

Going Green with Modern Archetype

Dhaka; a city that once boasted golden rice paddies, and miles of green, has a totally different face now. What was once a place of narrow roads, with rows of date palms and mango trees on either side, is now a dense jungle of concrete buildings. With development in many sectors, the city's greenery has rather diminished.



In this maze of monstrous apartments and towering condominiums, we have lost the vegetation that once prevailed in Dhaka. Environment savvy citizens and gardening enthusiasts try to do their part by creating in-house gardens. Although this is important, the contribution is meagre.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if there were a better way to add greenery and buildings to the city simultaneously?

On their path to find an answer to this question, Rangs Properties Ltd came up with a unique solution. This combines modern architecture, organisation, functionality, sustainability and is financially and spatially feasible, known as the "green fence." Always trying to incorporate innovation in every aspect of their work, be it the process or the product itself, they are breaking new ground for the revival of green in the cityscape.

While designers and residents of apartments are quick to deck the building

with lush green once it is complete, Rangs Properties Ltd functions with a different thought process. Shafkat Rahman, Deputy Marketing Manager of Rangs Properties Ltd, explains— "During the construction phase, the project site is typically found to be disorganised and surrounded by an ordinary metal fence. We brainstormed about utilising this fence and adding vegetation from the very beginning of construction."

The green fence is a form of vertical garden, which simply means to grow plants vertically rather than horizontally. This idea was the brainchild of Mashid Rahman, Managing Director of Rangs Properties Ltd and Divisional Director of Real Estate Division, RANCON Holdings Ltd. When asked about the originality of this idea, among many other things, he mentioned, "I thought, can we make vertical vegetation? It is possible to add greenery to walls, and if so, can I use that as a fence?"

Finally, after adequate research and experimentation, the company installed its first green fence in Rangs Z Square, located in Gulshan, on April 2018. Later they implemented the same in eight more projects such as RK Square, Atrium, Eminence, Lake Placid, FS Vega, Miranda, Diorama and Courtyard. It is now an essential element in all of Rangs Properties' projects. The green fence is a one of a kind product in Bangladesh, paving the path for others. The basic idea is to cover the peripheral fence of a construction site with greenery rather than a dull expanse of metal sheets.

Initially, the green fence used coconut rind as the main building block. However, a few unanticipated problems arose, such as water leakage, flimsy structure, and low longevity of plants. To overcome these drawbacks, the company came up with a better version within a few months.



The new version features geotextile bags. These little bags or pockets work as a container for a compound mixture, where plants can grow. The fence is densely aligned with many of these bags making it a green fence. This version is sustainable and is 40 percent less expensive compared to the original version.

It is one complete environment friendly package. No paint is required as would be the case with an ordinary metal fence, reducing the use of toxic materials. Furthermore, the fence is reusable. Once a project is complete, the green fence can either be used for a new project, or can be attached to a concrete wall for aesthetics.

This also plays a great role in providing a positive contribution to the surrounding environment. The alignment of greenery takes up less space on the ground in the already tightly packed streets.

It is an element of modern architecture, suitable for beautification of the building and the city as well. A construction site is a place that people normally avert. But adding a green fence to it will surely create a breath-taking statement and make your head turn in awe.

The green fence posits several intrinsic benefits. Not only is it soothing to the eyes, but foliage is also linked to radiating a positive energy and thus, is a catalyst to mental peace. Plants are known to reduce the surrounding temperature and filter the air, making it more breathable. Although scarce, they are somewhat effective in absorbing noise, thus reducing sound pollution.

For the selection of plants that can be used for this cause, many factors need to be considered. Plants that are sustainable, lightweight, able to withstand harsh surroundings, require low maintenance, and are aesthetically pleasing are selected. Wahidur Rahman Adib, CEO and Managing Director of INSPACE Architects Ltd states, "For the green fence, we typically use ferns and Adelia plants."

"Maintaining this fence does not require anything extraordinary; regular watering, trimming and replacing when needed keeps them in pretty good condition. We have a couple of dedicated gardeners for this job," says G M Shifatur Rahman, Head of Project Management at Rangs Properties. The company has found a modern solution to contemporary problems. It has created an innovative archetype by embedding greenery in the unlikely of places. As they work to develop better versions of this, they also aim to inspire others to do the same.

As Mashid Rahman said, it is their social responsibility, through which, they are also creating a positive brand image regarding the country. Together with these small efforts, citizens can bring back the lost greenery of Dhaka, one step at a time.

By Fariha Amber
Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed