



the city that was

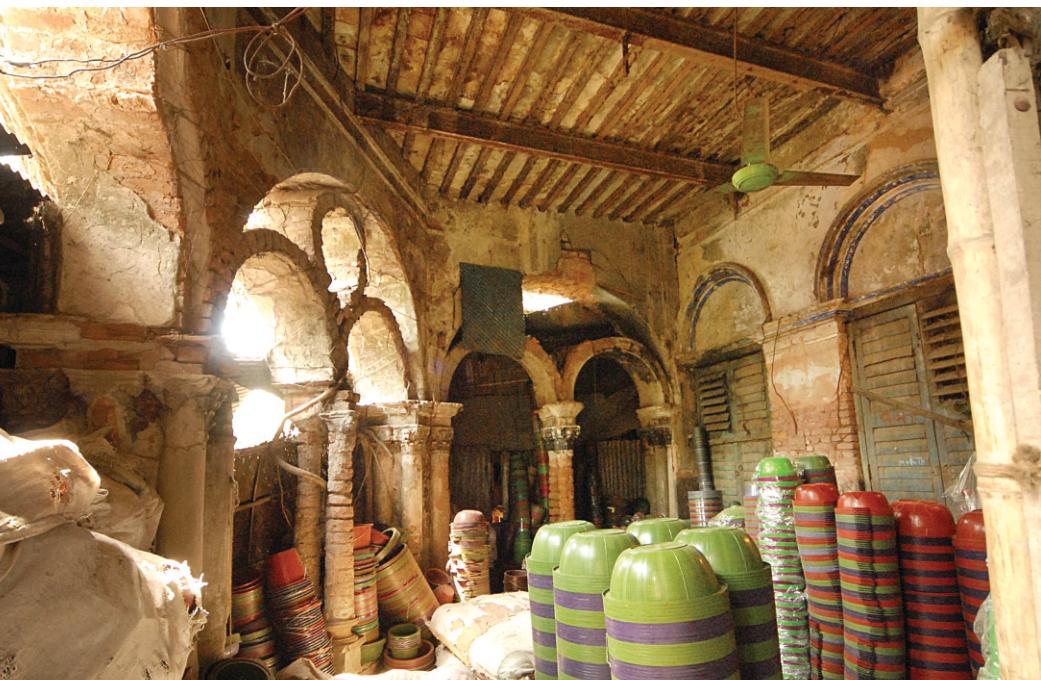
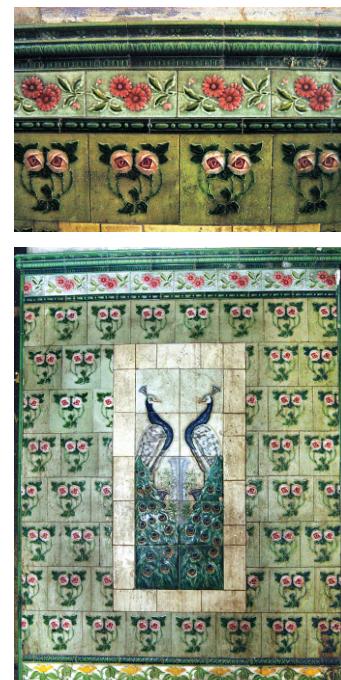
In old days, the present Shahidullah Hall area of Dhaka University was known as "Baag-e-Musa Kha". According to Hakim Habibur Rahman, the area was a garden and was famous as garden of Muslims. It was named after Musa Kha, who was the son of Isa Kha, one of the famous Baro Bhuiyan. Musa Kha was captured when he lost a war with Subader Islam Kha. However, Subader Islam Kha was very kind to him.

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DHAKA'S HIDDEN PEARLS-2

Bhawal Rajas' relics in a shambles

DURDANA GHIAS



STAR PHOTO

The retreat of Bhawal Rajas at Nolgola now being used as a place of making cement bags and manufacturing recycled plastic products (right). A part of the decorative tiled walls of the abode (left).

