

Restoring endangered glory

Exhibition on urban conservation



One of the buildings used by Brahmo Samaj

KARIM WAHEED

It is believed that a society that disregards its heritage loses its soul. Heritage is not just a record of the past; it's one of the key elements that shape up the urban identity -- at present and for future. Cities around the world have proven that conservation of heritage adds both economic and cultural value to the community. However, in most cases the reality is old historic sites are at risk of being destroyed in the name of modernisation and economic development. The process of preservation is a shared responsibility of government, proponents and members of a community.

These issues and more were discussed at the inauguration of the three-day exhibition, seminar and workshop held at British Council on March 15. The exhibition titled *Old but New, New but Old* -- jointly organised by British Council, Bangladesh and North South University (NSU) -- features one set of posters from UK and three sets from Bangladesh. The posters reveal the sharp contrast between urban conservation processes in the two countries.

ABM Abdul Hawk Chowdhury, secretary, Ministry of Cultural Affairs inaugurated the exhibition. Architect Moshabbar Hussein, president, Institute of Architects Bangladesh attended the event as the special guest. Richard Sunderland, acting director, British Council and Professor Mahbubur Rahman, chairman, Department of Architecture, NSU also spoke at the event.

The posters from UK highlight achievements in urban conservation powered by economic development, legislation and an overall encouraging atmosphere. Restoration implemented in neighbourhoods including Gateshead Quays, Birmingham's Bull Ring, Coin Street on London's South Bank and others are featured in the posters.

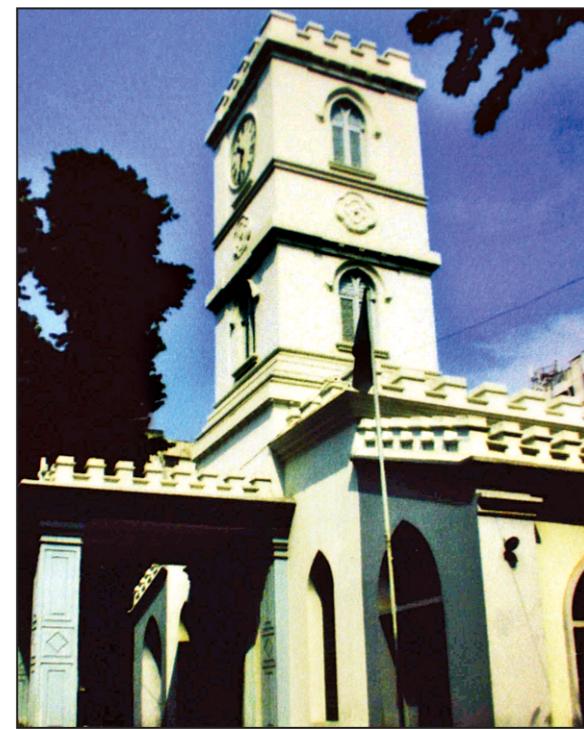
The Bangladeshi posters feature few of many historically significant sites and buildings that deserve to be conserved. The restoration, however, is being barred by lack of awareness



A house in Old Dhaka desperately in need of restoration

and expertise as well as economic reasons.

These posters -- prepared by students of NSU and volunteers of Urban Study Group as part of their studies -- feature



St. Thomas Church

three areas: Bahadur Shah Park (originally known as Victoria Park), Panamnagar in Sonargaon and Shankharibazar.

The posters provide history, existing plans, materials used, structural elements, details on designs and proposed restoration of edifices that have witnessed a century and in some cases more.

Photographs and accompanying text highlight the historic significance of buildings used by 'Brahmo Samaj'. The Brahmo movement in Dhaka started in the first half on 19th century. The progressive community introduced and operated several educational institutions and publications. The site, to the south of Jagannath University, initially housed a Brahmo school. Two small dilapidating bungalow type buildings now exist (a temple and a library). Continued misuse and pressures from developers now threaten their existence.

History of the Dafra Hostel is quite intriguing. The Anglo-Persian branch of Mahasiswa Madrasah, was established in 1906 and was converted into a school 10 years later. The school moved to its current location in 1945. During World War II, the building was used as Air Raid Protection Brigade Office. At present, Dafra Muslim Hostel -- a small two-storied pavilion type structure built in Mughal style -- exists at the site. The building has four openings topped with multi-foiled arches, an extended cornice on dentils and parapet with floral motifs.

