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Front Page

Bamboo-clay house earns prestigious Aga Khan award

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A clay, straw and bamboo made two-storey eye-catching building at Rudrapur of Biral upazila in Dinajpur won the triennial Aga Khan Award for Architecture.

The building is a school of the Modern Education and Training Institute (METI) of Dipshikha, a Bangladeshi non-government organisation (NGO) working with children and their creative potentials.

According to METI officials, the building was constructed in 2005 and took only four months to build. Local craftsmen, traditional methods and materials were used with an innovative twist and pupils, parents and teachers pitched in.

The building drew a lot of attention at home and abroad for its use of local cheap materials and converting those into an elegant structure. Villagers of remote areas of the district showed their interest in building such structures.

The building cost Tk 17 lakh.

Anna Heringer from Austria and Eike Roswag from Germany, the architects, were the key people behind the building. They engaged skilled local craftsmen and helped them refine the processes and taught them new techniques.

To spread the new methods among the rural and urban people, about 15 students of Architecture and Civil Engineering Department of Brac University, led by Khandakar Hasibul Kabir lecture of Brac University, also worked there.

Sohel Al-Rahe, an architect from Brac university, expressed his pleasure over the METI school's success. He said clay-made houses are common in Bangladesh but this is a new technique of building and would add new dimensions to the traditional method.

Stifan Neumann, a civil engineer from Germany, arrived at the site about three weeks ago to study the architectural methods used after hearing about the building winning the Aga Khan award. He is currently working on another similar building at the site.

According to Heninger, the building was made with local materials like clay, bamboo, straw and rope. The building is weather friendly as the moisture and heat inside the building are controlled by the clay, straw and bamboo.



The award winning school building of Modern Education and Training Institute of Dipshikha in Dinajpur, which is made with local materials and an innovative twist. Photo: STAR

The temperature inside the building is lower than outside during the scorching heat of summer and higher during winter, according to the engineers.

Prodip Tigga, head teacher of METI, received the award last September on behalf of Dipshikha in Malaysia.

Earlier that month, the school was selected as one of the nine awardees of the triennial Aga Khan Award for Architecture with a prize fund of \$500,000.

Aga Khan, the founder chairman of the committee, himself announced the nine recipients of the 2007 award at a ceremony marking the 30th anniversary of the award in Kuala Lumpur, on September 4.

The other projects selected by the 2007 Award Master Jury are Samir Kassir Square, Beirut, Lebanon, Rehabilitation of the City of Shibam, Yemen, Central Market, Koudougou, Burkina Faso, University of Technology Petronas, Bandar Seri Iskandar, Malaysia, Restoration of the Amiriya Complex, Rada, Yemen, Moulmein Rise Residential Tower, Singapore, Royal Netherlands Embassy, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and Rehabilitation of the Walled City, Nicosia, Cyprus.