

Bernard Gomez **DIALOG AXIATA CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS, COLOMBO**



Located in a hectic locale in the city of Colombo, the new corporate headquarters of Dialog Axiata stands as a landmark amidst the inconspicuous surroundings. The architect while focusing on the client's requirement of projecting the corporate identity designed a building that gave attention to sustainability, energy efficiency and practicality.

Photos Eresh Weerasuriya

Architect's Description

The client required their corporate headquarters to be a dominant presence in an area that was characterised by low- and middle-rise buildings. This high-rise building was to epitomise the corporate identity of Dialog Axiata, which is a multinational telecommunication giant with a significant presence in the country. The built area is 78 perches within a one acre property.

The building consists of a ground floor and 15 upper floors, which include its own parking, as a base podium of five car park floors. The staff canteen and kitchen are located above the podium at level 6, followed by eight office floors. The auditorium, viewing terrace and lounge are on the 15th level and completes the ensemble.

The ground floor functions as the service, and the customer care areas. The 6m high service level incorporates the staff pedestrian entry into the premises and also incorporates the mechanical and electrical services infrastructure, facility maintenance, and the janitorial requirements of the building.

In designing the new building priority was given to the amalgamation of the existing buildings with the new, in terms of form, and the retro-use of the existing spaces. The customer care centre, connects two of the existing buildings at the lower ground and first levels, thereby creating 8,000sqft of interactive area.

Design Concept

The architectural design favours a softer, greener, and humane approach to the stereotypical highrise, whilst also exploring its iconic form as an opportunity to create a corporate brand identity for Dialog Axiata. Functional efficiency was a key aspect of the design process. The base was considered particularly important to give the building the appropriate scale. The decision was primarily governed by the need to maximize vehicular movement and promote the concept of unsupervised multi-storey parking on a site that fronts one of the busiest roads of Colombo—Union Place.

The parking/podium design, utilised the concept of a split level mezzanine parking levels creating a maximum ramp of 1.5m, on 7m width, 1:10 grade ramps, ensuring smooth vehicular flow within the podium. The semicircular, vehicular and pedestrian ramps, cantilever out 6m from each end, giving the podium a dynamic movement oriented aesthetic, on which the office floors sit. The design of the entrance canopy, which also functions as the pedestrian entry to the building, was based on the primary need to create a column free space, which does not inhibit vehicular and pedestrian traffic. The design of the canopy was modelled on the concept of a traditional parasol, with a single steel column and support framework. The resulting structure is a free flowing shell concrete form that also takes its cue from the repeating curves of the podium ramps.

The technical and service requirements of traditional highrise design were explored, in an attempt to create a 'massing' and aesthetic, where functionality is the main driving force. The façade design was viewed as part and parcel of a sustainable façade infrastructure, designed to reduce heat gain, facilitate building maintenance, and 'humanize' the building façade.

The extensive uses of cantilevered planters soften and shade the West, East, and South faces of the building. These were designed, with a conscious decision to soften and green the façade, whilst also presenting a softer, glare free, working environment for those inside the building. The planters also serve as service platforms, eliminating the need for service gondolas.

The cantilevered service tubes, which hang off the building at each office level are designed as accessible conduits, accommodating present and future, service infrastructure, HVAC ducting, lighting and antennas. These service elements were moulded into the layering of the design, making them an indistinguishable part of the facade architecture.

A 50m high tempered glass curtain wall, anchored using steel cables, designed as a 'window', to and from, the otherwise impersonal office tower. This 'window' was also conceived as a branding opportunity using the corporate



