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ARCHITECTURE UPDATE

BUILD ✦ CONSTRUCT ✦ DESIGN

INTERVIEW

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Corporate Office

Editor-in-Chief & CEO : Sheldon Santwan
sheldon@saffronsynergies.in

Head - Strategy : Rajesh Chakrabarti
rc@saffronsynergies.in, +91 98202 39033

Head - Business Development : Steve Vaz
steve.vaz@saffronsynergies.in, +91 98216 22152

Editorial Team

MUMBAI

Executive Editor : Prasenjit Chakraborty
prasenjit.chakraborty@saffronsynergies.in, +91 9819263364

News Editor : Disha Shah Ghosh
disha.shah@saffronsynergies.in, +91 9619453170

Sr. Correspondent : Tejaswini Paranjape
tejaswini.paranjape@saffronsynergies.in, +91 99200 80545

NEW DELHI
Sr. Correspondent–North India : Vartik Sethi
vartik.sethi@saffronsynergies.in, +91 7042882005

HYDERABAD
Chief Correspondent–South India : Asmita Mukherjee
asmita.mukherjee@saffronsynergies.in, +91 98342 55360

MUMBAI
Social Media Team (Mumbai) : Nishtha Ganesh
nishthagan@gmail.com, +91 93240 36308

DESIGN & LAYOUT
Madhukar Ingawale
madhukar.ingawle@gmail.com, +91 9967433821

CONTRIBUTOR
Anurag Yadav

DATABASE & SUBSCRIPTION
Senior Coordinator (Mumbai) : Gauri Sawant
gauri.sawant@saffronsynergies.in, +91 83690 80796

Coordinator (Mangaluru) : Priya Karkera
priya.saffron@gmail.com, +91 9702944562

Tech Support
Design & Development (Mumbai) : Gilson Prabhudas

Marketing Team

Nagpur
Head - Sales & Marketing : Ajay Wadode
ajay.wadode@saffronsynergies.in, +91 8087127814

Mumbai
Sr. Manager – Sales & Marketing : Pooja Nalawade
pooja.nalawade@saffronsynergies.in, +91 97690 52241

*Responsible for selection of news under the PRB Act

Saffron Synergies
902, 9th Floor, Cozy Apartments, Yari Road,
Versova, Andheri (W), Mumbai-400061,
Maharashtra, India.

The Material Moment

If architecture were a dinner party, building materials would be the guests who quietly pay for the wine, set the mood, and still get blamed if the conversation turns awkward. For years, we treated materials as supporting actors—reliable, necessary, and best spoken about in hushed, technical tones. That era, mercifully, is over.

Today, building materials have stepped into the spotlight, tapped the microphone, and said, "Gentlemen, ladies—this building will not behave unless I do."

Concrete is having an identity crisis (low-carbon, high-performance, expressive—pick two). Steel has discovered manners and sustainability certifications. Glass now wants to think, tint, breathe, and occasionally generate power. Even humble brick has gone bespoke, sustainable, and Instagram-ready. One half expects it to demand a speaking role in client presentations.

For architects and designers, this is exhilarating—and mildly terrifying. Materials are no longer just about strength, finish, and cost. They now carry ideology. Carbon footprints matter. Supply chains are interrogated like suspects. Clients ask questions that begin with "How future-proof is this?"—a phrase that has ended many a comfortable specification meeting.

Builders, meanwhile, sit at the intersection of ambition and arithmetic. The market demands faster delivery, tighter margins, and greener credentials—all at once. Materials, in response, promise miracles: lighter, stronger, quicker, smarter. Some deliver. Some, like distant relatives, talk a good game and arrive late.

And vendors? This is your golden hour. The days of selling by datasheet alone are fading. The new currency is partnership—educating, co-creating, problem-solving. If your material can't explain itself in a boardroom and on site, it risks becoming a footnote.

The next decade will reward materials that simplify complexity. Products that integrate performance, sustainability, and aesthetics—without demanding a PhD to install—will win. Expect fewer "hero materials" and more intelligent systems.

In short, materials are no longer backstage. They're writing the script. And as an industry, we would do well to read it carefully—before the building does it for us.

Rajesh Chakrabarti
Head-Strategy
rc@saffronsynergies.in

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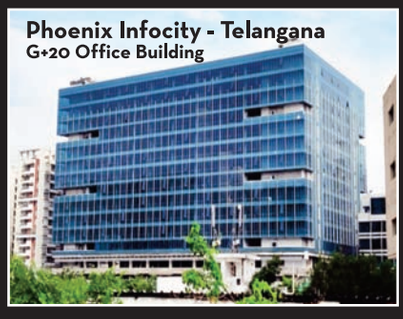

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Govee Smart Lights

Govee has launched three new smart lights: Floor Lamp 3, Ceiling Light Ultra, and Sky Ceiling Light. These Matter-integrated lights offer advanced features for mood-setting. Floor Lamp 3 controls 281 trillion colors and temperature lighting (1,000K-10,000K), compatible with Apple HomeKit. Ceiling Light Ultra (21 inches, 616-pixel LED) displays animated scenes with 5000 lumens brightness. Sky Ceiling Light (21 inches) mimics natural daylight with DaySync, adjusting lighting based on time, sunrise, sunset, and local conditions. Features like DaySync and AI Lighting Bot 2.0 make Govee competitive with rivals like Philips Hue, brightening 2026 for smart lighting.

Nuvoco Concreto Tri Shield

Nuvoco Vistas launches Nuvoco Concreto Tri Shield, a high-performance Ready-Mix Concrete enhancing structural durability. It features Chloride Shield, Carbonation Shield, and Sulphate Shield, extending structure life by 50%. Validated through Nuvoco's CDIC (NABL accredited), aligned with IS, ASTM standards. Suited for commercial complexes, hotels, hospitals, educational institutions, offering long-term protection.

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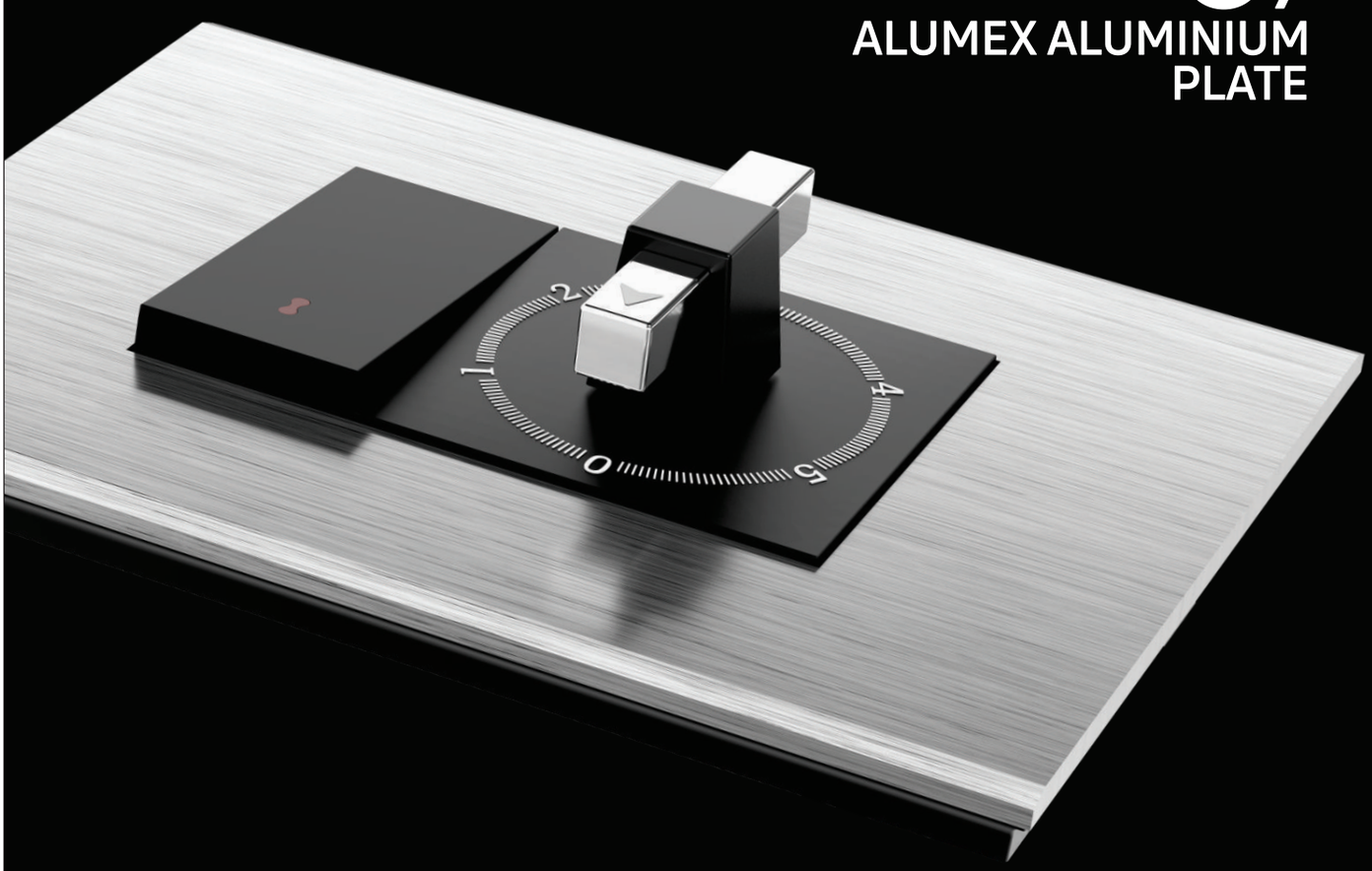

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Budget 2026 Expectations: Real Estate Developers Seek Policy Push to Sustain Housing Demand and Urban Growth

AU Staff | Hyderabad

Maharashtra's real estate developers urge policy measures in the Union Budget 2026 to boost affordability and growth, advocating tax incentives, infrastructure status, GST rationalisation, and connectivity investments.

Prashant Sharma, President, NAREDCO Maharashtra, said, "The real estate sector continues to be a critical driver of economic growth and employment. In the upcoming Union Budget, we hope to see measures that strengthen end-user demand and enhance affordability. Granting infrastructure status to housing, especially affordable and mid-income segments, would significantly improve access to institutional finance and reduce borrowing costs." He added, "Revisiting tax benefits for homebuyers by increasing deduction limits under Sections 24(b) and 80C, along with GST rationalisation and faster approvals, will go a long way in supporting the sector's long-term, inclusive growth."

Kaushal Agarwal, Chairman, The Guardians Real Estate Advisory, noted, "As Budget 2026 approaches, policy continuity and targeted measures to strengthen affordability will be crucial. The market has shown strong resilience, supported by genuine end-user demand. Enhanced tax relief, relooking stamp duty and registration charges, and clarity on taxation for under-construction properties can significantly ease ownership costs and boost buyer sentiment."

Shilpin Tater, Managing Director, Superb Realty, said, "Granting infrastructure status to housing, improving access to long-term capital, and rationalising GST on key building materials will support project viability. In commercial real estate, incentives for green-certified, future-ready office spaces will be essential to align with evolving global standards."

Kamlesh Thakur, Co-Founder & Managing Director, Srishti Group, highlighted infrastructure priorities, stating, "Increasing tax benefits and extending interest subsidy schemes will support genuine end-user demand. Accelerating projects like metro corridors and key arterial roads will unlock new micro-markets and drive inclusive urban growth."

Image Courtesy: Outlook Money

Shraddha Kedia-Agarwal, Director, Transcon Developers, said, "Policy measures that enhance affordability, ease of doing business, and access to low-cost funding will sustain buyer confidence across segments, including luxury housing. Clear taxation and investment-friendly regulations will further strengthen demand, especially from NRIs."

Gaurav Varma, Director, ORA Group, added, "Strengthening tax incentives and fast-tracking infrastructure projects will help unlock new demand corridors. Rationalisation of GST and incentives for sustainable development will enable the creation of high-quality residential assets with long-term value."

Dhruman Shah, Promoter, Ariha Group, concluded, "Faster clearances, single-window approvals, GST rationalisation, and incentives for green developments are essential to ease execution challenges. Continued focus on infrastructure and redevelopment will support the delivery of globally benchmarked residential assets."

Together, industry leaders believe these measures can ensure balanced, sustainable growth while reinforcing real estate's role as a stable pillar of India's economic and urban development. ■

Neworld Developers partners with Cane-line for Northern Hills luxury project

AU Staff | Mumbai

Neworld Developers has onboarded Cane-line as Luxury Living Partner for Northern Hills, integrating their expertise in indoor and outdoor living. The partnership marks a strategic milestone in curating residences beyond architecture, focusing on thoughtfully designed lifestyle environments. Cane-line's globally recognised designs will enhance shared spaces and lifestyle zones as per a press release.

Cane-line is known for comfort, craftsmanship, and timeless elegance, creating understated and livable spaces. Their designs will shape communal lounges and landscaped areas, elevating the sensory experience.

"Cane-line's inclusion underscores our intent to set a new benchmark for residential living," says Sunil Sisodiya, Founder and Chairman, Neworld Developers. The partnership blends global design with curated lifestyle experiences. ■

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steve.vaz@saffronsynergies.in
+91 98216 22152

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ajay.wadode@saffronsynergies.in
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PROFILE

Ar. RK Malik, Founder of RK Malik & Associates, transforms observations of everyday life into architecture that supports, comforts, and inspires. His designs combine clarity, natural materials, and sustainable strategies for spaces that quietly enrich human experience.

Ar. RK Malik Designs Spaces That Inspire and Support Life

Prasenjit Chakraborty | Mumbai

For Ar. RK Malik, architecture began shaping him long before he realised it would become his profession. He grew up observing how spaces influenced people, how a well-lit room could alter a mood, or how a thoughtful layout could make daily life easier. Those early impressions remained with him.

