

Time Out



Delhi

GET MORE OUT OF DELHI
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IT'S ALL YELLOW

*Anurag Kashyap boots
up his latest flick*

BLACK HUMOUR

*Dark days in a new novel by
Mohammed Hanif*

STORIES IN RED

*Remembering
Manjit Bawa*

Raise the roof

**Blueprints for Delhi's
new architecture**



breaking new ground

Delhi is in desperate need of a new architectural vision – and we’d be lying if we said that there’s a revolution in progress. But there are plenty of hidden examples that lay the foundation for taller ambitions. Romi Khosla Design Studio completed the Polyclinic for the Destitute near Old Delhi’s Lahori Gate this year. Wedged in next to a mosque, it’s a solid block of optimism. Painted crisp white, sunny yellow and blue, with large glass windows for cross-ventilation, it’s a sparkling antithesis to its surroundings – weavered buildings, their red and cream paint chapping. “We’d like to think of it as a small but significant input, our own cheerful little contribution to the urban cacophony,” said firm partner Marthand Khosla.

back to the drawing board

Karanjeet Kaur finds gems of architectural style buried in the heap of Delhi's new construction.

Earlier this year, when the Municipal Corporation of Delhi shifted shop to a tower overlooking the Ramlila Maidan, it was probably hoping that a change in headquarters would mean a change of image. In height, the MCD building vies with the DDA tower for the distinction of being the tallest in the capital. But for its look, it turned to the template of corporate offices in Gurgaon and Noida. Nothing spells professionalism and success like alucobond and glass.

The two materials are far from popular, however, with architects and urban planners in Delhi. The corporate façades created with glass and alucobond are seen as just the latest blind misstep away from Delhi's last moment of architectural greatness. At best, that was 40 years ago; at worst, a few hundred. Since the '80s, an aspirational urgency, a craving to look like the world, and an availability of new materials have drenched Delhi's residential enclaves with what Gautam Bhatia famously called "Punjabi Baroque". Since the last decade, our commercial and institutional architecture have gone the way of Faridabad Futurism.

Appropriately, the challenge of the last 20 years has begun with the market. "Architecturally, one of the problems we're facing is so

many materials are accessible, so they're used indiscriminately," said architect and urban planner AG Krishna Menon. "All these spectacular, eye-catching buildings in Gurgaon – they're really just like buildings with burqas. It's usually shoddy construction, covered with fancy material from the market. You can make a mess inside, and put a burqa around it. A student can do it." Like the keekar trees that cover the Ridge, alucobond is an especially resented invasive species. "We're finding more and more the civilisational debris from the West coming into our market, and it provides a new kind of aesthetic, which people equate with progress and 'IT'," said KT Ravindran, the Head of Urban Design at the School of Planning and Architecture. Yet in



Clean canteen Romi Khosla Design Studio's Castro Café at Jamia Millia Islamia University has an open design and easy-to-maintain fixtures