



Nabaratna temple uncared for in Sirajgonj

AFTER a hazardous journey on the Dhaka-Bogra highway, one reaches Hatikumrul village in Sirajgonj. Here stands the temple named Nabaratna Mondir, with its terracotta and antiques. However, on a closer look, one is shocked to see the historically important temple. A significant portion of the monument has been damaged due to the lack of proper maintenance and care. The main room of the temple, on the first floor, is still in somewhat good condition in comparison with other rooms. However, some parts of the other rooms have already been turned into ruins.

A reliable official of the Archaeology Department said that most of the rooms of the temple have been destroyed along with its terracotta and artistic design. He revealed that another four old temples in adjoining areas, including Shiva Mondir, are also being damaged. Nabaratna Mondir was built on almost the same design as Kantuzir Mondir in Dinajpur. However, the beauty and the artistic design of the temple have been ruined. On the contrary, the Kantuzir Mondir is almost intact because of the Department's maintenance and care.

During the visit of the temple one would find that, violating the existing archeological rule, some interested visitors wrote their lewd comments on the structure. What's

even worse is that some bricks and terracotta had been pulled out from its original possession and taken away without any resistance.

Officials of the Archaeological Department said that the temple was declared as protected in the year 1987. However over the last 18 years, the authority has allocated some money for maintenance only once. Nevertheless the officials still believe it is possible to restore



the temple to its original glory-- provided the Government allocates the required funds for renovation.

In his publication *Ancient Monuments of East Pakistan*, archaeologist Doctor Syed Mhamud-Ul- Hassan said that the temple was built in the early 17th century. He also observed in his publication that the temple was damaged in the earthquake in the year 1879. He mentioned in his publications that one Brahmin Zamindar Debendra Bhadury established the temple about 100 years before the earthquake.

It is observed that the east-west corridor of the ground floor has lost its previous beauty as the roof had been damaged because of negligence. Some local people built their houses and cultivated different crops, including bananas, adjacent



to the temple. Archaeology Department officials said there was a proposal to acquire the land around the temple many years ago but the government didn't pay any heed to it.

Some local people reported to the authority that the temple premises have turned into a safe haven for drug addicts. Officials of the Archaeology Department admitted to the authenticity of the report and said the protection of the temple couldn't be ensured for want of manpower and necessary funds

.....
Story : MD. HASIBUR RAHMAN BILU
Photo : SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