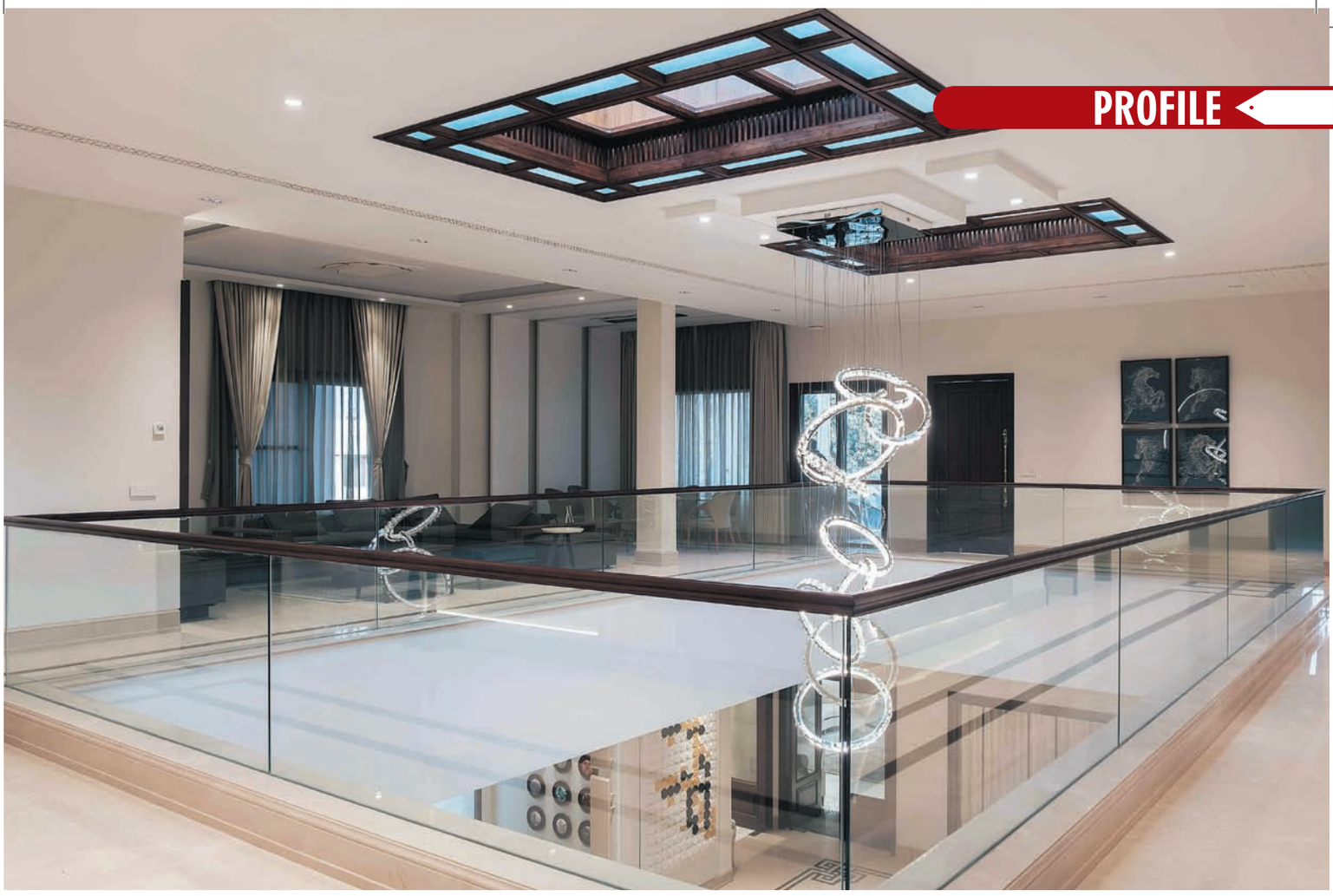
Ar. Malik's years at GCA, Lucknow deepened that curiosity, as the school encouraged students to understand why a building should exist before considering what it should look like. That principle has remained central to his work.

When he began practising and later established R.K. Malik & Associates, he carried this belief forward. He was drawn to clean lines, honest materials, and designs that felt natural rather than imposed. Above all, he came to understand that architecture is at its best when it quietly supports the people who inhabit it.

Listening Shapes Design

His process always begins with listening. Every project carries its own expectations, constraints, and possibilities, and understanding these early saves considerable time later. Once the brief is clear, he spends time studying the site. The surroundings, the light, the climate, and even the way people move through the space all become the foundation of the design.

For Ar. Malik, the creative stage usually starts as rough sketches or quick thoughts, allowing ideas to develop without overthinking. But as soon as something feels right, the practical considerations begin. How will it stand? Will it age well? Can it remain within budget? Over the



years, he has learned that creativity does not suffer because of practicality; instead, it becomes more refined.

Working closely with his team and consultants' keeps the design grounded. The goal remains constant, to create a space that feels good to use and makes sense to build.

Healing Through Design

Some of Ar. Malik's most challenging experiences have arisen from healthcare projects. Designing a hospital, for instance, requires far more than technical expertise; it demands empathy, patience, and a deep understanding of how people behave in stressful environments.

One particular project compelled him to reconsider how spaces can actively support healing. Balancing clinical requirements with a calm, human atmosphere proved demanding. The key lesson from that experience was that complexity becomes manageable when the purpose remains clear. It reinforced the idea that architecture is ultimately about people. When the user's experience guides the design, even the most complex situations begin to fall into place.

Sustainability Through Simplicity

For Ar. Malik, sustainability is not defined solely by technology or certifications; it begins with simple, thoughtful decisions. Proper orientation, natural light, ventilation, and durable materials—these fundamental choices already reduce a building's long-term impact. Innovation emerges when they explore better ways to apply these familiar principles. Sometimes this means a new construction method; other times, a more efficient layout that saves energy quietly and effectively.

He believes these elements as crucial because buildings endure for decades, shaping how people live, work, and experience comfort, while influencing the responsible use of resources. Architects cannot ignore this impact. By designing with care today, buildings can serve both their occupants and the environment for many years to come.

Future Trends in Architecture

Ar. Malik believes that the next decade promises to be fascinating. Cities are growing rapidly, and the way people live is evolving alongside them. Homes will need to accommodate multiple generations living together, while workplaces will become increasingly flexible. Climate will be a major driver, requiring buildings to respond to heat, water, and shifting environmental patterns. This will compel architects and designers to rethink materials and design strategies.

Technology is expected to play a significant role, but not as a replacement for creativity. Instead, it will help professionals understand challenges more deeply and construct more intelligent solutions. At the same time, people are seeking spaces that feel warm, natural, and grounded. Architecture is moving toward simplicity, calmness, and a stronger connection to nature. Above all, collaboration will be essential, with the most successful projects emerging when architects, engineers, clients, and communities work together from the very beginning. ■

prasenjit.chakraborty@saffronsynergies.in

‘Our priority is to strengthen our leadership in the quality-driven Indian market’

As roofing demands evolve across India’s diverse climates, Colorshine is emerging as a technology-led challenger. In this conversation, **Savio Lainez, Vice President – Sales and Marketing, Colorshine,** discusses the company’s advanced coatings, sustainability approach, manufacturing excellence and ambitious growth plans in India and abroad with **Prasenjit Chakraborty.**

Q Colorshine has quickly established a presence in a competitive roofing market dominated by long-standing players. What core innovations or technologies set Colorshine’s roofing solutions apart, both in terms of performance and customer value?

We respect the legacy of other players but the market is now demanding a Climate-Ready Edge, and that is where Colorshine leads. Our rapid ascent is not due to size, but due to two fundamental technological advantages that deliver superior value.

The Ultimate Al-Zn Coating & Substrate: We utilize a premium Aluminium-Zinc alloy that provides far greater corrosion resistance than standard galvanized steel. We offer a minimum coating mass ranging from AZ-200 GSM to AZ-70 GSM. This composition provides 4–6 times better corrosion protection, ensuring a longer structural lifespan.

The Advanced 4-Coat Paint System: While others may use a standard paint coat system, we ensure a robust, modern 4-coat paint coating that offers superior paint adhesion and film integrity. This process allows us to provide a minimum paint film thickness of 35 microns on the top coat for our premium products. This thickness, combined with advanced topcoats like PVDF, SDP, SMP, RMP, and UDP, ensures best-in-class anti-fading and anti-corrosion properties, as validated by industry benchmarks like the 1000-hour Salt Spray Test (SST).

In terms of customer value, these innovations translate directly into industry-leading performance warranties, which reduce the total cost of ownership over the building’s life. We offer not just a product, but a promise of enduring quality and performance.

Q Given India’s diverse climatic zones — from humid coasts to arid interiors — how does Colorshine engineer its roofing materials to ensure long-term durability, energy efficiency, and sustainability across these different environments?

Our approach is rooted in material science and customization, ensuring we don’t offer a one-size-fits-all solution:

Tailored Durability for Harsh Climates: For coastal, high-salinity zones or severely corrosive industrial environments, we recommend and manufacture products with higher Al-Zn coating mass, such as AZ-200 or AZ-180. The aluminium component in the coating forms a durable barrier against moisture and chlorides, significantly extending the life of the roof where it matters most.

Engineered for Energy Efficiency: The aluminium content in our Al-Zn coating naturally gives our coils high heat-reflective properties. Furthermore, we advise and supply lighter color shades in our color-coated range for hot, arid regions. These lighter colors reflect a higher percentage of solar radiation, which can decrease the interior roof temperature by 3–5 degrees Celsius compared to conventional metal roofing. This reduces the need for air conditioning, leading to substantial energy savings for the end-user.

Sustainability through Longevity: By engineering our products to last longer and perform better under extreme conditions, we reduce the frequency of roof replacement. Our robust PVDF/SDP/SMP/RMP/UDP topcoats maintain their aesthetic and protective qualities for years, making Colorshine a choice for long-term sustainability.

Q What are Colorshine's future growth plans in India and abroad?

Colorshine is in an aggressive growth phase driven by the 'Make in India' and infrastructure momentum.

Our primary goal is to achieve 1.0 (MTPA) of coated steel production capacity by 2030. To achieve this:

Domestic Expansion: We are strategically expanding our manufacturing footprint beyond our base in Andhra Pradesh. This includes commissioning two new state-of-the-art facilities: one in Nagpur, Maharashtra (Central India), expected to be operational by 2028, and another in the Eastern Region of India by 2030. These strategic locations will significantly enhance our national reach and supply chain efficiency. Additionally, we are also coming up with a new Color – Coating line in Gudur with a planned capacity of 120000 TPA.

International Ambition: Our focus remains on consolidating our position as a leader in the quality-driven Indian market first. However, the quality, standards, and technical specifications of our products are designed to meet global benchmarks, including compliance with JIS, ASTM and EU standards. We are regular exporters to Europe and multiple international markets worldwide, amplifying Colorshine's global footprint.

Q How does Colorshine make sure its roofing products stay reliable — from manufacturing to installation and after-sales service?

Reliability is built into our entire value chain through three core pillars:

Manufacturing Excellence: Our facility features a fully integrated process, from our new Cold Rolling Mill (CRM) complex to our high-tech Continuous Color Coating Line (CCCL). We adhere to stringent quality management systems, holding both BIS and ISO certifications, ensuring consistent product quality across every batch.

Unwavering Traceability & Digital Service: Our confidence in our product is now backed by a commitment to digital transparency. We recently launched a mobile application to issue digital warranties for all our warranty-backed products. This is a game-changer. It provides customers with instant, verifiable, and secure proof of warranty, eliminating physical paperwork. This is just the first step, as we are rapidly developing this app into a complete digital ecosystem for all our stakeholders—enhancing material tracking, technical support, and the speed of our after-sales service.

Industry-Leading Assurance: To uphold our commitment to long-term performance, every coil and product is marked with non-erasable video jet printing that records essential batch details. This system ensures that from the point of manufacture to the final installation site, the customer can verify the authenticity and certified specifications of the material they are receiving. This comprehensive approach, backed by our 15-year warranty on Signature and 9-year warranty on Spectrum, ensures complete peace of mind for the end customer.

Q How is Colorshine designing its roofing products to meet architects' and builders' demand for aesthetic and sustainable solutions?

Modern architecture requires materials that combine high performance with design flexibility. Colorshine addresses this through innovation in our finishes and our commitment to the environment:

Aesthetic Versatility: We offer an extensive palette of colors and, notably, we have introduced premium finishes that redefine the visual appeal of steel. Our Printed Steel variants, including realistic Wood Finishes, and our sophisticated Wrinkle Finish coils, allow architects to design with high-durability coated steel that mimics the texture and warmth of traditional materials, providing an design elevated, unique façade or roof.

Sustainable Material Philosophy: Our products are inherently sustainable. The base Al-Zn coated steel is recyclable, supporting the circular economy in construction. Furthermore, we are committed to environmental responsibility in our processes, utilizing high-solids, low-VOC paint formulations that comply with strict environmental standards while maintaining superior film performance.

By offering a blend of PVDF-level performance, low-VOC sustainability, and high-end aesthetic finishes, we provide architects and builders with the 'Green Steel' solutions they need to build smart, beautiful, and future-proof structures.

With this balanced approach to aesthetics, performance, and sustainability, Colorshine reinforces its commitment to delivering high-quality steel products that look better, perform better, and last longer. ■

prasenjit.chakraborty@saffronsynergies.in

The prevailing narrative of human architectural history often traces a linear path from primitive shelters to the heights of Rome and Greece. Yet on the Indian subcontinent, a parallel and perhaps far more advanced story was being carved into living rock. Ancient Indian architecture is not merely a collection of religious monuments. It is a testament to a civilization that possessed a profound understanding of geology, astronomy, acoustics, and engineering that defies conventional historical timelines.

