

Now-a-days, it is not too unfamiliar when a child is being abused sexually, by strangers and known people alike, including many different types of perpetrators and reprobates. Though in Bangladesh, Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) is still a very delicate issue, it is one of the most traumatising experiences for a child. To combat against such experiences, 'Breaking the Silence',

'Breaking the Silence' is working for raising awareness amongst children, caregivers & duty bearers to prevent sexual abuse. Along with these, the NGO also works on promoting social awareness, empowerment and capacity building, rescue and support, community based child protection and child friendly governance. "We are hopeful that this calendar will help create further

TO FIGHT AGAINST CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

NILIMA JAHAN
PHOTO: COURTESY

a Non-Government Organisation has been working relentlessly since 1994 and hence, is engaging with different types of awareness raising activities.

Very recently, 'Breaking the Silence' has unveiled a year calendar for 2016 themed 'Moments of Childhood' by Jewel Aich, the internationally renowned magician at the "New Perspective" event of Le Méridien Dhaka. Each calendar will be sold at 400 taka and the money will go to the NGO for working against the threat of child sexual abuse.

awareness and raise funds to address this issue" says Roksana Sultana, Executive Director of Breaking the Silence.

Le Meridien Dhaka is the official hospitality partner for the calendar by hosting the event and helping them set up a sales kiosk in their lobby. They are also promoting the sales of the calendar as large numbers of global audiences are engaged with them. The 'New Perspective' is a signature series of events by brand Le Méridien to allow innovative people draw together new insights and arouse



The calendar has been ideated and shot by Rajesh Ramakrishnan, a passionate photographer who is also the Managing Director of Perfetti Van Melle Bangladesh Private Ltd. It demonstrates different quick looks and flashes of children of Bangladesh. Their joys, mischief, friendship and fun are the main focus which has been depicted onto the calendar.

"I have been shooting for the calendar since the last few years to support a good cause. I think, it is one of my small efforts to give something to the society", says Ramakrishnan. "It was a great fun to work on this calendar and I have revived some outstanding moments of my childhood while capturing these images", he adds to express his perception about the pictures.

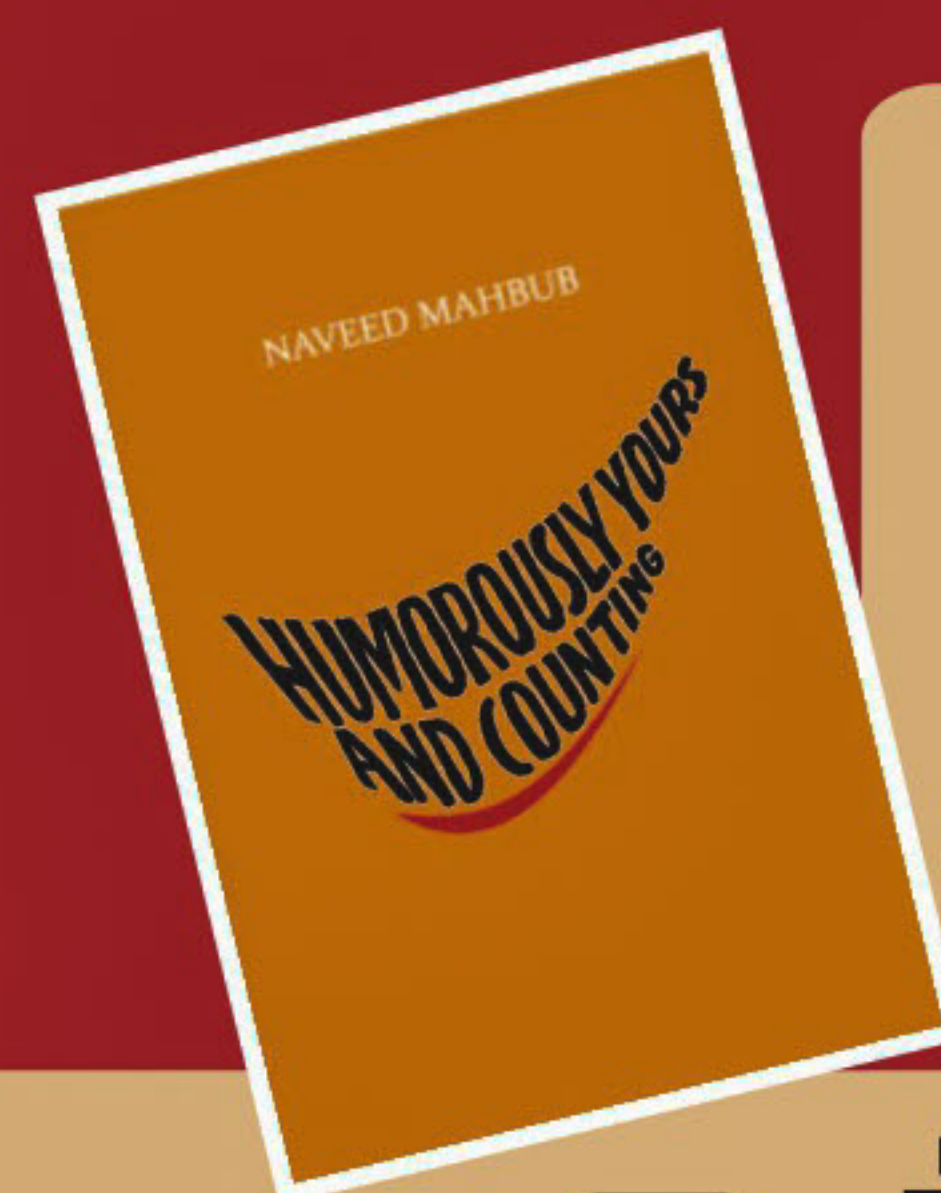
dialogues through interactive experiences that explore an artist's talent. Le Meridien came up with the series in 2012 and it has been ongoing at every Le Meridien hotel.