One of the oldest Anglican churches in the region (built in 1819) -- St. Thomas Church -- has also been featured. Inmates of Dhaka jail provided labour in the construction of the church that includes a clock tower over its west entrance. Delicate stone and brick works are still as immaculate as they have been for nearly two centuries. The church underwent an extensive renovation in 2005.

The exhibition can be a source of information and inspiration to students as well as history, archaeology and architecture enthusiasts. The joint endeavour by British Council and NSU is commendable.

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National Theatre Festival '07 'Shundar Alir Pala': A tale of oppression

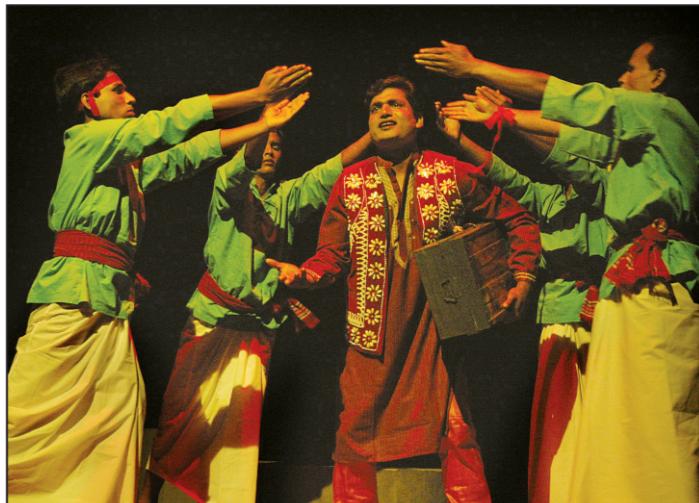
It is the misfortune of Bangladeshi peasants that despite producing crops, the harvests are logged at the houses of feudal lords. Over the decades, regardless of changes in the government, little changes have been made to the system that deprives proletarians of their rights.

Featuring a Union Parishad Chairman named Shundar Ali and his exploitation of the masses, Kamal Mahfuz Hadi's play *Shundar Alir Kissa* brings to light a tale of oppression.

To serve their personal interests, feudal lords such as Shundar Ali interferes in each and every aspect of the proletarians and turns their lives to hell.

Shundar Alir Kissa, a Gobindaganj Theatre, Gaibandha production, was staged at the Experimental Theatre Stage on March 15. The show was held as part of the ongoing National Theatre Festival arranged by Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation in association with Bangladesh Shilpkala Academy.

Through a chorus, director of the play Mohammad A Hannan lets the



A scene from *Shundar Alir Pala*

story unfold. Between the sequences the chorus appears on the stage and introduces a new scene. The tune of the chorus is highly influenced by *Bhawaiya*, a popular folk music genre of the northern part of the country. If the chorus is efficient during transition

Biplab Datta's set is simple yet effective. Abdulla Hel Sadi Talukdar as the lead singer of the chorus was impressive. Rest of the actors need to perform from the heart.

Script reading of 'Nimojon'



Acclaimed dramatist Selim Al Deen's play *Nimojon* is yet to be staged. As part of the script reading course MA students of the Department of Drama and Dramatics, Jahangir-nagar University recite scripts of plays on the stage.

A recital of *Nimojon* was held at the National Theatre Stage on March 15. Through voice modulation and music compositions students presented the fall of humanism featured in the play.

Nimojon is a chronological history of genocides that have taken place, questioning whether we are rational beings or not. Genocides carried out by humans are the reason for civilisations being destroyed. And the repetition of these brutal incidents has moved human beings from the superior position.

BY ERSHAD KAMOL

Adivasi Cultural Festival begins today

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

A three-day Adivasi Cultural Festival begins today in the city at Showkat Osman Memorial Auditorium of Central Public Library. The festival is organised by Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD). Adivasi artefacts and photographs will be displayed in the festival. Cultural shows will also be held daily in the evening during the festival.

The festival will be inaugurated by Basundhara Dewan, the first woman headman of the Chittagong Hill Tracts and Bazar Chowdhury, today at 4pm.

Santal, Khasi, Tanchangya, Bawm, Mandi, Chak, Chakma, Khyang, Tripura, Monipuri, Rakhaing, Malo and other cultural groups from indigenous communities all over the country will perform during the festival.



