

FROM COSY CHILEKOTHAS TO PLUSH PENTHOUSES

The many charms of top-floor living

Cosy soirées, stargazing with telescopes, or unplugged musicals at private terraces are no longer scenes from a Hollywood film. Stylish living is redefining our fast-paced urban life, thanks to the state-of-the-art amenities. As the city runs faster than ever and moments fleet within the blink of an eye, people are embracing top-floor luxury to make the most of city life. Imagine living in a house where you can watch the metropolis in motion with a cup of coffee — with an uninterrupted view of the moon or the monsoon drizzles!

The idea of immersive top-floor living has long been a part of our culture. Remember Arnob's song "Chilekothay Gorbé Basha?" Living amidst the concrete cacophony, the singer's yearning for a haven on the roof speaks to many of us. As top-floor living evolves from humble attics to plush penthouses, let's take a broader look at the fascinating art of living on top-floor homes!



The compact suites, often used as storage rooms or guest quarters, are also an escape den for young adults navigating adulthood. The small windows open up a grand vista — representing their greater ambitions in life — often revealing a cinematic street view where real life unfolds in its truest colours.

"You see, these days, we don't get to see the sky from our rooms," comments Shuvro, a PhD student living abroad. "Also, the sound of the city might be irritating on the roads, but from the chilekotha — it creates a sense of rhythm."

Shuvro recollects how a small conference room with a few plastic chairs, and a portable fan welcomed his best friends every week after work before he left Dhaka for higher studies.

"The attic seemed like a small world of our own, where we could pour out all our stories," he shares fondly, "Countless nights witnessed our deepest conversations as we celebrated birthdays, new jobs, promotions and most importantly — Copa America Championships, all in that little room on the 10-storied building!" Shuvro continues with a hint of homesickness.

Despite the shift in the modern housing scene, chilekothas remain a souvenir of our past. In fact, many artists, musicians, and craftsmen are setting up their studios on rooftops — holding art shows and cosy jam sessions in an intimate setting.

CHARMS OF LIVING IN TOP-FLOOR APARTMENTS

In recent years, Bangladesh has witnessed the advent of high-rise residential buildings, especially in Dhaka — where shimmering towers are reaching new heights with cutting-edge features.

"I can actually watch the sky from my bed," gushes Tasnim, who lives in a ninth-floor apartment. "And on full-

moon nights, my floor is bathed with silver light. We have lived in this flat for over a decade, yet I cannot help being spellbound by the flashes of lighting during *kaal-boishakhi* storms," she exclaims.

Apart from the magnetic views of passing seasons, advanced facilities such as multipurpose halls, and fitness centres are incorporated on the top floors so that the users can meet their everyday needs within the reach of gated condominiums.

"Be it Pahela Boishakh or 31st night, Eids or Pujas — people gather at the shared terraces to meet and greet," elaborates Tasnim. Despite being on the top floor, shading devices paired with vertical gardens keep the heat manageable in her home.

"Not very long ago, people would

Nasrin, a top floor homeowner in Dhaka, has recently moved into her dream house perched on the 14th floor. With ample shading and thoughtful decoration, she has turned her south-facing terrace into a lavish outdoor lounge. Colourful flowers, bonsai trees and benches make it a perfect place to host family luncheons, late-night barbecue sessions and a spot to rest after a hectic day.

LUXURY LIVING IN LOFTY PENTHOUSES

We have watched it — the sophisticated gatherings in New York's deluxe penthouse apartments. High above the restless Manhattan where creative minds, professionals and entrepreneurs hobnob and enjoy an immersive getaway. These plush

penthouses are becoming the pinnacle of an extravagant lifestyle.

Zarin, a business owner residing in Dhaka, shares her plans for building an exclusive penthouse for her close circle — a boutique escape from the relentless hustle.

"I see the penthouse as a peaceful oasis, a free-flowing space to find solace from the chaos," she shares with enthusiasm. The successful businesswoman ponders how the pursuit of metropolitan dreams often leaves us drained and in need of enjoyment and aesthetic delight.

