

Arche To retain

There is need for generating enthusiasm for excavation, preservation and the restoration of historical buildings and monuments in Bangladesh. Apart from the recent effort to have a mobile museum the wealth of knowledge of ancient art treasures has generally remained confined to places that are not easily accessible to most. As a result visits to the museums and being aware of the need to further excavate and preserve historical ruins are limited to a few ardent scholars. An occasional newspaper report discussing the problems of erosion, theft, smuggling, lack of good storage facilities, and the ruin of ancient buildings through salinity and water-logging would thus seem to be the only indicator of public interest.

The Lalbagh Fort in Dacca and many other relics elsewhere in the country could well do with some intelligent renovation and face lift. Obviously this work suffers from lack of funds for maintenance. Then, the elegant red brick romantic wall from the Moghul time lies neglected and forgotten at Satmasjid Road near the Idgah with rumours afloat that it will be soon demolished to make room for a supermarket or a library at any rate. Saving such relics, in the first place, need not wait for funds. Secondly, when preserved well these give returns in more ways than one. Bullet riddled walls and bombed turrets are made the centres of attraction in western central cities either as a memorial of a heroic stand by the patriots or as reminders of the ghastliness of wars. We too may have a few such places where war relics may be preserved as memorials of the War of Independence.

Scholars and authors with cultural interest should probably write more popular articles to make the public aware of the existence of historical wealth around. Meanwhile the Parjatan Corporation should be more active about cultivating interest in sight seeing. In that way not only would the tourist industry get a boost but there would be more awareness of the need to preserve buildings, statues and constructions of historical importance. Many people living in Bangladesh have not the opportunity nor even sometimes the knowledge, for instance, of the intricate beauty of the 400 dargahs in Sylhet alone. Paharpur findings and treasures are still open to the onslaught of rain and corodating water-logging. The house where Nawab Sirajudaullah last took shelter is reduced to a shack. Smuggling of brass and stone historical items to western affluent countries remains rampant. Awareness by seeing is the first step to retaining these treasures.