Mounds of plastic shoe soles, wads of cement bags and other plastic wastes are what now adorn the Nolgola Rajbari in Mitford area, once housing a bustling Kachhri (tax office) and a fine retreat of the Bhawal Rajas in the city.

When this correspondent walked into the premises of the 120-year old Rajbari, large sacks of shoe soles were seen piled up on both sides of the entrance and baskets containing plastic wastes strewn here and there.

Big arches, brick turrets, wooden bars in the ceiling, 10-foot high wooden doors, decorative motifs of dancing peacocks and sloping brick pattern were speaking of a time that was left in the distant past.

Floral motifs made of tiles were pilfered and broken off the walls leaving the house denuded of its ornamental beauties. Parts of the ceiling were covered with tin shed as the brick shed and wooden bars were missing in some places.

Clothes were being dried on the ramparts of the Rajbari. In a corner of the Rajbari, the inhabitants were cooking in a makeshift kitchen.

There are at least five structures in the compound -- all of them are now being used as small plastic recycling factories and for making cement bags. According to workers this place is being used as a factory for several decades. Some structures are being used as staff quarters of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC).

In terms of prestige, ancientness, extent and income, the Bhawal Estate was comparable only with the Dhaka Nawab Estate in Eastern Bengal. They had landed estates in Dhaka, Mymensingh, Faridpur and Bakerganj. Joydebpur was their headquarters.

Unlike most landlords the Bhawal Rajas attended Kachhri everyday.

Sir Krishna of this family first obtained Bhawal pargana in 1704 from Diwan Mursid Kuli Khan. Since then his family had been in charge of Bhawal till the abolition of zamindari system in 1951. Raja Kalinarayan Roy, who got titles

from the British government in 1878, was a famous landlord of this family.

Tawhid Amanullah, lecturer, Department of Architecture, Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology, said the architectural features of the Rajbari follows Roman architectural mode and resembles the style of the colonial period.

The Rajbari is a wall structure devoid of columns. The width of the wall is 15 to 20 inches. The tiles used on the walls are corbelled, he said.

"All the quarters inside the compound are built encircling a courtyard. This is a rare feature.

The main entrance has a true arch. The key stone, made of brick, in the middle takes the load. Inside the room the doors and windows have flat arches or lintels. True arch and flat arch are Roman features. Concrete was not used in lintels. These are common features of the colonial period," said Amanullah.

Md Shafiqul Alam, director, Department of Archaeology (DA), receive any letter from DA regarding the Rajbari. "Moreover, we wrote them [DA] several times to take the abbot of the Bhawals at Gazipur but they did not give any reply," he said.

Asked if they have any plan to enlist the Rajbari, AMB Abdul Howk Chowdhury, secretary, Ministry of Cultural Affairs, said: "Do you think it is of any use?"

Dr Sharifuddin Ahmed, professor, Department of History, DU and former director general of the National Archives, said that in 1850s the Nawabs and Rajas of Bengal grew a tendency to have a Kachhri Bari in Dhaka especially those who had estates in the

area.

Dhaka division.

The Bhawal Rajas owned most lands of this city so they needed to do tax related work staying near the city. High government officials, divisional commissioner, district judge and collector were posted in Dhaka. It was important to maintain a good rapport with them because of the strict law of paying tax, he said.

Secondly, Dhaka was the centre of best education, treatment and entertainment. The Rajas used to send their sons to the city so that they can come in touch of these amenities. According to historians, the Kachhri was possibly used as a retreat when the Rajas visited the city to collect taxes.

About the importance of conserving this place, Dr Sharifuddin said: "We, the present inhabitants of Dhaka owe two families; the Nawab family and the Bhawal Rajas. The Rajas opened a separate ward for women for the first time in Mitford Hospital when the society was very conservative. They also donated Tk 2 lakh for Curzon Hall and funded Kalimarayan scholarship for science students."

