

# REBUILDING THE WORLD

The Covid-19 pandemic has transformed the way we live, but is it also going to change the way we build and design in the future? Architects weigh in

By Ridhi Kale

## THE CAPSULE CURE

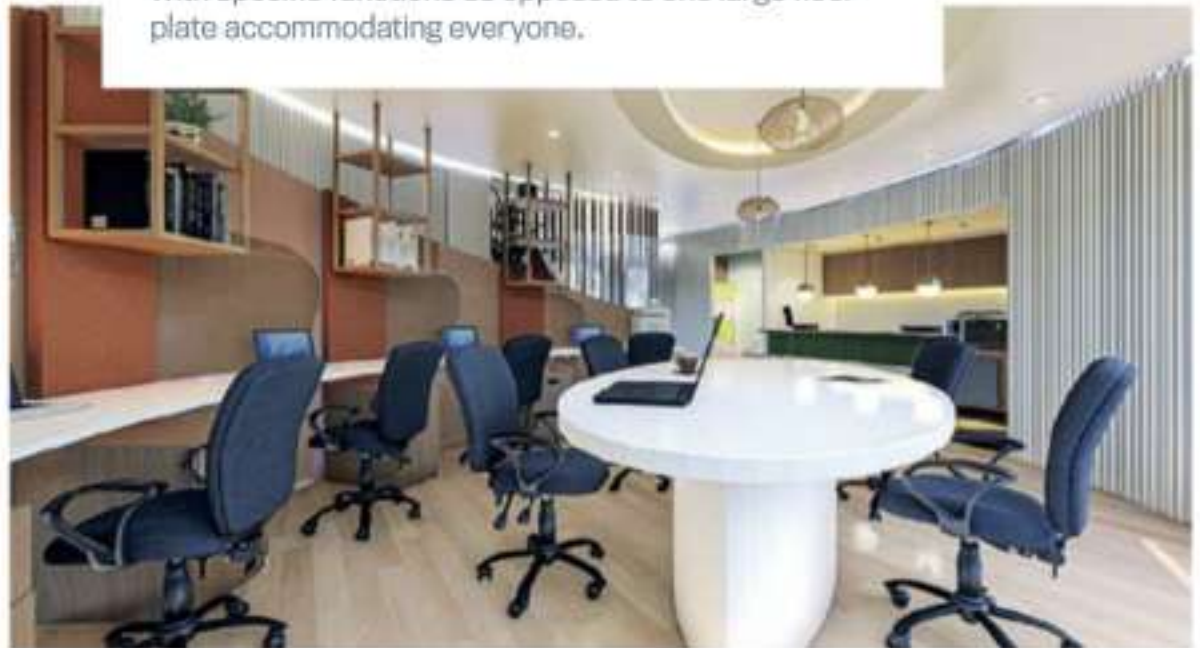
The COVID-19 crisis has resulted in a renewed distrust of public transport in its existing form. That's where 'Capsule for Automated Transit' (CAT) comes in. "CAT, a prototype personal rapid transit, features automated pod vehicles operating on a network of specially built automated guide-ways (on ground/ elevated). CAT moves small groups (one to four commuters) in AI automated pods on fixed guide-ways that are arranged in an extensive network topology," says Akshat Bhatt, principal architect, Architecture Discipline, a multi-disciplinary design studio. The perks of CAT are that commuters can board a capsule immediately upon arriving at a station and move nonstop toward their destination.



ARCHITECTURE DISCIPLINE

## BACK TO WORK

Since offices have been hit the hardest, the need for making them safe for employees has become paramount. "The most popular intervention is the '6 ft model', where a 6 ft distance is maintained between employees, mostly by layout rearrangement," says Meena Murthy Kakkar, design head and partner, Envisage, an interior and architecture firm. The pandemic has also led companies to opt for smaller but multiple-satellite offices with specific functions as opposed to one large floor plate accommodating everyone.



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## ON BRAND

It's not just offices that are using technology to solve problems caused by the pandemic. Physical stores are transitioning from being mere transactional spaces to becoming 'billboards' for brands. "With the rise in augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) technology, customers now seek more engaging, immersive experiences, which tell a story and help cement the relationship between the customer and the brand," says Pankhuri Goel, principal, Studio Lotus, a multi-disciplinary architecture and interior design firm. As per Goel, for a physical store, to drive better engagement with its target audience, its design should take into account the brand narrative and its expression within the space.



## SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS

Today, there is a need to inhabit open, semi-permeable spaces. "We must redefine adaptive comfort—the principle that people experience indoor conditions differently," says Sachin Rastogi, founding director and principal, ZED Lab, an interior design studio specialising in net zero energy buildings. He uses the Cantilever House in Ghaziabad by ZED as an example: "A series of connected living spaces have been planned to create a home that can be brought to life through the day. The water court serves as a heat sink to lower temperature and bring in daylight, reducing the need for artificial lighting and air-conditioning."



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## SMART NEIGHBOURHOODS

It will not suffice to simply change the architecture of the home, hospital and workplace. According to Rahul Kadri, partner and principal architect, IMK Architects, an architecture firm known for urban planning, one solution is to revise urban policies. "We need to work on developing high-density, mixed-use neighbourhoods where one could access all essentials within a 500-metre radius from the doorstep. We need self-sufficient units with all public facilities and amenities available locally—units that could be administered with ease and where inhabitants can walk or cycle to work, to school, to shop and to play," says Kadri.

## HEALTHCARE FOR ALL

The pandemic has forced us to convert stadiums, hotels and many such existing structures into makeshift hospitals to sustain the rapid surge of patients. This made KNS Architects come up with a unique architectural solution—shipping containers. "These Disaster Management Healthcare Units (DMHUs) make the most of renewable solar energy by using solar panels on their roofs for power generation as well as water heating" says Kanhai Gandhi, co-founder and principal architect, KNS. "The design flexibility also allows one to create private wards and rooms. The design can cater to every strata of society."

## LEAVING THE CITY BEHIND

*Architects are freeing homes from the urban bustle*



## SOUTHERN SPLENDOUR

Located at an altitude of 1,850 metres above sea level, this home by Studio Lotus lies in the blue mountains of the Nilgiris and is embedded within lush green estates of tea and coffee, fruit orchards and botanical gardens. The design approach aims at minimising damage to the site's ecology.



## GOAN FLURRY

The Si-Oul project is the brainchild of Kriss Real Estate. They teamed up with SAV Architecture to come up with a trio of residences—Sol, Lua and Terra—in Goa's quaint village of Siolim. The homes are inspired by diverse design heuristics, including the Bauhaus movement and the works of Geoffrey Bawa.



## THE HILLS ARE ALIVE

For architect Gautam Bhatia of Gautam Bhatia Navin Gupta Architects, a solution to pollution, overcrowding, pandemic and lockdown was creating a home in the hills, surrounded by nature. Located at an altitude of 3,400 ft in Uttarakhand's Nalni Village is Nature's Homestead, a set of 12 unique homes that offer both privacy and community.