Whispers of Lost Science in Ancient Indian Architecture

Vartik Sethi | Delhi

While the rest of the world was largely still grappling with basic structural concepts, Indian master builders were creating complex, multi-story structures that aligned with celestial bodies and challenged the very laws of physics. The evidence suggests that ancient India was not just a participant in architectural history but potentially its forefather, possessing knowledge that has since been lost to the sands of time.

A Regional Tapestry of Stone

The vast subcontinent did not adhere to a monolithic style. Instead, it developed distinct regional grammars of architecture, unified by a shared spiritual ethos but differentiated by geography and material.

The North: The Vertical Aspirations of Nagara

The defining feature of Northern Indian architecture is the shikhara, the curvilinear spire. Rising like stone

representations of the Himalayas, these temples emphasize verticality and the connection between earth and sky. At sites like Khajuraho in central India, which follows the Nagara style, the temples are clustered masses rising to a central peak. They are covered in unbelievably intricate sculptures that depict everything from the mundane to the erotic, symbolizing the ascent from the earthly to the divine. The immense weight of these stone mountains was supported not by mortar but by gravity and precision interlocking systems, a technique that allows them to withstand earthquakes that would crumble modern concrete.

The South: The Dravidian Giants

In contrast, the Dravidian style of the South is characterized by vast, sprawling temple cities enclosed by massive walls. The defining features are the gopurams, colossal and pyramidal gateway towers that often dwarf the main sanctum inside. Temples like the Brihadeeswara in Thanjavur show an obsession with horizontal layers, geometric precision, and immense scale. The vimana, or tower, over the main sanctum is built from granite blocks of staggering weight. The capstone alone weighs approximately 80 tons. How this stone was lifted to a height of 216 feet remains a subject of debate, with theories ranging from massive earthen ramps stretching for miles to lost levitation technologies similar to those rumored in Egyptian pyramid construction.

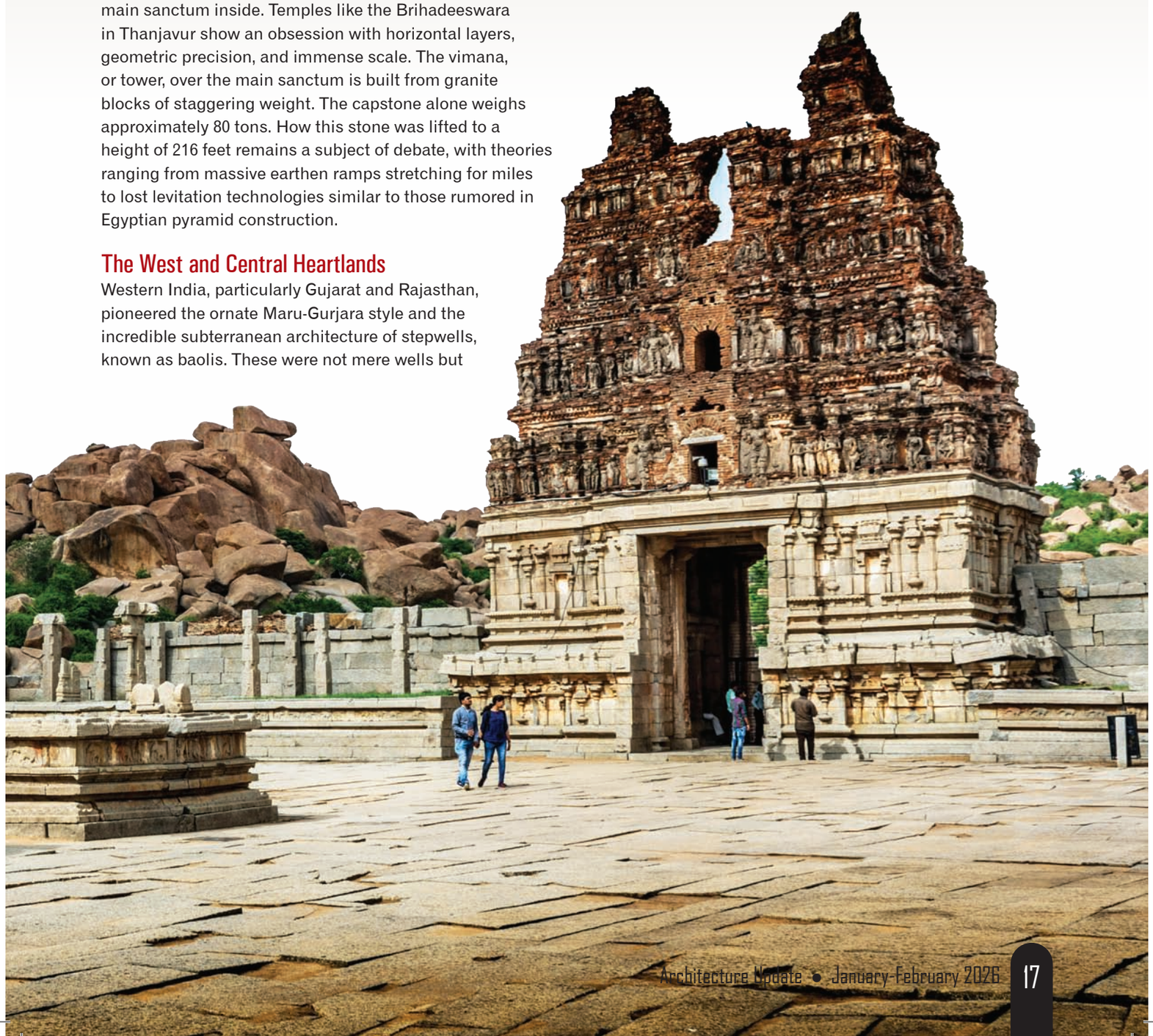
The West and Central Heartlands

Western India, particularly Gujarat and Rajasthan, pioneered the ornate Maru-Gurjara style and the incredible subterranean architecture of stepwells, known as baolis. These were not mere wells but inverted temples turning water storage into subterranean palaces of intricate carving. Central India often acted as a crucible, blending northern and southern styles into hybrid forms known as Vesara. These structures are robust, highly decorated, and integrated deeply into the forested landscapes, showing an organic connection between the built environment and nature.

The Monolithic Impossibility: The Kailasa Temple

If one seeks evidence of advanced ancient technology, they need look no further than the Kailasa temple at the Ellora Caves in Maharashtra. It is not a building constructed by adding stones. It is a structure revealed by removing them.

Kailasa is the world's largest monolithic structure, carved top-down out of a single volcanic basalt cliff face. The statistics are mind-bending. It is estimated that over 200,000 to 400,000 tonnes of rock were excavated. Mainstream archaeology suggests this was achieved with



hammers and chisels over a period of perhaps 18 years.

However, engineers and geologists today question this timeline. The sheer logistics of removing that volume of debris would require a non-stop convoy of trucks in the modern era. Combined with the intricate planning required to carve multi-story galleries, bridges, drainage systems, and ornate statues without making a single mistake, the official narrative seems lacking. In a subtractive method, you cannot put rock back if you cut too much. The margin for error was zero.

The precision of the cuts, the mirror-smooth polishing of certain basalt surfaces, and the speed of execution have led to hypotheses concerning lost technologies, perhaps advanced drilling mechanisms or chemical techniques for softening stone that are unknown today. Kailasa remains an enduring enigma, a project that would challenge even modern engineering firms armed with diamond-tipped machines and laser scanning.

Masters of Astronomy And Their Celestial Alignments

Ancient Indian architects were not just engineers. They were master astronomers. Their temples were often giant, calibrated instruments meant to track the cosmos and measure time.

Across India, numerous temples are dedicated to the Sun God, Surya, demonstrating an advanced understanding of solar movements. The Konark Sun Temple in Odisha is designed as a colossal chariot with 24 giant wheels. These wheels are not decorative. They serve as sundials capable of telling time to the minute based on the shadow cast by the spokes.

More astounding is the precision alignment found in temples like Modhera in Gujarat and the Gavi Gangadhareshwara Temple in Bangalore. Designed with mathematical exactitude, these structures ensure that on specifically significant days, often the equinoxes or the summer solstice, the first rays of the rising sun traverse the entire length of the temple halls to strike directly upon the idol in the innermost sanctum.

This phenomenon requires not only precise knowledge of the earth's axial tilt and solar path but also the ability to orient massive stone structures with flawless accuracy without the aid of modern GPS or surveying equipment. It suggests that the layout of these temples was dictated by a sophisticated geodetic grid that mapped the subcontinent.

Defying Gravity and Sound

The wonders of ancient India extend into realms that seem almost magical: acoustics and anti-gravity.

In Hampi, the Vittala Temple complex houses the famed Musical Pillars. These slender stone columns, when tapped, emit distinct musical notes resembling various instruments like the veena or the mridangam. How ancient artisans could tune solid granite, a material notoriously difficult to work with, to specific frequencies remains a mystery of acoustic engineering. It implies an understanding of the density and sonic properties of stone that we have yet to replicate.

Perhaps the most baffling architectural anomaly is found at the Veerabhadra Temple in Lepakshi, Andhra Pradesh. Among its 70 pillars, one is the famed Hanging Pillar. This massive granite column does not rest fully on the ground. A thin piece of paper or cloth can be slid underneath its base.

It hangs suspended from the roof, defying our understanding of load-bearing structures. British engineers during the colonial era reportedly tried to dislodge it to understand its secret, only to find the entire temple structure shifting. This proved that the pillar played a crucial, yet inexplicable, role in the building's tension and stability. It suggests a knowledge of cantilever mechanics and weight distribution that borders on the miraculous.

The Forefathers of Architecture?

When we view the entirety of ancient Indian architecture, from the scale of Thanjavur and the impossibilities of Ellora to the astronomical precision of Konark and the acoustic mastery of Hampi, the standard historical timeline feels inadequate.

The sophistication on display suggests that India was not merely catching up to other ancient civilizations but was likely far ahead. It points toward a "golden age" of scientific and engineering knowledge that was later lost due to invasions, the destruction of libraries, and the ravages of time.

Furthermore, the longevity of these structures is startling. While modern concrete has a lifespan of perhaps a century, these stone monuments have weathered thousands of monsoons. The Iron Pillar of Delhi, a metallurgic marvel that has refused to rust for over 1,600 years, stands as further proof of a lost chemistry.

These stone archives whisper that the ancients were not primitives fumbling with primitive tools. They were masters of a lithic technology we have yet to fully comprehend. They understood the earth, the sky, and the stone in ways we are only beginning to rediscover. It is entirely possible that the roots of advanced architectural thought lie not in the West, but in the intricate carvings and soaring spires of ancient India. ■

vartik.sethi@saffronsynergies.in

ISI Marked Doors – Not Just a Panel to Close the Hole in the Wall

By **Amit Vaze,** CEO, Sleek Boards Group

The Indian door industry is undergoing a major shift, moving from the supply of individual door shutters to complete door-set solutions comprising both the door shutter and frame. Real estate developers across large, medium, small and micro segments increasingly prefer these integrated, ready-to-install solutions for faster project execution, consistent quality and reduced on-site effort.

Upgraded Indian Standards: A Leap Towards Uniform Quality

Revised Indian Standards — IS 2202 (Part 1):2023, IS 2202 (Part 2):2022, IS 2191 (Part 1):2022, IS 2191 (Part 2):2022 and IS 15380:2023 — provide comprehensive guidelines for manufacturing durable, performance-driven and aesthetically superior doors. A key advancement is the unification of performance parameters across different door constructions, ensuring a minimum guaranteed performance for every door reaching the end user. This marks a significant milestone in standardization and quality assurance for the industry. IS 4020:1998 continues to serve as a critical benchmark, prescribing 16 performance tests for evaluating flush door quality and durability.

Material Flexibility and Design Freedom

The revised standards allow manufacturers to adopt modern materials while meeting defined performance criteria, offering greater design flexibility without compromising quality. Key component options include:

- **Infill:** Timber batten, block board, tubular or solid particle board, hollow core including paper or other material honeycomb, honeycomb panels or cellular core.
- **Face Panel / Door Skin:** Plywood, core with face veneer, MDF, HDF or hardboard.
- **Stile & Rail:** Solid wood, Laminated Veneer Lumber (LVL), Veneer Laminated Lumber (VLL), or hybrid constructions using MDF, HDF or plywood.
- **Overlay:** Decorative veneer, HPL, CPL, PVC foil, ABS sheet or other decorative laminates.
- **Adhesives:** Phenol, Urea Formaldehyde, Melamine Urea Formaldehyde, PVAC, PUR, EVA or other adhesives meeting performance requirements.

This modular, performance-based approach enables cost-effective, application-specific door solutions.

Compulsory ISI Marking: Driving Quality and Modernization

With ISI marking now mandatory for flush doors, manufacturers must comply with these upgraded standards. The adoption of engineered materials and modern construction methods allows manufacturers to scale production up to three times without additional capital expenditure, while ensuring consistent quality in ready-set configurations. This shift is also accelerating the transition away from labour-intensive, time-consuming practices towards standardized, engineered door-set manufacturing that delivers efficiency, precision and repeatability.

Evolving Expectations: Beyond Aesthetics and Function

Doors in modern India are expected to deliver multiple performance attributes. Acoustic-rated doors with drop-down and perimeter seals are gaining popularity, offering sound insulation ratings of 28 dB, 39 dB and 42 dB, particularly in compact urban homes. Fire safety has also become critical with the growth of high-rise buildings. Manufacturers now offer 60-minute fully insulated fire-rated wooden door-sets compliant with IS 3614:2021, with several expanding capabilities for 120-minute fire-rated door-sets.

