



Simpletree Lighthouse, Banani. Photo: H M Fozla Rabby Apurbo



Mayor Mohammad Hanif Jame Mosque, Azimpur
Photo: SHATOTTO Architecture for Green Living



Cox's Bazar Railway Station. Photo: Claudio Manzoni

Architecture that inspires

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Upon entering the complex, devotees are welcomed with a scenic roofless terrace, with a view towards the Azimpur Graveyard. People come here, sit down, sometimes chat with their neighbours, or take some rest during the non-praying hours. On Friday afternoons, the place fills with people gathering for the Jummah prayer.

"The terrace is inspired by the Mughal concept of 'Shaan,' describes Azam. "In this bustling neighbourhood, the shaan serves as a social hub and a much-needed respite," he elaborates.

Dhaka, also famous as 'The City of Mosques' – brims with places of worship. Yet, rarely do we see one with no domes, archways, or 'minarets,' especially in an old town where Mughal mosques stand proud.

Azam says that he had involved the community and the clientele in the design conversation, and soon, people were eager to have a new mosque in their area.

In answering what drove him to discard these details, the veteran architect responded rather thoughtfully, "I think the absence of symbols can actually bring us closer to God."

Breaking away from decorative traits, Azam wished to evoke spirituality with natural and subtle attributes. For example, the male prayer hall omits a traditional praying spot (mihrab) of the religious leader (Imam). Instead, the Imam's prayer space is highlighted by light from the ceiling and glass accents on the floor, creating a peaceful ambience.

The female prayer space has a dramatic opening on the roof, letting light flow inside. Imagine saying a prayer in such a divine setting, where sunshine flickers through pierced walls, as the graveyard lying a few steps away reminds you of the ultimate fate.

The soaring tower at the front of the mosque and a chic glass bridge with engraved Qur'anic verses define the aesthetics of a present-day praying space. Azam shares with content how the local people take care of the landmark, fostering a sense of community in the neighbourhood.

TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE SKYLINE

Beyond religious spaces, the megalith of Dhaka is seeing rapid growth in commercial structures. In the bustling boulevards of the capital, we can see a range of sleek towers, reflecting this swift transformation.

Take Shanta Forum as an example. The 25-storey twin tower at Tejgaon exhibits an expansive 'urban plaza,' while heat-resistant towers overlook the Hatirjheel Lake. Like Forum, many cutting-edge high-rises are shaking up the city skyline, with exciting skyscrapers underway!

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