



Zebun Nessa Mosque, Ashulia
Photo: Asif Salman

Architecture that inspires

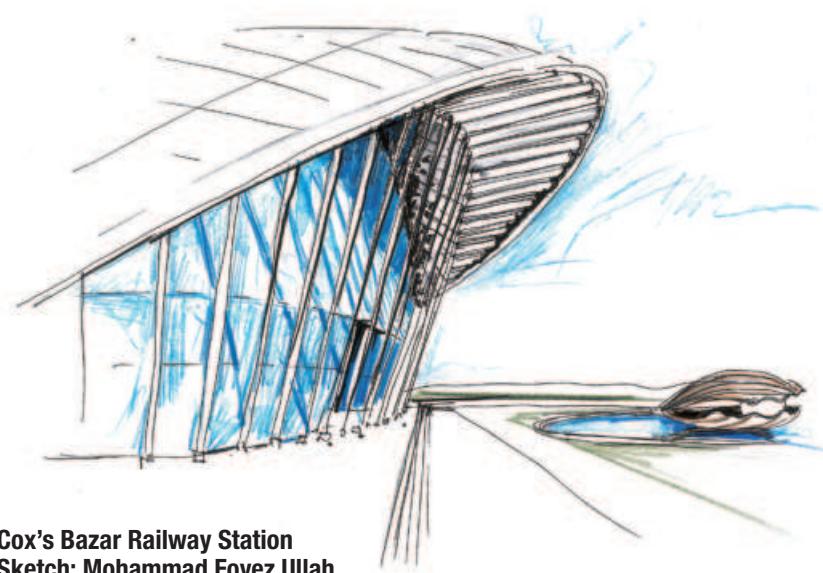
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"The city is inevitably evolving towards high-rise buildings," observes Mohammad Foyez Ullah, the principal architect of Volumezero Limited with over 30 years of experience in the field. "And managing the density is an opportunity for architects to innovate," remarks the architect.

His portfolio has myriad milestone projects, like International Convention City Bashundhara (ICCB), Grameenphone Corporate Headquarters (GP House, designed in partnership with Mustapha Khalid Palash), Shahjalal Islami Bank CHQ, and many more.

In his work, he explores how buildings can interact with the city while enhancing the quality of a fast-paced lifestyle. But do these ambitious buildings increase the construction cost? Foyez Ullah emphasises that smart engineering and technology can in fact help cut down the budget. Furthermore, he adds that strategic planning can go a long way in dealing with our harsh tropical climate.

We can spot a notable example



Cox's Bazar Railway Station
Sketch: Mohammad Foyez Ullah

and textured concrete of the 15-story development sets a serene tone amidst the corporate backdrop.

The luminous interiors of the Lighthouse are a result of a calculated floor plan. "We try to arrive at an efficient floor plate width to ensure light reaches into the interior," clarifies Foyez Ullah. "The interplay of glass and concrete layers creates a deep shade from the sun while elevating the aesthetics," he remarks.

The rhythmic terraces are cosy with flowers and plants, offering an exquisite view of the cityscape. He stresses how architecture can play a role in creating a healthy, comfortable and refreshing work environment in our race with time.

The iconic building embraces a sustainable construction approach, earning LEED Gold certification from The U.S. Green Building Council. In recent times, buildings like Simpletree Anarkali, CEGIS Bhaban, and GP House, along with many others, incorporate green materials, rainwater harvesting and water recycling systems – inspiring a bold new step towards sustainable architecture.

MODERN SPACES WITH A TRADITIONAL TWIST

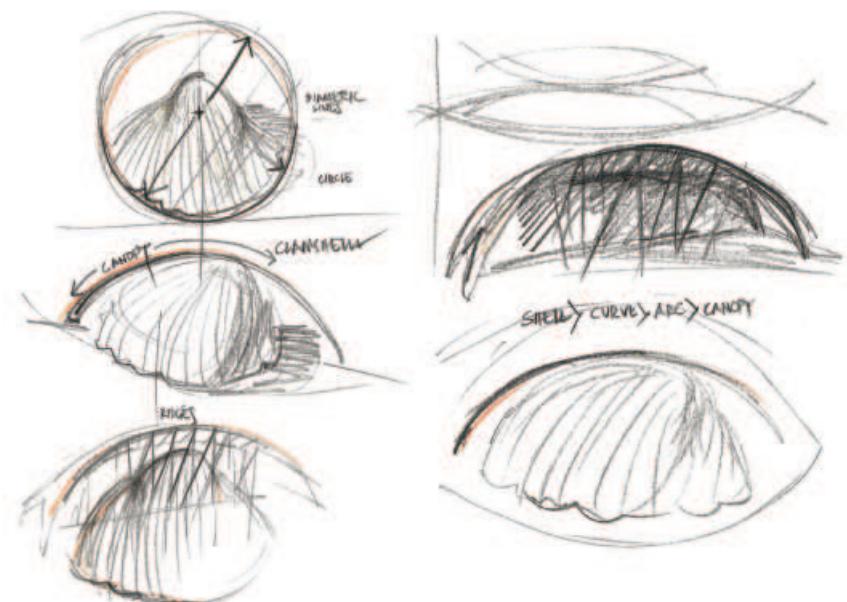
As modern architecture embraces innovation, the Zebun Nessa Mosque, designed by Studio Morphogenesis Limited, sets a stunning example of how modernity and tradition can co-exist and complement each other.