With mandatory ISI marking, acceptance of engineered materials and technological modernization, the Indian door industry is poised for strong growth over the next decade, driven by real estate demand, performance-oriented products and rising consumer awareness. ■

***Amit Vaze** is a second-generation entrepreneur spearheading Sleek Boards Group, India's premier marketing organisation for technologically advanced wood panel products. With a strategic focus on innovation, quality and global collaboration, Sleek Boards has established itself as one of the influential brands in the Indian furniture and Door Industry in the past 28 years.*

IN CONVERSATION

Beyond Symbolism

Dikshu C. Kukreja on The New Vernacular of Indian Urbanism

Dikshu C. Kukreja, Managing Principal, CPKA, argues that the future of design in the subcontinent isn't about "smart" sensors or glass icons, but about an "operational vernacular", a return to structural logic, land-use reform, and the dignity of the user.

Vartik Sethi | Delhi

For the better part of the last two decades, Indian architecture has existed in a state of high-velocity tension. On one side lies the pull of the global icon, the glass-wrapped corporate tower that signals economic arrival. On the other lies the weight of heritage, the pressure to visually reference a millennia-old history through motifs and ornamentation.

But according to Dikshu C. Kukreja, Managing Principal of C.P. Kukreja Architects (CPKA), this binary is rapidly dissolving. As the subcontinent grapples with rising temperatures, water stress, and unprecedented urban density, the profession is moving toward a new paradigm: a shift from the representational to the operational.

In a wide-ranging discussion on the state of the industry, Kukreja outlines a vision for practice where "vernacular" is no longer a stylistic choice but a performance metric, and where the "smart city" is defined not by sensors, but by spatial logic.

The Rise of the Operational Vernacular

"The contemporary Indian vernacular is no longer defined by imagery or stylistic references, but by performance under real constraints," Kukreja asserts.

For years, 'vernacular' in the Indian context often implied a nostalgic aesthetic, a terracotta tile here, a jali screen there. Kukreja argues that the climate crisis has forced a deeper, more structural engagement. The rising energy intensity of modern buildings is compelling architects to re-engage with the fundamental logic of building in the tropics.

This new vernacular prioritizes massing, depth, and shading over surface treatment. It champions courtyards and controlled permeability, ancient technologies that are being rediscovered not for their look, but for their ability to lower ambient temperatures without electricity.

"This shift is not a rejection of global discourse, but a maturation beyond it," says Kukreja. "Indian architecture today is less concerned with demonstrating modernity and more focused on durability, environmental response, and social use. In that sense, the vernacular has become operational rather than representational."

This logic extends to what Kukreja terms "organic architecture." Often reduced to fluid shapes or biomimicry in Western discourse, in the dense Indian context, 'organic' means coherence. It is the discipline of responding to site conditions and patterns of occupation. "Regulatory constraints do not diminish architectural intent; they sharpen it," he notes. "Restraint becomes not a limitation, but a form of urban intelligence."

The Death of the Glass Box

This move toward climatic responsiveness places the ubiquitous glass façade, the long-standing symbol of corporate success, squarely in the crosshairs.

"The association of glass façades with corporate success emerged from a misplaced equation of transparency with efficiency," Kukreja explains. In the early 2000s, the all-glass tower was the ultimate status symbol for Indian IT and finance sectors. Today, that equation is being dismantled by operational expenditure (OPEX) realities.

With rising energy costs and thermal discomfort becoming unavoidable, clients are beginning to recognize that long-term performance is a stronger marker of value than transparency. A building that fights the Indian sun requires massive mechanical cooling loads, creating a vicious cycle of energy consumption.

"Buildings that moderate heat gain, reduce mechanical dependence, and age well are now understood as resilient

assets," Kukreja observes. The mandate for the modern Indian architect is to prove that climate-responsive design, using opacity, louvers, and thermal mass, is "not an aesthetic compromise, but a more advanced expression of architectural quality."

Infrastructure: From Terminal Logic to City Logic

As India undertakes one of the world's largest infrastructure build-outs, the risk of alienation looms large. Mega-projects, by their sheer volume, can overwhelm the human user. Kukreja cites CPKA's work on Yashobhoomi (the India International Convention and Expo Centre) as a case study in combating this "scale fatigue."

"Large infrastructure becomes alienating when scale overwhelms cognition," he says. "The primary challenge at Yashobhoomi was not size, but legibility."

Rather than adopting "terminal logic", the efficient but soulless movement of people through a tube, the firm applied urban principles to the interior. They established clear spatial hierarchies and strong axial organizations, much like the streets of a planned city. Crucially, daylight was utilized not just for illumination, but as a wayfinding tool.

"The alternation between compressed circulation zones and expansive public volumes was deliberate, allowing users to constantly recalibrate their position," Kukreja details. By treating the convention center as a city precinct rather than a megastructure, the design restores a sense of agency to the user.

This philosophy applies equally to transit hubs. Kukreja argues that metro stations and rail terminals must be viewed as "civic infrastructure" rather than mere conduits for throughput. When designed with public plazas and active edges, they support the informal commerce and social interaction that define Indian public life. "This shift requires treating mobility infrastructure as an extension of the public realm rather than as a purely engineering problem," he adds.

The "Smart City" Fallacy vs. Land-Use Reform

Perhaps Kukreja's most incisive critique is reserved for the "Smart City" rhetoric that dominates current policy discussions. He warns that India's urban challenges are often misdiagnosed as technological problems when they are, at their core, spatial and structural.

"We are attempting to layer data-driven solutions onto cities characterized by fragmented land use, long commutes, and inefficient densities," he argues. Sensors that monitor air quality do nothing to reduce the commute times that cause the pollution in the first place.

For Kukreja, the "smartest" intervention is land-use reform. In a city like Delhi, he suggests that enforcing mixed-use development along transit corridors would yield higher dividends for quality of life than any digital overlay. Integrating housing, employment, and transit reduces the friction of the city. "Without correcting the spatial logic of cities, 'smartness' risks becoming a superficial overlay," he cautions.

Soft Power and the Diplomatic Mission

On the international stage, architecture functions as a subtle but potent form of soft power. Having worked on various diplomatic missions, Kukreja believes these structures must communicate values rather than symbols.

"Diplomatic buildings inevitably speak about how a nation perceives security, openness, environmental responsibility, and public life," he says. The challenge is to avoid "overt iconography", the literal translation of national symbols into built form, and instead focus on "hospitality without vulnerability."

A successful embassy projects institutional confidence through proportion, spatial clarity, and material restraint. It is about "visual aggression" versus "invitation." When architecture achieves this balance, it becomes a credible expression of national identity rather than a "graphic assertion" of it.

The Future of Practice: AI, Reuse, and Housing

Looking toward the future of the profession, Kukreja touches upon three critical pillars: Technology, Heritage, and Equity.

1. AI as a Steward, Not a Creator While acknowledging that AI will revolutionize workflows through optimization and analysis, Kukreja is wary of "delegating judgment." Architecture, he reminds us, is not an exercise in option generation, which AI excels at, but in informed decision-making. "The creative and moral responsibility of design must remain irreducibly human," he states. AI should reduce routine labor, freeing the architect to engage more deeply with ethics and spatial quality.

2. The Imperative of Adaptive Reuse He also calls for a re-evaluation of India's post-independence concrete heritage. As the nation races to modernize, these modernist structures are often threatened with demolition. Kukreja views this stock as a repository of "embodied energy and social history." The next phase of Indian practice, he predicts, will shift from expansion to "repair, retrofit, and reinterpretation," creating a continuity between the Nehruvian era and the present.

3. The Unresolved Challenge: Housing Finally, Kukreja identifies the "most unresolved challenge" in Indian architecture: the production of dense, affordable, climate-resilient housing.

While India has developed the capacity to deliver world-class airports and museums, everyday urban housing is still treated as a "quantitative problem rather than a spatial and social one." The dignity of the urban resident often gets lost in the statistics of "units delivered."

"Addressing this requires architects to work closely with policy frameworks, financial models, and governance systems," Kukreja concludes. "It is not a problem architecture can solve alone, but it is one where architectural thinking must play a central role." ■

vartik.sethi@saffronsynergies.in

The Silent Co-Authors' Indispensable Contribution to the Architectural Narrative

For decades, the architectural narrative was viewed through a singular lens: the vision of the architect. We celebrated the genius of the sketch, the audacity of the structural engineer, and the finality of the silhouette against the skyline. The materials, be it brick, mortar, timber, or laminates, were seen merely as the ink used to print the story. They were passive elements serving a utilitarian purpose.

Vartik Sethi | Delhi

But as we navigate the mid-2020s, a profound shift has occurred in the built environment. The supplier has evolved into a partner, and the vendor has become a visionary. The building materials industry is no longer just supplying the canvas. They are painting the picture alongside the designers. They have become the co-authors of the development we see around us.

This co-authorship is driven by a triad of modern demands: the hunger for hyper-customized aesthetics, the non-negotiable need for sustainability, and the integration of art into function. To understand this paradigm shift, we must look at the industry leaders who are rewriting the script, from the surface textures we touch to the structural cores that hold us up.

Raman Bhutani
CEO, Sanish Laminate

The Surface as the Storyteller

The most immediate interaction a human has with a building is tactile. The walls, the cabinetry, and the surfaces define the mood of a space more than the floor plan ever could. It is here, in the realm of finishing and surfacing, that the concept of material co-authorship is most visible.

Raman Bhutani, CEO of Sanish Laminate, views his product not as a mere covering but as a primary design instrument. He noted that Sanish Laminate believes in pushing the boundaries of design and innovation by creating laminates that bring versatility, character, and light to every environment.

His perspective highlights a crucial evolution in interior architecture. Laminates were once chosen primarily for durability and cost. Today, they are chosen for drama and identity. Bhutani pointed out that their focus on trailblazing, quirky designs is what sets the brand apart. When a material provider actively seeks to elevate spaces beyond the limits of what the market currently offers, they stop being a catalog of options and start becoming a source of inspiration for the architect.

Chitranshi Gupta
Director of the SRB Group

However, the co-author role requires more than just a pretty face. It requires a deep technical backbone. In an industry often criticized for prioritizing form over function, Sanish has doubled down on the engineering behind the aesthetic.

At the heart of their success lies an unwavering commitment to research and development, Bhutani explained. He emphasized the company's status as one of the fastest-growing brands since its inception in 2017. Through extensive investment in R&D, they bring forth products of the highest quality that are not only ahead of their time but also possess a timeless appeal in their design and craftsmanship.

This investment in R&D is where the partnership between architect and manufacturer solidifies. An architect can dream of a finish, but it is the manufacturer's R&D that determines if that dream can withstand heat, moisture, and time. Bhutani added that true quality extends beyond appearances. It is about the experience and durability that their laminates offer. By guaranteeing this durability, brands like Sanish allow architects to take greater creative risks, knowing the material will uphold the integrity of the design.

The Structural Conscience

If surfaces provide the personality, the core materials provide the conscience. The modern building cannot simply stand. It must stand for something. With the construction sector responsible for a significant portion of global carbon emissions, the material industry has had to pivot from exploitation to preservation.

Chitranshi Gupta, Director of the SRB Group, which encompasses SRB Woods, SRB Boards, and Flavicon Eco Boards, represents this shift toward conscientious construction.

Gupta said that sustainability, quality, and inclusivity are the pillars of a future-ready building revolution. Her portfolio spans MDF, HDF, and bagasse particle boards, addressing the critical need for wood alternatives that do not deplete forests. Bagasse, a fibrous byproduct of sugarcane, is a prime example of agricultural waste transformed into architectural wealth.

She noted that her goal is to offer superior material choices that combine high quality, versatile applications, and cost-effective solutions for Indian households.

But Gupta's co-authorship extends beyond the product to the very culture of the industry. Construction has historically been a fortress of male dominance. Gupta is dismantling that structure from the inside out. She asserted that as a female entrepreneur in a traditionally male-dominated industry, she brings a fresh perspective in every aspect and strives to incorporate more females in every tier of the industry in the future.

When we talk about development, we often talk about concrete metrics. But Gupta's approach, focusing on excellent sourcing, production optimization, and sustained growth to channel partners, reminds us that the development of a nation is also about the development of its people and its supply chains.

Blurring the Lines

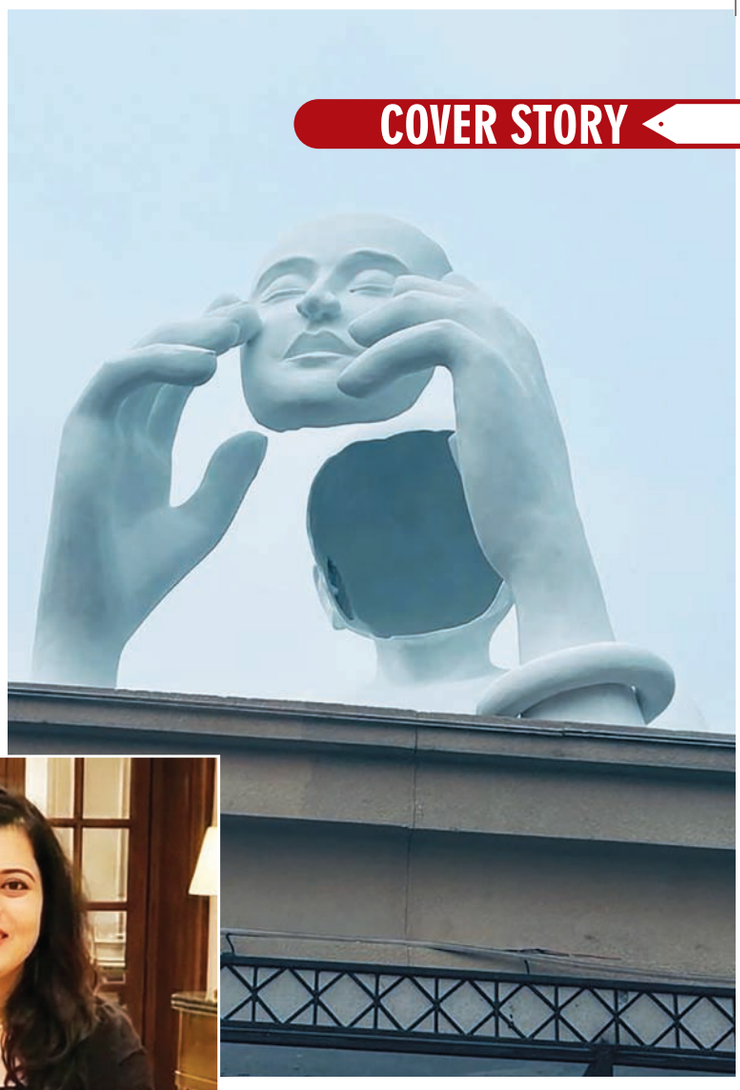
The final frontier of this new architectural narrative is the dissolution of boundaries between building material and art object. In contemporary luxury and hospitality projects,

architects are increasingly demanding materials that serve a structural purpose while doubling as sculptural installations.