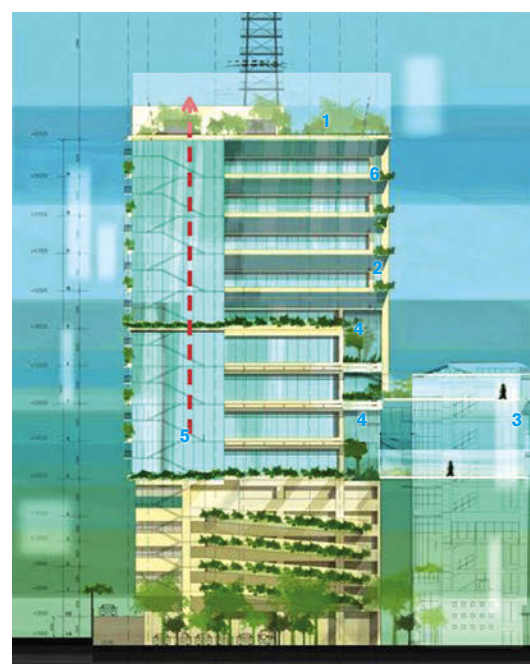
SECTION A-A



WESTERN ELEVATION

WESTERN ELEVATION

- 1 On site renewable energy use of solar panels for heating of water for kitchen, use of photovoltaic cells for 15-20 percent of entire electrical requirement
- 2 Green roof terrace: the use of planters along the peripheral edge of building
- 3 Storm water collection and management system for drip irrigation
- 4 Vertical green shading panels
- 5 Shading and orientation
 - Green shading using soft lanscape.
 - Glazing on western and eastern façades use cantilevered service tubes for service infrastructure and shading



UNION PLACE ELEVATION

UNION PLACE ELEVATION

- 1 Roofing and terrace paving white/light coloured
- 2 Cantilevered service tubes for maintenance of façade infrastructure, shading and reduction of heat gain.
- 3 Links to and from existing buildings
- 4 Double height green gardens at staff canteen, encourages cooling between buildings and social interaction
- 5 Naturally ventilated staircase using "stack effect"
- 6 Reduction of glare into office floors using light shelves for western, eastern, and south western façades.



Page 28: Street view showing the amalgamation of existing and new. Page 29: Branding the building at night. The layered façade as a light box of corporate colours. This page: above, the

entrance parasol: the scaled down entry into the building; below left, the design elements of the façade etched against the sky; below right, view of building from the Street.



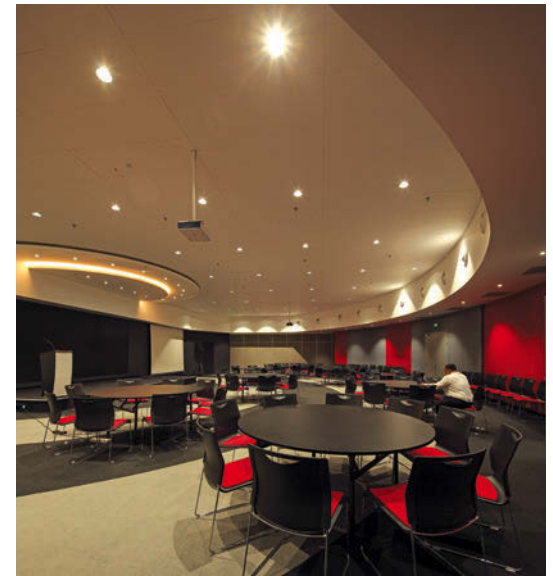
colours of Dialog Axiata, for iconic night time lighting effects, giving the building a street identity.

The office floors have been planned with functionality and efficiency in mind. Designed for flexibility, and user comfort, these spatial envelopes minimize the use of structural columns within the floor plate, and maximize potential views, whilst regulating the effects of glare penetration. The floors capture great views of the city: to the East – Town Hall, Viharamahadevi Park and the West/South West – Beira Lake, Port and the Indian Ocean.

Sustainability and Energy efficiency

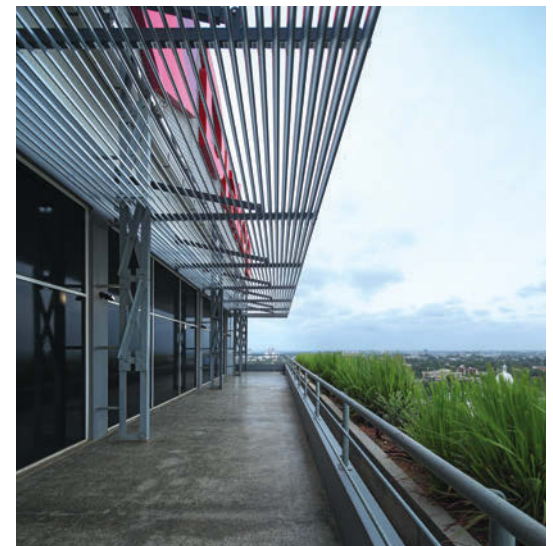
Several important design decisions were taken to reduce energy consumption, utilize renewable energy sources, and promote water and power conservation in this building, which aims to obtain a gold rating in Leadership in Energy Efficient Design (LEED).

