

ireal- ties

Kolkata

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**CHARLES
CORREA
(1930-2015)**

The man who designed the iconic City Centre in Salt Lake is no more.

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**CLEANING
UP KOLKATA**

KMC's waste compactor machines. And how they are transforming Kolkata.

Kolkata's only dedicated real estate magazine | Vol 11 | Issue 2 | July-September 2015

SEISMIC THREAT

IS MY BUILDING GOING TO
BE SAFE FROM THE NEXT
EARTHQUAKE?

THE
EMERGING
TALLEST
HIGH RISE IN
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Number of apartments: 730

Completion: 2018

Location: Badu Road, Madhyamgram

Unit sizes: 2-BHK (851-870 square feet)/
3-BHK (1,061-1,354 square feet)

Open space: 57.59%

Developer: Srijan, NPR Developers and
PS Group

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Badu Road, Madhyamgram

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Opposite the NSG hub on Badu Road near Madhyamgram Choumatha, Majhergaon will be ensconced by 10 acres of greenery. Home to native birds, regional trees and a large natural water body, Majhergaon offers 2-BHK and 3-BHK apartments with all modern amenities. The perfect balance of peace and convenience that you have always desired.

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■ **COVER STORY**



SEISMIC THREAT

The big question that every apartment buyer is now asking: Is my building going to be safe from the next earthquake? According to Pradip Sureka, MD, Sureka Group, high-rises are safer than standalone bungalows when it comes to earthquake resistance. Poushali Biswas reports.



IS PAINT KILLING YOU?

Paint your walls. Inhale fumes. Endanger your health. Newly-found evidence suggests new (and alarming) writing on the wall. We explore the potential hazards and what you can do to make your home safer.



MOVING BACK IN TIME

Kolkatans should get ready for a heady dose of nostalgia as a number of real estate projects are mushrooming across the city mirroring the grandiose architecture of the past.

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A unique movement focused on bringing donors and NGOs under one roof.

Dear reader,

Finally a cover story to shake you up!

When you buy into a new home, you probably ask about 'loading', price, location, and instalments. Do you bother to ask about the kind of earthquake proofing the building has? After the April tremors in Kolkata, an increasing number of buyers are asking this precise question, especially when selecting to buy into residential high-rises. This issue of *real-ties* explores the subject while speaking with architects and realty promoters.

The issue also takes the subject of safety ahead through a discussion of the potential hazards of wet paint on painters and residents. We have always been used to the initial unusual smell of paint, associating it with freshness. What modern research indicates is alarming; this wet paint sends

out toxic vapours which can aggravate asthma and cause a number of health problems.

And then we come to one of the most interesting developments in Kolkata's real estate space – a 60-floor high-rise on Chowringee – the tallest in the city and one of the tallest in the country. The project, overlooking the maidan, will not just provide one of the best views of the city – the rolling greens, the river and the skyline – but also be one of the city's most plush and exclusive.

There is also an insightful story on how an increasing number of people are buying apartments online!

Enjoy!

TEAM NK



CHARLES CORREA (1930-2015)

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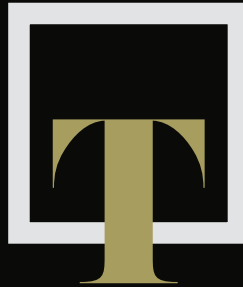
Seismic threat



Uniworld City, New Town Rajarhat



THE BIG QUESTION THAT EVERY APARTMENT BUYER IS NOW ASKING: IS MY BUILDING GOING TO BE SAFE FROM THE NEXT EARTHQUAKE? ACCORDING TO PRADIP SUREKA, MANAGING DIRECTOR, SUREKA GROUP, HIGH-RISES ARE SAFER THAN STANDALONE BUNGALOWS WHEN IT COMES TO EARTHQUAKE RESISTANCE. *POUSHALI BISWAS REPORTS*



There used to be a time when most buyers would ask real estate promoters ‘Would you provide a club with the apartment?’

In the last few months, the question that most buyers are asking first is, ‘Is the building earthquake-proof?’

This question is relevant for more reasons than just the recent earthquake in Nepal and tremors in Kolkata. Taller buildings are being built in Kolkata than ever before, raising fears that perhaps an earthquake could cause serious issues. Buildings are getting increasingly expensive, compelling buyers to ask whether the higher outlays are justified on the grounds of enhanced safety. Buildings are being designed around heavier loads; a recent landmark construction in Kolkata provided for a 500 feet-tall structure sitting on the terrace of two adjacent high-rises. There is a growing fear that Kolkata’s high water table is not conducive to high-rises, endangering their safety during an earthquake.





Urbana, Anandapur

“There are big questions being raised by prospective buyers on whether their buildings would be equipped to withstand a lateral movement during an earthquake,” says Sujit Kumar Paul, Project Manager of Modello Ventures LLP.

“All buildings are constructed to carry their own weight; they are all equipped to do so vertically but not necessarily side-to-side, a crucial factor in case of an earthquake. So when an earthquake strikes, the side-to-side movement creates a tuning fork-like effect, oscillating with each wave, potentially damaging the structure.”

So what makes structures earthquake-resistant? How can

structures resist external forces (loads) and protect their safety?

The question of structural safety begins from the kind of foundation, which is, in turn, influenced by building type, soil and environmental conditions. The foundations generally used in Kolkata comprise the following:

Pocket or strip foundation

– One of the commonest foundations built on a strong soil base in non-waterlogged areas, generally for low-rise buildings (only first floor) and ranging from 1,200 millimetres to 1,500 millimetres.

Raft foundation – Used in sandy and loose soil in waterlogged areas but ideal for buildings with few storeys. A ground beam (600 millimetres

to 1,200 millimetres) can come out from the foundation base and is attached to the ground floor slab to form a network of concrete embedded around the building space.

Pile foundation – Offers the strongest foundation; requires specialised engineering with soil bored deep into the earth and filled with concrete to support a multi-storey building.

Besides, a resistance to sway loading through robust walls and partitions helps enhance resistance to earthquakes. The result is that engineers design roofs, walls and partitions around lightness without compromising load-bearing strength. Wherever possible, the walls need to be robust enough to shoulder the load of tension and compression:

the bolted or welded connections should resist more tension than the ultimate tension value of the brace (or more than the design load) and should not buckle with loads well above the design load. Finally, there is a need for the load to go down to the ground in a seamless manner.

Compliance commitment

At the heart of the structural safety of Kolkata's buildings lies a robust compliance to a number of stringent codes that enhance structural safety. These codes have been painstakingly debated and created to make a greater-than-adequate provision for safety. The design requirements of the Indian Standard Code address the use of specific ma-



materials that provide adequate safety against unforeseen lateral movements:

IS 13920: These comprised ductile design and detailing of earthquake-resistant structures.

IS 1893: Criteria for earthquake-resistant design of structure, liquid retaining structures, bridges and retaining walls, industrial structures, dams and embankments.

IS 456: Indian standard for plain and reinforced concrete.

“While the IS Code is followed consistently, we are occasionally requested to design structures around the requirements of Seismic Zone IV, which makes the structures even more robust and enhances structural redundancy,” says Mr. Sanjiv Parekh, Structural Consultant. “There is a general feeling that this extensive provision is perhaps not required, but it is done to enhance buyer confidence and used as a

marketing tool.”

Reducing vulnerability

The other means of reducing the vulnerability of large buildings is to isolate them from the floor using bearings or dampers so that the tremor impact is minimised. This base isolation method is a key facet to earthquake resistant engineering and is related to passive structural vibration control technologies, largely used in Japan. However, this difficult and expensive process is not considered suitable for low and medium-rise buildings.

Besides, the foundations of earthquake-resistant buildings must permit ground movement. Frequently, the foundations of traditional buildings are often ‘pinned’ but because the bottom of every wall or column bears down onto the foundations, the bases do provide fixity in a static condition. But during an earthquake, the ground is not static: it moves up and down, side to side, and can

change slope. The fixity of the base does not contribute to the strength of a building but weakens it.

Besides, the ground can crack and expand within the dimensions of a building, putting enormous pressure on the structure. Hence, the foundations of buildings in earthquake-prone areas are required to have a grillage of reinforced concrete or steel, going both ways under all load-supporting members. Such foundations should have full strength connections to the columns, and should be strong enough to give positional and rotational restraint to all the columns. It is not possible to make buildings earthquake-proof to the extent that they will resist any earthquake, but the structures can definitely be made safer and more resilient.

Not costlier

So would all this make earthquake-resistant buildings more expensive? “Structural safety measures have always

“STAYING INSIDE URBANA IS SAFER DURING AN EARTHQUAKE...”

Pradip Sureka, MD, Sureka Group

High-rises are safer than standalone bungalows when it comes to earthquake resistance because they are designed around stringent safeguards. For instance, adequate modelling techniques have been used with computer simulation and model tests before structural engineering can even commence in high-rises.

Urbana’s architectural features are centred around this provision. The open spaces provided between the structures are large and comfortable. Adequate spaces are provided to accommodate the structural requirement of shear walls. The peripheral space around the structures is a safe 30 metres.

At Urbana a wind tunnel test was conducted on scale model (1:400) by CPP Inc, Fort Collins, Colorado, USA, to determine structural loads resulting from high-speed winds. Equivalent static structural frame loads for a nominal 50-year recurrence were calculated. Motion-induced occupant discomfort was simulated by predicting maximum top floor acceleration across various recurrence levels.

The result is that buildings like Urbana are designed to deal with specific behaviour patterns manifesting during earthquakes. For instance, Urbana’s structure withstood the recent Kolkata earthquake without residual strain.



been in place, so there is no reason for real estate promoters to price projects higher because of this," says Sujit. "Safety is not an add-on; it is a given. All our engineered structures are earthquake-resistant. The only difference is that buyers never used to bother about structural construction processes and safeguards; they now wish to be better informed."

However, even as real estate developers do not think that constructing earthquake resistant buildings would warrant higher pricing, buyers indicate that they would be

"Before the recent earthquake, structural safety never crossed my mind," says Tarun Chatterjee, a software engineer

willing to pay more. "Before the recent earthquake, structural safety never crossed my mind," says Tarun Chatterjee, a software engineer by profession, looking for a residential property in Kolkata. "However, this is a major concern now and one will need to examine specifics and be willing to pay more if needed for enhanced structural safety."

Insurance solution

So even though an earthquake cannot be predicted, the safest thing for buyers would be to seek an insurance cover. A house destroyed by an earthquake can be rebuilt by setting aside about Rs.6-12 a day - the cost of buying home insurance, which most people consider an unnecessary expense. "The premium for a standard fire and perils

cover, which includes natural and man-made calamities, is as low as Rs.60 per Rs.1 lac. However, less than 1% of the people who can afford it seek home insurance," says Tapan Singhel, MD & CEO of Bajaj Allianz. This home insurance covers rebuilding the structure, not the value of the property. Reconstruction costs range from Rs.1,800 per square feet for a no-frills structure to Rs.3,500 per square feet for superior construction. A 2,000 square feet house can be insured for Rs.35-70 lac, for which the premium would be roughly Rs.2,100-4,200 a year.

REALTOR RESPONSIVENESS

So how are Kolkata's realtors responding ?

Are they building stronger homes ?

Are they using safer materials ?

"The important point that apartment buyers need to remember is that there is a clear provision for building earthquake-resistant structures through stringent guidelines," says Mr. Pawan Agarwal, Director of NK Realtors. "The result is that most modern buildings in Kolkata, being engineered constructions, are safe from an earthquake and keep in mind the parameters related to the seismic zone under which Kolkata falls. So the message that needs to go out to prospective buyers is that Kolkata's modern buildings are not just better-looking or better-equipped; they are safer as well."

Are they designing their interiors in a manner that makes it safer for users and visitors ?

Are they advising users on how to safeguard lives during an earthquake ?



Identifying potential residential hazards

- Tall, heavy furniture that could topple - bookcases, china cabinets or modular wall units.
- Water heaters that could be pulled away from pipes and rupture.
- Appliances that could move enough to rupture gas or electrical lines.
- Hanging plants in heavy pots that could swing free of hooks.
- Heavy picture frames or mirrors over a bed.
- Latches on kitchen cabinets or other cabinets that will not hold the door closed during shaking.
- Breakables or heavy objects that are kept on high or open shelves.
- A masonry chimney that could crumble and fall through an unsupported roof.
- Flammable liquids (painting or cleaning products), which would be safer outside home. (Source: FEMA)

What customised materials are used in high-rises?

It would be pertinent to indicate that IS 456-2000 recommends designated concrete mixes across grades (M10, M15, M20, M25, M30, M35 and M40); the letter M refers to the mix and number to the specified 28-day cube strength of mix in N/mm^2 . M25 is used in G+4 storied building; in high-rise buildings, M30-M40 is normally used. As far as steel is concerned, the Fe500 variety is used in reinforced cement concrete, indicating that the bar can safely withstand a yield stress of 500 N/mm^2 . Besides, aerocon blocks are an excellent substitute for clay bricks and hollow concrete blocks in wall construction. Soil capacity is an important determinant of what kind of foundation be built to reinforce structural safety.

