IIT-Madras to map Golconda’s Bagh-e-Naya Qila

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ASI wants to ensure medieval relics aren’t destroyed by the planned expansion of a golf course

In another instance of modern technology coming to the aid of medieval heritage, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) will be using Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) to map the contours of the area around the Bagh-e-Naya Qila excavated garden in the Golconda Fort. It has roped in the Indian Institute of Technology-Madras (IIT-M) to carry out the mapping. This medieval garden in Hyderabad is the only one of its kind still intact. The others — built during the Qutb Shahi rule (1518-1687) — have either been built over or have disappeared. The contour mapping was necessitated by the impending advance of the Hyderabad Golf Club, which wants to expand its 18-hole course into a 21-hole one by taking over some of the land adjoining the Bagh-e-Naya Qila. A GPR map would reveal any buried relics.

“The Hyderabad Golf Club wants to add a few more holes on the other side of the garden. We don’t want to lose any more history. We want to ensure that there are no relics of the Bagh-e-Naya Qila underneath and hence we are planning to map the area. We would have liked to do this with a Light Detection and Radar (LiDAR) but for that we need the permission of the Defence Ministry,” said ASI Superintending Archaeologist Milan Kumar Chauley.

Gold coins unearthed

The Naya Qila garden inside Golconda Fort was built by rulers of the Deccan and is one of the few symmetrical gardens extant. In 2014, when the ASI excavated the area after diverting the water flow, it discovered water channels, settlement tanks, walkways, fountains, gravity pumps, and other garden relics. An earlier excavation unearthed gold coins in the golf course area. According to author Ali Akbar Husain, the Naya Qila area also has multiple chabootras (raised platforms) which are remains of garden structures that pre-date the Qutb Shahi rule.

“We have told the IIT-Madras team that mapping has to be finished before the monsoon. We will do the preliminary study by end of this month and the mapping might be completed in May,” Mr. Chauley said. While there is a semi-collapsed ‘baradari’ (a pillared, gazebo-like structure) in the garden, historians think another baradari might lie buried.