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Kochi, Heavy Rain, School's Heritage Building Collapsed

School's heritage building under renovation collapses

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Kochi

A SINGLE-storey heritage building of Delta School, Fort Kochi, collapsed on Thursday, seemingly due to the heavy rain, while renovation works were on. Though 12 workers were present on the site, they escaped unscathed. A small portion of the restaurant adjacent to the heritage building was also damaged. The workers said the incident took place around 10.55 am while they were constructing a concrete lintel on the existing building, which, alleged locals, was being used by the school to conduct dance and music classes for students.

"I was working inside. The building tilted and a sound was heard following which I ran to safety to the ground nearby. I was lucky as a huge chunk of lintel collapsed in front of me. Had I reacted even a fraction of a second late, I would have died," said a carpenter, who did not wish to

be named. Fire and Rescue Services workers soon rushed to the spot and deployed a dog squad to check whether any worker was stranded under the debris. However, the other workers later confirmed only 12 of them were working there and had made it out safely.

Unscientific methods alleged

Residents in the area alleged the renovation of the heritage building was being carried out in an unscientific manner and the school management had failed to get the proper sanction from the authorities concerned.

"The walls of the building were in a pathetic state and not in a position to bear the load of the huge concrete lintel. We had informed the school management about this, as one of the walls had developed a big hole. Moreover, the school authorities constructed the lintel without a

pillar to support it," alleged Siyad, who runs the hotel adjacent to the collapsed building.

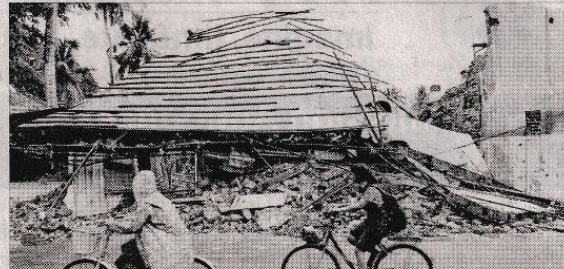
'Allegations baseless'

Refuting the allegations, Delta School authorities said the building, located 50 m away from the main school building, was never used for any other purpose.

"Since it is a heritage building, we cannot demolish it. We had

received the permission from the Archaeology Department and the local body to initiate renovation work. Every year, we are using the fund to maintain the heritage building," Sheren, principal of Delta School, told 'Express'.

Fort Kochi tahsildar K V Ambros issued a stop memo to the school authorities against initiating further construction on the school compound.



A portion of an under-renovation building of a school at Fort Kochi that collapsed on Thursday | MELTON ANTONY