

Chandanpura Nachghar: melodies lost, memories whisper

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Chattogram: Standing as a silent witness to centuries gone by, the iconic 'Sazzalella's Dance Hall', locally celebrated as the Chandanpura Nachghar, remains one of Chattogram's most resplendent relics of cultural grandeur and feudal aristocracy.

This architecturally enchanting mansion, crafted in the refined style of old-world design, sits adjacent to the Chandanpura Fire Service Office at the heart of the city. Once a beacon of aristocratic opulence, today it languishes in neglect.

Its plaster has crumbled, its doors and windows are weather-worn, and banyan roots entwine themselves around its fading cornices as nature slowly reclaims what history once bestowed.

Historical records suggest that the edifice is nearly 255 years old,

dating back to around 1770, its foundations laid even before the advent of British colonial rule. The architectural style bears traces of Portuguese influence, a silent testament to the layered antiquity of Chattogram's past.

It was commissioned by Zamindar Sazzalella, remembered as the first-generation feudal landlord of the region, whose vast estate once spanned Chandanpura, Chawkbazar, Anderkilla, New Market, and Bakalia. Under his patronage rose this two-storied cultural citadel, boasting a magnificent reception room, a spacious dance hall, and fourteen grand chambers designed for musical performances and the entertainment of noble guests.

Within its walls, richly adorned chambers were reserved for baijis, the traditional courtesan dancers whose artistry elevated its prestige.

The very architecture was attuned to music; its doors and windows were ingeniously structured to carry melodies across the mansion.

Folklore whispers of nights when the jingling of anklets and the strains of song filled its halls, as aristocrats and dignitaries gathered beneath oil lamps to revel in the rhythms of Sazzalella's soirées.

However, where music once lingered in the night air, silence now prevails.

Aliur Rahman, Chairman of Chattogram History and Culture Research Center, reflected, "The fire service has expressed interest in transforming this visually captivating structure into a museum. If realized, it would secure the building's survival as a heritage site. Otherwise, we will formally petition for its protection as an architectural treasure."

Md Anwar Hossain, Assistant Director of Chattogram Fire Service and Civil Defense, echoed this hope: "There is indeed a decision to establish a museum here under the fire service, although no further directives have been issued. The building remains in the same state as before."