



DHAKA  
HERITAGE

# Historic sites LEFT IN RUINS

**TARUN SARKAR**

Dhaka city's two ancient structures – Boro Katra and Chhoto Katra – are at the verge of extinction due to rampant encroachment in absence of government measures to preserve those.

The situation has turned so worse that now the establishments are almost invisible from a short distance, as several other concrete structures have been erected.

The occupiers now claim ownership of the ancient establishments and its adjacent lands, though historians and researchers refuted their claim.

The establishments are Waqf estates, which are owned by the government. The occupiers have encroached the area illegally over the years, said researchers.

Now, the government bodies concerned are saying that they are planning to acquire the lands to protect the establishments.

Boro Katra was built during the regime of Mughal prince Shah Shuja, and Chhoto Katra was constructed by Mughal Subahdar Shaista Khan.

The Department of Archaeology on December 21, 1989, announced the structures as "Protected Archaeological Site".

In 2020, Rajuk declared the two structures as "Traditional Special Establishments".

The existing rules prohibit any kind of expansion, exclusion and change of such archaeological sites. Even, no permanent establishment can be constructed on their premises or adjacent areas.

However, defying the rules, occupiers

have constructed many structures inside the premises of the two establishments and its adjacent lands.

Researchers said Boro Katra and Chhoto Katra are parts of national history, culture and archaeology. So, the government must take steps to protect them.

There are four historical palaces on the bank of the Buriganga river.

Ahsan Manzil, which was built by Nawab Khwaja Abdul Ghani in 1872 for the family's official residence and zamindar office. The



government in 1992 took over the palace and made into a museum.

Another palace, Ruplal House, was built during the era of East India Company. Recently, Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) took initiative for its maintenance.

The rest two are Boro Katra and Chhoto Katra, which are decaying day by day, as the government is yet to take any steps to preserve them.

Multiple palaces were constructed on the bank of Buriganga during Mughal and Nawabi era. But most have already been obliterated, according to

historians.

Some of those historical structures are the palace of Subahdar Islam Khan at Islampur, the palace of Subahdar Shaista Khan at Midford Hospital area, the palace of Fakhrul Shiar at Lalbagh's Posta area and the palace of Nawab Hossain Uddin Khan in Nawabganj area.

"Katra" is a Persian word that means caravanserai or roadside inn. Multiple katra were constructed during Mughal and Nawabi era in Dhaka. Of these, Boro Katra and Chhoto Katra are mentionable, according to historians.

Boro Katra is located at a point in between Buriganga river and Chawkbazar. Mughal prince Shah Shuja

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Prof Muntassir Mamoon

constructed it for his official residence. After construction, the prince did not want to use it as residence, which is why the palace had turned into an inn.

Within a gap of around one and half years, Subahdar Shaista Khan constructed Chhoto Katra in Swarighat area of Chawkbazar.

Chhoto Katra's structural design was almost similar to Boro Katra, said architect Prof Abu Sayeed M Ahmed.

During a recent visit there, it was seen that some parts of this palace have already faded away with time, while another large part was illegally occupied. Local traders have set up multiple concrete structures inside the premises.

Both Boro Katra and Chhoto Katra

are located under Ward-30 of DSCC.

Talking to The Daily Star, the ward's councillor Mohammad Erfan Salim claimed that neither Boro Katra nor Chhoto Katra are heritage buildings, rather those are private properties.

The two buildings have many parts. Each of them has separate owners. Even, several clashes took place in the past, following feuds over ownership.

If the government wants to preserve the buildings, it must conduct thorough land survey in this area and must have court's verdict, he said.

However, historian Prof Muntassir Mamoon claimed that Boro Katra and Chhoto Katra are Waqf estates and none can claim ownership of such properties.

"We have been demanding government's effective measures to evict illegal occupiers and preserve the two ancient structures. But no visible steps have been taken so far," he said.

Researcher Hashem Sufi said at least 250 people have kept Boro Katra and Chhoto Katra occupied and are now claiming ownership of its different parts.

The government should follow strategies applied in the case of preserving Ahsan Manzil.

Firstly, the government must acquire Boro Katra and Chhoto Katra by paying due money to the occupiers. After making it vacant, the government should initiate renovation works for preserving it, said Sufi.

Contacted, State Minister for Cultural Affairs KM Khalid said they have plans to preserve Boro Katra and Chhoto Katra. But he could not give details as to when and how the work will proceed.