Can high-rise buildings withstand earthquakes of 7.9 on the Richter Scale?

High-rise buildings can indeed be damaged by tremors of 7-8 on the Richter scale, though a well-engineered building, executed as per specifications, is unlikely to collapse. Even as there is no governing authority/rating in existence, testing at each step of any engineered construction is considered adequate to earthquake-proof the buildings.

Can internal architecture - ceilings, flooring and walls - affect structural safety?

The interior elements are non-structural and even as they may get damaged they have no bearing on structural stability. For instance, brick walls are non-structural; wall cracks do not affect structural safety; on the contrary, walls help dissipate the stress.

How differently does a high-rise have to be built?

There is no fundamental difference. For high-rises, one uses specific building materials compliant with ISC norms; besides, concrete testing is undertaken at Jadavpur University, IIT Kharagpur, BE College and other accredited labs.

How safe are the old buildings in Kolkata?

If the older buildings are engineered constructions then there is a likelihood of their being as safe as new constructions. The difference is all about calculations; what was manual in those days is largely computerised today.

“A well-engineered building is unlikely to collapse in an earthquake”

– Sanjiv Parekh, architect
Sanjiv Parekh is the Founder and Director of SPA Consultants, a Kolkata-based structural engineering firm





CHARLES CORREA (1930-2015)

“Being able to see the sky from within a building can make a difference between livable habitat and claustrophobia.” – Charles Correa

The man who designed the iconic City Centre in Salt Lake is no more. Charles Correa passed away on 16 June 2015.

The history of Salt Lake can be segregated into two parts – before City Centre and after City Centre.

City Centre was more than a mall; in fact, a mall it is not. It has no walls. It is not air-conditioned. It has a *bazaar*-like feel. It has an *adda* corner.

The man behind this truly Kolkatan

structure was none other than Charles Correa. In the other malls of the city, you can be made to believe that you are in Singapore or wherever; City Centre, is Kolkata, Kolkata and Kolkata.

● “Charles Correa was the inspiration behind the infusion of modernity into Indian architecture after 1947.” - **Prakash Deshmukh, President, Indian Institute of Architects**

● “He was arguably the most significant contemporary architect of Asia. His work was neither modern nor traditional, and

the significance of his Asian identity as an architect far outweighs that of him being an Indian architect.” – **Romi Khosla, renowned architect**

● “He made architecture a magic word and instilled in all of us architects a sense of pride in our profession. His true genius was how he never grew old. He was so relevant to society and community in every decade of his life.” – **Brinda Somaya, Principal Architect and Managing Director, Somaya & Kalappa Associates**



Aga Khan Museum in Toronto



The Champalimaud Centre for the Unknown, Lisbon



Ismail Centre, Toronto



City Centre, Kolkata

● “Navi Mumbai wouldn’t have happened if he hadn’t participated in the initial conceptualisation team along with Shirish Patel and Pravina Mehta as is his work in housing in relation to climate and lifestyle.” - B V Doshi, pioneering architect

● “Sometimes he did not like what we did. At others, we, perhaps, did not understand what he wanted. And then there were times when he also changed his mind. Whatever be the case, he made us undo what was done to get things the way he wanted. I was on tenterhooks and had the most trying times on the

work front. But personally, he was extremely warm and I must concede that he was always affectionate towards me.”

– Harshavardhan Neotia, Chairman, Ambuja Neotia Group

● “He never cared for anybody while expressing his opinions and did not mince words while doing so. I liked his way of working; he was very methodical. Basically, he was a good man at heart. That was why when we thought of drawing up a new regional plan for Goa, the name that came to mind, who would guide us in this task, was Charles Correa.” – Digambar Kamat, former CM, Goa

Charles Correa's creations

Gandhi Memorial, Sabarmati • City Centre I, Kolkata • Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics, Pune • Bharat Bhavan, Bhopal • Vidhan Bhavan, Bhopal • Jawahar Kala Kendra, Jaipur • National Crafts Museum, New Delhi • Brain Science Center, MIT, Massachusetts • Ismaili Centre, Toronto • Champalimaud Centre, Lisbon



CHARLES CORREA (1930-2015)

● Born in Secunderabad to Goan parents ● Got his master’s degree in Architecture from University of Michigan ● Obtained a master’s degree from Massachusetts Institute of Technology ● Had a weakness for model trains ● Chief Architect of Navi Mumbai; designed more than 100 buildings in India ● Took a deep interest in how architecture frames relationships between people and their environment ● His creations were marked by open spaces, incorporating natural ventilation and passive energy ● Named India’s Greatest Architect by the Royal Institute of British Architects in 2013

A Luminous Life

– Padma Vibhushan, 2006
– The International Union of Architects, (UIA) Gold Medal, 1990
– Japan’s Praemium Imperiale, 1994
– Aga Khan Award for Architecture, 1998
– Royal Gold Medal, 1984



ANALYSIS

Is paint killing you?

PAINT YOUR WALLS. INHALE FUMES. ENDANGER YOUR HEALTH. NEWLY-FOUND EVIDENCE DEPICTS AN ALARMING WRITING ON THE WALL. WE EXPLORE THE POTENTIAL HAZARDS AND WHAT YOU CAN DO TO MAKE YOUR HOME SAFER.

Paint your walls. Inhale fumes. Endanger your health.

There is a growing debate on whether paints are safe and usable. The reality is that conventional emulsion paints, synthetic and petroleum derivative chemicals in paints evaporate and emit noxious gases. When we live at home, we inhale these fumes and endanger our lives. The chemical load in

our bodies triggers headaches and nausea (Sick Building Syndrome) and can lead to longer-term health issues like eczema, asthma and a permanent multi-chemical sensitivity.

The World Health Organisation has reported a 20%-40% increased risk of certain types of cancer (in particular lung cancer) for those who come into regular contact with, or work with paint while

Danish researchers point to the added possibility of neurological damage.

This issue is becoming increasingly relevant for a number of reasons. The housing revolution in India coupled with Housing for All by 2022 programme, has put a premium on health. The irony is that at a time when there is an increasing focus on green buildings when the irony is that following handover, some of the benefits could be frittered



90 ppm

*Lead limit enforced by the
United States*

1,000 ppm

*Voluntary lead limit set by
Indian paint companies*

through irresponsible paint use.

So the big question is this: as we build more homes in the next few years than ever before, will we endanger our health in the process?

Reality: Spray paint fumes have a negative effect on health

Many standard professional-grade spray paints contain volatile organic compounds. Volatile organic compounds are emitted as gases from certain solids or liquids and include a variety of chemicals, some of which may have short

and long-term adverse effects on health. VOCs are emitted by a wide array of products including paints, lacquers and paint strippers. The ingredients used in spray paints comprise acetone, liquefied petroleum gas, xylene, n-butyl acetate, methyl ethyl ketone, propylene glycol, monobutyl ether, ethyl benzene, magnesium silicate and carbon black. The result is that when fumes are emitted, we stand a chance of inhaling a varied cocktail.

Lead-based paints can have severe health effects on children. If undetected early, children with high lead concentrations

could suffer from stunted growth, brain and nervous system damage, hearing problems, behavioural-cum-learning problems (like hyperactivity) and persistent headache.

Adult women can suffer from complications during pregnancy as well as other reproductive problems. Pregnant women can pass lead poisoning to their children via the bloodstream. Lead contamination can also cause digestive problems, nerve disorders, memory and concentration problems, high blood pressure, and pain in muscles and joints.



Stripping off old paint using a blow lamp or by scraping it off walls can expose the lead in old paint, which can then be inhaled. Stripping walls might expose mould — spores are then released in the atmosphere which one breathes in. These build up in the lungs causing mucus accumulation, breathing difficulties and potential asthmatic trouble.

How we may protect ourselves

There are a number of safeguards for those working with paints. One, wearing recommended personal protective equipment would help. Two, the use of appropriate spray enclosures and fume

extractors is recommended. Three, adequate ventilation and a mask could definitely be used.

When it comes to residents, there could be safeguards. The accurate estimation of paint quantities needed could help minimise waste. The use of eco-friendly paints, coatings, accessories, and techniques could be an alternative. For instance, quality emulsion paints offer not just an all-round performance but also represent a superior choice (solvent-based paints require users to exercise caution). The use of lead-based paints could be discouraged. The man-

ufacturer's instructions in how to manage the paint's toxic ingredients should be honoured. The work area should be cleaned before, during and after painting. Waste should be disposed each day.

Solution

To reduce the hazard, buy only as much paint as you need and use it all. Measure the area to be painted to determine the quantity needed. Buy the least hazardous product for your specific job. Water-based latex paints generally have fewer toxic and inflammable solvents.

If you do have leftover paint, give it away to others who can use it, if possible. Otherwise, keep it tightly sealed in the original can. Store it in a well-ventilated area away from extreme heat, cold or flame sources, and away from children. Store the can upside down to form a seal around the lid and preserve the paint's quality since some paints can stay useable for 15 or more years.

Lead-based paints are not typically hazardous if they are in good condition. Lead dust forms when lead-based paint is scraped, sanded, or heated. Dust also forms when painted surfaces bump together. Lead chips and dust can settle on surfaces and objects people touch. Lead dust can also re-enter the air when people vacuum or sweep it. If painting the exterior of an older house is required, it is recommended to use contractors trained to remove lead-based paint.

**real-
ties**

VOC	Exposure limits	Symptoms	Affected areas
Acetone	NIOSH REL: TWA 250 ppm OSHA PEL: TWA 1000 ppm	Irritation to the eyes, nose and throat, headache, dizziness, depression and dermatitis	Eyes, skin, respiratory system, central nervous system
Xylene	NIOSH REL: TWA 100 ppm OSHA PEL: TWA 100 ppm	Irritation to the eyes, skin, nose and throat, dizziness, excitement, drowsiness, staggering gait, corneal vacuolisation, anorexia, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain and dermatitis	Eyes, skin, respiratory system, central nervous system, gastrointestinal tract, blood, liver and kidneys
Toluene	NIOSH REL: TWA 100 ppm OSHA PEL: TWA 200 ppm	Irritation to the eyes, nose, weakness, exhaustion, confusion, euphoria, dizziness, headache, dilated pupils, lacrimation, anxiety, muscle fatigue, insomnia, paresthesia, dermatitis, liver and kidney damage	Eyes, skin, respiratory system, central nervous system, liver, kidneys



Land area: 3.14 acres

Number of blocks: 16

Number of floors: G+4

Number of apartments: 252

Completion time: 2018

Location: Burdwan

Unit sizes: 735-812 square feet (2-BHK);
958 and 984 square feet (3-BHK)

Open space: 70%

Developer: Shrachi Burdwan Developers
Pvt. Ltd.

RENAISSANCE SMART HOMES

Burdwan

THE DEVELOPER SPEAKS: Efficiently designed buildings with modern facilities and amenities, it offers 2-BHK and 3-BHK apartments with spacious rooms, a utility balcony, elevators, and among many other facilities for great and affordable living. Giving you complete living pleasure and a gateway to the lifestyle you always wanted – a school, hospital, club and shopping complex located within the premises. Bringing modern living to the 'Royal Heritage City.' Renaissance Smart Homes are homes for the future.

Moving back in time

Kolkataans should get ready for a heady dose of nostalgia as a number of real estate projects are mushrooming across the city drawing on the grandiose architecture of the past.





Kolkata's iconic Metro Cinema set to don a new look

One of the oldest cinema halls in the city, Metro Cinema, is all set to get a new look. Inaugurated in 1935, Metro Cinema, still stands tall on Jawaharlal Nehru Road.

But sans movie buffs, the grand chandeliers have gathered a thick film of dust. All that, however, shall soon be a thing of the past.

Inspired by the success at Metro Mumbai, the owner of Metro Cinema - Metro Realty, have decided to start renovation work at their Kolkata property soon with an investment of Rs.40 crore.

The death of single screen theatres is not a new thing in the city but with Metro, Kolkata would welcome another boutique mall and multiplex out of a heritage structure. Spread over 8,50,000 square feet, the Grade-III heritage building currently has just two floors allocated to it. Post-renovation, the property named Metro Emporium would be divided between a retail, multiplex and F&B wing.

Designed by New York-based architect Thomas Lamb, the hall was once used by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer to promote their films in the city. *Way Out West* was the first film to be screened here. The same theatre ran *Bobby* for 52 weeks in 1973. Hence, the new mall would also have a section commemorating the 70's blockbuster.

Art Deco detailing, ranging from grand chandeliers, stained glass windows, to brass railings and period wooden doors and furniture, will continue to be a part of the property. The owners are also in talks with a multiplex chain, some F&B majors and a few retail players for an anchor store.

