

**MANDA MASJID**

# 6-century old inscription remains, structure doesn't

|| MD FOISAL AHMED ||



**DHAKA VIBE**

The inscription at National Museum. Below, Nandu Bepary'r Mosque in Manda.

PHOTO: COLLECTED, STAR

From the Sultanate period, Dhaka witnessed many mosques built on its land, and that tradition was continued with utmost conviction -- to make the city full of places to pray -- throughout the Mughal era. They were definitely successful as Dhaka is commonly known as a "city of mosques".

Today, the Sultans and Mughal administrators are no more. Only their vestiges, in the form of these structures, remain -- reminding us of a time long gone. Consequently, the mosques that are still standing have become prime attractions for locals as well as tourists.

Visiting these ancient structures, one may wonder, which is the oldest mosque in Dhaka?

"Binat Bibi Mosque", constructed in 1454 at Old Dhaka's Narinda, is widely referred to as the oldest mosque that is still standing. It was built during the sultanate of Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah I.

However, decades ago, a tablet was discovered with inscriptions referring to an elusive mosque built even before the 1450s. According to the inscriptions, "Manda Masjid" was built in 1433.

Dr Abdul Karim's book, "Mughal Rajdhani Dhaka", published in 1994, says Manda



Masjid was built onshore of the Dhalai river, one of the main waterways during Sultanate and Mughal eras.

Habiba Khatun, former professor of Islamic History and Culture Department at Dhaka University (DU), gave account of this mosque in her doctoral thesis. She had visited it in 1982 and after observing Manda Masjid's architecture, she stated that it belongs to the Sultanate period, according to an earlier news report.

This correspondent, however, could not verify the thesis

content as DU authority failed to provide a copy. Surprisingly, the Department of Archaeology (Dhaka) knows nothing about this mosque. "It is not included in our archaeological list," said Rakhi Roy, regional director (Dhaka) of the department.

A quest for the mosque led to what is presently known as "Nandu Bepary'r Masjid", situated on Joda Masjid Lane in Manda area of Dhaka's Mugda.

Was this the original Manda Masjid? Why was the name which the mosque went by for generations suddenly change? Md Nur-Hossen Bepary, a descendant of Nandu Bepary, narrated the long history of the mosque.

"Over 300 years ago, our ancestor Abu Bepary arrived in Manda along with his father and started living here permanently. Along the way, Abu's father became the Imam of the mosque," Nur-Hossen said.

"After his father's death, Abu took charge of the mosque," he said. "During that period, the mosque started to become dilapidated. Abu's son Nandu, however, was a rich businessman, so he repaired it. From then on, locals started calling it 'Nandu Bepary'r Masjid'," he added.

Sadly, as the story went on, it became evident that the nearly

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## 'All murderers must be punished'

Oli Ahmed demands at LDP's 13th anniversary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) President Col (retd) Oli Ahmed yesterday called upon party leaders and activists to be ready to start a protest to "free people from the misrule of this government".

"There is massive corruption in almost every sector of the country. It is high time we take preparation to wage a movement against this corrupt government, eliminating the ongoing dirty political culture in the country," he said.

He was speaking at a discussion organised to mark the 13th founding anniversary of his party -- a component of the BNP-led 20-party alliance -- at Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh auditorium in the capital.

He said if countrymen could launch a united protest then dream of establishing a new government -- upholding human rights and rule of law -- can be realised soon.

Terming the recent drive against corrupt persons an "eyewash", he said the government is yet to arrest the masterminds of corruption, though some leaders were arrested only to draw people's attention.

"In fact, this government itself is corrupt and that is why they are not arresting the masterminds," he claimed.

Citing Buet student Abrar's murder, Oli

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## 'Messengers of positive Bangladesh'

NY senators for sustainable solution to Rohingya crisis

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

New York senators want to be the messengers of a youthful and positive Bangladesh, which is witnessing a significant growth in economic and social sectors, and facilitate more business and educational exchanges between the two countries.

"People here are incredibly hospitable, kind and generous," said Senator James Skoufis, one of five New York State senators, after a weeklong visit to Bangladesh.

During their visit, senators Skoufis, Luis Sepulveda, Leroy Comrie, Kevin S Parker and John C Liu went to Sylhet and the Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar.

They also held meetings with members of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) and the Sylhet Chamber of Commerce and few educators.

Skoufis said opening the door to nearly a million Rohingyas is a reflection of how generous Bangladesh is.

Not many countries would show this generosity and make such a great sacrifice, the senator added.

"Most media talk about flooding and other negative issues. That's not justice to the country," he said.

Skoufis was speaking at a reception hosted by Center for NRB Foundation at American Club in the capital on Friday evening.

Skoufis said he has seen many positive things in this country.

"We are going to be the messengers for Bangladesh and get the positive messages out in the world," he said.

Also, people need to understand all the positivity -- for travel, businesses, education and cultural exchange, Senator Skoufis added.

The senator said Bangladesh economy is growing at a great speed, and the business potential is tremendous here.

As the senators go back to New York, he said, they would facilitate some connections between the businesses of New York and Bangladesh.

Noting that the US is so far the largest

donor in humanitarian assistance to the Rohingyas, the senator said they would do whatever they can for a sustainable solution to the crisis.

Terming the first visit by the New York senators a historic one, Senator Sepulveda said he has a special relationship with the Bangladeshi community in New York, home to around 60,000 Bangladeshi Americans.

He said as they go back to New York, they would talk to the public universities there and try to set up education exchange programme, given that Bangladesh has a great number of talented students.

"We want to encourage federal representatives to do business with Bangladesh so that we can benefit from business and relationship," Sepulveda added.

US Ambassador to Bangladesh Earl R Miller said he is working with Bangladesh to resume Dhaka-New York direct flight to explore more business opportunities between the two countries.

Biman Bangladesh Airlines used to operate flights on Dhaka-New York route till 2006.

But, currently Biman or any other airlines from Bangladesh are not allowed to fly to the USA directly.

The restriction is in place as Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) of the US has downgraded the Civil Aviation Authority, Bangladesh (CAAAB) to Category-2.

Ferdousi Shahriar, director general (America) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said the New York senators are the ones who support the Bangladeshi community there.

It was due for them to be familiar with Bangladesh, she added.

"I hope you know Bangladesh better now; this will surely strengthen our relationship," said the director general (America) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Center for NRB Foundation President ME Chowdhury Shameem and CEO Dilara Afroz Khan Rupa also spoke at the event, among others.



There was a fire on the 12th floor of BGMEA building in Karwan Bazar around 12pm yesterday. Four teams of firefighters brought the blaze under control in around 40 minutes. No one was injured.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

## Litter-free Dhaka still a distant dream: experts



FILE PHOTO

UNB, Dhaka

Littering continues to ruin the beauty and environment of the capital due to apathy of the authorities concerned, lack of awareness among people and absence of law enforcement, according to experts.

They said mayors of the two city corporations had promised to make Dhaka a beautiful and clean city, but they have so far failed to come up with any well-thought-out plan, action and campaign programme to address the

perennial problem.

Dhaka streets continue to bear the brunt as it has become a destination for plastic and other bottles, cans, cigarette stubs and packets, papers, paper bags, waste from food items, coconut shells, tissue papers, household waste, clothes and solid waste.

In 2016, the two city corporations set up around 6,700 trash bins to curb littering, but most of those were either damaged or stolen within a year. Urban experts think unplanned installation, lack of

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