Rakhi Roy, Dhaka regional director of Department of Archaeology, said they have already taken initiative to relocate those who are staying there, and to acquire the land.

Then, measures will be taken to renovate and preserve the structures,

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## Grabbers beware

Warns Atiqul, DNCC opens 7 parks, playgrounds

STAR REPORT

Seven parks and playgrounds were opened for city dwellers in Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) area yesterday.

Mayor Atiqul Islam inaugurated the parks at a programme in Shyamoli, reports UNB.

Addressing the event, he said, "These parks and playgrounds are New Year's gift for the city dwellers, and you need to take care of them now as they are your assets."

The seven parks and playgrounds are: Shyamoli Park, Iqbal Road Park, Humayun Road Park, Banani Block-C Park, Baridhara Park, Banani Block-F Park, Rayer Bazar Baishakhi Playground.

The DNCC mayor warned real estate developers not to grab rivers and canals by filling them with sand. He said action will be taken against grabbers, no matter how powerful they are. He directed officials to form a management committee for maintenance of the parks and playgrounds within the next seven days.

The DNCC mayor said the parks have been designed considering facilities for people of all ages, including those with special needs.

"Arrangements have been made so that these playgrounds never get waterlogged," he said.

## Work impartially, independently BNP urges judiciary

UNB, Dhaka

BNP standing committee has called upon the judiciary to work neutrally and independently instead of "helping the government to gain its narrow political interests".

At a virtual meeting on Friday, the committee also voiced deep concern as the Appellate Division dismissed a leave to appeal petition filed by Dr Zubaida Rahman, wife of BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman, said BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir.

Speaking at a press conference at BNP chairperson's Gulshan office, the BNP

secretary general said their standing committee members observed that "unfortunately, there is a perception in the public mind that the judiciary is unfairly cooperating with the illegitimate, usurper and unelected government to serve the narrow purposes of the ruling party instead of protecting the independence enshrined by the constitution."

The BNP leader said their meeting strongly condemned and protested such despicable efforts.

"We call upon the judiciary to carry out its judicial functions independently with an impartial attitude upholding the main character of the constitution," said the BNP secretary general.

Fakhrul said Dr Zubaida is a non-political physician and the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has implicated her in the case with a political motive.

"The case has been filed without any basis only to harass and humiliate the Zia family," added Fakhrul.

The BNP leader also alleged that the government has been making efforts to eliminate political institutions using the "false" cases by establishing its "control and influence" over the judiciary.

"In the same way, they (government) are trying to keep our leader Khaleda Zia and acting chairman Tarique Rahman away from politics by unlawfully convicting them in false cases out of political vengeance," Fakhrul observed.

## WB report proves poverty rise info fictitious: minister

BSS, Dhaka

Referring to a World Bank (WB) report stating that Bangladesh has further reduced poverty, Information Minister Dr Hasan Mahmud yesterday said the report has proven that some so-called research and social organisations have published fictitious and motivated reports of increasing poverty in the country during the pandemic to create confusion.

"The report has proven that some of the country's so-called research and social organisations have published fictitious and motivated reports... I hope that the propaganda will stop now."

He said this while exchanging views with journalists on the WB report "Bangladesh Development Update – Recovery and Resilience amid Global Uncertainty" at his official residence on Minto Road. The report states that poverty in Bangladesh has reduced by 0.6 percent from 2020 to 2021, and the poverty rate now stands at 11.9 percent, which was 12.5 percent, he said.

"So, I hope that the newspapers, which published fictitious and motivated reports... will be more cautious."



For the vehicles of Dhaka, zebra crossings have always been an alien concept. This scene of two pedestrians trying their best to stop buses and cars while walking on the stripes seems to prove just that. With no authority present to enforce rules, all drivers get a free pass to do as they please. This photo was taken yesterday near Asad Gate.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## Buet entry test June 4, 18

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The first-year admission test for the academic session of 2021-22 at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) will be held on June 4 and 18.

The university authorities issued a notice setting the date yesterday.

The tests will be taken in two steps. The preliminary test will be taken in two shifts on June 4.

Candidates who pass the preliminary test will take part in the final admission test on June 18, added the notice.

Online registration for the admission test will remain open from 10:00am on April 16 till 3:00pm on April 25, read the notice.

Application fees can be submitted through mobile or online banking till 3:00pm on April 26.