"When Rajesh informed me that he was working on this project, it seemed perfectly in tune with our format. Moreover, the issue raised gave us an opportunity to be a part of a larger and significant objective, which is just the spirit of Le Méridien Dhaka", explains Ashwani Nayar, General Manager of Le Méridien Dhaka.

The event was also attended by eminent personalities from the field of businesses, arts and community service. By sponsoring the paper and printing of the calendar, Coca-Cola also supported this good cause.



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AWARENESS

HERITAGE

Local myth says, the two hundred years old building on the hill-top was built by Portuguese pirates. There was a tunnel from the building that connected Karnaphuli River through which pirates would frequent secretly. From the two tower's tops, guards would conduct surveillance all around. Hence locals call it "the Portuguese Fort". However, historians say that the myth does not have any historic evidence. Instead, it is a British colonial building that was used as the first court of Chittagong. Hence, its name is 'Darul Adalat'.

Although built by the English during their rule, the name 'Darul Adalat' is a Persian word which means "court building". Historians say that this is because soon after the British took over the rule from Mir Kashim in 1760, they

continued to use Persian as their official language till 1837.

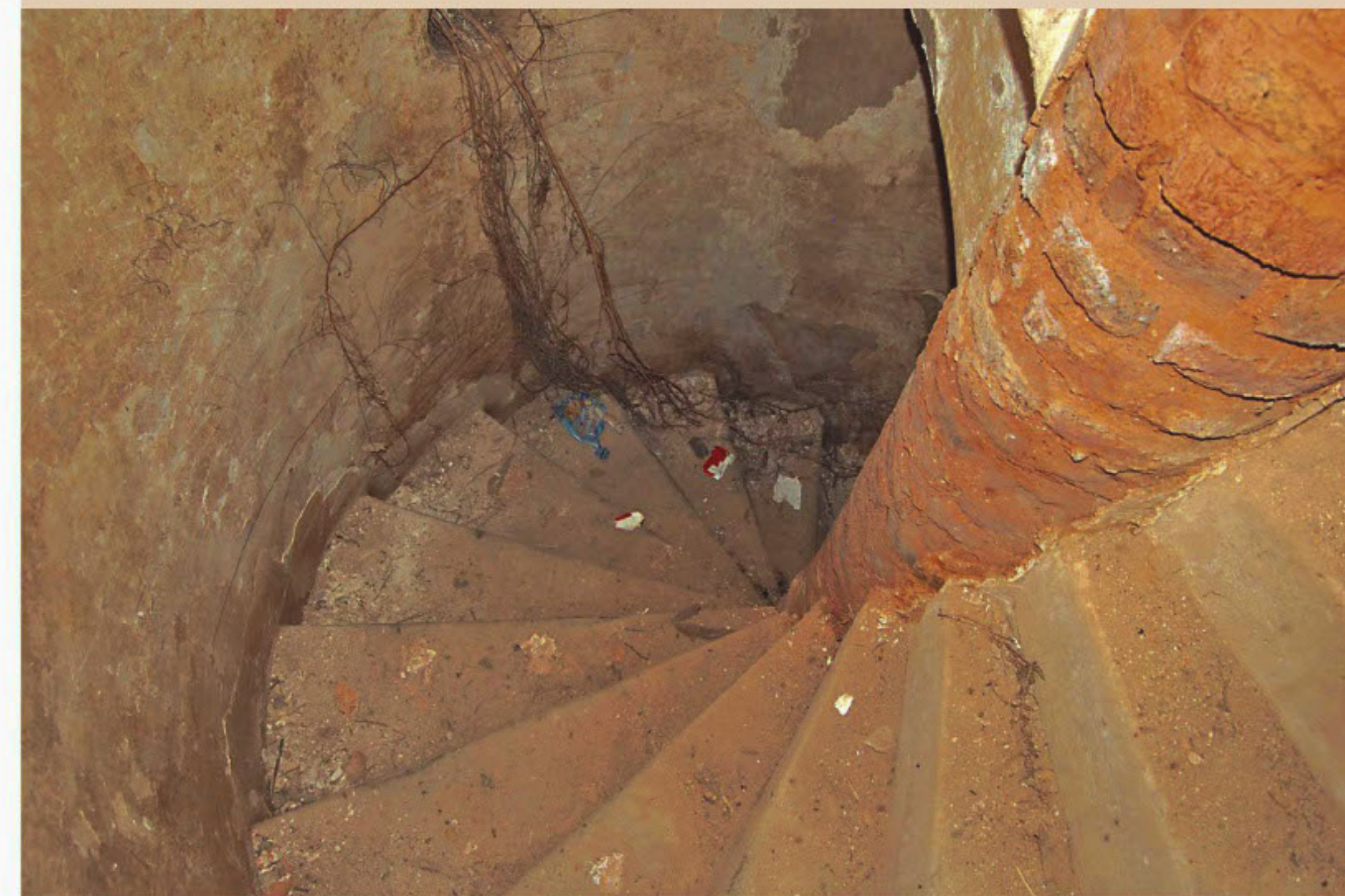
There is a dispute over the funding date of the building among historians. Chittagong history researcher Abdul Haque Chowdhury in his book 'Shahar Chittagramer Itikotha' (History of Chittagong City) said the building was built soon after British took over in 1761. Antiquity researcher Shamshul Hossain, however thinks the building was built in the mid nineteenth century.

According to college documents, the Mohsin College authorities bought the building along with the hill from government in 1879 at the price of 30 thousand taka. From then on, they used it for various purposes and abandoned it in 2002, terming it 'risky'. Later, they planned to demolish the building in 2009 to replace it with a new one. But the