Sameeksha, COO of Versatile Art of India, identifies this trend as design-led functionality.

She observed that they are witnessing a growing shift in the building materials industry where materials are not just structural but also expressive. Sculptures and wall art are increasingly being treated as integral architectural elements rather than afterthoughts.

This is a significant departure from the past, where art was hung on a wall after the building was finished. Now, the wall itself is the art. Using innovations in metal, fiber, and mixed media, manufacturers are enabling architects to create long-lasting, weather-resistant installations that bring character and emotion to spaces, both indoors and outdoors.



The Human Connection

Ultimately, buildings are built for people. The materials used must resonate with human needs: the need for beauty, for safety, and for connection.

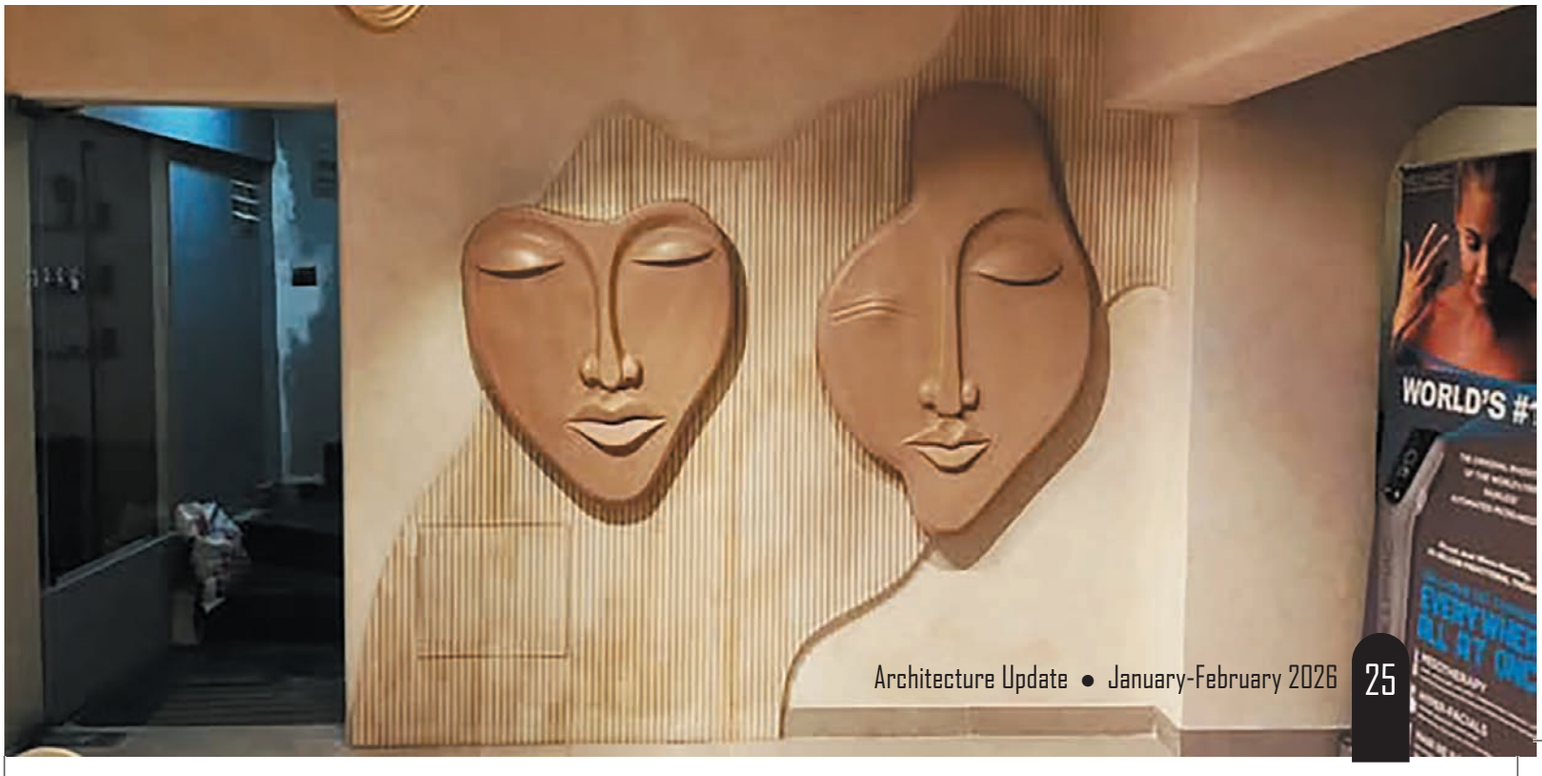
Returning to the philosophy at Sanish Laminate, Raman Bhutani articulated a sentiment that binds these diverse sectors together: the value of relationships. He stated that their dedication goes beyond just products. It is about cultivating lasting connections. He explained that they understand the significance of relationships, and that is why they prioritize delivering exceptional value to their clients.

Sameeksha
COO, Versatile Art of India

This is the definition of the new era of development. It is no longer a transactional exchange where a builder buys a board and nails it up. It is a symbiotic relationship where the manufacturer understands the emotional and functional intent of the space.

Bhutani concluded that as contributors to the decorative industry, their goal is to make a positive impact by not only enhancing spaces aesthetically but also infusing them with their core values. This reinforces Sanish's aim to leave an indelible mark of quality, innovation, and beauty. ■

vartik.sethi@saffronsynergies.in



PROJECT FOCUS

Moradabad-based **'The Lohia Sales Gallery'**, designed by **Ar. Kulveer Bhati** of TOD Design Innovations on a 6,000 sq. m. plot, features a striking boomerang-shaped plan. Its dynamic geometry, with a 7m entry tapering to 3.5m edges, choreographs visitor flow and responds to sun-path, making it a standout architectural statement.

The Lohia Sales Gallery Where Craft Meets Climate

AU Staff | Mumbai

The Lohia Sales Gallery and Experience Centre in New Moradabad is the first architectural expression of Lohia World Space's flagship township, Lohia One. Conceived by principal architect Kulveer Bhati of TOD Design Innovations, the gallery is a confident, contemporary landmark that translates brand ambition into built form. Sited on a 6,000 sq. m. triangular plot, the building responds to visibility, movement and sun-path, resulting in a sculptural boomerang plan whose seven-metre entry tapers to 3.5 metres at the edges — a profile that choreographs sequence, scale and arrival.

Site, program and visitor journey

Programmatically the gallery is resolved into two clear zones: a public, experience-led sales gallery and the operational offices for Lohia World Space. Visitors enter through a generous double-height reception that unfolds into the central model showcase — the building's experiential heart. A meticulously detailed scale model sits under controlled lighting and is circled by choreographed circulation so guests can study the masterplan from multiple vantage points. Suspended above the model is a commissioned lighting sculpture by origami artist Ankon Mitra; its folded geometry functions as a focal artwork and wayfinding device, linking craft with architecture.

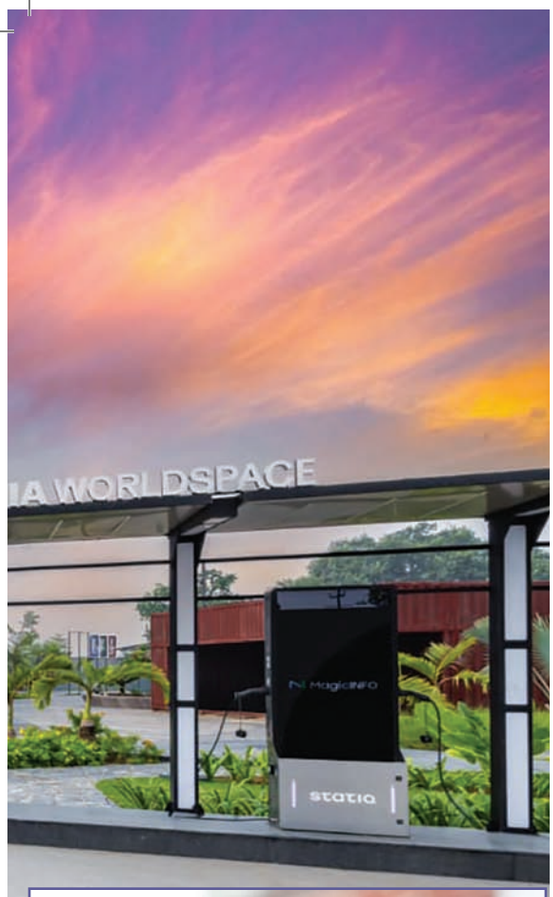
An adjacent immersive experience theatre presents masterplan narratives, phasing and lifestyle through dynamic audiovisual storytelling. Beyond the theatre, glazed meeting cabins and consultation lounges offer acoustic privacy without visual isolation, enabling simultaneous group presentations and one-on-one discussions within a single uninterrupted visitor itinerary.

The façade: craft, geometry and performance

The façade is the project's principal narrative device — a layered composition that communicates identity, context and climate response.

Cultural resonance: At a tactile level the envelope reinterprets Moradabad's brassware traditions. Jali-inspired perforations, dotted impressions and refined metal textures echo local engraving motifs, creating a contemporary surface language that roots the building in regional craft.

Parametric geometry: The elevation is deliberately faceted: angled modules, shifting planes and




Ar. Kulveer Bhati

non-parallel lines create a multi-dimensional field that catches light differently through the day. This geometry animates the mass, breaks monotony and visually expresses the dynamism of the Lohia Group.

Climatic performance: Perforated panels, deep overhangs and screened elements act as passive shading devices — reducing solar gain while admitting diffused daylight. The façade therefore functions as both a sculptural skin and an environmental filter, balancing transparency, thermal comfort and visual depth.

Visual identity: A signature red-framed gable and expansive floor-to-ceiling glazing establish a recognizable entrance and a strong street presence, ensuring the gallery reads as a civic landmark from approach roads.

Materials, interiors and lighting

Interiors pair architectural restraint with warm, contemporary finishes — neutral floors, textured surfaces, timber accents and soft, layered lighting that create a premium, welcoming ambience. The lighting strategy is integral: integrated LED bands beneath the canopy, recessed cove lighting that sculpts the sloping roofline, and targeted accenting for the model and presentation zones produce a layered, atmospheric interior and a distinct nocturnal identity. The Ankon Mitra sculpture is woven into this scheme, its folded planes refracting light to animate the central space and enhance wayfinding.

Sustainability and future readiness

Sustainability is embedded in the design intent. The gallery targets LEED Gold/ Platinum performance through high-performance glazing, daylight-responsive controls, energy-efficient systems and materials chosen for durability and reduced embodied carbon. Building services employ zoned HVAC and intelligent controls; water-sensitive landscape strategies reduce demand and support biodiversity. The site integrates electric vehicle infrastructure in collaboration with Statiq, providing on-site EV charging and signaling the township's commitment to future mobility.

Landscape and urban presence

The exterior landscape is intentionally minimal — manicured lawns, paved approaches, curated planting pockets and discreet path lighting — allowing the sculptural building to remain dominant. Concealed linear LEDs tracing the roofline give the gallery a luminous, floating quality at night while threshold seating invites informal engagement.

Conclusion

The Lohia Sales Gallery is more than a sales facility: it is an architectural prologue to Lohia One that tells a story of craft, innovation and sustainable ambition. By combining a culturally resonant, performance-driven façade, a choreographed visitor journey, a signature art-led lighting centrepiece by Ankon Mitra, considered lighting design, Statiq-enabled EV charging, and LEED Gold/Platinum-targeted sustainability measures, the project offers an aspirational preview of township life and sets a new benchmark for experience-led sales architecture in emerging urban contexts. ■

Fact File

Name of the Firm	-	*TOD Design Innovations*
Name of the Architect/Designer	-	*Ar. Kulveer Bhati*
Status of the Project	-	*Completed*
Year of Completion	-	*2025*
Size/Area	-	*1.5 Acres*
Location	-	*New Moradabad*

The recently concluded Design Mumbai event brought an inspiring mix of global design voices, fresh ideas and future-ready brands shaping India's evolving design landscape. Among the many noteworthy participants, String Furniture, captured attention for its deep commitment to circularity and its design philosophy. During the event, **Tejaswini Paranjape** had a face-to-face conversation with **Jonas Wetterlöf, CEO of String Furniture** to uncover the brand's expansion strategies and its unwavering sustainability principles.

