

Dhaka Collegiate School: Demolition of historic building sparks outrage



This decaying building was once the prestigious Dhaka Collegiate School, an institution that taught legends, including Buddhadeb Basu and Jagadish Chandra Bose.

The historic building of Dhaka Collegiate School, a prestigious institution and one of the first government schools of undivided India, is undergoing demolition, sparking outrage among heritage activists and alumni.

Founded in 1835, the institution began as Dhaka English Seminary. In 1841, addition of its college unit transformed it to Dhaka Collegiate School.



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The institution saw renowned figures including Jagadish Chandra Bose, Meghnad Saha, Munir Chowdhury, Buddhadeb Basu, and Syed Shamsul Haq as its student over the years.

School authorities claimed the demolition is necessary due to safety concerns and they followed proper procedures and permissions from the authorities concerned.

However, activists claimed the building could have been renovated and preserved considering its historical significance while also ensuring students' safety.

Adding to the controversy, the building, despite being over a century old, is not listed as a heritage site by the Department of Archaeology.



A 2018 High Court order, however, had restricted alterations to over 2,200 buildings in Dhaka, including this building.

Even the Dhaka District Administration granted permission for its demolition after structural engineers from the Department of Education had previously identified this building as unsafe.

Visiting the school yesterday, it was seen that around 30 workers were demolishing the two-storey building, dismantling doors, windows, and the roof.

According to them, they have been engaged in the demolition work for several days.

Mehedi Hossain, one of the workers, said, "Our task is to demolish the building. We have been given three months to complete it."

A company named Maa Enterprise won the bid for demolishing the building for Tk 3,32,000.

A spokesperson for, anonymously, confirmed that the company got the work through bidding process.

Some parents of students alleged that demolition of the building caused disruption during classes and examinations.

Taimur Islam, CEO of Urban Study Group, said the precious heritage structure should have been preserved.