Metro's strategic location on Esplanade makes it a prized property even today. Though the present rental value of the current unorganised commercial properties in the area is about Rs.400 per square feet, with Metro giving way to a boutique mall, rentals are bound to go up.

Kolkata to have a residential complex modelled on Victoria Memorial

Recreating the nostalgic magic of the bygone era, a new residential project is being built on the lines of the iconic Victoria Memorial's facade.

A joint venture between real estate major Jain Group and the Das family, who own a land parcel on B T Road near Noapara, the 'Dream Victoria' premium housing project's facade, arches and columns would be reminiscent of Victoria Memorial.

With a built-up area of more than 3,30,000 square feet, the project is expected to be ready in the next three or four years at an investment of over Rs.80 crore and will have more than 200 flats.

Tram depot lease plan revived

The State Government has decided to offer surplus land at Tollygunge and Belgachia tram depots for commercial utilisation on lease of 99 years, with the option of renewal of the terms. The request for the proposal document for each individual depot is separate and selection of the lessee for each depot will be through a separate competitive bidding process. The land parcel available on lease at the Tollygunge depot is 241 cottahs. At Belgachia, the available land parcel is 59 cottahs.

Since the new building rules would ensure more built-up area, the authorities decided to cancel the bids and offer a level playing field to those who would like to make a fresh pitch.

Last August, an urban policy was unveiled that sought to unlock construction opportunities in

congested zones, rewarding the real estate sector. The new policy aims to allow higher FAR, which governs the size of a building on a particular plot.

Consulting firm KPMG was recruited as transaction adviser and legal firm Fox and Mandal was engaged to oversee the legalities.

Seven companies had bid for Tollygunge and three for Belgachia. Among those who had bid for Tollygunge were Shapoorji Pallonji, a consortium led by Tata Housing, Ambuja Realty and NBCC, a Central Government enterprise. A consortium led by Merlin Projects was among the companies that had bid for the Belgachia land.

With the new building policy in place, the company bagging the tender in Tollygunge will earn Rs.39 crore more than what it would have earned under earlier rules. The additional earning for the Belgachia depot will be around Rs.3 crore.

A person is holding a tablet computer. The screen shows a real estate advertisement for 'HOME FIESTA'. The ad features a logo with a house icon and the text 'HOME FIESTA'. Below the logo, it says '15 DAYS 5500 HOMES', '65 RESIDENTIAL COMPLEXES', and '45 CREDIBLE DEVELOPERS'. A red banner across the middle says 'FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER'. Below this, smaller text reads 'Be a part of a spectacular Online Property Expo Of Residential properties in Kolkata & West Bengal from 1st to 15th March.' and 'ALSO WIN ASSURED APPLE PRODUCTS'. At the bottom, there is a website 'www.nkrealtors.com' and a phone number '033 4040'. The person's hand is visible on the right side of the tablet, pointing at the screen.

An increasing number of buyers are clicking their way to home ownership. Poushali Biswas explored why

Online!

There was a time when buyers visited realty marketing offices, studied brochures, observed apartment models and even visited sample apartments before they agreed to buy.

These days, an increasing number of buyers are selecting to buy online. That's right, online. As simply as sitting in one's chair, clicking a few buttons and paying online.

In a business that was conventionally marked by a deficit of

trust, why are more and more buyers intending to buy without even visiting the project site or shaking the promoter's hand?

"In the last few years," says Biplob Kumar, AVP, Corporate Communication and Customer Care, NK Realtors, "there has been a sea change in buyer attitudes and that's because of some pertinent reasons. One, there has been a greater emphasis on property standardisation as a result of which if a promoter promises something, the commitment is more likely to be honoured. There is one

big reason for this transformation. Earlier, if a promoter under-delivered, the consumer had no choice but to be at the receiving end. Times have changed considerably in the last few years. Consumer democracy is stronger than ever. If a promoter under-delivers, there is always the possibility that a few posts online could destroy the promoter's reputation. There is also a stronger legal redressal system for consumers and if anyone needs proof, one has to only look to how the judiciary system has penalised the coun-

try's largest real estate company for not protecting consumer interests. The result of these realities is that there is greater confidence now in the country's real estate development industry than ever."

Developments

There are other developments that are making industry observers sit up and take notice. 99acres, a prominent Indian property portal, announced a flash online sale of properties in June 2015, offering projects between Rs.15 lac and Rs.20 crore in Mumbai, Delhi-NCR, Bangalore, Pune

So why are more and more people purchasing what is usually the largest asset purchase in an individual's life, online? "In the last few years, there has been a noticeable trend among NRIs wanting to buy properties in India," says Biplab, "and the reality is that they cannot fly down only to inspect a property and then decide that they would not want to buy. The result is that buyers would rather go online and conclude a deal within minutes."

Tipping point

So what convinces people to buy? What is the tipping point? There are a number of triggers that have piqued the interest of purchasers.

One, the credibility of property brands has grown; buyers place faith in a property brand that has established its presence over a period of time. Establishing an online presence is merely one step ahead from there.

Two, buyers recognise that a company that has invested in a 3D walkthrough coupled with online purchase would be considerably more credible (systems, processes and practices) than a competitor that has bothered to do neither. The result is that these systems are now becoming a new benchmark of promoter credibility.

Three, buyers do a comprehensive due diligence of what has been posted online before they select to buy. "Most online buyers – this is true for NRIs – are more aware of ground realities than prospective buyers who live in Kolkata," says Biplab. "They are aware of peer neighbourhoods, proximity to landmarks, price movements and prices of comparative properties. The online buyer is a serious and well-informed buyer, no doubt."

Four, the trust mark that on-

line buyers seek is a CREDAI (Confederation of Real Estate Developers' Association of India) membership. If a property company is affiliated to CREDAI, it enhances credibility.

"From being perceived as a lead generator, the online platform is now seen as a medium where consumers are increasingly calling the shots. While fulfillment is still less, the online platform is making a definitive impact right across the buying cycle of a home seeker," says Sudhir Pai, CEO, Magicbricks.

Online virality

The online virality has extended to Kolkata as well. For years, prominent realtor Siddha invested in physical sales. "When we launched Siddha WaterFront, Khardah," says Ashish Ganeriwala, Head, Marketing & Communications, "we were pleasantly surprised, especially since the project was being marketed in Khardah and surrounding North Kolkata areas. Following this, we are investing more in online marketing. This trend is here to stay. Online marketing, we feel, will play a major role in years to come as it will offer better ROIs. We have a dedicated online team constantly working towards servicing our customers as well as reaching to our target audience through the digital medium. Every fifth sale appears to come from the online mode." This sentiment is echoed by Dr. R.S. Bhartia, Director, Fortune Realty. "We established an online presence five years ago and today approximately 20% of our business is generated via online portals."

Mobile app

The NK Realtors app has taken user experience to a new level.

Tata Housing sold a luxury property for Rs. 5.5 crore online.

A Mumbai resident booked a 4-BHK apartment at The Promont (Bangalore) for Rs.4.5 crore – again online.

Snapdeal marketed a Tata Housing unit for Rs.1.1 crore within hours of commencing sale.

Tata Housing marketed 1,500 apartments online, 25% of its Rs.1,100 crore sales.

Tata Housing conducted an online exhibition to sell 200 housing units over 11 projects in seven cities.

Users can explore properties in Kolkata and West Bengal – duplexes, bungalows, penthouses, office and retail spaces – on the go. Prospective customers can take informed decisions on the basis of photos, videos, interactive maps and other property details. The service simplifies property search by allowing house-hunters to use a single platform. The company took this initiative ahead through the launch of Home Fiesta, its online property festival in the month of March 2015, selling 70 properties.

Brotin Banerjee, CEO & MD, Tata Housing, said in an interview that he expects 30% of housing sales to come from the online medium. "This is the future," says Pawan Agarwal, Director, NK Realtors, "and anyone who misses this universal opportunity is likely to miss the bus."

and Chennai. The international giant, Softbank funded a start-up called Housing to market properties online. The start-up, with US\$120 million in its kitty, acquired a real estate portal (Indian Real Estate Forum) to widen its services. 99acres mobilised US\$125 million from Info Edge through a qualified institutional placement. The Google Capital-backed Commonfloor raised significant funding and started acquiring competing startups. Snapdeal plans to reach out to NRI customers willing to invest in India.

WHEN DID THE GARIA-TOLLYGUNGE STRETCH WAKE UP?

THE 7.8 KILOMETRE GARIA-TOLLYGUNGE STRETCH HAS EMERGED AS ONE OF THE BUSIEST RETAIL DESTINATIONS IN KOLKATA. THE STRETCH IS MARKED BY DIVERSE RETAIL STOREFRONTS, MARKETING A RANGE OF PRODUCTS FROM CONSUMER DURABLES TO FASHION TO PROVISIONS. WHAT MAKES THIS POCKET TICK?



“Transformation?!” Dulalbabu exclaims. “You would have to travel back just 20 years. This was not even a part of Kolkata. ‘*Oto dur e thaken?*’ people would ask me. I would not venture out after 9 pm and one would have to pay the taxi a lot extra to just come to this part of town.”

Upward curve

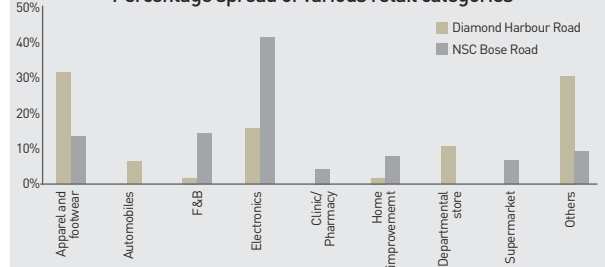
About 30 years ago, Kolkata virtually ended at Prince Anwar Shah Road. Not many lived beyond. Those who did were considered ‘*oppar*’. Then something happened. The Metro connected the rest of Kolkata with Tollygunge. When this transpired, some of the growth extended a couple of kilometres down from Tollygunge. The Metro line was extended again in 2009 when four stations were added (Kudghat, Bansdroni, Nakta-la and Garia Bazaar), which proved to be the turning point. “A Metro station means rapid growth,” says Tapesh Bhandari, a resident for 15 years.

“People buy homes wherever the Metro extends. More homes mean more consumption. More consumption means more stores. More stores mean more economic activity – and traffic. This is the brief history of the Garia-Tollygunge stretch.”

Then came the EM Bypass kicker. The arterial areas re-

ceived an unprecedented boost. Garia-Tollygunge was connected to the longest road in Kolkata. Gradually, new residential properties were launched. Residential projects like Victoria Greens, Westwind, Orbit City, Sugam Park, Sherwood Estate and Upohar transformed the stretch and the hinterland.

Percentage spread of various retail categories





On NSC Bose Road

- Titan • Adidas • Bata
- LG • Senco Jewellers
- Jharkrafts • Sreeleathers
- Spencer's • Domino's •
- Arambagh • Nokia • Gupta
- Brother's • Café Coffee
- Day

The retail destination

So what caused the retail boom in the area? “One of the ways in which shopping has transformed is that it has become more hub-driven,” says Kiran Biswas, a Garia resident for 23 years. “Who wants to go to New Market and malls in South Kolkata? Who wants to negotiate the traffic? Who wants to beg taxis to bring us back to Garia? Better to shop on this stretch without parking or commuting problems. The biggest draw for me is that everything (daily necessities to branded lifestyle products) can be found on a single stretch. Really convenient!”

A study conducted by Cushman and Wakefield substantiates her assessment. NSC Bose Road has been identified as one of the two most promising retail destinations in Kolkata. How is that for endorsement?!

What drives this surge

The principal factor driving the retail revolution has been the affordable rents of stores along the stretch. Compared to store space in Gariahat, the retail rent on the Garia-Tollygunge stretch is considerably lower. When retailers pay less, they can pass the benefit on to customers. The result is that monthly retail rentals of around Rs.60 per square

feet have transformed the economics in favour of high-street shopping.

The result is an explosion in the range of retail brands along the stretch. This stretch has become a key market for every range of product starting from apparels, cosmetics, accessories, furniture to coffee shops, service stores and hangouts. From Sreeleathers to Adidas, from Café Coffee Day to Gupta Brothers, the number of options is mindboggling. Large swathes of quality retail space is being constructed at present and will further boost this area as a thriving retail spot. Besides, Cushman and Wakefield indicated a breakdown

between domestic and foreign brands on NSC Bose Road at 79:21. “There will always be a room for high-street retail,” says Munmun Biswas, GM, Jharkrafts. “You can’t drive into a mall and pay Rs.60 for parking, when all you want to do is buy specialised handicrafts.”

The Tollygunge-Garia stretch extends from Tollygunge Tram Depot, Ashoknagar, Ranikuthi, Netaji Nagar, Bansdroni, Naktala, touching Raja SC Mullick Road at Garia and passing through Rajpur-Sonarpur along Garia, Narendrapur to Harinabhi up to the southern fringes of Kolkata.



