

Lalbagh Fort had efficient water supply network

By M. M. Firoze Ahmed

Archaeologists have discovered an efficient water supply network in the Lalbagh Fort. They believe that bullock-driven Persian wheels were used to pump water for supply in the fort.

A 185 feet long and eight feet wide fountain has been excavated out in the fort recently. The fountain served as a water line towards a central water reservoir. Its surface is made up of watertight lime-surki.

Excavations carried out on the south-western side of the fort also unearthed a row of four rooms believed to have been once used as underground arms depots.

10 BRASS PIPES

Water was pumped also through another pipe running five feet below the surface of the fountain. Ten brass pipes were fitted with that pipe and the former ones function-

ed as forays — under pressure of water.

A senior official of the Department of Archaeology said that they believed that water was first lifted to an overhead tank from river Buriganga. However, it was also not unlikely that water was lifted from some big wells within the boundary of the fort.

Excavation is still going on to find out the exact source of water and to gather concrete proof of the use of Persian wheels.

Mr Habibur Rahman, Regional Director of Archaeology Department, told this correspondent that excavation was started in January this year. It could not begin earlier due to fund constraint. The work however, would continue till the onset of monsoon, he said.

FOUNTAIN

The fountain is located near the surface of the earthen rampart covering nearly the

full length of the southern side of the fort. Its design indicates that the Mughals themselves built it.

If the hypothesis proves true, the popular notion that Britishers had buried the important section of the fort would no longer hold good. Maybe the Mughals did the earth work in the fort for both a better defence and an architectural beauty, archaeologists said.

COINS FOUND

The measurement of the rooms could not be readily ascertained. Excavators found only some coins containing illegible writings. The coins will be treated with chemicals so as to make writings legible. The rooms had pucca floors.

Director of Archaeology Department Dr A K M Shamsul Alam told this correspondent that the fountain would be renovated when necessary.

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Lalbagh Fort

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fund would be available. He said that the fountain at a height of 12 feet from the garden plain would give a new look to the centuries-old fort.

The Lalbagh Fort was constructed by Prince Muhammad Azam, the third son of Emperor Aurangzeb — between July 1678 and October 1679. Nawab Shaista Khan also had done some new construction works inside the fort before abandoning it due to the sudden death of her favourite daughter Bibi Pari who was betrothed to Prince Azam. He considered the death as ominous.

The fort having defence walls on all sides has a beautiful mosque inside it. There is a magnificent tomb on Bibi Pari's grave. Besides, there is 'hammam' (bath room) and a hall of audience. The hall of audience is now used as a mini archaeological museum. The gates, walls and other structures of the fort were renovated about a decade ago. A beautiful garden in the open space of the fort now adds to its beauty and attracts thousands of visitors.