It has now become a joke as there have been a dozen buildings in last one decade that I had documented and then they got demolished! That reminds me of one of my favourite movies 'Road to Perdition' where Judd Law playing a killer could take photographs of dying persons!

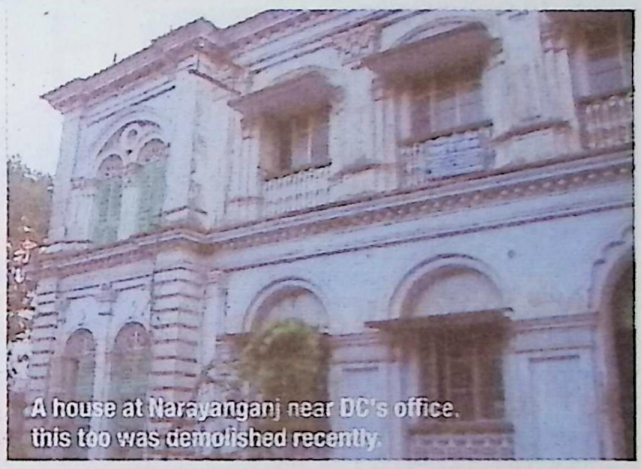
Although there was an attempt to update and prepare a comprehensive list of heritage structures that merit protection under the BCR 2007, progress has not been satisfactory. The DOA has a rudimentary and incomplete list that is rarely updated. It excludes many buildings and sites with merits. Part of the problem is in the definition of 'heritage' which DOA follows. For it age is the only yardstick for a structure to qualify as 'heritage'. Furthermore, it does not have adequate and skilled manpower, fund and above all vision for conservation of heritage. The IAB asked for fund to survey the existing building stock and recommend structures and sites for inclusion in the heritage list. Its heritage Cell once mobilised architecture students to identify and do preliminary documentation of heritage structures in Dhaka. Meanwhile the urban development committee formed a sub-committee to develop such a list whose progress is doubtful.

The rules have provisions on conservation of heritage buildings and sites. These include restrictions, special requirements and the mandatory special permission to build within 500 meters of any heritage structure. An annexure to the rules makes special provisions for three categories. These are enlisted buildings, restricted/ preserved areas and areas especially nominated or demarcated. According to the BCR 2007 the Rajuk shall prepare and/or update and maintain a list of heritage buildings, special structures and areas matching the above categories. The basis of the list could be identification by Rajuk, listing from DOA, suggestions from IAB, and/or from recognised professionals and experts on the subject. Unfortunately the BCR 2008 supposedly an improved version cut down many requirements in terms of preserving the heritage without the notice of experts that prepared it in 2006.

Until the early 1990's Bangladesh had no building code to ensure health, safety and hygiene for its citizens. Following recurrent fires in Ready Made Garment factories, collapse of buildings and loss of lives, for example death of construction workers as the roof of under-construction Mita Textile factory gave away (1984); death of students from collapse of a roof under repair in the Jagannath Hall of Dhaka University (1986); or death of workers in stampede and suffocation in a fire at the Beauty Garments in Mirpur (1989), demand for having our own building code was raised mainly by the architects. The government tried unsuccessfully to formulate this with the help of BUET experts. In 1993 it engaged a consulting firm to formulate the Bangladesh National Building Code (BNBC). I was lucky to be in the selected group who actually wrote the various parts of the 1400 page document in a record time.

The urge to follow the code in good faith did not succeed, except that some provisions were integrated into the 1996 Building Construction Rules making compliance must for approval of building plans. It was not until the 15th November 2006 that the Code became mandatory following an amendment of the 1952 Building Construction Act. Violation of the Code is an offence now punishable by a maximum of 7 years imprisonment and/or fine of Tk 50,000 (approx. US $ 700).

The BNBC ensures public safety, health and general welfare in so far as they are affected by design, construction, alteration, repair, removal, demolition, use or occupancy of buildings, structures or premises through structural strength, stability, means of egress, safety from fire and hazards, sanitation, light and ventilation. It has special provisions for preservation, restoration of historic, cultural and architecturally significant buildings as decided



A house at Narayanganj near DC's office. this too was demolished recently.



Almost demolished Jagannath Mandir in Tantibazaar that the Temple Committee initially agreed to conserve