ARUL ADALAT

MINHAJ UDDIN
PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



government halted the plan considering its historic importance.

The two storey building has unique architectural traits. The walls are made of brick-lime-mortars and each are three feet wide. There are sixteen rooms in the building. Besides, two towers on the North-East and North-West corner. Inside the towers, there are two spiraling staircases. Deep darkness prevails inside the towers even in sunny days. The towers are topped by two small domes. But no tunnel could be found, in the building area of 0.775 acres.

At present, weeds have taken over the building as no one takes care of it. Large cracks are visible in some rooms. The college authorities who owns the building has hoisted a signboard warning visitors not to enter. Besides, three buildings have been built to house a mosque, two dormitories in the north and west sides of the building covering its magnificent view.

Resident students say visitors from different areas still visit the building. Even foreign archeology enthusiasts come to see the unique building. Recently a team of Chinese archeologists visited the site, they said.

On hearing about the building, recently Shohrab Uddin, a lecturer and Department Head of Comilla University's archeology department visited it. He said the

building could be declared protected and turned to its original condition by repairing damaged portions. "Merely declaring protected would not do. The authority could turn it into a mini history museum displaying historic articles of Chittagong. Then the building would attract more visitors and become an entertainment facility as well as a learning hub".

Lovely Yeasmin, Assistant Director of Department of Archeology (DoA), Chittagong, said they have submitted a report suggesting protection of the building to the Director General of DoA in April 2013. However, the DoA Dhaka office is yet to declare the building protected.

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