



#FYI

# Architect Marina Tabassum designs London's iconic Summer Pavilion

Since the year 2000, Serpentine Galleries of London have commissioned celebrated architects worldwide to create a pavilion in their compound. The prestigious organisation is celebrated for showcasing art, design, architecture, performance, and community projects and this year is special for us Bangladeshis as the Serpentine Pavilion 2025 has been designed by our own Marina Tabassum.

In a landmark moment for South Asian architecture, Marina Tabassum and her office Marina Tabassum Architects (MTA) have become the first from the region to design the Pavilion — a space known for celebrating innovation and cultural dialogue through design. Titled "A Capsule in Time", the pavilion is currently open to the public at Kensington Gardens in London.

"This is very exciting, and we are honoured that our firm was selected to design for the 25th anniversary of this

event," said Tabassum, who received the Aga Khan Award for Architecture in 2016 for the iconic Bait-ur-Rouf Mosque in Dhaka. "This is a major event in the world of architecture that we all look forward to and we feel truly proud to be the designers of this year."

The structure draws inspiration from the traditional "shamiyanas" from Bengali weddings — festive canopies used across South Asia. "Soft light seeping through the fabric of shamiyanas creates a colourful atmosphere. That is something we wanted to recreate here in London," interprets Tabassum, whose work is known for exploring the themes of light and its sensory connection to space.

The 4.8-metre-high pavilion is a flexible, open space with built-in bookshelves and a cafe at the southern end. The structure allows people from all walks of life to gather, connect and communicate under one roof. "The open courtyard space is

similar to the courtyard spaces in our villages," shares the architect.

"A Capsule in Time" is an exploration of the relationship between time and architecture. In Tabassum's words, time is interconnected with space, as architecture can be a tool of continuity that lasts longer than our own lifetime.

"The temporary nature of the pavilion has been an interesting theme to work with in contrast to the continuity of architecture," elaborates Tabassum. The transience of architecture is present in the Bengal Delta, where homesteads are built and rebuilt due to the shifting course of a river.

"In the char areas we can witness this temporality of living," as the showcase will end in October, Tabassum points to the fleetingness of space: "Currently, the pavilion is bringing so many people together, and after a while, it will all be gone."

Tabassum's contextual, climate-responsive, and community-driven design

clearly resonates across borders which enabled her to become the first South Asian female architect to be the designer of the pavilion. Previously, the Serpentine Pavilions have been designed by worldwide renowned architects, such as Zaha Hadid, Frank Gehry, and Álvaro Siza.

"Every time I am there, people are coming up and saying that this is one of their favourites," remarks Tabassum, "People have accepted it and I think it is a project we can all be proud of," she shares with contentment.

Envisioned to be transformed into a public library after the exhibit, the bookshelves currently feature a selection of books on Bengali culture, literature, poetry, ecology and Bangladesh.

The pavilion will remain open to the public till 26 October 2025.

**By Tasmiah Rahman**  
**Photo: Asif Salman**

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