An Architect's Dhaka

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At that time it was in the middle of several extensive and elaborate gardens stretching from current Toyenbee Circular Road in the east to Sonargaon Janapad/Penetrator Road to the west, and from Paribag to Nimtali in north-south. A major part of it was developed during the early-Mughals as Bag-i-Padshahi out-of-town large gardens in part of Sujatpur and Chistia mahallas. The area repeatedly fell into decay from negligence as their patrons either left the city or became financially weakened, and was gradually encroached by marshes and jungles.

Magistrate Daws in the 1820s started to regenerate the beauty of the area by clearing the swamps and creating various recreational grounds mainly for the Europeans with the help of the jail convicts. The Chummery fittingly looked over a cricket ground to its west; further west of which was created the race course eventually taken over by the Nawabs, who also established a zoo to its north. To its east in Paltan and Topkhana, separated from the Nawab Ahsanullah's garden in Dilkhoosa by water bodies, was the cantonment and ordnance depot till early last century. So the Chummery was like a club where both colonial civil and military officers could mingle. It reciprocated the Gymkhana Club on the other side of the oval, and anybody could imagine the amount of fanfare, cheers, clapping and excitement accompanying horse racing, polo, cricket, croquet or golf part of the colonial culture.

However, after the end of British rule in the sub-continent, the building saw different uses ranging from the government officers bungalow, part of Salimullah Muslim Hall, Dhaka University Girls' Hostel, to headquarters of the Public Service Commission. It has been known as the CIRDAP House since 1985 when it was handed over to the Centre for Integrated Rural Development of Asia and the Pacific. However, it is more popularly known as the 'Chameli' house after a flower in colloquial language, as



Chummery in the 1990s after restoration