"On the one hand, the main hall of the mosque serves as a well-being space, echoing modern values," describes lead architect Saika Iqbal Meghna, co-founder of Studio Morphogenesis Limited. "The perforated walls, garden courts, and a thin shell dome on the other, bring back age-old aesthetics of Bengal in keeping the room naturally cool," continues Meghna, also an Assistant Professor of the Department of Architecture at BRAC University.

The mosque has recently been awarded a place on the architecture shortlist of the top five civic projects from around the world for the Dezeen Awards 2024.

The prayer space has multiple uses – it holds discussions and prayer sessions where children from the nearby madrassa attend.

Meghna recalls, as an architecture student, she was once denied entry during a mosque survey. "The women's gallery in Zebun Nessa Mosque ensures the democracy of a space, where everyone can enter without hesitation," she shares with pleasure.



One of the noteworthy features of the mosque is its unique connection with nature that establishes the very idea of a "breathing pavilion" built over an elevated mound adjacent to low land and waterbodies, an indigenous architecture form of the monsoon delta.

The mosque marks its profound presence, deeply integrating the existing waterbody, a reminiscence of Ashulia's original landscape. According to Meghna, the client wanted to integrate the serenity of the nearby waterbody into the lifeless industrial zone.

"As a response, we partly chiselled away the westward boundary wall – revealing the view. Unlike solid qibla walls in conventional mosques, the qibla of this mosque is defined by a wide arched opening, allowing the prayer space to flow seamlessly towards a light-filled infinity," she adds.

Saika Iqbal Meghna stresses how modern architecture allows architects to settle for a simpler and more efficient approach. The ethos is evident in many architectural benchmarks, including the Bait Ur Rouf Jame Mosque by Marina Tabassum, which received the prestigious Aga Khan Award for its masterful geometry with the essence of Sultanate features.

A HOMEGROWN MASTERPIECE
Back in 2023, when the Cox's Bazar

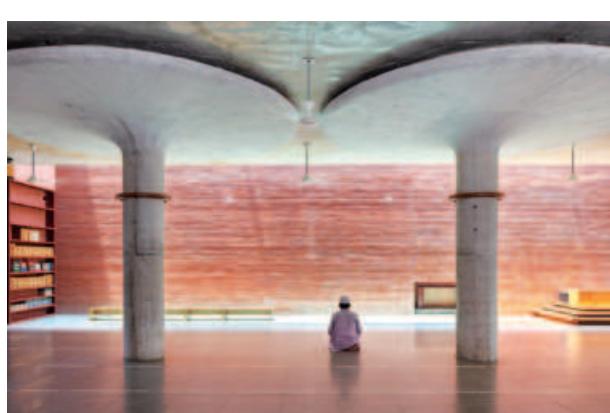
Railway Station opened to the public, many were amazed at the spectacular architectural grandeur. According to Foyez Ullah, the principal architect of the project, it was a challenge to make the project possible with the resources available in our country.

"We wanted to explore our capabilities," he remarks, with an enthusiasm to push the boundaries. "Translating the clamshell shape into a practical design was surely a challenge, and we overcame it."

As one of the most iconic stations in the country, the unique roof represents the rich marine life of the sea, captivating locals and visitors alike. The station offers a grand welcome to tourists arriving to the beach city, where shops, experience zones, restaurants, and guest accommodations aim to transform it into a vibrant entertainment district.

This marvel surely does make you wonder – how much our construction and design sector can contribute with the right kind of support and system! As our architectural field evolves and inspires, embracing innovation, and tradition – Bangladesh also looks forward, towards building a robust architectural identity on the global platform.

By Taslimah Rahman
Photo: Courtesy



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

of Foyez Ullah's vision for the city in Banani's Simpletree Lighthouse. Despite the compact plot of only around 14 katha, Lighthouse smoothly harmonises with the thriving streetscape. The muted colour palette

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