The small mosque may have been built by Nawab Ghani in 1854-55, who owned the Dil-khoosha garden and several important structures around, many of which are retained and well maintained. About 140 years on the same architect involved in the conservation of Ahsan Manjil was brought in to help RajUK renovate the mosque; on its surface the fawn colour guniting was used as popular then. During the Mughals the area belonged to a naval officer Mirza Mukim. To the north and east, at the outskirt of the expanding city was the now extinct Kamalapur river/canal. A major part of the garden is now within the Bangabhaban complex, which also houses the grave of Shah Niamatullah from early 16C and another old mosque near the gate, the Manuk House, and Dana Dighi. Shahid Matiur Shishu park in front of the complex has the modern City Theatre and a historic water body.

Kawranbazaar was a caravanserai and check post for the northbound travellers, frequently visited by army convoys during Mir Jumla's Assam expedition. The alignment of this road, one of the earliest highways like the Grand Trunk road built earlier that connected Sonargaon with Gaur from east to west, has largely been retained as the Mymensingh road. The urban hamlet was situated just at the outskirt of Mughal Dhaka beyond the Ramna gardens and jungles. Next to it the Europeans set up their factories in Tejgaon. The small three dome mosque was built in 1679-80 in the Shaista Khani style by Malik Ambar Shah, the chief court eunuch. To facilitate movement and retiring of the passengers, he also built a well, bridge and garden. The bridge over the Pandu river (Hatirjheel) existed till the 1960s between Bangla Motor and SAARC Fountain.

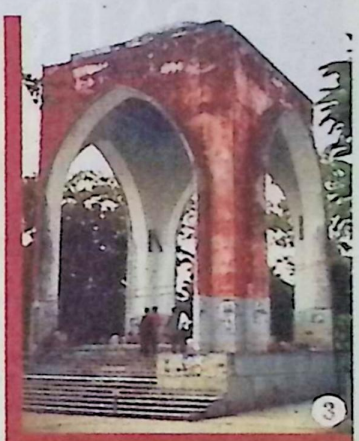
I find this mosque less discussed in literature, and often not included while details are discussed on Khan Mirdha's or Shahbaz Khan's mosques representing the same style. Moreover, the beauty of this well-proportioned mosque has been tarnished by the unsympathetic renovations and alterations. As RajUK carried out conservation of this mosque, the Archaeology Department (DOA) refused to include it in the protection list, blaming RajUK for damaging the architectural elements and thus reducing its heritage value.

Conforming to prevalent style, Ambar Shah Mosque was built on a thakhana (podium), which has now subsided due to unabated construction activities in the vicinity, some obnoxious and threatening the stylistic integrity of the historic structure. Its mihrab, mimber and some structural members were built in Rajmahal basalt. The middle-dome is higher than the side-domes placed on semi-pendentives. The high shoulder is embellished with merlons in the form of petals. There are about 20 corner turrets and slimmer pilasters all around its four facades, topped by deformed cupolas going slightly above the parapets.

However, RajUK does not always act responsibly or in time. It's delayed and non-committed response and absence of a mechanism to enforce Building Code made it impossible to stop demolition of Jagannath University Library Building. We drew media's attention to its demolition, and asked RajUK to stop the unauthorised construction. However, all attempts for saving the building went in vain as it was not listed, and based on a wrong notion, government bodies do not seek building permission.







1. Porch of 160 years old Jagannath University Library Building that RajUK failed to stop demolition of.
2. Jagannath University Administrative Block a very fine hybrid style building that the VC promised to save.
3. Bahadur Shah Park Memorial to remember the Shahid sepoys of 1857.

Conflict is common between RajUK and DCC on their jurisdiction to identify and demolish unsafe buildings; this has saved Shankharibazaar temporarily. As they were locked in a debate, conservation action groups joined forces to save the neighbourhood. RajUK has also been lax in its commitment to develop a list of heritage structures and sites independently or in cooperation with the DOA and the Institute of Architects Bangladesh as the Building Construction Rules require.