Complex and complicated property acquisition procedure has barred the DOA from preserving even the listed structures. The other prevalent view is that its paternalistic attitude is responsible for its failure. Yet conservation of Lalbag Fort, Haji Khwajah Shahbaz's Masjid and Mazaar, Khan Muhammad Mirdah's Masjid, Satgambudj Masjid and Mazaar, and the Eidgah undertaken by it in Dhaka is mention worthy.

The 1678 Lalbag Fort encloses a typical Mughal garden with few structures in ruins. Encroachment within the walls, destruction, defacement of different structures and changes in internal spaces, had put the fort in a sorry state. The two-storied block was partly damaged; bathhouse, niches were filled in and decorative panels plastered over. The DOA accomplished a good job in restoring the structure and converting it into a museum, but the pinkish finish on the exterior, rather than the original lustrous white, raised debates. It also worked on other structures: the Mosque, Tomb, gateway and rampart. It shied away from proper excavation and documentation of the intricate water supply system a network of terracotta pipes, an aqueduct, a water reservoir and several fountains.

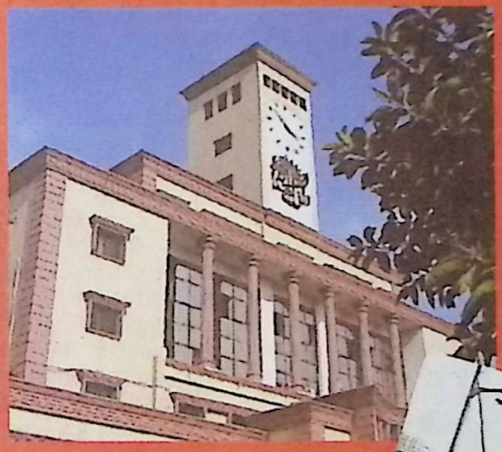
In 1950 the Eastern Circle of the Pakistan Directorate of Archaeology took over the Masjid and adjacent square mazaar of Haji Khwaja Shahbaz. The three domed oblong mosque built in 1679 was in a bad state of repair. The Directorate restored the dochala roof on the veranda of the tomb and the decorative features; reconstructed the brick podium and provided adequate provision for ablution and sanitation services. In a way the other two mosques built slightly later than this one bear similar features in a refined form.

Patronised by Qazi Ibadullah, the chief judge who was briefly the Naib Nazim in charge in Farrukhshiar's absence, Mirdha (Mirza) either built or supervised the construction of the Khan Muhammad Mirdah's Masjid at Atishkhana in 1704 or 1706. The typical three domed oblong structure rests on a vaulted 16' high tahkhana, surrounded by colonnades; there are 17 square chambers with flat brick roof connected from this, used either as shops or madrasa. The municipality for sometime used the space as a cowshed. A majestic 9' wide straight stair goes up from a large garden-yard through a narrow gate to the tahkhana roof (sahn); the basalt steps are joined by iron clamp. Along the front podium parapet are two small octagonal bastions. The mosque is surrounded by the sahn on all sides with a huzra to the northeast where the Imam lives and teaches Quran to children; part of it and the boundary walls look like late-additions.

There are three cusped archways on the eastern wall, echoed by three niches on the qibla wall; both the central darwaza and niche are taller. The single opening on north and south is closed with jali. Two lateral arches divide the interior, topped by three squat onion-domes embellished with blind merlons. The side domes are made smaller by using semi-pendentives. Four corner turrets elaborately stretched above the parapet have cupolas. Pinnacled pilasters border the entrances and mihrab on back wall; inside the mihrabs have floriated engaged colonettes, cusped arches, and elegantly moulded kanjuras. The façade is profusely panelled with ornamental merlons. To give an impression of imperial buildings done in red sandstone, masons used brick dust on outside walls.

SEE PAGE 26







After the Nagar Bhaban was built, Rajuk engaged the architect of BDR's Centenary Gate at Peelkhana for face-lifting of their own building which was once the symbol of Dhaka City