



The Society used to publish News Bulletins till recently containing information/news on heritage, articles of related interest by experts and reports of its various activities. It now migrates to bi-monthly E-Bulletins with the same purpose in mind.

The Calcutta Heritage Collective Trust (CHCT), a group comprising architects, artists, heritage experts, developers, photographers and citizens united by a love for the city and a commitment to blend heritage with urban development, proposed a restoration plan for four sites, viz. two arches, one at Fairlie Place and the other near Tipu Sultan Mosque, both commissioned by Nawab Abdul Gunny and his son to commemorate the Prince of Wales's visit to the city in 1875; McDonell Fountain, opposite Calcutta High Court (with a lion's mouth-shaped waterspout); and Banerwar Temple at Kumartuli, built around 1740, and one of the two surviving terracotta temples there. CHCT has approached the Tourism Secretary and West Bengal Heritage Commission for the purpose. [TOI, 23 July 2019]

The Calcutta High Court directed the Kolkata Municipal Corporation not to carry out delisting or downgrading of any of the heritage buildings under its purview and to file an affidavit on why and how heritage buildings are delisted followed by their demolition and redevelopment at the vacated plot. The directions were issued by Chief Justice T. B. Radhakrishnan and Justice A. Banerjee after admitting a public interest litigation filed by INTACH (Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage) and CAL (Calcutta Architectural Legacies) which pointed to the arbitrary manner in which KMC had delisted several heritage properties in Kolkata in recent years. The case was to be heard next on 27 September 2019. The downgraded structures include the Gateway at Episcopal Palace at 5B Russell Street, Minerva Cinema (renamed Chaplin), Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose College, AJC Bose Road, Ghulam Rasul Mosque and the old Kenilworth Hotel [TOI, 28 July 2019]

The history of Dum Dum, 1747-1947, was published by Deshkal in two volumes (in Bangla), entitled British Dum Dum and Swadeshi Dum Dum, totalling about a thousand pages, authored by Moumita Saha, under the editorial guidance of Shyamal Kumar Ghosh, and based on field investigation and research by People's Green Society. The two-volume work was released on 31 July 2019 at Ajitesh Mancha in Nagerbazar on the completion of 160 years of Belgachhia Natyashala. The Bengal Army of the East India Company (EIC) was established before the Battle of Plassey in 1757, while Bengal Artillery had come up even earlier; the training



The Art Deco facade of Roxy cinema

camp for the latter began operating in Dum Dum in 1775. Col. Patrick Duff formed Dum Dum Cantonment in 1783 by taking over eighty-four villages under Digla, Sultanpur and Koikhali mouja, and this became the headquarters of Bengal Artillery which played a leading role in the spread of the EIC's reach. By 1850, Dum Dum had become virtually the premier Cantonment in the country. Now through sheer neglect the structures and artefacts concerning that history are being lost. Sirajdowlah's camp at the time of the attack on Calcutta and Clive House (the garden house of Lord Clive) are yet to be listed for preservation. Heritage structures such as Outram Institute and Fairlie Hall have been pulled down. The cultural history of the territory outside the Cantonment area, 'greater Dum Dum', is no less important. But of that, little remains. The poet Satyendranath Datta's birthplace in Birati-Nimta, the garden house of Dulichand Sheth where Gauhorjan took her music lessons and notable musicians of the time converged, the house of Kishorichand Mitra, writer, civil servant and social worker (and author Peary Chand's brother), the palatial residence on Paikpara-B.



View of Dwarkanath Tagore's Belgachhia Villa as it stands today

T. Road of the Rajas of Kandi, and the Belgachhia garden house of Chhatubabu and his clan where the famed Hindu Mela began have all crumbled under the demolition axe, while Dwarkanath Tagore's Belgachhia Villa (later Belgachhia Natyashala [a centre for the dramatic arts] is in a state of extreme disrepair. [TOI, 31 July 2019]

As part of Bengal's heritage, its centuries-old art form of patachitra (which also flourishes in Odisha), known for the (mainly traditional) graphic-oral narratives, such as Mangalkabya and Chandimangal, through painted scrolls, has evolved with the times, and is taking on more contemporary subject matter. Most patachitrakars, as the artists are called, are Muslims, who have no misgivings about depicting Hindu myths and fables, the religious divide being blurred. Pingla in West Dinajpore is a hub of the art which has been showcased at folk and handicrafts festivals in Sweden, France and Britain. Pingla received the GI (geographical indication) tag in 2018, and an MoU (memorandum of understanding) was signed between UNESCO and the MSME (micro, small and medium enterprises) Department of the West Bengal Government, for revival of the ancient art. While tradition remains the mainstay, social changes are increasingly getting reflected in the art. [TOI, 5 August 2019]

The West Bengal Heritage Commission has proposed to declare Cooch Behar and Nabadwip as heritage towns because of their rich cultural tradition and history, pertaining largely to their 'royal' and

'religious' past respectively. The Commission has identified 155 localities in Cooch Behar and 86 in Nabadwip as heritage sites. Views of the owners/occupiers of the sites have been sought. Once the final list is drawn up, a formal declaration on the heritage sites for both the towns will be declared. [The Telegraph, 11 August 2019]

After talks between the West Bengal Government's land acquisition authority and KMC, the latter is set to reclaim Roxy Cinema, a structure of architectural significance, at 4A Chowringhee Place. The precursor to KMC had leased out 4A and 4B Chowringhee Place in 1907/08 to Bengal Properties Private Ltd (BPPL) for 99 years. The civic body is planning to convert the existing structure into a multi-storied building to house some KMC departments, perhaps dismantling the iconic façade. After the lease expired in 2007/08, KMC had asked BPPL to pay Rs 71.34 crores for extending the lease for another 99 years, which the latter refused to do. In August 2017, Calcutta High Court ruled that BPPL would have to either pay the aforementioned amount or vacate the premises. KMC will initiate action after a final round of talks with the Government and legal experts. [TOI, 17 September 2019]

❖ For a list of buildings accorded 'heritage' status in Grades I, IIA and IIB by KMC/West Bengal Government (running to 96 pages), please refer to [https://www.kmcgov.in/KMCPortal/downloads/Grade\\_d\\_List\\_of\\_Heritage\\_Buildings\\_Grade\\_I\\_IIA\\_IIB.pdf](https://www.kmcgov.in/KMCPortal/downloads/Grade_d_List_of_Heritage_Buildings_Grade_I_IIA_IIB.pdf)