- The building management system, optimises and controls the chillers and HVAC system, among its other functions.
- The building incorporates a rain water harvesting and management system, with automated drip irrigation, used for planter irrigation. Potable water consumption in washrooms is reduced by using sensor taps to automate and regulate water use.
- Motion sensor lighting has been used extensively in washrooms and corridors to reduce unnecessary power consumption.
- The facade design maximises the potential of daylight entering the office spaces, whilst reducing glare, heat retention, and solar radiation into the working environment. This has been achieved with the use of 1200mm wide cantilevers as sun breakers and light shelves. With the aim to ‘green’ the building, whilst creating a humane working environment, the cantilevers form a continuous layering of the facade, whilst softening the interior working environment and shading the glazed openings, thereby reducing heat absorption into the building mass.

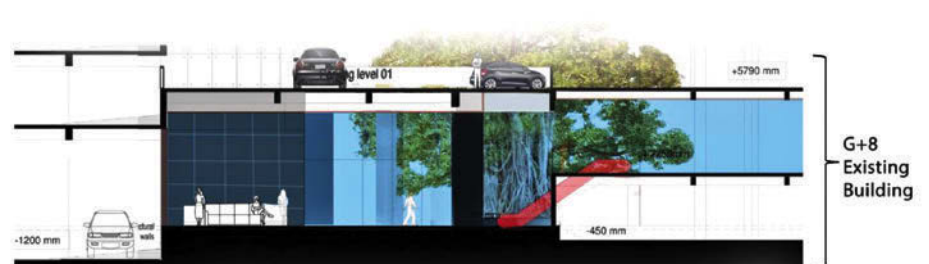
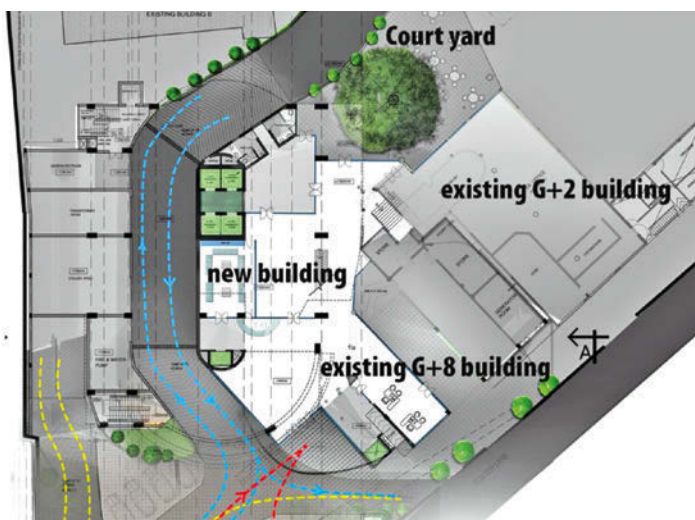


- The existing Banyan tree, has been preserved and incorporated into the design as an important focal point in the interior sequence of the customer care floors. It also acts as an important CO₂ filtration medium for the upper parking levels.
- The 7° sloped roof of the 15th floor auditorium, is fitted with photovoltaic cell banks, providing 38 Kw of renewable energy to the building.
- The design of the car park floors within the base podium maximises the potential of natural cross ventilation, eliminating stagnation of Carbon based emissions.
- The building promotes differently-abled pedestrian access wherever required, using ramps for pedestrian circulation, and disable friendly washroom designs in specified floors.

Ultimately the design concept attempts to marry the technical and aesthetic complexities of a highrise building using a sustainable approach that gives equal weightage to functional and energy efficiency, working environment, urban scale, aesthetic appeal and last but not least, corporate identity. @



Above: left, spaces softened by planted edges: the canteen on level 6; right, the ambience of the auditorium created by the lighting and corporate colour scheme. Inset: the space overflows on to the viewing deck.



DESIGN

Principal Architect
BGJF Consultancy Services:
Bernard Gomez
 Design Team
Prabodha Abyawardane
Pradeep Saranga Kumara
Rajeewa Weeraratne
R M Mendis
S T Hemasiri
 Project Managemant, Principal Engineer
NCD Consultants
HVAC Consultants
Chandana Dalugoda
 Electrical Consultant
Terrence Gunasekera
 Fire / Plumbing Consultant
Wijitha Perera
 LEEDS Consultant
Environ Sustainability Globe
 Civil Contractor
Tudawe Brothers
 Client
Dialog Axiata
 Built area
14,000m²
 No of parking
106
 Interior Consultants
 Main building – **PWA Architects**
 Customer care area – **Design Consortium**



Above: left, cantilevered staircase and frameless glass curtain wall, a window into the city; right: the space in-between, the overhead bridge connection with the adjoining building. Below: panoramic view from the auditorium terrace.

