

# Present Condition of the Cooch Behar Palace

A report by Arup Jyoti Das

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Frontal view of the Rajbari Palace before  
(source: [www.coochbehar.nic.in](http://www.coochbehar.nic.in))



Frontal view of the Rajbari Palace now  
(Photo: Arup Jyoti Das)

## Background of the Cooch Behar Palace:

The Cooch Behar Palace (Popularly known as Rajbari) was built by famous Koch king Maharaja Nripendra Narayan in 1887. This double storied brick building covers an area of 4768 square metres and is raised on a basement of 1.5 metres in height. The Palace is inspired by classical European style of Italian Renaissance and extends 120 metres from north to south and 90 metres from east to west. The Palace contains more than fifty halls of varied dimensions which include the bedrooms, dressing rooms, billiard room, kitchen, dinning hall, dancing hall, library, toshakhana and the ladies gallery. Beautiful paintings in the ceiling as well as in the interior wall surface in many rooms are very attractive. At present the Palace is under the maintenance of Archeological Survey of India. ND TV, India's prime satellite Television Chanel projected Cooch Behar Palace as one of the possible seven wonders of India on January 19, 2009. Koch Rajbanshis of South Asia see this Palace as a proud memory of their royal past. We visited the Rajbari Palace on September 24, 2012 during our recent field trips to North Bengal (Eastern part of proposed Kamatapur).

## Present Situation of the Palace:

At present the Palace is not well maintained and negligence by the authority is evident both outside and inside of the Palace. The Outside area along with garden is now full of wild grasses and garbage are littered almost everywhere. This is seen from main gate to the main palace. Both sides of the main path are full of wild grass, which has not been trimmed since a long time. Plastic bottles, empty packets of chips/ ice-cream and other stuffs are littered around the Palace. The Lighting lamps, meant for lighting are now covered by grass (see picture), which implies that lightings of the Palace at the night to attract tourist has been completely abandoned. During our visit we found cows roaming around areas and using garden of the Palace as toilet. It was shocking and surprising to see cows inside the Palace area since people can enter the Palace through the side gate that too with a valid ticket the whole of the outside area is full of untrimmed wild grasses/other small trees which implies that the palace has not been in for a long time.



Photo: Arup Jyoti Das

palace is also not maintained properly. Of the fifty halls only few (4-5) are used as museum and other parts are blocked for visitors. Floors are not cleaned properly and in many places wall paint is getting damaged.

The present West Bengal government, as well as Archeological Survey of India is completely ignoring the matter and indirectly damaging this National Monument. This act of the government is also responsible for hurting the sentiments of the Koch Rajbanshi people whose history and culture is always neglected by the Assam and Bengal mainstream.

The outer wall of the Palace is getting damaged due to bad maintenance. Some areas are badly damaged and damped. It seems the Palace has not been painted for many years. This is only for the front side. Once you go to the back side (almost 70 percent of the area) situation is worse. Walls in some areas are badly damaged and needed urgent attention. Surprisingly we saw some people hanging wet cloths inside the Veranda of Palace for drying them (see picture).

Photo: Arup Jyoti Das



The condition of the interior part of the



Photo: Arup Jyoti Das



Lighting at Cooch Behar Palace at night  
(source: www.coochbehar.nic.in)



Abandoned lighting lamps at present  
(Photo: Arup Jyoti Das)



Garden of Cooch Behar Palace  
(source: www.coochbehar.nic.in)



Garden of Cooch Behar Palace at present  
(Photo: Arup Jyoti Das)



Well painted Cooch Behar Palace  
(source: www.coochbehar.nic.in)



Pianting condition of the Palace at present  
(Photo: Arup Jyoti Das)