Land area: 3.2 acres

Number of blocks: 4

Number of floors: Blocks 1, 2 and 3: G+14; Block 4: G+7

Number of apartments: 229 (Blocks 1 and 2: 92, Blocks 3 and 4: 137)

Completion time: 54 Months From the Date of Commencement + 6 Months Grace Period

Location: Major Arterial Road, Action Area-II, New Town

Unit sizes: 2-BHK (945-1135 square feet); 3-BHK (1240-2270 square feet); 4-BHK (2380-2720 square feet); Penthouse (2910-3980 square feet)

Developer: Jain Group

DREAM ONE

NEW TOWN

THE DEVELOPER SPEAKS: We are happy to announce that we have launched a new project, Dream One. Located opposite Ecopark and Westin Hotel in New Town-Rajarhat, Dream One will bring future-ready intelligent homes for the first time to Kolkata, allowing residents to control their homes from their smartphones or tablets.

To support the technology, we have introduced Augmented Reality, wherein our customers can get a flavour of their prospective home in a unique interactive manner. We are also setting up an Experience Centre at the project site in collaboration with a technological team from Bangalore, Google and the realty portal commonfloor.com. Our customers will get a 360-degree experience of our project - interior and exterior views - through Google Glasses.

We are delighted to share that our project has been warmly welcomed by the people of Kolkata and we are confident that the introduction of this lifestyle-enhancing technology will boost customer sentiment.



Land area: 2.42 acres

Number of blocks: 3

Number of floors: G+6

Number of apartments: Block I: 48,
Block II: 72, Block III: 48

Completion time: Phase-wise
development, by 2018

Location: Bamunara, Durgapur

Unit sizes: 2, 2.5-BHK (977 to 1,233
square feet); 3-BHK (1,172 to 1,253
square feet)

Open space: 70%

Developer: Shrachi Group (under the
name of Spectra Realcon LLP)

SHRACHI GREEN VIEW

DURGAPUR

THE DEVELOPER SPEAKS: Greenview intends to become an integral part of the young and growing township of Durgapur. Located near NH#2 and Muchipara, the project comprises three towers with a wide range of facilities: landscaped gardens, children's play area, daily needs store, doctor's chamber, well-equipped AC gym, AC community hall, library, well-lit pathways and many more. Offering a comfortable and modern lifestyle amidst abundant greenery.

Shrachi Greenview will bring a different dimension to the growth of Durgapur and, in the coming years, we will be offering more such projects to address the housing needs of Durgapur residents.

HOME OF TH

How many times have you been halfway on your way to the office when you felt unsure of whether you had turned the geyser off? Or rushed back because no one else was home when your friends arrived? Or worried yourself sick because you were not sure if you had locked the door while leaving? Rishi Jain, Executive Director, Jain Group, speaks about Dream One, coming up at New Town-Rajarhat which has a novel solution.

What is a 'smart home'?

A smart or intelligent home is one that enables technology-supported living. In Dream One, we have introduced features that are the first-of-their-kind in Kolkata – mood lighting, access-controlled digital doors, panic buttons, fire and gas alarms, among others. All the items can be controlled with smartphones and tablets.

Is this the first such project in India?

Yes, Dream One is the first 'Intelligent Home' in India. This technology is being put to use across the world in developed countries. Why should India be left behind?

Why has the demand for such living arisen?

Lives are getting increasingly hectic and technology-dependent. The demand for living in premium and technologically advanced homes has grown. What customers will get at Dream One is not just a premium home, but an 'intelligent' home. Residents will have the kind

of lifestyle they only saw in movies. It is about aspiration, ease and a better lifestyle.

What is the customer profile you are looking at?

We expect to address both the tech-savvy and the technophobe. The idea is to improve the way we live and the way we function. If a mere click can put one's mind at ease or reduce the hassles of urban living, imagine how much more time and energy would be saved. Once more people realise that, like so many already have, they will opt for smarter living.

How will security concerns regarding this be addressed? For instance, if one's tablet is stolen, will it provide access to an intruder?

Nowadays, reporting one's stolen smartphone or tablet is a matter of minutes. We will have a top-notch technical team that will make sure that security and other concerns are addressed within minutes of lodging the information with us.



E FUTURE

3.2 ACRES

4 BLOCKS,
229
APARTMENTS

2, 3 AND
4-BHK WITH
PENTHOUSE

THE GATES There used to be a crossbar here once. This has been replaced by a grand gate at the principal entrance to the Rabindra Sarobar (adjoining Safari Park). The other revamped gate is at the start of Southern Avenue near Southern Park.

THE TILED FLOORING The flooring used to be concrete. The tiled pathway provides a pleasing look.

THE CHAINED RAILS The open interface with the lake has been replaced with chained rails as a decorative deterrent.

THE LIGHTS The lights have encouraged a number of people to step out in the evening for a walk because the place appears safer and more aesthetic.

THE GREEN SPACE This part of the Sarobar appears greener; in the past the grass cover used to be patchy exposing the soil.



Rabindra Sarobar transformed!

One of the most pleasing developments in Kolkata over the last year has been the transformation of this 192-acre national park

Anjan Ghosh captures the metamorphosis.





The grand gate that has replaced the crossbar



The addition of greenery
has enhanced the beauty
of Rabindra Sarobar



Aesthetically sculpted
statues heighten the
beauty of the place



The prudent use of terracotta



The light and sound show that is conducted each evening at the Rabindra Sarobar

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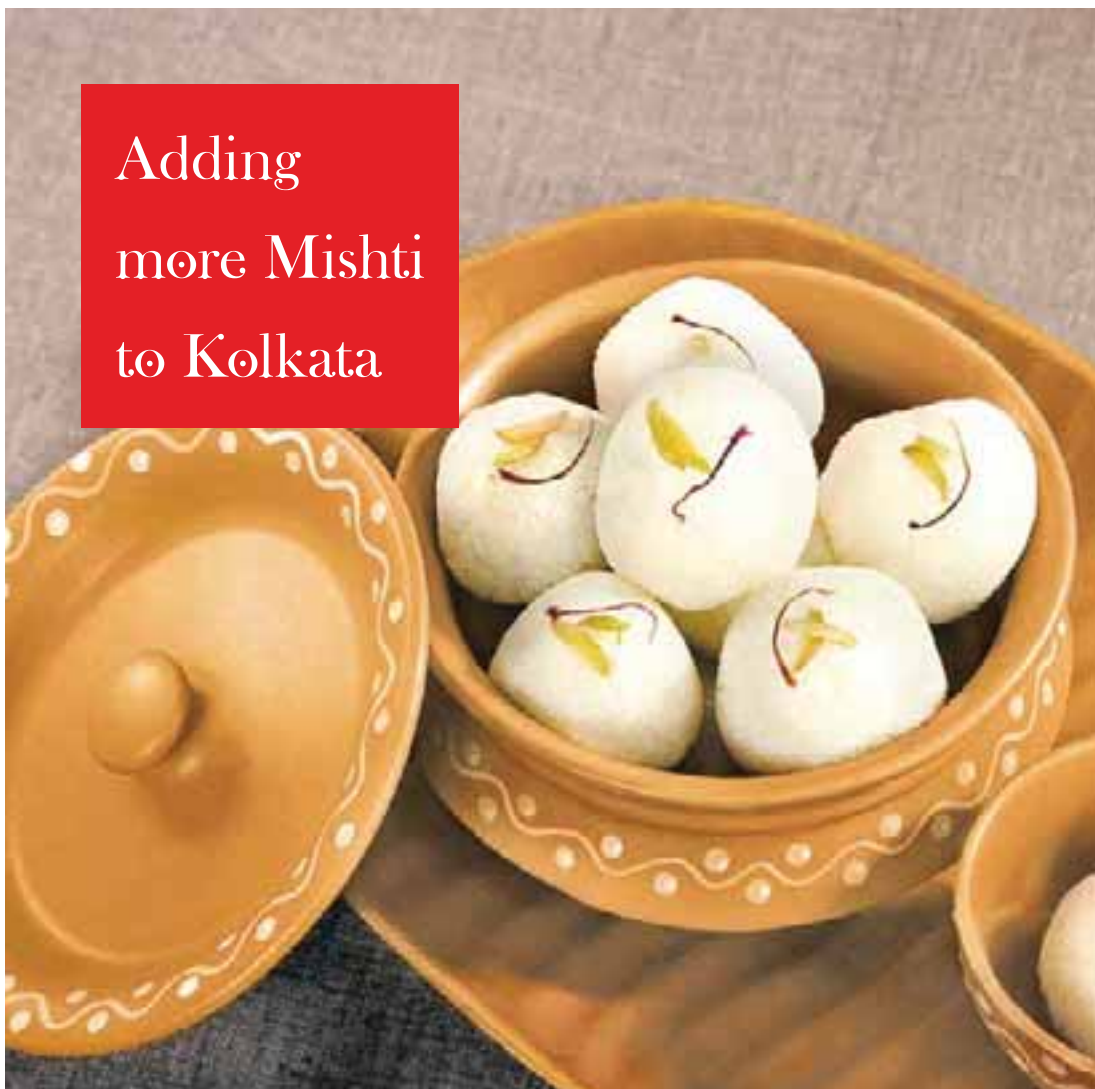


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Tallest high-rise in Kolkata

42
THE

Architect
Hafeez Contractor,
Mumbai

Interior designer
PIA Interior,
Bangkok

Landscaping
agent
Design Cell,
New Delhi





christened 'The 42', the 240-metre tall building on 42B Chowringhee that once belonged to the Maharaja of Darbhanga, is a super-luxury residential project. According to Mani Group CEO Sanjay Jhunjunwala, who is leading a consortium of four groups to develop the landmark, "The 42 will be the conversation-maker for Kolkata." Alcove and Diamond Groups from Kolkata and Sattva Group from Bangalore make up the quartet entrusted with the responsibility of erecting what is set to emerge among the tallest buildings in India.

Sudarshana Gangulee, Head of Marketing, Mani Group, joins us in conversation to answer questions most people have been eager to ask.

1 What made you decide to build the tallest high-rise, a 60-storeyed structure, in Kolkata? How do you expect to create the excitement around this tallest high-rise?

Any physical attribute like 'tallest' or 'biggest' in terms of any man-made endeavour can generally never be permanent. What is tallest today can be improved upon tomorrow. At one time, Hiland Park wowed Kolkata by becoming the tallest building in the city. It was soon overshadowed by South City; Urbana will be even taller. Hence, we have not been carried away with the idea of creating excitement by building the 'tallest' high-rise in Kolkata. However, upon completion, The 42 is set to become the tallest structure in the city.

2 Tell us about the architecture and interior style of The 42.

With its slender massing, The 42 makes for a distinctive and elegant tower. The awe-inspiring 13 metre-high ground floor lobby will be truly imposing. The apartments have been designed to be spacious and luxurious. They are designed in two distinct styles – classic and contemporary – and will be carefully crafted and slickly finished.

3 Other than being the tallest, what else sets The 42 apart from other high-rises?

What sets The 42 apart is the fact that it is truly an iconic address. Located in the heart in Kolkata's historic and enchanting thoroughfare – Chowringhee, The 42 will bring to Kolkatans the aura of majestic living with landmark architecture and stellar interiors. The building has one lavish bungalow apartment per floor and a triplex unit on top. Each of them will provide an unforgettable

360 degree panorama of the city including the lush greens in front and the river in the distance.

4 Can you tell us more on technologies that will be used within the premises and other maintenance provisions?

For vertical transportation, The 42 will have four high-speed passenger elevators along with one service elevator and one goods elevator. The MLCP block will have three passenger elevators and one dedicated service elevator.

The building will have 24x7 power supply with 100%-power backup. There will be an instant change over between mains and an auto synchronised DG set using a PLC system. Our lightning protection system will be in compliance with IS 2309 norms.

Quite understandably, The 42 will have advanced fire detection, alarm and suppression systems as per stringent norms, including hydrant and sprinkler systems, external fire hydrant with hose cabinet located at strategic locations, and addressable type fire detection and alarm system with multi-sensor smoke detectors (for common areas only).

The premises will be Wi-Fi-enabled along with signal boosters to ensure consistent high-speed connectivity.

5 Tell us more about the construction specifications and the safety measures in place.

The completed building will offer some truly state-of-the-art safety, security and access control systems to ensure complete peace-of-mind for the residents. These include:

- ▶ 24x7 vigilance facility with CCTV cameras

- ▶ Proximity card reader with boom barrier/ bollard control

- ▶ Swipe card access to entrance lobby and lifts

- ▶ Biometric front door lock

- ▶ Video phone monitoring at the front door and entrance lobby

6 What will be the configuration of the apartments in The 42?

The 42 will have 56 simplex apartments – one per floor – and one triplex apartment. The simplex apartments will be of two sizes (depending on the area of the attached sky balcony) – 7,780 square feet and 7,815 square feet, respectively. They will come with the option of four, five or six bedrooms.

