur led by the BNP leader and former commissioner Sadeq Khan met with her at 29, Minto Road and joined the party.

Those who joined the Awami League included industrialist and chairman of the Rayer Bazar Market Committee Mofazzuddin, former vice-president of the Mohammadpur thana BNP Murad Thakur, social worker Abdur Rashid, vice-chairman of the Rayer Bazar Municipal Corporation Market Nazir Hossain, Abul Hossain, businessmen Majibur Rahman and Manirul Islam and ex-president of the BNP Ward No 5 Majibur Rahman.

PM: Family

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and ensure their basic demands, Begum Zia said.

The Prime Minister said intense economic pressure and social evolution had brought changes in the traditional system and customs of the families and the 'nuclear family', based on wife and husband, son and daughter, had occupied its place.

In such a 'nuclear family' the members like mother, father, brother and sister are not given proper attention, Begum Zia said and added that as a result the bond of cordiality among the members of the family is lessening. Whereas, she said the family is the abode of peace and the base of the society.

The Prime Minister said despite resource constraint her government had taken various programmes for poverty alleviation and the socio-economic development encompassing the families and their members.

Professionals

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Loud voices of the militant professionals spilled out of the 'in-camera' meeting of the Prokrichi council alleging that the Press Note had "undermined the democratic movement of the country's professionals."

The Government, through a Press Note Wednesday night, transformed 50 per cent posts of the National Pay Scale-9 to Pay Scale-7 as selection grade and also upgraded the posts of nine cadres.

The Press Note came under fire from the professionals because it mentioned the upgradation of nine cadres, including five engineering cadres — and not the agriculture or health cadres.

A speaker at the council meeting was heard saying: "We are not fighting for our pay hike but for a greater cause — that is burial of the colonial administrative system."

Some of the councillors at the meeting also suggested rejecting the Press Note and going ahead with the en masse resignation programme.

Some 70 thousand doctors, engineers, agriculturists and non-administrative BCS cadre members are waging a campaign for reformation of the present bureaucracy.

Programmes

From Page 1 Col 5

midnight to avoid any possible clash.

The SBCS brought out a procession at around 11 am from Modhu's Canteen premises of Dhaka University yesterday morning which tried to march towards the meeting venue.

Police resisted the processionists from getting in to the Institute premises.

Meanwhile, the ICS had postponed its programme at the Engineers' Institute and held a rally at the north gate of the Baitul Mukarram Mosque at the same time.

Police took strict security measures round the ICS rally to avoid any violent incident. The Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee office which is close to the venue of the rally, was also guarded during this time.

BMA leaders

From Page 1 Col 8

lost his control while trying to avoid a rickshaw crossing the highway. The microbus was coming to Dhaka from Chandpur.

Dr Majed broke his right hand. Dr Huq received hit on his elbow joint while the rest sustained cut or hit injuries.

They were rushed to the Comilla hospital from where they were sent back to the capital.

The BMA leaders went to Chandpur to attend the annual general meeting of the Chandpur BMA unit.

Artho Rin

From Page 1 Col 4

Meanwhile, Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman has called a meeting of the Managing Directors and legal advisers of the banks to discuss steps to quicken the disposal of loan cases.

Besides finding out the legal flaws delaying the disposal of cases, the meeting is also likely to discuss the possibility of transferring some of the cases, like certificate cases, to the jurisdiction of general courts.

The Midnight File

Renewed fighting in Croatia unlikely

ZAGREB, Croatia, Dec 31: Renewed fighting in Croatia is unlikely because Serbia is weakened by international sanctions and under pressure to end the war in former Yugoslavia, Croatian President Franjo Tudjman said. Tudjman also said Croatia's army is stronger than in 1991, when Serbs captured about one-third of Croatian territory in a six-month war. "Serbia is internationally isolated and economically destroyed by sanctions," Tudjman said in a lengthy year-end interview on state TV Thursday, reports AP.

Sudan expels British envoy

LONDON, Dec 31: Britain told Sudan Friday to reconsider its expulsion of the British ambassador and gave Khartoum until Tuesday to explain its actions. The Foreign Office said retaliatory action such as expelling the Sudanese ambassador to Britain was "clearly one of the options" if a satisfactory response is not received. Sir Michael Burton, a senior Foreign Office official, told Sudan's charge d'affaires, Abdul Rahman Bakhit, that his government's explanation for the expulsion was "wholly inadequate," reports AP.

Code of conduct

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The draft code also calls for respecting the democratic rights of others, cooperating with the persons conducting the election and with the law-enforcing agency personnel, abiding by all election rules and making united efforts to ensure peaceful electioneering and polling.

The draft code has been framed in the light of the EC's earlier suggestions aimed at holding the city corporation polls peacefully and fairly.

The Chief Election Commissioner Justice Abdur Rouf placed the 31-point suggestion at a joint meeting of the major political parties, including the ruling BNP and the opposition Awami League, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and others on December 26.

The political parties agreed on almost all the proposals while the proposal to form a steering committee with representation of all the parties to assist the Election Commission in holding the elections smoothly was not accepted unanimously.

Demotions

From Page 1 Col 4

craft offshot some 5,000 ft from the touch-down point while landing amid stormy weather.