Sweden's Circular Design Icon 'String Furniture' lands in India

A Legacy Rooted in Circularity

String Furniture has sustainability woven into its DNA. The company has always manufactured in Sweden, ensuring high standards, certified materials, and environmentally responsible practices. According to Jonas, the brand's true circularity lies not just in responsible production, but in creating products that last across generations. "In Sweden, shelves are passed from one generation to the next. That is extremely circular," he notes.

Their iconic String Shelf, introduced in 1949, remains compatible with every version made since. Measurements, proportions and functionality have stayed unchanged for over seven decades—a rare consistency in the design world.

This enduring compatibility underscores the belief that sustainability begins with longevity, not just recyclability.

Collaborating With Designers

Jonas emphasised that String Furniture does not design its products internally. Instead, the brand actively collaborates with external designers to shape its product development. "So far, we have involved Swedish designers. It would be fantastic if international designers and architects work with us going forward," he shared. This openness signals an opportunity for young and established designers worldwide—including from India—to add new layers to String's design story.

What Truly Sets String Apart?

Quality remains String's strongest differentiator. But equally defining is the system's unparalleled modularity and flexibility. "Nothing sits permanently assembled to the panel," Jonas explains. Users can move, rearrange and reconfigure each element as needed. The system can grow horizontally or vertically, adapting to new spaces, functions or phases of life. This functional freedom, paired with minimalist Swedish aesthetics, has positioned String as a beloved choice for contemporary homes and refined interiors.

Evolution of Modular Furniture: What Has Changed?

Interestingly, while colours and material choices have evolved, the structural measurements of the String system have remained untouched since 1949. “If you buy a shelf from 1949, it can still pair with what we make today,” Jonas said. This timeless continuity reflects both the brand’s design philosophy and its circular ethics. In Europe, retail is the strongest growth driver for String. The classic String system is predominantly a residential product, widely used in private homes. While there are other ranges suited for offices and hospitality, the brand’s core customer base continues to come from the home segment.

New learning curve, India Chapter

Discussing the Indian market, Jonas was candid about the uncertainties and opportunities ahead. “To be honest with you, we don’t know yet,” he admitted. Recognising the complexity of India’s diverse consumer base, cultural nuances and varying spatial needs, String prefers not to manage India remotely from Sweden. Instead, the company has partnered with a local brand Fern and Ade that can guide and support its entry. “There is a learning curve… but we are in good hands with our partner,” Jonas added optimistically.

Global Footprints

String Furniture is currently present in 25 markets worldwide. Alongside India, the brand has recently expanded into China and, a few years ago, into the United States. The next potential opportunity, Jonas shared, could be South America, where they as a brand continue to find growing appreciation.

With its strong sustainability ethos, focus on longevity and user-centric flexibility, String Furniture is well-positioned to inspire new design conversations. ■

tejaswini.paranjape@saffronsynergies.in

OMA unveils design for The Perigon, Miami Beach’s new residential tower

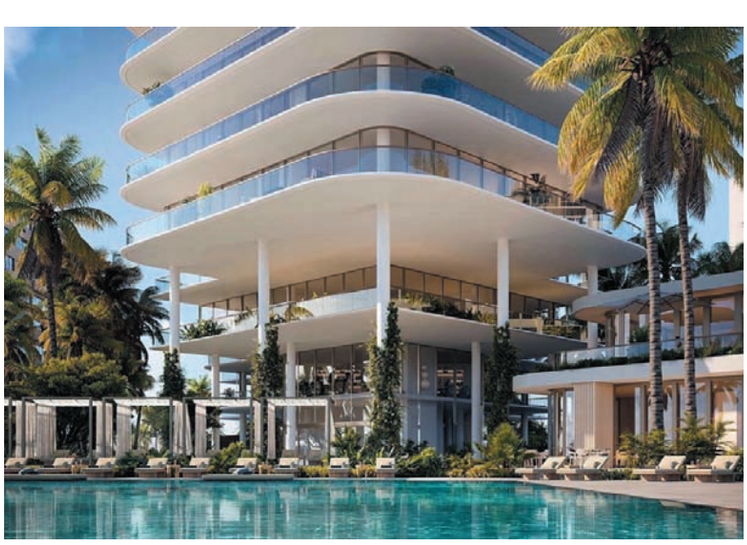
AU Staff | Mumbai

Global architecture firm OMA has unveiled the design for The Perigon, a 17-storey residential tower planned for Miami Beach’s Mid Beach neighbourhood. Located at 5333 Collins Avenue, the project is being developed through a joint venture between Mast Capital and Starwood Capital Group.

Set on a rare dual-waterfront site stretching from Indian Creek to the Atlantic Ocean, The Perigon is shaped by its unique surroundings and the opportunity for panoramic water views. Led by OMA Partner Jason Long, the design reimagines the building as a composition of interlocking “towers,” rotated to face the ocean and Biscayne Bay while minimising visual impact on neighbouring properties.

The individual volumes are merged and elevated 45 feet above the flood line, creating a single sculptural form that frees up the ground plane and improves resilience. Subtle contrasts between organic and orthogonal geometries highlight the relationship between the towers and lend rhythm to the façade.

Unlike typical Miami Beach residential developments that turn inward at street level, The Perigon introduces a porous base with a prominent entrance along Collins Avenue and landscaped outdoor amenities overlooking the ocean. Terraced upper levels step down toward both the city and the sea,



echoing the lifted form below.

The development will comprise 82 residences, offering floor-to-ceiling windows, expansive terraces and a mix of open-plan and secluded living spaces. Spanning approximately 408,000 sq ft, the project is currently under construction, with completion expected in 2027. Upon completion, The Perigon is targeting LEED Gold certification. ■

SPECIAL FEATURE

Designs that shape water

Decoding the role of bath fittings in water management

Water management happens at the large water bodies for its equitable distribution. But the same water entering our homes through walls, pipes and bathrooms also needs a systematic treatment for its efficient use. Because the real story of water management in India is not unfolding only in reservoirs or river policies. It is unfolding inside the corners of homes, hotels, offices and highrise developments where every wash,every flush and every shower becomes part of a much larger national equation. Tejaswini Paranjape waters down on a few bath designs which have a big hand in water conservation.

Water management today stretches across a very wide canvas. At a residential level it includes the way pressure is controlled ,the way tanks are filled, the way greywater can be separated, the way flow is regulated through fittings and how smart fixtures help households consume only what is needed. At a commercial scale it expands into treatment plants harvesting systems centralised monitoring building management systems and sustainability frameworks that evaluate how responsibly each litre moves inside a structure. And at both scales design emerges as the most immediate and most influential intervention. The choice of a faucet or a cartridge or a flushing system decides the daily consumption of every resident without them even realising it. This is where design becomes the quiet architect of conservation.

Interplay of Sensibility and Sensuality

Rahul Kher, Founder and Director, Zalur Lifestyle represents the new shift in how luxury understands responsibility. Rahul offers a line that captures the change in one breath. Water efficiency and sustainability are the new luxury. It reflects a mindset where beauty and ethics now walk together. Watching him speak it becomes clear that he is not treating conservation as necessity but as an elevated standard of living. He explains that good design must deliver sensibility as much as sensuality and should create an experience that feels indulgent but behaves responsible

Rahul Kher
Founder and Director
Zalur Lifestyle

at its core. His emphasis is on what sits inside the fitting and not just the surface that shines on the outside.

Zalurs portfolio brings this philosophy alive through aerators that shape richer flow with less output through progressive cartridges that regulate pressure and temperature without waste and through globally certified ranges that operate within restricted yet comfortable flow levels. Rahul describes how adjustable timed flow mechanisms sacrificial anodes for longer life stabilised fixing systems and controlled dispensing come together to create a product that works intelligently behind the scenes. Observing this reveals a simple truth. Sustainable fittings succeed not when the user becomes conscious but when the user forgets there was anything to save because comfort remains untouched. Water is saved quietly and consistently.

A 2024 study carried out across hotels in the UK, Denmark and Spain analysed over 17,500 shower events where “smart” shower cubicles provided real-time feedback on shower duration and water use, along with gentle on-mirror reminders like “water conservation starts with you.” According to phys.org, guests who saw this feedback reduced their shower time by about 25.8 percent, saving roughly 10 litres of water per shower on average. In a separate field experiment involving 570 households, use of a smart shower head that displayed water consumption in real time cut water use per shower by about 29 percent, showing that such conservation-friendly fittings can significantly reduce water and energy use even in regular homes (cais-research.de).

Sculpting water with care

The conversation then shifts toward Somany Ceramics, a brand that approaches water conservation with a more technical lens while maintaining the human experience at the centre. Shrivatsa Somany, Vertical head, SOMANY Bathware conveys that water efficient fittings will define the future of Indian bathrooms by ensuring luxury that behaves responsibly. Their products function in a way that removes the burden from the user. OxiStream aerators create a soft foamy flow that feels abundant while using far less water. Sensor based faucets release water only when needed. Automated Smart Sense toilets regulate flushing through intelligent detection. Their Quiet Swirl technology creates a thorough clean in a single flush without noise or repeated cycles. Listening to these details reveals that innovation in bath fittings is no longer about the outer form but about the invisible engineering that controls flow pressure speed and silence. Water becomes a material to sculpt with care.

Shrivatsa Somany
Vertical head
SOMANY Bathware

Sarveshaa SB
Chairman and MD
BHADRA Group

Ecosystem of Water Management

When water is managed through design in this manner the benefits ripple outward. Households experience lower consumption while enjoying the same comfort or better. Bathrooms remain cleaner due to controlled behaviour of water. Electricity bills reduce because less water requires heating. Developers see stronger sustainability scores and reduced operational strain. Commercial properties gain in long term value because efficient bathrooms are no longer an add on but a foundational requirement. Cities benefit because every controlled litre reduces pressure on municipal infrastructure. Water management becomes an ecosystem of advantages created by a single thoughtful choice at the design table.

A third voice from real estate will extend this understanding. This section will integrate their insights into the same conversational flow where they speak the design intent becomes visible and the larger meaning is inferred.

The Developer's Lens on Water-Intelligent Design

Sarveshaa SB, Chairman and Managing Director of BHADRA Group, highlights how water stewardship is now a cornerstone of luxury residential design. Across BHADRA's projects in Bengaluru and other emerging markets, advanced water-efficient fittings—including aerators, flow optimisers and sensor-activated faucets—reduce consumption by up to 60 per cent while maintaining a smooth, uninterrupted flow. Air-infused shower systems blend water with air to create fuller droplets, delivering indulgent comfort with significantly lower usage. "From rain showers to thermostatic mixers, every element is selected to combine efficiency with luxury," he notes, reflecting a future-ready philosophy where sustainability coexists with premium living.

Low-flow faucets with foam flow, infrared sensors, and dual-flush WCs have made the most meaningful impact, cutting daily consumption nearly in half. Concealed cisterns, ergonomic hand showers, and wide-format rain showers further enhance efficiency without compromising experience. Homebuyers increasingly recognise these features as marks of intelligent, long-term design, appreciating thermostatic mixers for precise control, air-infused showers for luxurious yet conserving experiences, and subtle safety touches like gentle floor gradients and anti-skid finishes.

Brand selection, Sarveshaa explains, is rigorous, focusing on innovation, durability, and aesthetics suited to Indian conditions. High-quality materials, sensor-enabled faucets, and precision-engineered systems integrate seamlessly into interiors while lowering maintenance and operational costs, proving that sustainable luxury delivers comfort, elegance, and long-term value.

This journey across brands and systems leads to an important realisation. Water is not a background utility anymore. It is a design responsibility. Every fitting chosen by a designer has the power to change how a family a hotel an office or even an entire tower consumes its water. A well designed faucet can save more water in a single day than a household can consciously save in a week. A well engineered flushing system can prevent thousands of litres from being wasted every month. These are small choices on paper but immense choices in practice.

Concluding at luxury with restraint

India stands at a point where every drop has weight. The decisions made in bathrooms today will shape the resilience of cities tomorrow. Designers therefore carry a responsibility that is both silent and powerful. In the quiet corners where water lives they are these designers who shape its path. Water has finally found its custodians. And through their choices luxury in India is now learning to coexist with restraint and comfort is learning to align with conscience. ■

tejaswini.paranjape@saffronsynergies.in

Architectural Lighting

K-LITE INDUSTRIES, an ISO-certified company and a leading manufacturer of indoor and outdoor luminaires, has launched a new series of LED Architectural Lighting. As trendsetters in outdoor lighting and inspired by the "Make in India" vision, K-LITE continues to redefine innovation through its latest product portfolio under the Architectural Lighting category.

The comprehensive range of applications includes

- Facade Lighting
- Pathway Lighting
- In-ground Luminaires
- Up-Down Lighting
- Billboard Lighting
- Vertical Light Bars
- Wall Washers
- Area Lighting Poles

and the highly popular Sleek Polar Lighting Solutions.

Each solution is backed by K-LITE's extensive understanding of urban illumination and expertise gained over three decades. The fixtures are designed to deliver value-driven technology ideally suited for Indian conditions. The LEDs used in these luminaires comply with LM-80 testing standards and are sourced from internationally reputed brands such as Nichia and CREE. All luminaires are compliant with RoHS, LM-79, and CE certifications. With a luminaire efficacy exceeding 100 lumens per watt, the products ensure superior performance and energy efficiency. A variety of optical distributions and Correlated Colour Temperature (CCT) options—Cool White, Neutral White, and Warm White—are available to meet specific lighting design requirements.

The standout feature of this series, the Sleek Polar Lighting Solution, showcases a contemporary design that is both timeless and distinctive. Compact in form, with no visible mounting elements, and offering optimized integration, the Polar Lighting seamlessly aligns with the geometric lines of the square column. These assemblies are ideal for enhancing the aesthetics of modern architectural environments.