7 It is clearly a high-profile project. Who do you see emerging as the buyers?

The 42 is a symbol of sophistication and will redefine luxury living the way it has been perceived in this city. The target customer set would comprise corporate honchos, senior professionals, business leaders, and people from families who now prefer to look at the practicality of a high-end apartment with a large floor plate compared to an independent house. Besides, we expect that NRIs and NRBs with a Kolkata connect will be interested.

8 Does this project comply with green building specifications?

Yes it does. The 42 has been bestowed with the 'Gold' pre-certification under the IGBC Green Homes rating.

9 When do you expect the project to be completed?

We expect to complete the project by end-2017.

Barrackpore-Barasat Exciting



future

The
Barrackpore-
Barasat pocket
combines
modernity with
familiarity



Barrackpore Railway Station

As consumers mature, the value of investing in pin codes whose prospects are attractive becomes more important than investing in saturated areas. The result is that an increased interest in a reinventing Kolkata pocket like Barrackpore-Barasat.

Gated community homes were once considered beyond the reach of the middle-class. Times are now changing. Buying power is improving and gated apartment affordability is rising. The result is that buyers are now seeking new-age homes in existing neighbourhoods, representing the best of both worlds – the modern coupled with the familiar. A feature increasingly becoming visible in the Barrackpore-Barasat pocket of Kolkata.

Slice of history

A number of residents like to live in places with a slice of history – and community. Barrackpore and Barasat possess layers of history. The earliest references to Barrackpore are found in the writings of the Greek navigators and historians of the 1st century BC. *The Statistical Account of Bengal* by W.W. Hunter talks of towns and villages on the banks of the Hooghly River as chief trading and marketing centres in which Barrackpore finds a mention. Siraj-ud-Daulah made his way to Kolkata from Murshidabad through Barasat. The British made Barasat a weekend retreat, constructing garden houses there. Warren Hastings made his villa in the heart of Barasat.



Artist's impression of Rameswara Riverview, Barrackpore

Northward shift

The priority of the day is getting from one place to another in the shortest time.

Barrackpore is attractively placed in this regard; it is connected to NH#34 and NH#35, Barrackpore Trunk Road, Ghoshpara Road and Barrackpore-Dum Dum Expressway (work underway).

Several roads connect Barasat to important points: NH#34, Jessore Road, Basirhat Road, Taki Road, Barrackpore Road, among others. Besides, important points of transit within Barasat comprise Champadali More (major city centre where NH#35 is divided by Jessore

Road and Basirhat Road), Colony More (intersection of Krishnanagar Highway and Barrackpore Highway), and Dakbungalow More (intersection of Jessore Road and Krishnanagar Highway), among others.

The shift

A number of decades ago, the commissioning of large factories and industries drew a large number of residents to Barrackpore and Barasat. Now that a sizeable resident community has been created and industries have left (no pollution!), large land commercial parcels are being developed, attracting a

large number of residential buyers.

Turning of the tide

There used to be a time when the mention of 'Barasat' would draw the reaction, of 'Isn't that far?' Interestingly, there has been a 40% rise in real estate activity in just two years in Barasat. Major builders like Godrej Properties, Salarpuria Group, Merlin Group and Hiland Group are focusing on Kolkata's outskirts – Joka, Barasat, Madhyamgram, Kona Expressway and Jessore Road. (Source: *The Economic Times*) Suddenly, the peripheral is becoming central to the business plans of prominent realtors.

A school finding a solution to the water crisis?! Shiuli Balika Vidyalaya, Barasat is doing just that. Backed by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited and a group of experts from Birbhum, this school has put in place a system to convert rainwater into potable water. Between September and November, the school processed 20,000 litres of rainwater. Collected in a reservoir, the rainwater is processed through a filter-bed of sand, charcoal and pebbles, purifying it following the addition of essential minerals. The water is then stored in four tanks and pumped into a terrace tank for distribution. Each floor has an ultra-violet ray-emanating unit to kill residual germs. (Source: *The Times of India*)

So what's in it for these large builders? "Despite a lower transaction ticket size," says Subhasis Dutta, a resident of Barasat "these suburban Kolkata projects generate steady demand. Besides, the concept of city 'limits' is becoming irrelevant. Conventionally, people never went outwards from the city centre on account of connectivity. With that problem largely solved, these homes in peripheral Kolkata have become compelling – inexpensive, well-connected and equipped with modern amenities!"

Capitalising on the transformation

Rameswara Riverview (5.61 acres) is one such property capitalising on this transformation. The Barrackpore property offers a Ganges view through three-side open apartments. The property comprises modern amenities (swimming pool, power backup, elevators, jogging track, children's play area, games room and gym, among others) for 360 apartment owners. "The one big transformation is the democratisation of lifestyle standards," says Subhasis. "What was once considered the privilege of the exclusive few is now available to a wider population sweep. It is properties like Rameswara which are accelerating this democratisation."

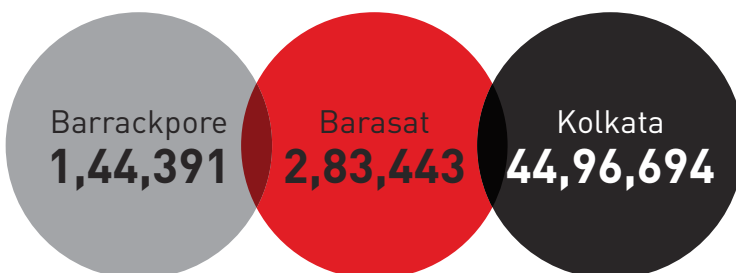
Riya Gitanjali (2.04 acres) on Barrackpore-Barasat Road is another upcoming property built around this value proposition. The 221-apartment property offers a reading room, swimming pool, themed driveway, yoga deck, utility shop, children's play area, among others. "The kind of features that we are

offering is directed towards raising the lifestyle standard of this pocket," explains Mr. Pawan Agarwal, Director of NK Realtors. "Which explains why this project has been themed around Rabindranath Tagore – hence the name of this project is 'Gitanjali'. The generic is history. The themed is in."

Fortune Heights (5.84 acres) in Barasat is positioned as the first high-rise in Barasat. The 821-apartment facility offers round-the-clock surveillance security, clubhouse, rooftop swimming pool, kids' pool with jacuzzi, *adda* room, games room, 'garden of colours,' reflexology park, clubhouse, power backup, guest rooms and amphitheatre, among others. "What we are offering are facilities that were once only associated with modern-day properties in South Kolkata," says Mr. Agarwal. "Who could have thought of a reflexology park in Barasat? Fortune Group has brought such a lifestyle because the Barasat gentry has changed significantly over the last decade – and deserves a better lifestyle standard."

What sets these properties apart is not just the quality of offerings; it is the value proposition. Rameswara Riverview is offering apartments starting Rs.23.35 lac, Fortune Heights is being offered for Rs.21.67 lac and Riya Gitanjali for as attractive as Rs.14 lac. "What is remarkable is that one can buy into a superior lifestyle quality at a cost that is one of the lowest of any metro city in India today," says Chandrima Banerjee, staying in this area since the last 25 years.

Populations



Goal!

An astro-turf quality comparable with the best in the world and residential football school. It's all happening in Barasat. The Barasat Stadium impressed Atletico Madrid officials so much that they said they preferred it to the Salt Lake Stadium. The astro-turf was entirely financed by FIFA's Goal Project and prepared by a Dutch company. The Indian Football Academy will train 40 boys at the facilities here.

Education hub

- Auxilium Convent School, Barasat
- Central Modern School, Barasat
- Adamas University, Barasat
- Adamas Institute of Technology, Barasat
- West Bengal State University, Barasat
- Kingston Polytechnic College, Barasat
- Kingston Educational Institute, Barasat
- St Mary's Technical Campus, Barasat
- AMS Education Trust, Barasat
- Nilganj High School, Barasat
- Jute Agriculture Research Centre, Barasat
- Regent Education and Research Foundation, Barasat
- St. Clare School, Barasat
- DAV Public School Barrackpore
- Barrackpore Wesley Hindustani High School, Barrackpore
- Barrackpore Police Training School, Barrackpore
- Army Public School, Barrackpore
- AB Model High School, Barrackpore

Illustrious connections

- Bollywood director, Shoojit Sircar, grew up in Barrackpore.
- Surendra Nath Bandyopadhyay, father of Indian Nationalist Movement, lived in Barrackpore.
- Bengali author Bharat Chandra Ray Gunakar, known for writing *Annadamangal*, lived in Mulajore.
- Ramprasad Sen, who authored religious songs, was born in Halisahar.
- Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, who penned *Vande Mataram*, was born in Naihati.



DO YOU KNOW THE REAL **Dr. R.S. Bhartia?**

Meet the promoter behind Fortune City, Fortune Township and the newly launched Fortune Heights project.

2 favourite Kolkata hangouts.

Agri-Horticultural
Society, Alipore
Hub, Taj Hotel



Your favourite book.

Creating Wealth by Robert Allen

Your proudest moment.

Completion of Fortune City

2 global structures you admire.

Petronas Tower, Kuala Lumpur

Taj Mahal, Agra

Favourite holiday destination.

Switzerland

A project that made you proud.

Fortune City



2 properties in Kolkata you wish you owned.

Bel Air Alipore

South City





Your role model.

The Late JRD Tata

things you love about Kolkata.

Friendliness of the people
Short commutes
Music festivals
Stretch between Raj Bhavan
and Victoria Memorial



2 films that inspire you.

3 Idiots

The Sound of Music



goSSIPwallah...

BUS STAND MAKEOVER

West Bengal's Urban Development department started developing the Karunamoyee bus terminus, a hotspot after the introduction of the Kolkata-Agartala bus service. Passenger flow at the terminus is expected to shoot up once the East-West Metro, which has a station at Central Park, starts operating. A subway may be constructed to connect the terminus with the East-West Metro station as well as night-shelter arrangements for long-distance bus passengers bound for Dhaka, Durgapur and Asansol.

(Source: *The Times of India*, 18.6.15)

CLEANING KOLKATA'S AIR

The Global Burden of Disease Report, considered the gold standard in global epidemiology, assessed that ambient air pollution was responsible for 630,000 premature deaths a year, or more than one death per minute. The World Health Organization 2014 report on air pollution listed Kolkata among its most polluted cities. (Source: *Times of India*, 5.5.15)

INDIA FOURTH LARGEST INFRASTRUCTURE MARKET, 2030

India is likely to emerge as the fourth largest infrastructure projects market in the world by 2025, according to a RICS report. India is at the sixth position with 5.3 per cent share of the global infrastructure market. By 2025, its share could rise to 9.8 per cent, placing it at the fourth position. (Source: *The Economic Times*, 4.4.15)

CHANDIGARH KA DIL KHUSH HUA!

Chandigarh, Lucknow, New Delhi, Chennai and Bengaluru are the five happiest cities in India, according to a study commissioned by LG and conducted by IMRB International, with a sample size of 2,424 respondents across 16 cities. Indians in the age group of 35-45 years are happier than their younger counterparts aged 18-24. While the latter rank happiness as an important component (58% aged 18-24 ranking happiness as their most important core value) the study's index scores showed the older people aged 35-45 are happier compared to them. (Source: *The Hindustan Times*, 12.6.15)

SOLAR SHIELD

A government housing complex towering over Dhakuria Lakes has gone solar to counter electricity bills. Avijit Ghosh, an energy technologist with Central Glass and Ceramic Research Institute (CGCRI), installed a solar power plant on the roof of Sirsa, a residential building for CSIR scientists. For the city, the average was pegged at 15.74, while that of the Dhakuria plant was found to be 15.82. The CUF values for Delhi, Mumbai and Chennai are 18.4, 17.19 and 17.81, respectively. The performance rate usually varies between 75% and 85%, while the Dhakuria plant's average PR was over 90%. (Source: *Times of India*, 18.5.15)



The imposing Dubai skyline





The World Health Organization 2014 report on air pollution listed Kolkata among its most polluted cities.

STATE TO CONSTRUCT HOUSEHOLD LATRINES

The West Bengal State Government, with assistance from UNICEF, is set to construct individual household latrines in 8.7 lac households by 2016. Within the overall framework of Mission Nirmal Bangla, Nadia district became the first Indian district to achieve open Defecation Free Status by constructing more than 3.47 lac toilets. In India 53.1% of the population do not have proper sanitation place. Proper sanitation will reduce problems like infant mortality in India. (Source: *Indiablooms.com*, 28.4.15)

A KUNMING-KOLKATA RAIL LINK!