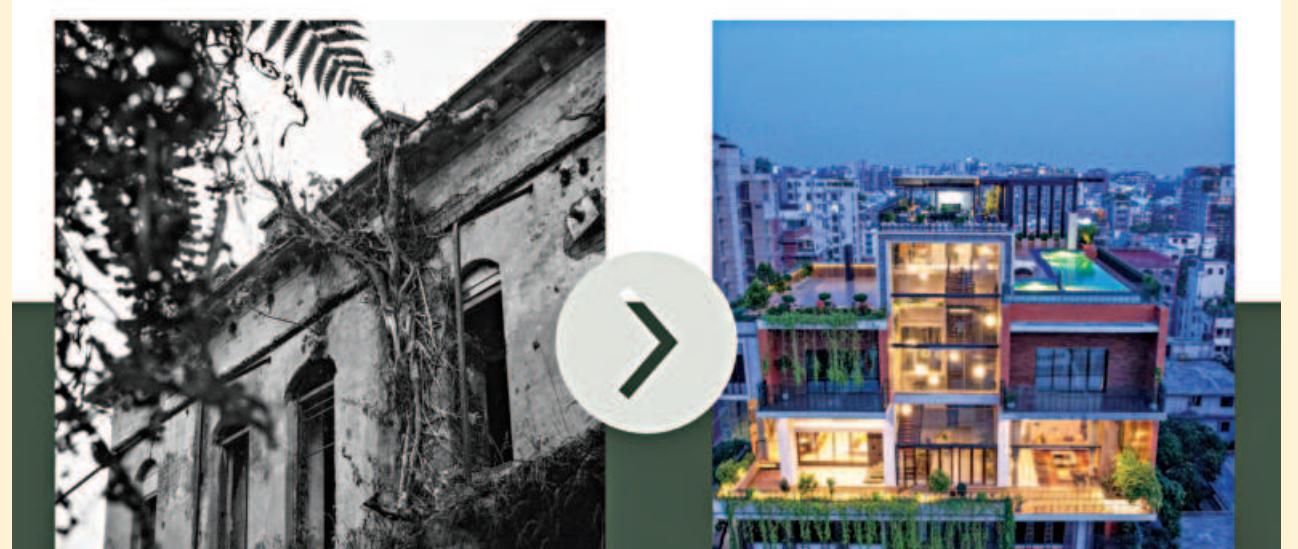
"The penthouse will not be for everyday living," Zarin muses. "It will be a place for slowing down and recreation. Floor-to-ceiling glass windows will draw the city inside the house — with a panoramic view of Hatirjheel Lake. Smart home systems will enable guests to enjoy outdoor cinema sessions and musicals, and a telescope will engage astronomy lovers in interstellar trips!"

Like Zarin, many well-off city dwellers are creating penthouses as living spaces, exclusively used for experiencing the finest of what the city has to offer.

With stark minimalist interiors, penthouses feature private elevators, expansive terraces, and of course bewitching views that will inspire you to shoot for the stars! Some even boast premium gyms and yoga studios, art galleries, and infinite pools — creating a self-contained world of ultimate luxury and amusement.

Imagine owning such a suave home with an address to cloud number nine — where the soaring heights turn urban chaos into a soothing chorus — as you spend a holiday on your sun-soaked sky deck, relaxing on comfy loungers!

Perched above the city's clamour, top-floor living offers more than just



avoid the top-floor apartments due to the overheating of the rooftop," notes architect, Abul Kalam Azad Kafy. "We use various strategies such as incorporating green lawns as a layer to block excessive heat gain. These gardens also serve as vibrant social hubs."

penthouses are no longer confined to silver screens or exotic lands — as the elites of our country embrace the highest quality of living. As Bangladesh's urban fabric stretches ever upward,

breathtaking views. These elevated sanctuaries continue to shape our urban experience, reminding us that sometimes, the best way to embrace the city is to rise above it!

By Tasnia Rahman
Illustration: Biplob Chakraborty
Canva: Ayman Anika



THE NOSTALGIA OF A CHILEKOTHA
Chaud or the rooftop has a special place in our hearts. So much so that we used to set up small cabins on the rooftops as a sanctuary from day-to-day hustle. The chilekothas or attics were unfit for permanent stay due to the harsh sun, storms, and excessive rain, yet they offered a quiet respite with a ceaseless view of the surroundings.

"My *nana* built a chilekotha in the 1960s as his private retreat — a place where he could just relax," remembers Mushfiqur Fahim, a 28-year-old master's student.

Fahim reminisces about his childhood days at his grandparents' home in old Dhaka, where the attic was his go-to place to play with cousins. Old Dhaka's vintage townscape has been etched into his memory ever since.

"When I was a child, I made up a rule that no one should bother me while I was in the attic. Unlike any other room, it simply had the vibe of being the most secluded place in the world. In the afternoon, I could see children playing cricket, flying kites, people strolling and hanging out on the streets," Fahim recalls.