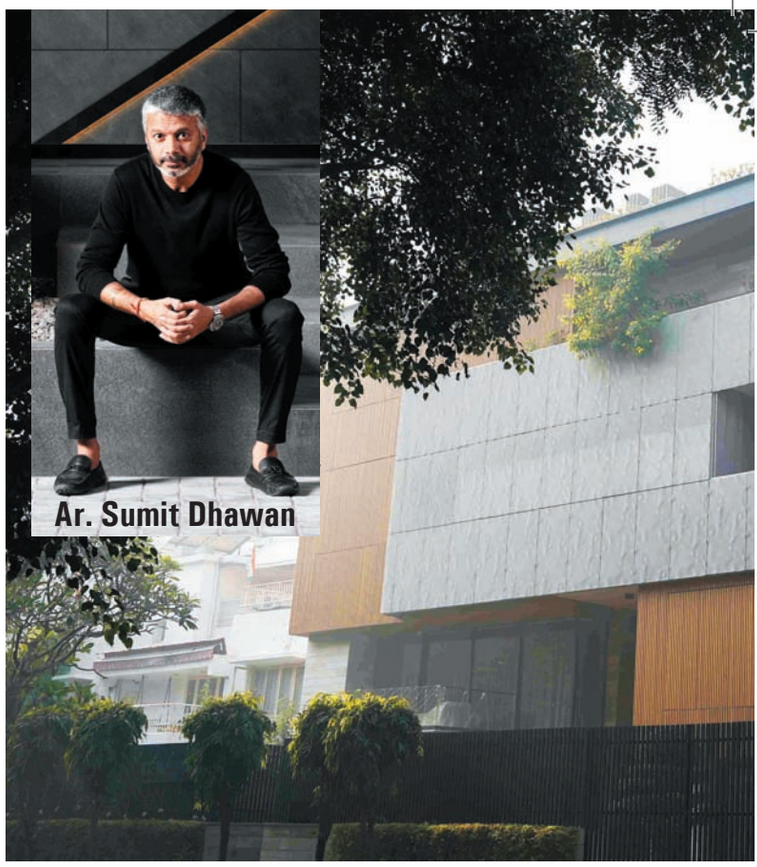
For more details visit our website : www.klite.in
For all enquiries, Contact info@klite.in
Phone +91-9500079797 / 044 26257710

K-LITE INDUSTRIES PRIVATE LIMITED
D-10, Ambattur Industrial Estate, Chennai - 600 058
Tel : 26257710, 48581950
Cell : 95000 79797, 95000 85511.
Email : info@klite.in Website : www.klite.in

Elegance Redefined

Casa Sereno, A Modern Sanctuary in Chanakyapuri

Casa Sereno, a 16,500 sq. ft. residence in Chanakyapuri, embodies serene luxury with its minimalist design and double-skin façade. Designed by Cityspace'82 Architects, it blends modern aesthetics with sustainability and natural elements, creating a timeless haven of calm and elegance.



AU Staff | Mumbai

Casa Sereno, also known as The Neos, is a refined architectural statement celebrating serenity, structure, and quiet luxury. Designed by Ar. Sumit Dhawan, this modern sanctuary evokes calmness, clarity, and timeless elegance. Completed in January 2025, the home reflects an aesthetic tailored to the client's desire

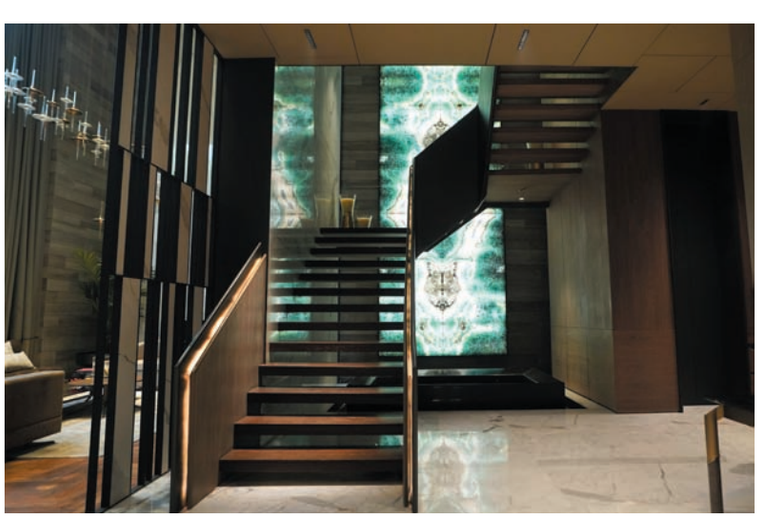
for sophistication and warmth. The architecture adopts a minimal visual language, with a bold façade defined by clean cubic volumes and horizontal bands emphasizing groundedness and scale.

The double-skin façade features perforated aluminum screens and wood-finish aluminum louvers, offering privacy, protection, and sculptural depth. Concealed glazing and scaled openings enhance privacy without compromising natural light and air. The spatial planning differentiates public, private, and leisure spaces across four levels. The basement is an entertainment hub with a bar, pool table, and lounges. The ground floor hosts communal areas, the first floor is for children, and the second floor is a private sanctuary with a master suite, puja room, and terrace garden overlooking lush greenery.

Inside, "luxury in simplicity" shines through refined materials like Satvario marble, Laminam surfaces, and engineered wood. The double-height living room is accentuated with a striking artwork and floor-to-ceiling glass panels inviting greenery inward. The staircase is a sculptural feature with a backlit onyx installation adding visual drama. Bathrooms extend into private open-to-sky pockets, ensuring natural ventilation and a spa-like experience with premium fittings.

Sustainability is core to Casa Sereno's narrative, with double-wall insulation, energy-efficient LEDs, water-saving fixtures, and terrace greens aiding passive cooling. Locally sourced materials and skilled craftsmanship embed the home in its cultural and geographical context. Despite construction challenges in the diplomatic enclave, meticulous planning ensured seamless execution.

Casa Sereno stands as a testament to thoughtful design where modern minimalism meets nature, luxury finds expression in simplicity, and architectural clarity creates a home of enduring elegance. ■



Fact File

Name of the Project	:	*Casa Sereno*
Name of the Firm	:	*Cityspace'82 Architects*
Name of the Architect	:	*Ar. Sumit Dhawan*
Status	:	*Completed*
Year of Completion	:	*January 2025*
Size	:	*16,500 sq. ft.*
Location	:	*Rajdoot Marg, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi*

'Craft Culture and Contemporary Luxury Define Poltrona Frau's India Journey'

Over the past decade, India's luxury landscape has transformed dramatically, and Poltrona Frau has evolved in step with it. **Amit Pai, Managing Director of Poltrona Frau India**, speaks with **Prasenjit Chakraborty** about how the brand balances heritage, innovation, and cultural nuance across residential, commercial, and mobility-driven design.

Q Poltrona Frau has expanded steadily across major Indian metros. From your perspective, how have the expectations of Indian luxury homebuyers and corporate clients evolved over the past decade, and how does the brand adapt its design storytelling to suit India's unique cultural and spatial sensibilities?

India's luxury consumer over the last decade has transformed into one of the most discerning in the world. Homeowners and corporate clients are no longer simply looking for internationally recognised names - they are interested in genuine craft, thoughtful materiality, and interiors that feel intuitively aligned with how they live and work. They want spaces that evoke emotional warmth, that express refinement without ostentation, and that reflect a certain cultural fluency.

Corporate clients echo this mindset, looking for environments that balance sophistication with a sense of ease. We refine how our identity is expressed in different markets, this means interpreting our design codes with lighter gestures, updated proportions, and compositions that respond naturally to the way people inhabit space today. We focus on creating spaces that speak through nuance: the softness of a curve, the tactile depth of leather, the harmony between forms - details that allow the environment to feel lived-in yet elevated.

Q Poltrona Frau is synonymous with Italian craftsmanship and timeless design. How do you balance preserving this century-old heritage with the need to innovate for contemporary lifestyles, particularly in the context of rapidly changing material technologies and sustainability demands?

For Poltrona Frau, heritage is a living foundation, something to be honoured, evolved, and continuously reinterpreted. An example that captures this balance is the iconic 1919 armchair, a masterpiece of Italian design. This year, it was re-released in collaboration with Fornasetti. The bergère 1919 armchair is covered in Pelle Frau® leather printed with one of the most characteristic patterns of the Fornasetti archive, the "Ultime Notizie (Breaking News)" decoration. This edition brings together our historic craftsmanship with a distinctly contemporary artistic sensibility,

showing how we protect the soul of a piece while enriching it with modern cultural relevance.

Innovation, however, remains essential as lifestyles shift. Today's clients expect flexibility, intuitive comfort, and materials that support longevity. We respond with research-driven solutions, new structural techniques, and updated aesthetics that preserve our design purity while meeting the needs of contemporary living.

In this evolution, Pelle Frau® leather plays a pivotal role. As our proprietary leather, developed through decades of research and perfected through precise tanning expertise, it embodies the tactile richness, durability, and comfort that define Poltrona Frau. Thirty years of research into reducing the environmental impact during the processing and transformation of leather resulted in Pelle Frau® ColorSphere Impact Less, a chrome-free tanned leather that reduces the total use of chemicals by 15% and water consumption by 10%, achieving a 10% reduction in CO emissions during the tanning process. This represents a proactive and strategic commitment by Poltrona Frau, where material excellence and environmental responsibility advance together.

Q Your leadership of the 'Interiors in Motion' division brings Poltrona Frau's expertise into automotive, aviation, and luxury marine sectors. How do insights from these high-precision environments influence your approach to designing for architecture, premium residences, and workspace interiors?

Interiors in Motion represents Poltrona Frau's commitment to bringing excellence in craftsmanship to mobility, where performance and comfort must coexist at the highest level. Our experience in automotive, aviation, rail, and luxury marine projects allows us to experiment with materials, integrate advanced technologies, and fine-tune execution so that every detail contributes to a seamless journey. These sectors demand precision, innovative engineering, and solutions capable of withstanding the most intensive use conditions.

This knowledge directly informs our approach to fixed interior spaces. The ability to translate complex engineering, refined ergonomics, and high-performance materials into residential, architectural, and workspace environments allows us to elevate the user experience. We apply the same rigor, attention to detail, and commitment to excellence, ensuring that every space embodies comfort, beauty, and technical mastery.

Q India has seen a rise in design-led architecture studios, luxury developers, and boutique hospitality concepts. How is Poltrona Frau India engaging with architects, interior designers, and developers to co-create spaces that reflect both global luxury and India's evolving design identity?

Our engagement with India's design community is rooted in ongoing dialogue, shared vision, and collaborative exploration. As design practices in India continue to sharpen their global perspective while asserting their own identity, we support this growth by working closely with all to understand their creative intent, project needs, and aesthetic direction. Our role is to offer our expertise, material knowledge, and design heritage in ways that complement their vision without imposing a singular interpretation.

Q Poltrona Frau's Custom Interiors division collaborates with world-renowned architects on public and commercial spaces. What emerging trends in customization, materials, and user-centric design do you believe will most influence high-end interior environments over the next five years?

Customization has always been one of Poltrona Frau's defining strengths, and its relevance will only grow as high-end spaces increasingly seek individuality through materiality, form, and detail. Clients now look for integrated design systems, tailored finishes, and elements crafted specifically for their spatial narrative - an evolution supported by refined natural materials, environmentally conscious processes, and intuitive, sensory-driven design.

One of our most revered examples in India is the NMACC Grand Theatre, where Poltrona Frau created all 2,000 custom seats. This landmark project showcases our ability to deliver large-scale, technically precise, acoustically refined solutions with the same craftsmanship and elegance found in private environments.

As a brand deeply rooted in craftsmanship yet forward-looking in technology and research, Poltrona Frau is uniquely positioned to lead this evolution. Our Custom Interiors division will continue to create solutions that marry precision with poetry, ensuring every project is as functional as it is profoundly personal. ■

prasenjit.chakraborty@saffronsynergies.in

GUEST ARTICLE

Designing homes that heal: The psychology of space, light and layout

By **Jenis Makwana,** Founder and Design Director at DezignCo

As modern lifestyles continue to progress and become faster-paced than ever, your home has evolved from being simply a shelter into becoming a haven. A place of comfort and affection, a place to crave for and to desire. Beyond aesthetic appeal and visual harmony, the spaces we inhabit have a profound psychological impact on our mood, behaviour, and overall well-being. At DezignCo, we believe that design is not only what we see but is more about how we experience it – even when we don't consciously think about it. When space, light, and layout come together with intent, your home can be much more than aesthetically pleasing; it can actually heal, restore and uplift you. It communicates your persona.

The Healing Power of Space: How Layout Impacts Emotion

The human mind has a natural reaction to the flow of space. An area that is cluttered and/or unorganised can be overwhelming, disorienting, and cause negative emotions. Conversely, well-planned, open, and breathable layouts subconsciously signal safety, clarity, and balance.

There are several ways to differentiate between each design of the home through a design psychology lens. The layout acts as a behavioural script:

- Clear circulation paths of the home allow the residents to feel in control. These circulation paths relieve some of the cognitive load on the residents, as large open spaces allow the residents to circulate more freely throughout the home.
- Zones designed around natural behaviours—morning rituals, family bonding, family functions, mindful silence—support emotional grounding.
- Multi-functional yet minimal spaces reduce decision fatigue and promote mental clarity.

There is a unique perspective on planning spaces by utilising data, behaviour studies, and design intuition to develop layouts that are easy to navigate and enhance family interaction and connection. Because when a space is easy to live in, the physical and emotional load becomes lighter. You carry the same positive energy that reflects each corner of your house.

Light as Therapy: Designing Around the Body's Natural Rhythms

Light is one of the most effective elements of design and yet one of the least recognised for its impact on our daily lives. According to studies in Environmental Psychology, light has a direct effect on our serotonin levels, sleep quality, and emotional well-being. Homes that optimise natural light feel more uplifting, energising, and emotionally warm.

