



Heritage tourism of the future: What lies ahead

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A recent ‘What Matters 2021’ survey by Agoda mention that spending more quality time with loved ones is the top thing people look forward to this year. In 2021, people are committed to travelling differently. They plan to travel more with friends and family, take more spontaneous trips and make more eco-friendly travel choices. In terms of research and development when our neighbour countries are getting ready for the next level of travel hype, are we thinking along similar lines? There are many travel groups recently developed in Bangladesh who are offering many lucrative offers for inbound and outbound tourism, but are these groups competing with the international market?

The theory of cultural heritage has come fully to life in the second half of the 20th century. It was never smooth but the persistent and tireless efforts of various individuals and groups aiming to preserve the legacy of humankind and pass it on to future generations as a compelling witness to history. First at the proto-tourism (to us tourism before railways) stage also known as the Grand Tour and, second, in the early 1950s. Their second encounter coincided with upheavals in the concept of modernity, postmodern cultural theories, and environmental movements as well as with the Venice Charter and the new

perspective on cultural heritage. They have cohabited in a love-hate relationship ever since. Due to information technology, accessible low-cost travel and the resulting globalisation, global tourism has increased exponentially over the last thirty years. United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) records nearly 1.5 billion international tourist arrivals a year. The current easy online presence of the world through proliferating images from all over the globe makes our entire planet seem desirable and accessible. Each of us has their own bucket list of places we want to visit and things we want to experience before we die, and

what we appear to covet most are cultural monuments and sites, particularly those from UNESCO’s World Heritage List. Though cultural heritage and tourism clash and complement each other, in an uneasy alliance, both life and death to each other.

Northbrook Hall, for example, once it used to be as a local cultural hub in Old Dhaka. It had a beautiful library and the smell of books patronised many Gregorians as well as other students to knowledge development. As the years passed by, community centres developed around it and the once-thriving town hall started losing its value as a heritage

site. As the city authorities completely overlook this heritage site, it’s now slowly being abandoned whereas it should have been preserved.

In the name of Divinity Property Act and Vested property law when local Muscle Man is taking advantage to demolish our old history, the Government should take strong and necessary steps to save history and heritage of Old Dhaka. The time of attention is now. It’s never too late to make things right.

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