China has proposed a high-speed railway line between Kunming and Kolkata. The link would be part of the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) Economic Corridor aimed at boosting trade relations. The proposed 3,000 kilometre-long rail corridor could be funded through China's Silk Road Development Fund or the Asian Infrastructure Fund. The rail corridor could pass through Mandalay, Chittagong and Dhaka before ending in Kolkata. (Source: *The Economic Times*, 18.6.15)

INDIANS INFLUENCE DUBAI REALTY

Indian nationals emerged the largest non-Arab investors in Dubai's real estate market, accounting for property transactions worth 3.040 billion dirhams (\$820.8 million) in the first quarter of 2015. The Dubai Land Department's annual report said a total of 11,603 real estate transactions in the first quarter of 2015 exceeded 64 billion dirhams (\$17.28 billion). The total value of non-Arab investments in Dubai real estate market's amounted to more than 12 billion dirhams. (Source: *hindustantimes.com*, 27.4.15)

ONLINE PLANS IN 9 WARDS

Applications for the sanction of building plans in nine wards of central Calcutta can now be submitted online. The nine wards comprise wards 56 to 59 and 63 to 67, all in Borough VII. The wards cover areas such as Science City, places surrounding Trinamul Bhavan in Topsia, parts of Bosepukur, Palm Avenue, Park Circus and Shakespeare Sarani.

Officials said the applicants would have to upload their building plans on the KMC website, www.kmcgov.in. The traditional system of manual submission will also continue. (Source: *The Telegraph*, 20.5.15)

KOLKATA STATE BUSES WITH CCTVS!

In a bid to make public transport safer, especially for women, the CSTC has installed CCTVs in 623 buses (introduced under the JNNURM scheme). The CCTVs have been installed inside and outside the bus: one in the front, another at the middle, the third one outside at the rear of the vehicle. The equipment, with a storage capacity of 100 gigabytes, will allow the footage to be stored for three days. (Source: *NDTV.com*, 15.4.15)

KMC's waste compactor machines...

and how they are transforming Kolkata

The KMC garbage vat at the convergence of Ballygunge Circular Road and Chakraborty Road used to be an ironic eyesore for years. Ironic because the road housed the rich and the famous including a Cabinet Minister; the vat sent noxious smells across the neighbourhood and also a prominent message: Come, look at me! I have been here for years in your face and there is nothing that anyone has been able to do about it!

The amazing thing is that the vat is still there but the garbage has gone. "There were a number of letters that one wrote to the mayor across the years," relates a high profile industrialist who stays a few hundred metres down the Ballygunge Circular Road stretch. "The letters were penned on the grounds that this represented a health hazard for the residents but the reality is that every single time one would hear excuses like '*Ki kora jai, apni bolun? Vat-ta ke shift toh korte parbo na...*'"

And this appeared to be the reality not just on Ballygunge Circular Road but also elsewhere across the city. The toniest city address of Southern Avenue comprised two large open garbage vats; Russell Street's vat was adjacent to offices of one of the country's largest FMCG companies ITC Limited; there were other vats in the open across the city in Mirza Ghalib Street, Camac Street, Kalighat, Chetla and Tallah.

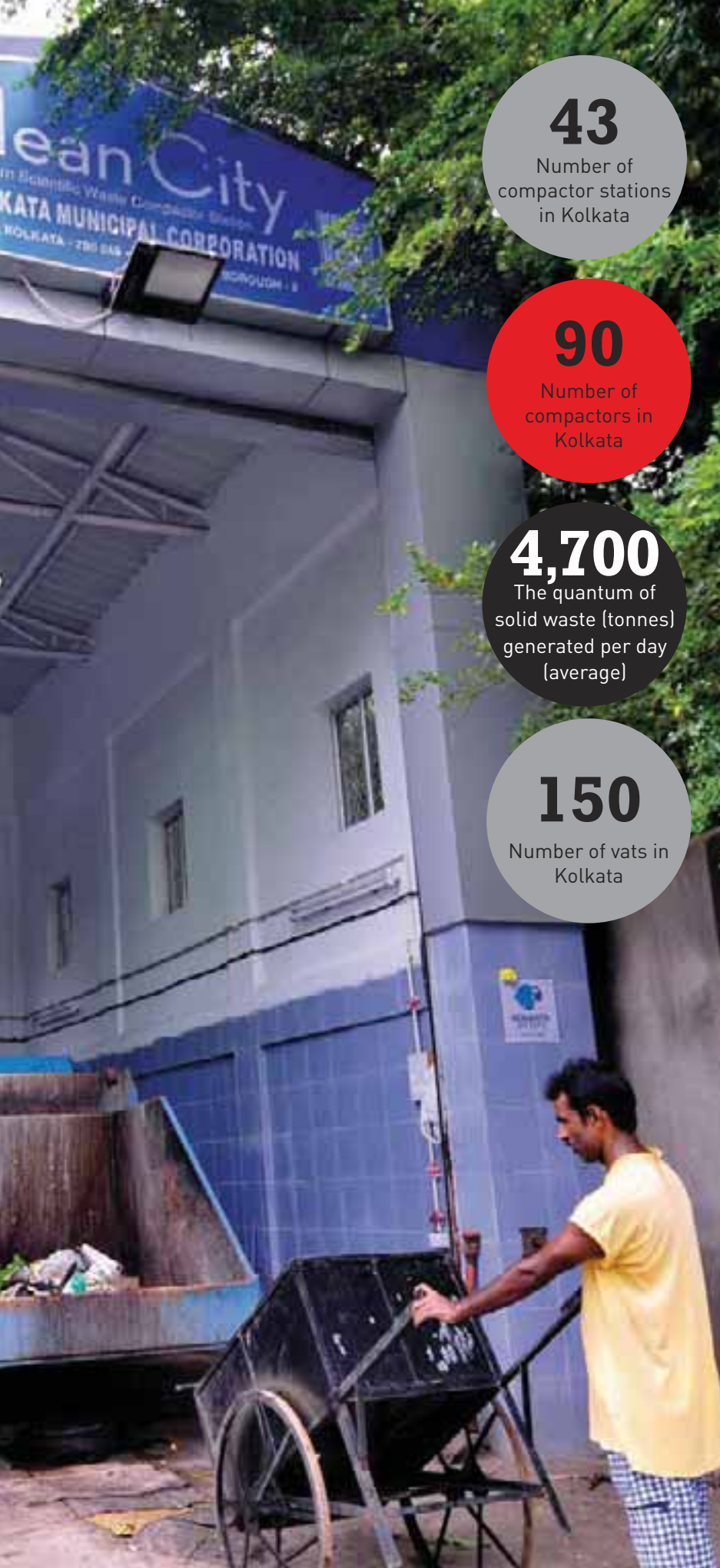
Open garbage vats? Gone!

In what has possibly been the most remarkable achievement of the Kolkata

Municipal Corporation, the open garbage vats have gone. Yes, gone. "We invested in modern garbage compactor machines and open garbage collection stations with technological assistance from the Netherlands," explains a senior officer in the solid waste management department of Kolkata Municipal Corporation. "The result is that instead of depositing garbage into open vats, our conservancy labourers are unloading the locality's garbage into modern compactors. Open vats are history. People coming to the city and complaining about garbage strewn across roads or garbage flying out of KMC trucks has ended. In terms of garbage management, Kolkata has entered the modern age. Most visitors returning to the city after a long gap are pleasantly surprised. They have never seen the city looking this clean."

This clean-up has led to enhanced neighbourhood pride – and even higher real estate valuations. "Even though we lived on Southern Avenue, which is one of the best addresses in the city," says Nikhil Gupta, a businessman, "when it came to giving first-time visitors a landmark to get to our residence, it would be embarrassing to explain that our house would be easy to locate since it was diagonally across a garbage vat. Besides, the word that got around was that the resale value of properties in our building were slightly on the lower side for this reason. I am happy to tell you that over the last couple of years – ever since the compactor replaced the open garbage vat – the scenario has transformed. The eyesore has gone, the





43

Number of
compactor stations
in Kolkata

90

Number of
compactors in
Kolkata

4,700

The quantum of
solid waste (tonnes)
generated per day
(average)

150

Number of vats in
Kolkata

smell has disappeared and I would like to think that our apartments valuations have increased. Good for the city, passers-by and residents!”

Extending to Rajarhat

Housing Infrastructure Development Corporation is planning to set up India’s first underground solid waste collection network in New Town.

Once operational, this ‘smart’ waste management will put Rajarhat in the elite company of Wembley City (London) and the congested neighbourhoods of Stockholm, Helsinki and Montreal.

The Underground Vacuum Systems for Sustainable Waste Handling has been recommended in the smart city report for New Town prepared by the National Institute of Smart Governance. The process begins with the deposit of trash into intake hatches (portholes) through which waste is pulled through an underground pipeline using the air pressure difference created by large industrial fans. The portholes comprise sensors that indicate when the trash needs to be emptied. This helps ensure that only one kind of waste travels through the pipe at a time. The pipelines converge into a central processing facility that uses automated software to direct the waste to a container, from where it is trucked to its final location (landfill or composting plant).

If only Kolkatans could litter less...



The origin

Three individuals happened to be discussing ways of improving realities in Kolkata when one of them piped in with a question: 'How about launching an event that would bring philanthropists and NGOs together under one roof? That would make it easy for philanthropists to decide who to donate to; it would make things easy for NGOs to seek prospective donors.' And out of this lateral idea was born Kolkata Gives. An organisation at one level, an event at the other. Created with the principal objective to network, mobilise resources, ensure that these funds are spent for the purposes for which they were raised and ensure that the deployment details are communicated to the donors.

The maiden event

The trustees at Kolkata Gives – Pawan Agarwal, Jyoti Sonthalia, Mukti Gupta, Anant Nevatia, Saurav Dugar and Mudar Patherya – launched their maiden event on 11 November 2013 at Hotel Park Plaza in uptown Ballygunge, Kolkata. Some 800 successful achievers turned up at the venue to hear the stories of 22 NGOs (selected with care) engaged in philanthropic activity. Not just hear, applaud, whisper '*shabash*' and leave, but to reach into their pockets and make a grassroots difference. Some 800 visitors made aggregate funding commitments of more than Rs.10 million.

Kolkata Gives

Kolkata Gives is a unique movement focused on bringing donors and NGOs under one roof.



Trustees of Kolkata Gives, 2015

The difference

So what made a daringly different experiment like this work in a city conscious of counting its pennies? One, the evident reality that the event promoters had no money to make from the event (cheques will go direct from donors to NGOs). Two, an exhaustive brochure listing out the stories of NGOs so that prospective donors went to the event informed. Three, aggressive networking with peers, friends and relatives to attend and 'listen to the stories and if you are impressed, then contribute'. Four, the handing of 'play money' to each visitor, inviting the person to contribute to whichever NGO he or she wished with a provision that this would be matched rupee-to-rupee by the organisers. Lastly, no NGO canvassed for a donation; it merely explained its story and hoped for the best.

Miscellaneous activities

The trustees at Kolkata Gives recognised

the dangers of conducting an annual event and doing nothing in the interim. The result was that Kolkata Gives charted out a number of year-through activities. Conducting a philanthro-tourism 'picnic' where it took 45 visitors to an NGO (OFFER at Baruipur being the first in March 2015). Conducting a workshop on how NGOs could brand themselves better. Collaborating with SREI as the philanthropic partner, helping enlist 1200 participants from NGOs for the marathon in February 2015. Launching India's first philanthropic tabloid in January 2014. Starting a back-office to research NGO activities and highlight them to interested donors.

The second event

Kolkata Gives 2015 at Hotel Park Plaza Ballygunge on 11 January 2015 was a festival of a different kind of philanthropy. The second edition of this unique philanthropic event drew twice the footfalls of its predecessor and considerably larger donation commitments for the benefit of the 30 selected NGOs on show. The best commentary about Kolkata Gives 2015 came from a visitor. "For 364 days," she said, "Kolkata's rich and famous compete to make more money than each other and then there comes this one day when they compete again – to give a part of their net worth away."

The climax of the day was something that most NGOs and visitors missed because it happened with minimal fuss. Sutirtha Bhattacharya, newly-appointed chairman of Coal India Limited, the largest single

CSR spender in the country with an annual disbursement outlay of around Rs.600 crore, spent an hour at the Kolkata Gives event engaging individually and incognito with a number of NGOs. His one statement could perhaps hold out an even bigger hope than all the cash mobilised during this nine hour event: "The time has perhaps come for an institution like Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) to be engaged to strengthen the governance delivery of these NGOs, so that it becomes easier for process-driven organisations like Coal India to support them and strengthen the virtuous cycle."