Our design philosophy centres around:

- Maximising daylight penetration through strategic openings, reflective materials, and light-diffusing surfaces.
- Balancing the use of both direct and ambient light creates vibrancy and calm.
- Circadian lighting takes advantage of people's natural cycles. Blue tones are energising, yellow tones are more relaxing.

Through a dialogue between design and the human body, the home becomes a biological partner, allowing the human body to tune itself for wellness through optimal light conditions. Light becomes the means of therapy, while the home becomes a personalised retreat.

Designing for Wellbeing: You'll want to consider the following sensory elements:

Every surface we touch, and every

colour we see, resonates with our mental wellbeing. A healing home integrates sensory elements that comfort, ground, and connect us with nature.

1. Materiality That Breathes

The use of natural materials, such as wood, stone, linen, and clay, emits a calming touch and adds positive emotional elements to the home.

2. Colours That Soothe

The colour palette(s) you select carry the emotional weight of the home. DezignCo's approach promotes the use of colour palettes that foster emotional healing and restoration:

- Soft neutrals for stability
- Earth tones for grounding
- Greens and blues for calmness
- Warm accent colours create joy without overstimulation of the senses

3. The Sounds of Silence

Wellness is tied to sound. Thoughtful consideration will create an acoustic cocoon using surfaces such as wall panels, plush rugs, upholstered furniture, and soft furnishings that will allow for better sleep and more mindful activities.

4. Air, Scent, and Thermal Comfort

The healing aspects of design include many things that can't be seen, including air flow, temperature, and scent. The use of subtle scents such as lavender and sandalwood can help improve mood and reduce stress.

The Influence of Nature: Biophilic Design in Everyday Living

Biophilic design (taking advantage of the design of space to enhance one's connection to nature) can be accomplished through the design of buildings ("green buildings"), and biophilic design also encompasses the actual environment itself, i.e., architecture that works with nature. Studies have been repeated numerous times, and the results are fairly clear: natural elements reduce stress, increase cognitive function, and provide emotional comfort.

At DezignCo, we integrate biophilic design in several ways:

- Inside and outside of structures appear visually continuous. The shapes and textures of the buildings are organic in nature
- The natural forms and patterns of the built environment are reflected in biophilic design
- The design of the space encourages a relaxed lifestyle (the development/design of "green pockets")

A home that has biophilic design incorporated into it not only feels like it has use for fresh air; it feels like it has life.

From Data to Emotion:

We believe that wellness is a responsibility of design, not a luxury.

The design of experience-based residential and hospitality spaces should utilise behavioural insight and data-driven design principles, with the goal that all your design decisions are made based upon what makes you feel best.

Important Aspects for going beyond interiors:

- How family members spend time together, interact, and disengage from outside distractions (such as phones)
- Light patterns through the day
- Navigate emotional problems due to the existing layout of the home
- Establish personal traditions and movement habits
- Adapt to physical surroundings in a long-term way.

The designs have to be characterised by the combination of technical accuracy and an understanding of psychology, transforming homes with a strong sense of individuality and allowing inhabitants to more easily "slow down", reconnect, and recuperate.

Why Healing Homes Are the Future

As the world embraces wellness as a priority, home design is shifting from luxury-driven aesthetics to human-centric experiences. Developers, architects and designers now understand the importance of mental wellness, emotional stability and environmental health through their work.

The goal of a Healing Home is not to be opulent. It is instead about choosing materials and making design decisions that support someone's spirit. Healing Homes are characterised by: soft light, plenty of air to breathe, natural materials, being thoughtful in providing silence and a tranquil visual environment. When design resonates with human psychology, homes become places where true healing occurs. ■

Jenis Makwana, *a seasoned interior designer with nearly 30 years of experience in the residential, retail, and hospitality design industries, founded DezignCo to create beautiful interiors by using data-centred and human-centred design methodologies that combine practical uses of a space with creative uses and ways to support emotional wellness. A masterful designer and architect of meaningful, mindful, experiential spaces, Jenis uses the principles of behavioural design, spatial psychology, and high-end craftsmanship in everything he creates. Continually mentoring young designers and working with other industry leaders to promote design excellence within India, Jenis Makwana is a true leader in his field.*

Bridging Theory and Practice in a Dense, Demanding Delhi

STEP Design Firm grew from small residential assignments to a studio that balances homes, hospitality and commercial work. Founder and principal architect **Gauresh Garg** graduated in 2008, worked across four practices, then set up STEP in late 2013. In a candid conversation with **Vartik Sethi**, he explained how the studio has since delivered more than 350 homes. Residential work accounts for roughly 60 percent of the portfolio, while hospitality and commercial projects form the remaining 40 percent and are growing.

Technique, Aesthetics, Practicality

STEP stands for Studio for Technique, Aesthetics and Practicality. The name reflects a goal Garg set early in his career. “The intent was to bring theory to practise,” he said. “We conceptualise first. We work into concepts, material boards and specifications before the final project is developed,” he explained. Projects begin with concept, material boards and specifications, then move to layouts and details.

Process that starts with use

Garg’s role has evolved from all-hands production to principal designer and supervisor. The team drives detailing, while major design decisions still go through him. An early apartment in Gurgaon became a turning point. The developer noticed the work, and long term commissions followed. That small win helped the practice stand on its own.

Function is mapped through walkthroughs. The team imagines how people enter, pause and move, and then edits plans and finishes. One example came from a children’s room. After a mental run-through, STEP raised the switchboards to five feet and removed sockets within reach. That small adjustment improved safety with no cost shock. Garg summed up the method using a familiar line. Design is how it works, then how it looks.

Delhi’s density and the builder economy

On urban issues in Delhi, Garg pointed to density first. Higher FAR and land prices have pushed multi-owner redevelopment. Buildings are taller, trees feel lower, and ground floors lose daylight. Increased FAR and land prices have pushed multi-owner redevelopment, elevating buildings and shading ground floors. “Sunlight does not seep in and microclimate is affected,” he observed. He noted a sustainability paradox. Shared structures can pool resources, yet market incentives often dominate climatic logic.

Another stress point is the builder-led model. Garg observed that many developers talk numbers rather than energy or envelope performance. A small but growing group is changing the conversation, mainly in the premium segment. He called for wider awareness inside codes, contracting and the craft ecosystem. Local materials and workmanship deserve more trust. Imported is not automatically better.

Tools that help rather than replace

Garg sees AI and BIM as essential, used in the right way. AI helps STEP turn a quick massing or basic model into visual references that clients can read. He said it gets about seventy to eighty percent of the intent and speeds up early conversations. The warning is simple. Do not let the tool replace learning. Treat AI like a starting page, not the final source.

BIM is described as non-negotiable. Coordination across automation, security, electrical, plumbing, firefighting and structure has become more layered every year. BIM reduces drawing conflicts and site surprises and is now integral to STEP’s workflow.

Range, mentors and method

Garg’s early jobs covered housing, industrial and institutional work, then high end residential. The variety built

confidence and a consistent concept-first habit. Reading and travel remain part of his routine. He cites Frank Lloyd Wright, Zaha Hadid and Bjarke Ingels for clarity and storytelling, and in India he often references the resourceful geometry of Sanjay Puri.

Guidance for young practices: Slow down to move fast

His advice to a 20-year-old architect is to slow down in order to move faster. Learn one zone deeply, then add the next. He said the value of a design rises with the time and thought inside it. Practice is a giving field. Patience and repetition build authority. The goal is not less work, but better focus. Become a master of one vertical, then take the next step.

What is the next STEP?

STEP expects to triple its scale in about five years, driven by hospitality. A new hotel in Gorakhpur is one example. Garg likes the complexity of back-of-house and guest choreography. The services should run smoothly while staying invisible to the guest. That requires systems thinking from concept to commissioning. ■

vartik.sethi@saffronsynergies.in

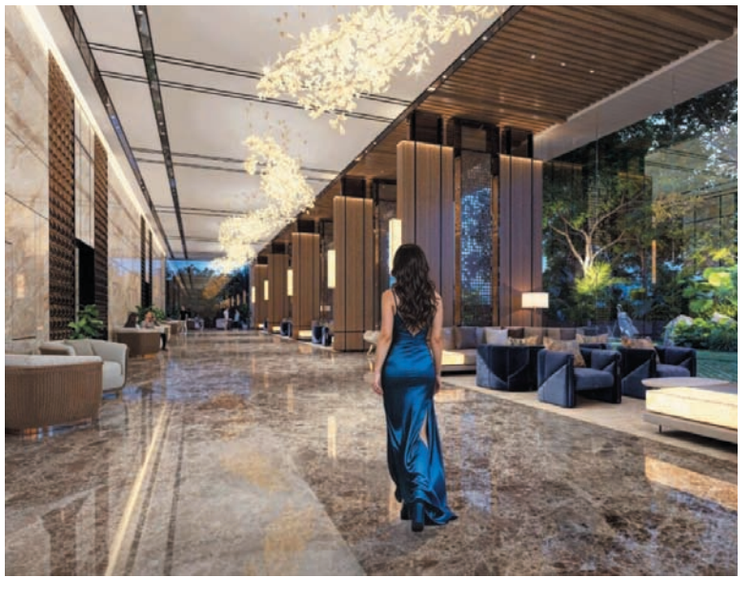
Sunteck Realty unveils ₹1,250 Crore ultra-luxury project in Goregaon West

AU Staff | Mumbai

Sunteck Realty launches its first tower in Goregaon West, a 42-storey ultra-luxury residential project with a ₹3,000 crore GDV according to a press release. The initial phase is valued at ₹1,250 crore. Designed by James Law, the project features three- and four-bedroom homes with private elevators and expansive decks offering Aarey Forest and Mumbai skyline views.

The development includes over 100,000 sq. ft. of lifestyle amenities, a luxury lobby, and eco-decks. An adjacent mixed-use hub will house premium dining, retail, and a Grade-A commercial tower. “The project introduces unprecedented design philosophies and lifestyle amenities in Mumbai’s western suburbs,” says Kamal Khetan, Chairman & Managing Director, Sunteck Realty.

The project is strategically located with strong metro, railway, and road connectivity, reinforcing Goregaon West’s status as a fast-evolving urban destination. ■



IN CONVERSATION

In the sprawling, often chaotic landscape of the Indian interior design and architecture industry, the gap between a pristine render and the dusty reality of a construction site is usually bridged by a precarious mix of WhatsApp groups, Excel sheets, and intuition. For decades, the industry has operated in silos, where communication breakdowns are accepted as occupational hazards and scope creep is the silent killer of profitability. However, for **Manoj Jindal, the Founder and CEO of Dzylo**, these inefficiencies were not just market statistics; they were personal hurdles.

Dzylo is re-engineering the 'Business' of Indian Architecture

Vartik Sethi | Delhi

Jindal's entry into the prop-tech space was not a direct leap from a coding boot camp but a calculated pivot from the trenches of the construction business. Before Dzylo, Jindal co-founded Umbrette, a design and build firm catering to individual homeowners. It was during his tenure running Umbrette that he encountered the sheer lack of cohesive digital tools available to Indian designers. He recalled the frustration of searching for a software backbone for his company, only to find generic CRMs that failed to understand the nuances of a creative studio.

"When we tried using general-purpose software, we could not fit any of them to our operations," Jindal explained. "So then we thought, why not build tech to manage our operations first," he added. What began as an internal operating system for Umbrette soon revealed a larger opportunity. Jindal realised that while a service-based design firm has limits on scalability, the technology he had built to manage it did not. He observed major players in the market who had raised significant funding but still struggled to capture a dominant market share after nearly a decade.

One of the most defining characteristics of the Indian construction sector is its heavy reliance on WhatsApp. From site supervisors to principal architects, the industry runs on chat. Rather than forcing a behavioral shift to a complex new interface, Dzylo made the strategic decision to integrate deeply with the platform the industry was already addicted to. Leveraging the WhatsApp Cloud API launched by Mark Zuckerberg in 2022, Dzylo embedded itself into the existing workflow. "We thought to enable other design build companies and share this technology," Jindal said.

Speaking on messaging apps, Jindal shared, "We had adopted WhatsApp API in the very initial phase itself." This hybrid approach allowed Dzylo to bridge the digital divide between the office-going architect and the on-site carpenter, ensuring that even a '10th pass supervisor' could engage with the software as easily as sending a text.

Beyond communication, Jindal identified that the adoption of software in creative fields often fails because the tools feel sterile and corporate. Architects are visual thinkers, yet most ERPs offer a drab palette of blues and greys. Dzylo prioritised UI/UX design that resonated with the aesthetic sensibilities of its users.

Perhaps the most critical intervention Dzylo makes is in the realm of financial accountability. Scope creep, the gradual addition of features by clients without corresponding budget increases is rampant in the industry. Dzylo addresses this by bringing the client onto a dedicated application where every approval and change is digitally recorded. Looking toward the future, Jindal is betting big on Artificial Intelligence, but not just for the flashy image generation tools currently dominating the headlines. Dzylo is deploying AI to solve mundane operational bottlenecks, such as scanning hardware bills to digitise inventory instantly or using voice commands to create complex task lists.

Ultimately, Jindal's vision extends beyond mere efficiency. He sees technology as a way to salvage the joy of the profession, preventing burnout in a field that many find "thankless" after a few years. By automating the chaos of vendor management and site operations, he hopes to allow architects to return to what they do best: design. ■

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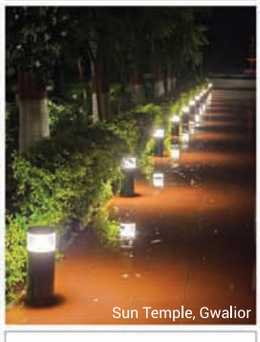
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