



Along with the original Maheshwarpasha School of Art building, the school ground hosts two other buildings of the rechristened Shashibhushan Shishu Vidya Niketan. Currently, plans are in motion to demolish the main 100-year-old building and replace it with a similar looking one.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Why destroy when you can preserve?

Country's first art school building faces extinction

DIPANKAR ROY, *Khulna*

The Maheshwarpasha Art School was established in 1904 by artist Shashibhushan Pal, the first of its kind for the East Bengal region. Shashibhushan established the school on the east side of the present Jashore Road, inside his own home. In 1918, it managed to secure recognition and funding from the government 14 years later.

A little over a hundred years from then, the school's premise is now about to be auctioned off to construct a similar building in its place. This comes despite disapproval from conscious citizens, who would rather see the original building turned into a historical landmark.

According to educationists, researchers, and historical books on Khulna, in 1929, the school was shifted to the west side of Jashore Road. It used to confer the four year "Diploma in Fine

Art" certificate.

After the Partition, the Maheshwarpasha School of Art was renamed Shashibhushan Art College.

In 1983, it emerged as Khulna Art College and was shifted to Gallamari area. In 2009, it became known as the Institute of Fine Arts under Khulna University.

Meanwhile, local well-wishers built the Shashibhushan Shishu Vidya Niketan at the original location about four decades ago. In 1980, a primary school was established there, while the grounds saw a secondary school in 1991. With these two, the complex now has three institutions.

Over the years, famed artists and eminent citizens from here and abroad visited the school. This includes Maharaja Vijaychand Mahtab of Burdwan, Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin, poet Jasimuddin, SM Sultan and more.

In a statement written on march 14, 1975, preserved at the school, Zainul

Abedin mentions, "This is the second art school in joint Bengal after Calcutta Art School, but it's the first for East Bengal."

On the same day, poet Jasimuddin and artists Quamrul Hasan and Nilima Ibrahim wrote, "This is the oldest art and craft school in Bangladesh. It is necessary to preserve this school to conserve its heritage."

Talks of taking down the century-old building began in 2016. But this was no more than a murmur till January last year, when Khulna City Corporation wrote a letter to the Department of Archaeology (DoA) to know whether the school was listed by the department.

In response, Afroza Khan Mita, Khulna regional director of the department, said in a written statement that the building is a British-era structure. While it is not a preserved antiquity, the school is associated with the continuity of cultural development and passion of the local people.

"Conservation and management

can be delegated to local government councils or district administrations. The Department of Archeology will provide technical advice on its renovation if the city corporation, school authorities or the district administration take the initiative to preserve it," she added.

Later on August 29, 2021, while identifying risky buildings at a KCC meeting, the then KCC executive engineer Liaquat Ali Khan raised the issue of including the 100-year-old building in the list of vulnerable buildings, sources told this newspaper. It was recommended that the authorities concerned take steps to demolish the building.

KCC then sent a letter to the then head teacher of the school Nahid Sultana, notifying her of the decision.

On November 14, 2021, at a school meeting held in the presence of State Minister for Labor Welfare Begum Mannujan Sufian, it was decided that

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COVID CURBS

Restaurant association worried

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Ctg*

Leaders of Bangladesh Restaurant Owners' Association in Chattogram are worried as the government has decided that dine in customers must show their Covid-19 vaccine certificate to get service.

Expressing their concerns, the leaders said if the government issues such an order, it will be a big trouble for the restaurant sector.

Recently, the health minister said the government was going to issue an order to bar people who did not receive both vaccine doses from entering restaurants, shopping malls, trains, launches and aeroplanes.

While talking to The Daily Star, Elias Ahmed Bhuyan, president of the association, said, "Checking the vaccine certificate of every customer will not be viable for restaurant staff."

"Many are yet to get vaccinated, while many others are still waiting to get the text their message after registering," he said. "If staffers ask customers to show their vaccine certificate, altercations might start," he said. "If the rule is imposed, customers would

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For at least 35 years, Jahangirnagar University campus has served as a welcoming transit spot for migratory birds during winter. But owing to ill-mannered birdwatchers and noise pollution, they've started to leave the premises early this year, within the first week of January. This photo was taken from the Botanical Garden beside JU's Joy Para Lake.

PHOTO COURTESY: AURITRA SATTAR

An early goodbye

JU CORRESPONDENT

They're gone, before they could even settle in.

Just a few days ago, a walk down the Jahangirnagar University campus would be filled with the buzzing and chirping of migratory birds, who have become regular visitors to the campus every winter.

But the university is no longer the green sanctuary it used to be. From reckless birdwatchers to sound pollution, a bunch of adversities have managed to rid the university grounds of the birds even before spring has come along.

Campus sources said thousands of ill-mannered

visitors come to watch the birds everyday, who often throw rocks at the touring avians. Then there's the case of all the noise made by cars and battery-run rickshaws that ply inside and around the campus which makes the birds feel even more unsafe.

In reply to a query over why the birds are leaving this early, Dr Md Kamrul Hasan, professor at the zoology department of the university and wildlife conservation researcher, pointed out three reasons.

"The two major lakes of the university -- Transport Yard Lake and Joy Para Lake -- are the main junctions of the migratory birds. It's mainly the

visitors of these two lakes, whose disturbance has shoed away the birds," he said.

"I have issued a letter to the registrar to restrict entrance of vehicles from the back of the lake for this season," he added.

"Another reason is the dilapidated state of the Joy Para Lake, which is filled with algae and garbage. Even though I have notified the estate office to clean the lake, but this wasn't done. As almost all of the lake's surface is covered with aquatic plants or rubbish, the birds have no place to sit."

"Another reason is the mindless violence of the visitors, especially those who throw

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TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR

Book Hounds



PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Bookstore, Nilkhet, Dhaka.

We are a perpetually curious group. Like members of secret societies of the Middle Ages, we quickly recognize each other. Once our numbers were large and we were considered cool and fashionable. Though fewer today, we persist in our ways -- habits we learned from doting parents, an affectionate uncle or aunt, or the right kind of friends. For the rewards of these habits add immeasurably to our lives.

We are book hounds.

While talk of a new movie, a fancy car, or Elon Musk's billions excites some, our ears perk up whenever we hear talk of a book or a writer. Picking up the scent of a good read we doggedly follow it. We do not rest until we have held the book in our hands to read it.

As children, books captured our hearts and opened the doors of our imagination. We read them everywhere -- before school, during breaks, after school, at night under the blanket with a torchlight when our parents thought we were asleep. Books were the gifts we prized on our birthdays.

Money to buy books was even better. A trip to the bookstore was a joyous occasion. Those of us growing up in small towns had only one or two bookstores at our disposal -- Sylhet's National Library and News Corner, for example -- but they were familiar with us and patiently encouraged our browsing.

We eagerly loaded up before school vacations. Would ten books tide us through summer? Read the best one first or save it for the last? Exchange with others? There was no end to the want for books.

Word of a new thriller by Alistair MacLean, or an upcoming volume of Kuasha, the scientific detective, started us on a new chase. Sometimes it took months of searching and waiting before the book finally reached our hand.

Second-hand bookstores, such as those in Nilkhet, drew us with the promise of unexpected treasures.

We scoured the libraries. The one at school came first, but when we had gone through all the books there we turned to public libraries. We sought out friend or relatives who had large book collections, so we could immerse ourselves in their books.

Growing up changed our interests and our books. A chance encounter with a tree, fruit or flower opened up an interest in books on botany and nature.

A trip to an archeological site kindled a fascination with history and the kings, queens and wars of yesteryear.

A technical discussion on a radio show

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An-Noor

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GD-47