CULTURAL FEAST

National Theatre Festival

Organiser: Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation

In association with Bangladesh Shilpkala Academy

Time: 7pm

Venue: National Theatre Stage

March 17

Desh Natok

Jonne Jomantor

Venue: Experimental Theatre Hall

March 17

Theatre (Arambag)

Bolod

The schedule is subject to change

Baha festival: A boost for indigenous culture

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

economic freedom."

Thousands of Santals in Rajshahi began observing a three-day Baha (flower) festival at Sundarpur village of Kakkonhat in Godagari upazila recently.

Danish Ambassador Einar Hebogaard Jensen extended his greetings to the organisers. His message, pledging expansion of collaboration with government to supplement development of the indigenous communities, was read at the inaugural session.

Eminent litterateur Professor Hasan Azizul Haque formally inaugurated the festival. In his speech, he called upon the indigenous communities to struggle for safeguarding their own culture and heritage. "There are close relations between Bengali and Adivasi cultures. However there is a need for

special guests.

Professor Mesbah Kamal of Dhaka University and Moloy Kumar Bhumi of Rajshahi University attended as

executive director Bhagbot Tudu delivered welcome messages to thousands of Santals.

A paper on the cultural significance of the Baha festival was presented by a respected member of the Santal community, professor Albert Soren.

AUS, with assistance from OXFAM-GB and Manusher Jonno, organised the event.

The programme began amid dancing and singing accompanied by traditional drums and harmonium in the morning.

The Santal men and women went around houses and expressed greetings by throwing coloured water at each other.

A fair was organised at Sundarpur where weavers, cake makers and different NGOs had booked stalls for projecting indigenous lifestyle and history of their struggles.



Song and dance during the Baha festival

TV GUIDE

All programmes are in local time. The Daily Star will not be responsible for any change in the programme.

ATN BANGLA

10:30 Talk Show: Annyodishi
11:05 Swapner Muthophone
12:15 Shurer Madhuri
12:45 Shatdhin
01:30 Nari
03:45 Shobor Jonno
04:20 Shesh Okhro
05:30 Grameenphone Nari
06:20 Gondhoraj
08:00 Samsung Cine Aha
08:00 Mega Serial: The New Sabuj Opera
08:40 Drama Serial: Laal Neel Beguni
09:20 Mega Serial: Ek Jonomey

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06:50 Mon Amar Shondhan Kori
07:30 Ranger Manush
08:15 Drama Serial: Shonto Kutir
09:50 Somprordan
10:30 Urey Jay Bak Pokhi
12:10 Kichhu Kotha Kichhu Gaan

CHANNEL 1

08:40 Shuprobhat Bangladesh

09:30 Chokh Mele Dekhi

10:00 Magic Show

10:30 Bagaan Bilash

11:00 Drama: Ja Kichhu Chai Ei Jiboney

12:05 Telefilm: Sholhon

02:00 Olpo Sholpo Golpo

03:30 Parul Shomachar

Kathan

04:15 Fusion for Baul

06:00 Saaq Bela

06:30 Top News

06:45 Muktir Judho

07:00 Shurela Lagan

08:15 Drama Serial: Shunney Boshobash

09:00 Shondhi Khorey

09:30 Expression

04:25 Shoyer Shondhane

05:30 Muktijudho Protidin

06:00 Talk show

06:20 Drama Serial: Shath Goenda

07:50 Drama Serial: Kachhey

CHANNEL i

08:30 Shokaler Gaan
09:30 Shangbadpore

09:45 Public Reaction

09:50 Tritimatra

11:05 Na Bola Kotha

12:30 Citycell Taroka

01:05 Ebong Cinemar Gaan

01:30 Shangbadpore

01:45 Public Reaction

02:40 Magazine

Programme: Shath Rang

03:20 Crikha Guide

04:05 Crikha Bishwa Cup

04:25 Special

04:25 Shoyer Shondhane

05:30 Muktijudho Protidin

06:00 Talk show

06:20 Drama Serial: Shath Goenda

07:50 Drama Serial: Kachhey

08:45 Meteor Man

10:30 City Slickers 2

12:25 Jurassic Park III

02:00 Wildfires

03:30 Guess Who?

04:10 Flubber

05:25 Musafir Hoon Yaaron

06:10 Shomoy Oshomoy

11:40 Media Bhutan

07:50 Drama Serial: Kachhey

08:40 Talkshow: Apnar Ki Kichhu Bolar Achhey

09:00 Shomoy Oshomoy

11:40 Media Bhutan

07:50 Drama Serial: Kachhey