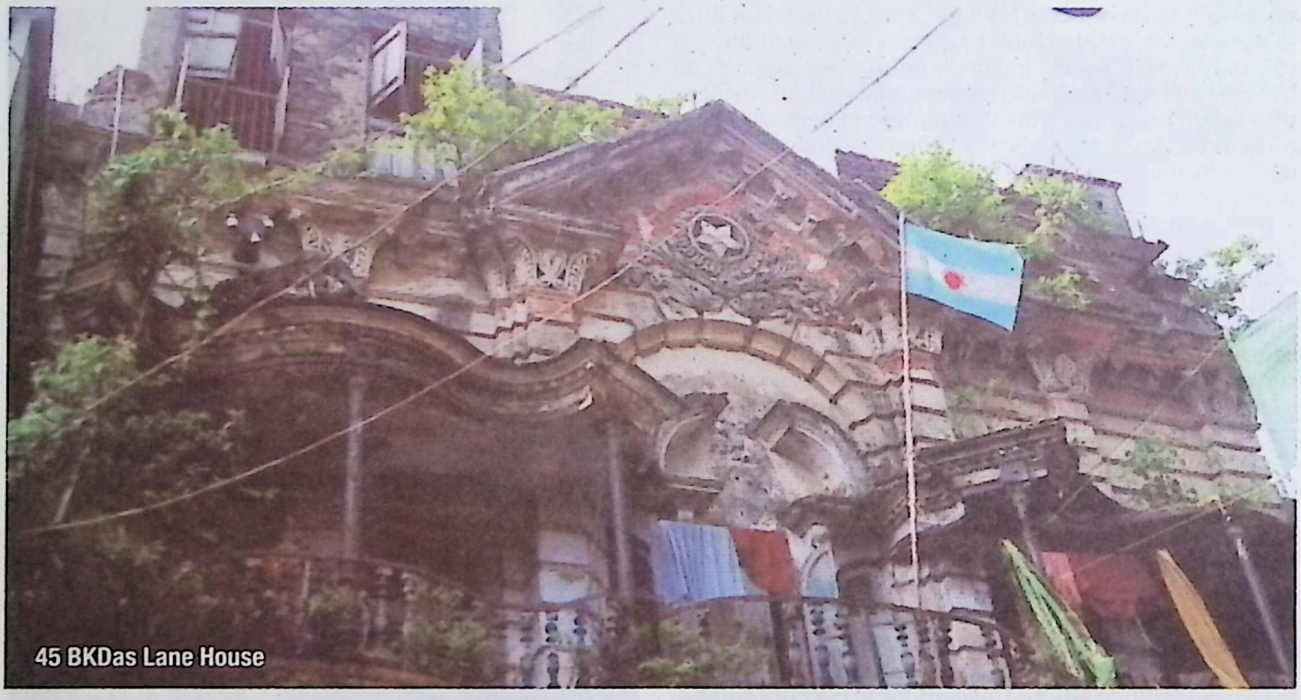
by a standing committee to be constituted under BNBC.

There are issues to be resolved before the code can be a part of general practice. Since the adoption of the BCR 2007, Rajuk has been insisting on full compliance to the Code. Many practicing architects and allied professionals are not yet fully conversant to follow the code in its entirety. To complicate matters further, there are ambiguities and contradictions and some provisions have become obsolete with time and access to new information, knowledge and technology.

For example, as the reach of fire ladder in Dhaka was up to the seventh floor height in 1993, the code asked for all higher buildings to have fire escape. Though fire ladder can now reach to at least 11 floors, the fire department is reluctant to make the Rule realistic. Although the code mandates 5-yearly review and revision, it has not seen any change since 1993. A national steering committee of which I am a member is now working on revising the code. There is no agency to enforce the code or any official to oversee and monitor its compliance.

The BNBC has special provisions for preservation and restoration of historic and architecturally valuable buildings. Accordingly it provides for a standing committee, which can frame additional/new provisions as and when necessary. Despite the suggestion of the code there is no standing committee on heritage conservation. As it does not have any mechanism for enforcement, historically important and architecturally valuable buildings have no protection and are under a constant threat of demolition.

More often than not, occupants or owners deface, modify or extend facades of architecturally valuable buildings without any consideration to aesthetic quality, form, value and compatibility. The recent extension of the Dhaka University Library Building is a visual affront to the work of a Bangladeshi master architect. Built in 1953, it is an early modern building in Bangladesh designed by Muzharul Islam. The authority recently started to build a mobile phone tower on the roof of the building. It became an eye sore amidst the serene tranquillity and the natural ambience of the university campus. Though protest from the architects and an apprehension of bad publicity made the authority stop the construction; but it has now proposed to demolish the building and construct three high-rise towers with Korean assistance.



45 BKDas Lane House

The extension to the Mosque in Kawran Bazaar is a clear example of good intentions paving the road to hell. The architect who worked on the extension had the good sense to respect the old mosque; yet the sensitivity, knowledge of history and principles of conservation are lacking. The mosque sits uncomfortably next to the unwieldy extension and development around it. So is the case of the historic old mosque, which the outer stadium almost shrouds from view; the designer or the builder did not bother to recognise its existence.

Many such changes and demolition of architecturally valuable buildings go unnoticed either by professionals, citizens or the media. From an economic perspective commercial interests perceive heritage structures as unproductive, useless or even inconvenient. Some even term them risky, vulnerable and uneconomic to justify change or demolition for a new beginning.

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