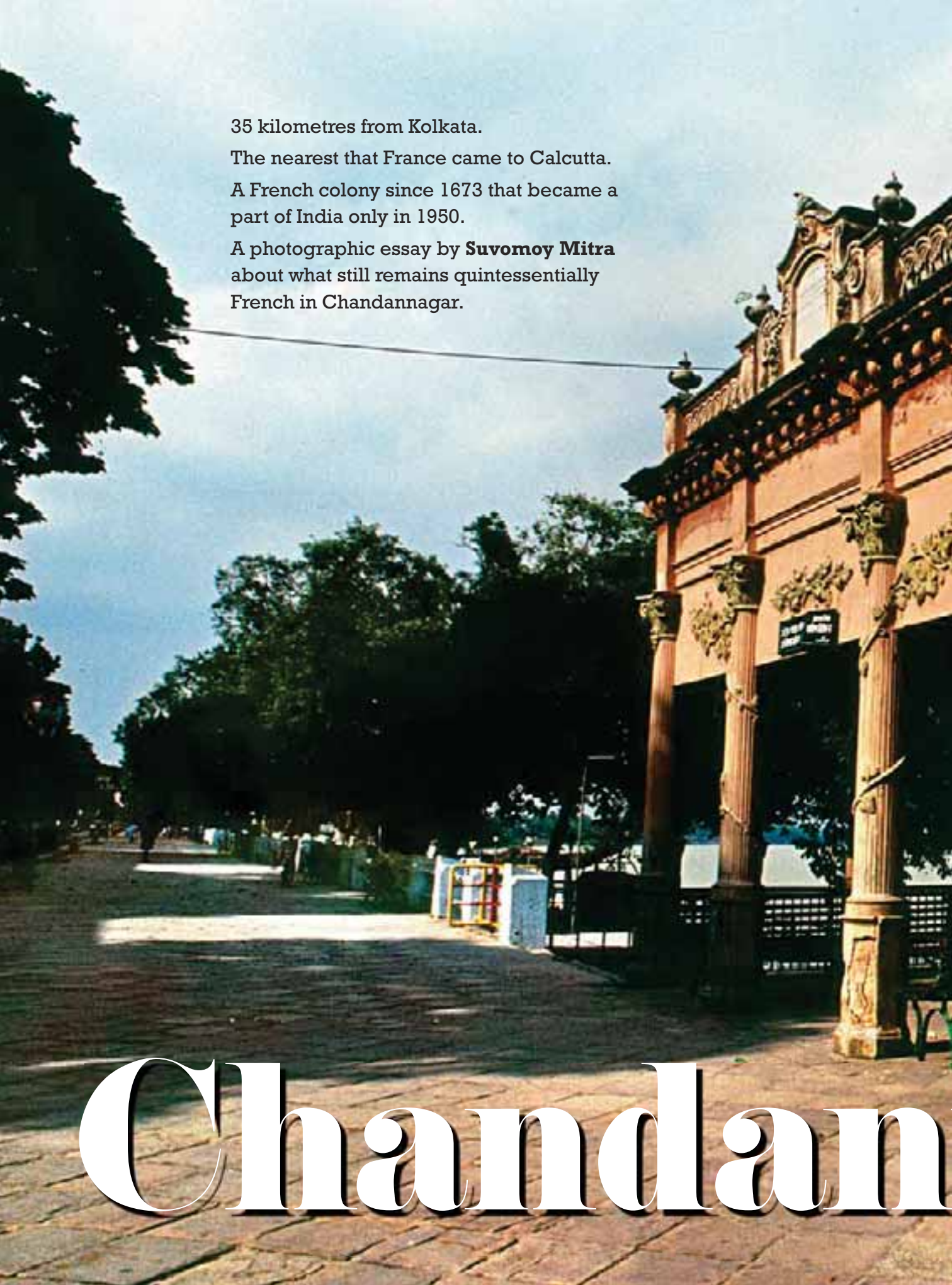
The vision

"Kolkata Gives is positioned as a facilitator for all those people who desire to donate and make a difference and a guide for all those desiring to mobilise funds," explains Pawan Agarwal, trustee. "A number of people who wish to donate seek to provide funds to NGOs who possess the highest standards of governance and credibility. Besides, NGOs need a real-time understanding of what donors need and also of which donor would like to fund what kind of projects. This two-way engagement makes the philanthropic wheel turn and this is the kind of service that Kolkata Gives would like to provide in a bigger way. In short, we would like to play the role of a trusted intermediary."

real
ties

SOME NGOS SHOWCASED AT KOLKATA GIVES EVENTS

• Calcutta Rescue • Jyoti Development Trust - Disha • Sir Syed Group of Schools • Hamari Muskan • Kolkata Swasthya Sankalp • Mentaidd • The Unmesh Society • Amitie Trust • Ashabari (Calcutta Home of Hope) • Association for Social and Environmental Development • Calcutta Social Project • Centre for Contemporary Communication • Chhaya • Civilian Welfare Foundation • Ektara • Friends of Tribal Society • Help Us Help Them • Indian Society for Rehabilitation of Children • ISKCON Food Relief Foundation • Jungle Crows Foundation • Kadam • Kamdebpuurrural Development Society • OFFER • Parivaar • Sahay • Rise • Rural Healthcare Foundation • Samaritan Help Mission • Samarpan Foundation • Soroptimist International of Calcutta • Suprava • The Leprosy Mission Purulia Leprosy Home & Hospital • Tiljala Society For Human and Educational Development



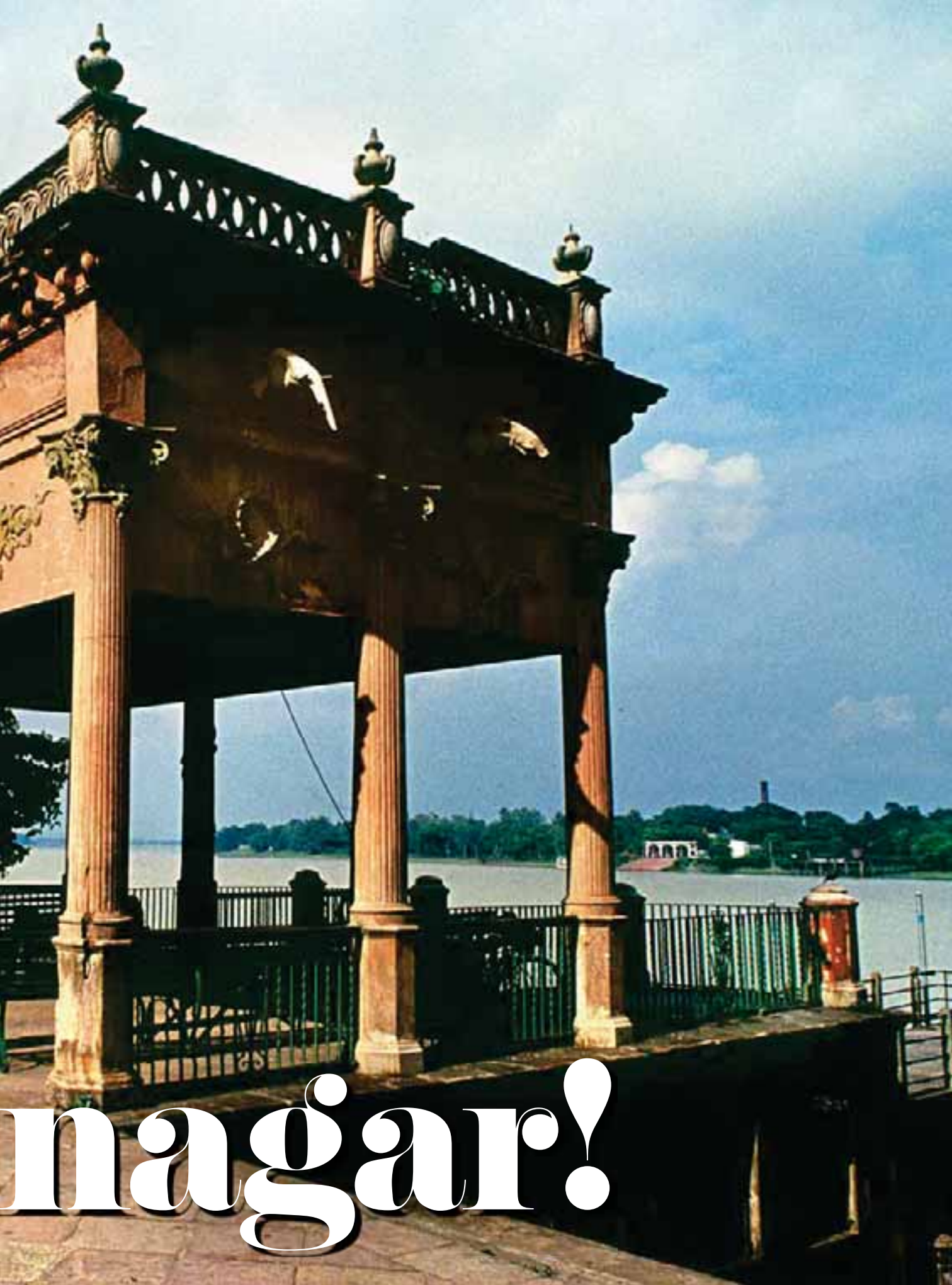
35 kilometres from Kolkata.

The nearest that France came to Calcutta.

A French colony since 1673 that became a part of India only in 1950.

A photographic essay by **Suvomoy Mitra** about what still remains quintessentially French in Chandannagar.

Chandannagar



magyar!





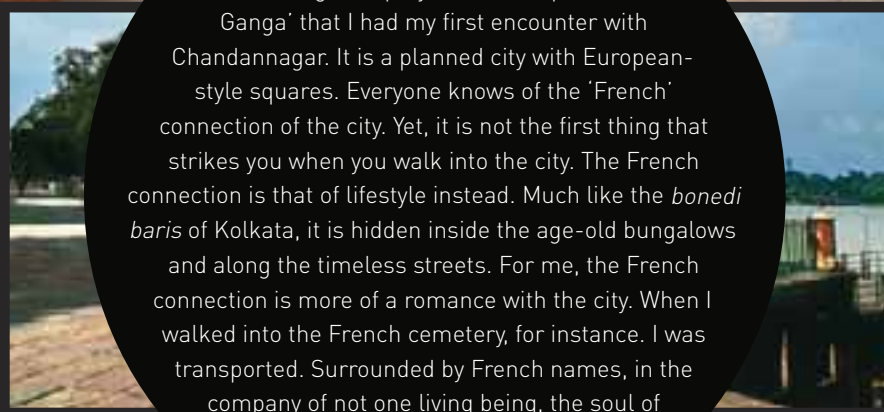
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5



6



7

It

was
while

working on a project on 'Europe and Ganga' that I had my first encounter with Chandannagar. It is a planned city with European-style squares. Everyone knows of the 'French' connection of the city. Yet, it is not the first thing that strikes you when you walk into the city. The French connection is that of lifestyle instead. Much like the *boned bars* of Kolkata, it is hidden inside the age-old bungalows and along the timeless streets. For me, the French connection is more of a romance with the city. When I walked into the French cemetery, for instance. I was transported. Surrounded by French names, in the company of not one living being, the soul of the French seemed to come alive.

- Suvomoy Mitra, Photographer



① **The Institute of Chandannagar:** One of the oldest museums of the region. A collection of French antiques (cannons used in Anglo-French War, 18th century wooden furniture, among others). The Institute still teaches French.

② **St Joseph's Convent:** Grown into multiple education institutions and dispensary.

③ **Kanailal Vidya Mandir:** Established as Saint Mary's Institution in 1862, teaching

French, Renamed Kanailal Vidya Mandir after the revolutionary Kanailal Dutta, a student of this school.

④ **Chandannagar Strand:** Built in 1920s in honour of Durgacharan Rakshit, recipient of Legion d'Honneur award. An elegant pavilion comprises slender columns with decorative stucco works consisting of an elephant's head and floral design.

⑤ **Clock Tower:** The Jail was established in 1850.

⑥ **Chandannagar City Gate:** Entry point of the French territory on G T Road, it reflects the lost glory of a French era.

⑦ **Chandannagar Court:** Short distance from the Chandannagar Strand, comprising rare French artifacts.