"Even if the Rajbari contains a little or no significant architectural features it has great historical values. It is not important that a dwelling should have important architectural features. USA preserved the slave cabins, which has no architectural features but those are parts of history. It is a part of our history. It is a spot from where modern city life started. It is our duty to conserve the place," he said.

city express

The latest crop of quotes from the city's press -- words worth repeating, we feel, for their humour, insight or sheer outrageousness. Star City does not necessarily support the opinions expressed in this column.

"Why would I seek political asylum here?"



-- Sheikh Hasina
Awami League chief

Told an interviewer of BBC Bangla Service in reply to his query on whether she would seek political asylum in UK or USA in the changed circumstances, on Saturday. Source: The Daily Star

"Freedom prevails. But this is not the freedom of normal circumstances"

-- Mainul Hosein
Law Adviser

Told reporters about the instructions given to mass media, on Thursday. Source: Prothom Alo

"We neither cut the hills nor did we destroy any forest. We only levelled the high land for the housing project"

-- Aminul Islam
Deputy Commissioner, Cox's Bazar

Told a reporter after an ecologically critical hill near Cox's Bazar has been levelled and its trees worth a few hundred crores of taka have been cut down and sold by the district administration to prepare residential plots for bureaucrats, on Monday. Source: The Daily Star

"... The decision was made 12 years ago and you should not talk much about that. You are talking too much. Be careful! We are on a government duty"

-- Firoz Ahmed

An engineer of Mirpur zone, National Housing Authority
Told a reporter while thousands of trees were being chopped down to construct a shopping mall on a land designated as green space in the city master plan and also a playground for children, on Tuesday. Source: The Daily Star

"Climate is changing every moment. We are now facing early winter, delayed winter, early rain, advanced flood, over rain, drought and rise of sea level due to global environmental changes"

-- Dr CS Karim

Agriculture and Environment Adviser
Said at the concluding session of a two-day long workshop on 'National Capacity Self-assessment for Global Environmental Management' in the city, on Monday. Source: The Daily Star

Compiled by Durdana Ghias

Unfit human hauliers run on city streets

SHAHNAZ PARVEEN

duration is already over. We will not issue certificates for them any more," said Abu Bakar Md Shahjahan, chairman, BRTA

"We will not permit import of these vehicles in the future," he added.

These human hauliers namely Laguna, Maxi, Nagar Paribahan, Navana service, Tista are plying on various routes from Gabtoli, Agargaon, Mirpur, Mohakhali, Gulistan, Mitford Hospital, Khilgaon, Bashabo and Taltola.

Conditions of these vehicles are completely wrecked. Commuters say these vehicles break down on the streets regularly. Most of these vehicles are driven by apprentice drivers,

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"We have asked the owners to dump these badly shaped vehicles. Still they are operating

them on the streets. To avoid law enforcers, they usually come out after dark," the BRTC chairman said.

"The owners know about the

terms given by BRTA. They do not come to us because with the current condition of the vehicles they will not get certificate form us."

These vehicles are run by CNG. There are allegations that substandard cylinders are used in some of the human hauliers, posing serious threat to the commuters.

"We conduct mobile court on Mondays and Thursdays to check for fitness of all vehicles. BRTA is not responsible to impound the vehicle from the street. We just issue certificates. DMP is supposed to enforce the law," said a BRTC source.

Transport workers however

said they had special arrange-

ments with the police but they are careful after the caretaker government took over.

They said mobile courts mostly conduct their operation in the morning. Human hauliers try to stay away from the streets during the morning.

Recent actions by the caretaker government changed the scenario on the BRTA premises at Mipur where a large number of vehicles are seen lined up for fitness certificates. Owners are not taking any chances and keeping their papers updated.

Owners of human hauliers, however, are not paying any heed.