If the pilots had 7,100 ft runway passage in front of them, only then they could manage to stop the aircraft smoothly but they had only 6,000 ft. The captain had to brake hard to stop the 274-seater aircraft within 6,000 ft which caused the accident. The captain could not explain before the probe body why it happened, the source added.

The report has been submitted to the Chairman of the CAAB Air Commodore Shamser Ali, who will submit it to the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism for further action.

Meanwhile, the damaged aircraft has been repaired at a cost of Tk 60 crore and sent to Rome, Italy, for d-checking at the workshop of Alitalia, the maintenance agency for Biman.

The Industries Minister said this kind of export-oriented project would greatly contribute in narrowing down the trade imbalance between the two countries.

Dr Manucher Towhid, Managing Director of KAFCO, BCIC chairman Waseq al-Azad, were among others present on the occasion.

After suspension of work for about a year, work on the KAFCO project resumed from October 1, 1992 after re-negotiation of the contract with the present government.

Indo-Pak talks open tomorrow

Last chance to resolve Kashmir issue, warns Islamabad

ISLAMABAD, Dec 31: Pakistan, expressing pessimism over the outcome of the forthcoming talks with India, today warned India that the weekend session would be the last chance to peacefully resolve the Kashmir dispute, reports AFP.

"We have afforded India an opportunity to prove their good faith" in reaching a negotiated settlement of the Kashmir issue, Foreign Minister Sardar Assef Ahmed Ali told a news conference here.

Pakistan, he said had agreed to hold the foreign-secretary level two-day talks starting in Islamabad Sunday "very, very difficult circumstances."

"But there is no state of optimism," the minister said following a statement issued by his Indian counterpart, Dinesh Singh, on the eve of the talks,

that Kashmir was "irrevocably" part of India.

Stressing that the November 24 joint declaration had stated that Kashmir would be discussed in "totality," the minister forewarned that Pakistan would refuse to continue the dialogue if the Indian side indulged in "purposeless" discussion.

However, he said the Indian government had not fulfilled its commitment of reducing 'repression' in the northern Himalayan state which was Pakistan's 'bottom line' to enter into a dialogue.

The killings continue in the Indian held Kashmir, villages are being torched and death in custody are reported regularly, he said: Adding that "all I feel is extreme sadness."

Answering a question that if the atmosphere was so pessimistic why were the two sides holding the talks, he said, "We believe it is a civilised way to resolve the disputes."

Pakistan made a commitment and "unlike India, we stand by our commitment," the minister added.

One more Shibir activist dies in hospital

By Staff Correspondent

One more Islamic Chhatra Shibir (ICS) activist, injured in a bomb explosion at Tongi Tuesday night, died at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday.

Reza, 23, succumbed to his injuries at around 10 in the morning.

Economy '93

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At the same time the wage push subsequent to public sector wage award to industrial workers had hurt the exporters. In balance, the export sector has shown growth owing largely to continued growth in exports. Imports are also showing some growth.

Bangladesh's gross international reserve continued to grow during the first half of the current financial year. The October reserve level was 235 crore dollars — 12.6 per cent higher than the reserve level in July.

The combination of low inflation, lack of acceleration in exports and imports and growing levels of reserve is symptomatic of stagnation. Given her low level of income, Bangladesh cannot afford this stagnation.

The strategy that was drawn up to come out of the stagnation was to use the annual development plan (ADP) to inject about Taka 9700 crores as public sector investment in the economy. Investment spending level in the first four months is much lower than the pro-rata target. With inter-cadre rivalry among government officials at its peak it is likely that there will be further deceleration in public investment.

Private investment is not doing any better. In spite of two cuts in bank rates, commercial banks are using deposit money for the purchase of government papers because of poor interest in term loans. Unconfirmed reports say that the private sector banks, which did not lower lending rates earlier, are planning to do so in the future.

The outlook for the next six months is that the economy will remain stable — but there will be very little movement forward.

JCD founding anniversary today

The Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) will observe its 15th founding anniversary across the country today, reports UNB.

The JCD was launched on January 1 in 1979 with an avowed aim to establish violence-free campus and production-oriented education in the country.

Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman took the initiative of floating the organisation as the student wing of BNP.

To observe the anniversary, JCD has chalked out elaborate programmes which include hoisting of national and organisational flags at party offices, placing wreaths at the mazar of Ziaur Rahman, rally, discussion and milad mahfil.

As part of its central programme, the JCD leaders and activists will place wreaths at the mazar to Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman in the morning. Later, they will bring out a colourful procession from the Dhaka University campus and hold a rally in front of the Public Library.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia is expected to join the JCD rally at 10.30 am.

The JCD central body has instructed all its units to observe the founding anniversary in a befitting manner.

Prohibition on traffic movements

All traffic movements from the southern side of the PG crossing near Shahbagh to TSC crossing have been prohibited from 6 am to 6 pm today, reports BSS.

All heavy transports including bus, trucks and mini buses have been advised to avoid road from the Sheraton crossing to the PG Hospital, from the Mat-sya Bhaban to the PG Hospital, from the Kanta Ban towards PG Hospital, from Nilkhet police station towards the TSC and from the Doel crossing toward the TSC and follow alternate roads from 9 am to 3 pm today.

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