IN THE MEDIA



Asia's most expensive apartment

Henderson Land Development sold a unit at 39 Conduit Road (Hong Kong) for HK\$93,000 per square foot, a record for Asia. An unidentified buyer paid HK\$433.8 million for a 4,664 square foot unit on the 45th floor of the building, according to the sales posted in the first-hand residential properties electronic platform. *[Source: SCMP]*

Mumbai green buildings to get 20% tax sop

Certified green buildings in Mumbai could soon get up to 20% discount on property tax as per a proposal being considered by the municipal corporation in discussion with Indian Green Building Council. There are examples of civic and state bodies like those in Noida, Chandigarh and West Bengal, where construction of green buildings is encouraged through additional floor space index of 5-10%. The measure has worked well in these regions. *[Source: The Economic Times]*

Women must be co-owners in govt's affordable houses

The government has made a mandatory provision of making the mother or wife either sole or co-owner of flats along with the beneficiary under the affordable housing scheme. This provision will be introduced in the government's flagship Housing for All scheme. "The provision of ownership of a flat to women has been included so that they have a greater say in the domestic affairs. Several states have taken initiatives such as reduction in stamp duty and electricity bills if the house is registered in the name of a woman," said an official. *[Source: The Times of India]*

Housing for All

The Cabinet gave its approval to launch Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Housing for All by 2022' scheme that includes rehabilitation of slum dwellers, promotion of affordable housing for economically weaker sections through credit-linked subsidies, affordable housing in partnership with public and private sectors and subsidy for beneficiary-led individual house construction or

enhancement. A central grant of Rs. 1 lac per house, on an average, will be available under the slum rehabilitation programme. Under the credit-linked interest subsidy component, a subvention of 6.5% on housing loans availed up to a tenure of 15 years will be provided to individuals hailing from low income groups, giving them with a benefit of around Rs. 2.3 lac each. *[Source: The Economic Times]*

Parkomat back under KMC wings

Ten years after they were built on a PPP model, the Kolkata Municipal Corporation is set to reclaim Parkomat, an automated parking plaza on Rawdon Street, and the parking facility on Lindsay Street. The mayor Sovan Chatterjee conceded that there was a difficulty in utilising the parking plazas, especially the one at Rawdon Street, since the civic body had failed to enforce no parking in the 500m area. *[Source: The Times of India]*



NUMBERS

174

Percentage jump in
Kolkata's millionaire club
between 2004 and 2014

11

Indian houses
(in crore) that
will be required
by 2022

81

India's urban
population (in
crore) expected
to reach by 2050

180

The projected Indian
real estate market (US\$,
billion) by 2020

30-40

Percentage rise in real
estate activity in Kolkata
outskirts in two years

70

Percentage of urban
housing need in the
affordable segment

1.7-2.0

Area (in lac hectares)
required to meet Indian
urban housing needs

Thoughts to blow your mind by Juhani Pallasmaa

Juhani Pallasmaa is a Finnish architect par excellence, former Professor of Architecture and Dean, Helsinki University of Technology. *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses*, his 1996 book of reflections on architecture, perception and the self, has become a part of the canon of architectural education across the world.



"Our skin is capable of distinguishing a number of colours; we actually do see by our skin."

"The ultimate meaning of any building is beyond architecture; it directs our consciousness back to the world and towards our own sense of self and being."

"An architectural work is not experienced as a series of isolated retinal pictures, but in its full and integrated material, embodied and spiritual essence."

"A wise architect works with his/her entire body and sense of self."

"There is medical evidence that peripheral vision has a higher priority in our perceptual and mental system."

"The dominance of the eye and the suppression of the other senses tend to push us into detachment, isolation and exteriority."

"Modernist design at large has housed the intellect and the eye, but it has left the body and the other senses, as well as our memories, imagination and dreams, homeless."

"The current industrial mass production of visual imagery tends to alienate vision from emotional involvement and identification and to turn imagery into mesmerising flow without focus or participation."





What makes **Lake District** one of Kolkata's best maintained properties?

Lake District in Phoolbagan was developed by the Prasad Group.

The property is respected not only for the view that it provides of the 97.9-acre Subhas Sarobar water body but also its impeccable maintenance standards.

Mr. Sanjay Agarwal, member of the Lake District Residents' Association, and Mr. Surendra Bhuwania, Treasurer, explain how they have helped protect the property's maintenance standards.



Q. What makes Lake District of Phoolbagan one of the best maintained residential properties in Kolkata?

Sanjay Agarwal: The success of any residential society lies in its community culture. At Lake District, we live like a family. Now you might ask what this has got to do with maintenance. The reality is that only when each resident feels a sense of ownership and inter-personal accountability can a property be maintained most effectively. By



that yardstick, let me ask a counter-question: when is the last time you saw a well-bonded residential community but poor property maintenance – or vice versa? There is a connection between the two beyond what most people might think.

Surendra Bhuwania: At Lake District, our responsibilities have been competently allocated by our management committee across committee post-holders covering security, maintenance, sports, festivals and gardening. In our experience, the more an association monopolises portfolios across fewer people, the bigger the potential problem becomes in the long run. The trick lies in engaging a larger number of individuals to drive their specific portfolios ahead.

Q: Lake District comprises 380 apartments. Is the scale challenging?

SA: The scale is indeed challenging because we have 13 towers (Phase I and II) and, of these, two towers are 11-storeyed, another is four-storeyed and the rest are seven-storeyed. The total area we have within Lake District is 5.5 lac square feet! The result is that we have a fair spatial spread to manage in terms of safety and house-keeping to start with.

SB: There are a number of amenities

also to be taken care of. Apart from a swimming pool, we have a gymnasium, club, auditorium, community hall and a 10,000 square feet lawn. Besides, a children's play area, temple and tennis court are across the lawn. We also provide facilities for indoor games (billiards, cards, carrom and table tennis). For committee members, the challenge is to maintain the entire property in top-class condition, or else we will be deluged by complaint calls on the intercom that '*Bhayaaji*, we are very disappointed with the maintenance standard'!

Q: What then is the key to a high maintenance standard?

SA: Whatever required specialised maintenance, was outsourced. For instance, a specialised agency manages the swimming pool, resulting in daily cleaning. The lawn, temple, club and gymnasium are cleaned almost every day by our captive housekeeping team. The auditorium and community hall are periodically maintained (especially after events). The point is that we are able to achieve all this for a maintenance charge of just Rs.2.25 per square feet, a portion of which is directed to a sinking fund to finance larger foreseen and unforeseen maintenance expenses.

Q: Can you shed some light on the sanitation and cleanliness system?

SB: Lake District employs its own house-keeping staff of about 30 people. When I say 'own', I mean we recruit through our contacts – four plumbers, four electricians, one accountant, one help-desk assistant, one supervisor (to monitor electro-mechanical equipment), one senior person for overall complex management, and a number of sweepers. Besides, there are attending staff members in the swimming pool and gym as well as housekeeping staff for elevators, staircases who also collect waste.

SA: The housekeeping staff for cleaning the staircases usually collects garbage from each apartment and transfers it to the centralised garbage bin, subsequently evacuated by the municipal van.

Q: You mentioned a 10,000 square feet garden. How do you maintain such a large facility?

SB: We spend around Rs.25,000 monthly in gardening, employing five gardeners. Besides, we have invested in water pipes, mowers and modern equipment for world-class maintenance. But the effort and cost have been worth it; our garden provides a countryside feel right in the heart of Kolkata.

Q: How is Lake District special?

SA: It would appear from this conversation that Lake District is special because of the kind of physical amenities and facilities that we provide. It goes beyond that however. The residents have a strong sense of community. For instance, the senior citizens within Lake District get together virtually each evening on the lawn. In most properties, the elderly could well be marginalised; at Lake District, they are involved stakeholders.

Q: That brings me to a relevant point – security.

SA: We have three gates at Lake District (one accessible all day, another opened twice a week and the third used in case of emergencies). We delegated the security function to a professional agency comprising the deployment of 35 officers (including 12 supervisors). There are two security members at each gate. The property comprises of intercom and CCTV facilities at the main gate and one camera in each block, as a result of which live monitoring is a continuous reality.

But at Lake District, we realise that there is just so much that we can do with technology. The other part of the security comprises an extensive documentation of domestic helps by virtue of their ID cards (voter IDs, PAN cards, Aadhar cards, ration cards, among others). Can this make a difference? I think it can. Before any domestic help thinks of doing anything that is not in line with acceptable behaviour or conduct, he or she will think twice. When you have a large complex comprising a number of individuals



View from the top at Lake District

who come in every day – I would put this estimate in excess of 500 including drivers – there is a strong need for institutionalised deterrence.

Besides, we have the usual safeguards like the intercom, six security guards on round-the-clock duty, two supervisors and a lady security guard (day duty only). Besides, we have three security guards at each tower providing round-the-clock security. The one index of our

commitment to safety is that we spend Rs.2.50 to 3 lac each month on security.

Q. What emergency provisions are in place at Lake District?

SA: We have protocols for most emergencies. Besides, even as we do not have any medical facilities within our complex, the fact that there are around 70 doctors among the residents, serves as a captive resource, should any emergency occur.

Safety provisions

Two power back-up generators available (equipment brand provides maintenance).

Fire control system provided with fire-proof light fittings and fire alarms; built in a manner to facilitate emergency evacuation.

Deep tube-well pump available, along with two water filter plants to purify contaminated water.

Corrigendum

In the real-ties issue October - December 2014, the article *What makes the Keventer Westwind one of the best maintained residential project in Kolkata?* mentioned 'Our rainwater harvesting system recharges water bodies and the ground water table.' In reality, the water body within the complex captures rainwater and acts as a natural recharger of the ground water table. The error is regretted.





Land area: 22 acres

Number of blocks: 38

Number of floors: G+15 and G+7

Number of apartments: 2,336

Completion time: June 2016 – December 2018 (in phases)

Location: BBT Road, Maheshtala

Unit sizes: 2-BHK (771 square feet to 973 square feet) and 3-BHK (1,236 square feet to 1,524 square feet)

Open space: 78%

Developer: Eden Real Estates Pvt. Ltd.

EDEN CITY

Maheshtala

THE DEVELOPER SPEAKS: With sprawling greens on three sides, Eden City Maheshtala is spread across 22 acres. Located in South-Western Kolkata, it is just 45 minutes from the central business district – Park Street and Esplanade. The promoters have gone a step ahead and planned an AC bus service that transports you from your doorstep to the nearest metro station.

Offering amenities like jogging tracks, clubhouse, swimming pool, multi-purpose court, library, home theatre, restaurants and convenience store, Eden City also takes care of the elderly – doctor's chamber, medicine shops and a pathology centre are located within the premises.

Eden City also offers facilities like 24x7 filtered drinking water, power backup, elevators and best-in-class security. You can unwind and stroll along the landscaped gardens, sit by one of the natural water bodies or indulge in sports, science or culture. Everything you need. Within reach.



freewheeling

MUDAR PATHERYA EXPLAINS HOW THE MANNER IN WHICH WE USE A SHARED RESOURCE IN OUR RESIDENTIAL BUILDING TELLS US ACTUALLY WHO WE ARE.

THE BIGGEST insight into who we are as an individual is derived from how we use the residential elevator.

I live in a standalone ten-storied building serviced by two small (box-like) elevators. One is a conventional manual lift and other an automatic (porous collapsible gates, both). The automatic lift is an obedient servant; press the button and it takes you to the desired floor. Since it is electronic in nature, neither can it be stopped midway nor its direction alterable at one's whim. The conventional lift is less of an obstinate beast; the person, going from the eighth floor to the ground floor, can stop to pick someone on the third floor and change her mind and manoeuvre the lift back to the eighth floor, collect her forgotten car keys and proceed to the ground floor. You might ask: if you have two elevators, where is the problem? Residents can always choose to embark on a different lift in case of a delay, right? The problem is that being a cost-conscious

building we use only one lift. The problems emerge when we use the manual; when the liftman is off for his lunch or has been asked to run some errand – suddenly pandemonium prevails.

This is what a typical hour entails: a fellow resident and you take the lift upwards; she is to get off on the sixth floor and you on the ninth. You stop the lift on the sixth floor so that she can exit. In walks someone into the building's foyer on the ground floor and starts demanding for the lift (*ghanti maar-maar ke*) and you feel terribly guilty that you are actually infringing on someone else's use of the lift when it turns out that the 'someone' is a domestic assistant working on the second floor who could have taken the stairs anyway.

Take the next instance: you take the lift to the ninth floor and before you can even open the collapsible door, someone has pressed the button on the second floor and off the lift goes to the second floor without your being able to get off. Obviously, the person on the second floor (who is monitoring the up and down arrow on the lift

panel while standing on the second floor) is in too much of a hurry to even let the passenger exit.

Take the third instance: the gentleman on the fourth is so notorious that even when the lift has gone on a simple drop journey (no waiting), he will ring for the lift so aggressively (non-stop 20 second ring) from the ground floor, that anyone hearing it would assume that the neighbouring country had declared war on India and this was a call to blackout and head for the bunker.

Take the fourth instance: you see the lift rising up from the ground floor towards your floor (it is easy to see through the shafts of conventional lifts) and you feel good that you would be able to get in. The lift stops at the eighth floor; you ring the lift bell hoping to draw attention that you are on a higher storey and need to be collected for the downward journey, but hell, the lift turns direction and goes down – only because the eighth floor resident would rather have the lift entirely to herself and couldn't care to go in the reverse direction to collect a passenger.

So we are deep in a dilemma. Should we ask domestic assistants to use the stairs? Should we ask domestic assistants to use the lift on the way up but walk down? Should we ask all domestic assistants from fifth floor downwards to walk their way down? Should we levy a lift tax that covers the cost of electricity of concurrently running the second lift? Should we wind down the *ghanti* attached the lift so that it creates less of a racket? Should we replace the manual lift with the electronic so that manual interventions are eliminated?

This morning I pasted a note on the building's notice board seeking a discussion. A meeting will be held to 'decide'.

I only hope that after much tea, samosas and bonhomie at the meeting, another meeting is not convened to 'decide'.

Mudar Patherya

If you have interesting feedback, send them to mudar@trisyscom.com.

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