Audio Piracy: Eating up music industry

DURDANA GHIAS

and singing other artistes' songs in concerts.

The idea of piracy started with the era of compact discs (CDs). With the advent of CDs, people started copying them at home and at commercial basis. A brand CD is first converted into mp3 format and then 20 pirated copies can be produced in 2 minutes through a machine called CD Tower.

Flimsiness, low bit rates and substandard sound quality are some features of these CDs sold at low prices. These CDs do not contain the address of the company.

The government is not addressing this issue seriously and losing Tk 0.25 per brand CD. Imposing hundred percent tax on CD (CD Recordable) and embargo on importing CD Tower are some steps to stop piracy, Tinku said.

Nazmul Haque Bhuiyan Khaled, owner, G-series, said that previously they sold around 30 lakh copies of an album but now the sale is hardly 30,000. "We are losing 90 percent revenue. This is slowly eating up the music companies."

The highest punishment for piracy is a fine of Tk 5 lakh, which is 'not enough' according to many. The situation has much improved after raids by the joint forces but the role of the police is



Pirated CDs are being sold on the footpath of Nilkhet.

not active enough, said sources. "When we seize pirated CDs and hand them over to the police most of the time the accused gets the lot back by bribing and the CDs are back to the market," alleged Tinku. "This is very frustrating."

Mirza Nurul Islam, chief executive officer, onirban.com Ltd and founder of onirban.com.bd, a website providing music news, live interviews and online concert, alleged that music websites are promoting piracy.

"Singers and producers put their efforts in making a piece of music. Their intellectual rights should be protected," he said.

About piracy through online websites, he said most of these sites are run by small artistes. Unable to sell songs to music companies they upload their songs on a website. But as their songs are unknown to people they do not know these sites. To make them listen to their sites they then start uploading songs of other prominent singers.

It takes \$40 to start a website, \$10 to buy a domain and the rest is spent on hosting. It takes only \$30 a year to maintain the website. "If IP addresses of these websites can be blocked from the server of submarine cable then it can be stopped," he said.

Babul Chowdhury, music producer, Don Music, said, "At the district level the piracy is going on in full swing. Local hoodlums are doing it under the protection of local administration. Earlier, we got orders from districts and advertised new albums in dailies. But now we do not advertise anymore because the

Syed Mohammad Nayeem, manager, admin, Ektaar Music, said, "Until recently the mobile companies were providing ring tones through agreements with illegal content providers. Recently we sent a letter to all mobile companies requesting them to share the revenue they collected by providing illegal ring

under process," said Nayeem. Artistes, on the other hand, express mixed reaction on the matter of piracy because of the music companies' reluctance in giving royalty.

Maqsood, a renowned singer, said, "On the international level artistes are paid royalty based on the sale of their album. But in Bangladesh the major music companies retain total ownership of the album after giving one-time payment to the artistes. So artistes hardly bother to protest in case of piracy."

A handful of companies, like Ektaar, Sound Machine, Arshi, ATN Music, have only recently started offering royalty, which is a positive development, but they still remain minor players in an otherwise huge industry, he said.

"It is rather ironic that the recording companies who are vocal against piracy today in fact began their business way back in the late 80's by pirating Hindi and English music and some are still doing the same. It is sheer hypocrisy that former pirates have now joined hands to beat 'new pirates'. No conscious musician can be a party to it. It is purely the business of the music companies to sort it out and the only way to do it is to introduce the royalty system," he added.

Albums released before festivals like Eid and Bangla Noboborsho are very popular in the market, but a very few customers know that all these are pirated products, said shopkeepers at CD outlets. "Dhaka is virtually a goldmine of pirated CDs. It is very hard to find a brand CD of English songs if you want to buy one," said a young music buff

tones to their subscribers with the music companies. Now they are quite aware of making contract with legal content providers."

"At present private radio channels are broadcasting songs taking verbal permission from us. A universal agreement between music companies and radio is