

EXHIBITION ON ARCHITECTURE STUDENTS' DESIGN PROJECTS

An attempt to respect nature's way

DURDANA GHIAS

Students' innovations in designs to restructure old buildings for preservation were showcased "Spaces and Responses" a three-day exhibition arranged by Schools of Architecture.

Belayat Hossain from Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology (AUST) said that the Chittagong Court Building that was built towards the end of the 19th century was unique in symmetry and his design aimed at holding on to this uniqueness while maintaining its aesthetic beauty.

This is the only building in the entire subcontinent atop a mountain built during the Colonial period and carries great historical value, he said.

Describing the old building further, Hossain said that people flocked the courts at that time to listen to sensational cases heard while some others went to the rooftop to take a look at the weather ahead.

The place to stroll within the premises too has disappeared and Hossain's project aims at bringing back its original form.

In his design Hossain has preserved the grand entrance in the south and extended the northern side and linked both sides by a plaza.

"The Court Building is in the heart of Chittagong and the hub of business activities. The Public Works Department assured me of some space currently occupied by the Zahirul Haq market which I will utilise in my extension programme," he said.

Other participants were from Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET), Khulna University (KU) and the University of Asia Pacific (UAP).

"Although a seemingly dead city, yet consisting 52 buildings (the last one built in 1905) is a part of world heritage and was developed during the transitional period of around 100 years from Sultanate to the British era has not lost its traditional radiance," said Pushpita Eshika, of KU, whose project is to conserve Panam City in Sonargaon.

The city has two traditional features, which she maintains in her design -- the spatial quality of the buildings and the open places in the premises that was intentionally created so that residents could enjoy a breath of fresh air outdoors.

"Panam is encircled by a canal, working both as a trench for security and a part of the sanitation system. In my project I proposed the re-development of the buildings and revitalising

the water body," she said adding that it can be a potential tourism spot with rowing facilities.

"Many historical places, like Shankhari Bazar, have changed over time but Panam City stills holds on to its originality. The structures still reflect both colonial and Sultanate style," said the budding architect.

Speaking at the inauguration Nizamuddin Ahmed, head of BUET's department of Architecture said that the exhibition aims at increasing cooperation, understanding and exchange of ideas among teachers and students of different architecture departments within the country.

"Open space is very important in construction and it was focused in this exhibition," he said. "We are facing an acute shortage of open space in the city and is one reason why land value and house rents are soaring," he added.

"According to the new construction rules 50 percent space should be left open before constructing a residential building in the metropolis, but is not put into practice and the previous rule is yet to be made defunct," Ahmed said emphasising on the effect of nature and open space on human behaviour.

When asked the reason of the existence of the previous law he

said: "The new law has had bad publicity and stirred up sharp reaction."

"This exhibition is arranged to share with people what our students are doing. We want public participation and build internal relation among the architecture departments of various universities," said Abu Sayeed M Ahmed, head, department of architecture, UAP and convener of the exhibition, with Bijon Bihari Sharma and M Abdul Muktadir, heads, Architecture Discipline, KU and head, Department of Architecture, AUST respectively being other conveners.

Among other projects were -- Redevelopment of Hazaribagh Tannery Area (KU), Civic Centre at Narayanganj (UAP), Country Boat Museum and Research Centre at Narayanganj (UAP), War Museum at Bijoy Sarani (BUET), Cricket Village at Purbachal (UAP), Film Institute & Archive at Agargaon (AUST), Launch Terminal at Shyampur (BUET), Multimodal Terminal at Narayanganj (AUST) and many others.

The exhibition held at the national Museum inaugurated by Sadeque Hossain Khoka, Mayor of Dhaka City Corporation as chief guest and sponsored by Neer Ltd and will end today.



Visitors at the exhibition closely examining a design.

STAR PHOTO

Dhaka: Home away from home



Curzon Hall intrigues Channa as it is a British structure with Mughal imprint



Channa R Jayasekera, Research Fellow, International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, (ICDDR,B), who has been in Dhaka for the last one month, shared his feelings about the city.

Though I have been in Dhaka only for a month I have tried to experience as much of the city as possible. Initially I enjoyed the trip from the airport to my apartment.

The roads were wide and very nice. But after a few days disparity struck me and that was staggering.

Dhaka is the biggest developing country city I had ever lived in. Among my first impressions I noticed the ban on polythene and plastic bags and auto rickshaws with two-stroke gasoline engines and utilising compressed natural gas that signifies thinking ahead.

Media coverage of cities of developing countries is not very flattering. So I carried I negative preconceived notion of a big, crowded, polluted and poverty stricken Dhaka, and my impressions did not differ much.

In spite of that I chose to come to Dhaka because I am very passionate about things people deem negative or unenthusiastic. I am very keen to work for international development and global health and wished to work in a developing country that is in dire need of health services.

I am a medical student at Duke University School of Medicine in the United States (US). I love my work at ICDDR,B, a world class institute in a developing country, and the people I work with. I was offered the position of a research fellow facilitated by Harvard University and National Institute of Health of the US. I wanted to conduct research on cholera in Bangladesh.

The artistic power of Dhaka is quite attention grabbing, where there is a strong

emphasis on the expression of creativity. I have been to many painting and photography exhibitions and galleries. Well, one does not need to visit such places to see creativity -- I find that every rickshaw is a work of art in itself!

Social life does not seem so bad; eating out is really entertaining with many good restaurants around.

Dhaka is a booming city with roads choked with vehicles, construction and other signs of economic development, but still having vast portions of its population in poverty and uneven resource distribution.

The traffic situation, housing and sanitary conditions in poorer parts of the city need careful planning.

Though many wealthy people live in posh areas, they are fringed by little children begging at a window of a BMW as I crossed the Mohakhali flyover. That is very depressing. I have not seen this much disparity in other developing countries I have been to.

Life of an expatriate is very comfortable here. And there are some moral challenges involved with that. They get high remuneration in NGOs, MNCs and embassies and afford luxuries, which is beyond the reach of people in the first world countries. Besides, service is very cheap here. People can employ drivers and domestic help, which is quite unimaginable in the developed countries.

I like the extent of Dhaka city and I love exploring it. It contains an old city (Old Dhaka), and a vast campus of Dhaka University.

Dhaka's architecture however, is an interesting lens through which the city's history, present, and future can be seen. I like it that history is visible in the architectural edifices of Dhaka. In the old city one can see buildings from Mughal period.

In the Dhaka University campus the Curzon Hall displays the architecture of British period with a Mughal imprint. The structures contain a vastly different sociopolitical era - both locally and in South Asia.

Then on its periphery lies buildings like the Parliament and other imposing structures built in the 70's that so boldly express the birth of a nation, patriotism, independence, and optimism; in newer parts of the city, shiny new megastuctures express the burgeoning modernism and capitalism.

I am quite impressed by the grandeur of the Parliament house. Its sprawling structure is really mesmerising, very majestic, futuristic and forward looking. It is fascinating that one city contains buildings ranging from the mughal period to the present.

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As told to DURDANA GHIAS

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