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Finding a 'dream' home for the family is a goal almost every individual aims to realise during his or her lifetime. Whether it is for a sense of security, as a symbol of achievement, or the simple desire to have a place where you can be yourself, this quest is a perennial one. For the real estate market, it means identifying how this need can be met in the most contemporary form. If the latest luxury projects are any indication, buyers are being intrigued by integrated home automation solutions, design stamps from international architects and designers, spectacular landscape design, and some more. "Luxury is a relative term. What is probably most sought-after in today's market is an aspirational lifestyle. Therefore, whilst all the 'traditional' luxuries are now seen as standard, one has to go beyond the norm," says Tushad Dubash, director, Duville Estates.

Prospective home buyers are scouting for modern buildings with an "international feel". In his experience, Dubash has seen that buyers are willing to spend on a quality product and "they rightly understand that these are the long-term aspects which will bode well for them as well as the value of their property." For long, prominent locations and accessibility to leading business and retail hubs have been a determining factor in luxury projects, but now there is much more that is being sought after. "While bespoke residences and the overall lifestyle experience serve to define the segment, the concept of 'Green luxury living' - resource-conscious, environmentally-sensitive and, yet, indulgent homes - is becoming increasingly popular," mentions Jaimin Desai, head - Design and Sustainability, Mahindra Lifespace Developers. Luxury means different things to different people and is fluid across segments, says Anubhav Gupta, chief design officer, business head - Vikhroli, head - CSR Sustainability, Godrej Properties. "For us, luxury is a state of design and experience. From a design perspective, we think out-of-the-box in preserving past legacy, enhancing present thinking and anticipating future trends of what luxury may encompass."

He has found that customers now have a renewed sense of the qualitative aspects of residential planning, wherein integration of daylight and Green features that contribute to better health and air quality is considered paramount - aspects that are redefining luxury. It's not about packing a project with 'world-class' amenities - be it parks, spas and international-designer-landscape, the objective is to create an experience. "At Isprava, luxury means incredible and completely thought-through experiences for our customers," states Nibhrant Shall, founder and CEO, Isprava. "It is about going above and beyond, to make life easy for the customer. It is more than just comfort, it is about revolutionising the way one looks at luxury living - both in India and internationally. Luxury housing projects, today, demand transparency, clean land titles, integrity, convenience, comfort and exquisite as well as unique projects being delivered on or before time." In this conversation, architect Anupam De, principal, Anupam De Associates, believes it is important to consider the well-being of the individual as a crucial 'luxury' parameter.

Well-being can be socio-economic conditions. Simple things like natural light could contribute to the mood of the person. Space planning is also one of the parameters. In our metro cities, travel is a big concern - so pack in all amenities within the project, so that they don't have to travel. But the larger picture is, bigger peripherals which is today absent in the metropolis," he shares. With brands competing with each other to provide different and unique amenities, real estate has redefined the concept of luxury by setting new benchmarks like swimming pool balconies, game and theatre rooms, spa bathrooms, rooftop terraces, colonnades and landscaped gardens - points out a Lodha spokesperson. Even in these aspects, there are revisions and upgrades taking place. Projects are no longer considering landscaping as a stand-alone feature, but the possibility of creating an entire natural ecosystem - that most urban dwellers crave. The Park by Lodha is expected to incorporate a butterfly garden, an organic farm, a reflexology garden and lotus pond, GO LOCAL OR INTERNATIONAL? Charles Correa gave us Kanchenjunga that stands as an iconic structure - a contextual, luxury project like no other. It wasn't the location that determined its luxury, nor the amenities; it is the unique design that allows it to still stand tall.

We asked our real estate experts if their faith in Indian architects has diminished now, to deliver such luxury projects? Jaimin Desai of Mahindra Lifespaces states, "The ideologies in modern architecture post-independence and post-millennium have seen a sea change. In the 70s and 80s, pre-liberalisation era, there was an intense search for an indigenous Indian identity and language amongst architects. However, with the strong blowing winds of globalisation, Indian architecture is now part of the global stage. I do not see Indian architects and international architects being part of two separate domains. Architecture, for

India, has truly become without borders - where cross country collaborations are pushing the envelope of good design and setting new trends with each project." Pointing out current trendsetters, Nibhrant Shah of Isprava, comments, "The faith in Indian architects has not diminished at all. After Charles Correa, we have architects like Architecture Brio, ADRG, Malik Architecture and many more who are commendable. Luxury is always about the relationship between the users and the end product." Elaborating on the selection process, Anubhav Gupta of Godrej Properties, explains, "We are currently partnering with well-known firms, both in India and globally, across design disciplines.

We typically spend a fair amount of time matching the right consultants with the right project. It is essential to get the creative right each time, to deliver value for our customers. We have a rigorous selection and interview process by invitation only' to shortlisted specialised firms. Previously delivered work of high quality; a project-specific approach note/pitch; availability of partners/owners to consult on the project; the particular design team and skill sets available; ability to quickly deliver per most efficient time, cost and quality parameters - all lead to our decision for making a suitable appointment. All intellectual design property produced is co-created and co-owned between GPL Design Studio and our partners. In the recent past, we have collaborated with the following firms: SOM, Pelli Clarke Pelli, Sasaki Associates, Nikken Sekkei, Perkins Eastman, Woods Bagot, Broadway Malyan, Lotus, RSP Architects, UAW, DADA Partners and AECOM, among others." Some may think there needs to be legislation to prevent excess international bids, but ultimately what a consumer wants will dictate everything - says architect Anupam De.

A consumer will dictate to the developer what he wants, the developer will see the aspirational needs of the consumer and then satisfy by choosing an international/ Indian architect. Any legislation won't change this. In the Middle East, the regulation for an international architect is to set up an office with a requisite number of staff to do a project of this size. There are no such regulations in India. It's a market-driven scenario." SUSTAINABLE LUXURY According to a recent research report, more than 20% of emerging luxury consumers in Lidia, USA, UK, UAE and China are keen on sustainable or eco-friendly homes, points out Desai. Mahindra Lifespaces wants to pursue Green design and make it a foundation of all their residential projects, including those in the luxury segment - namely Luminare in Gurgaon, L'Artista in Pune and The Serenes in Alibaug. "For example, the design elements of Luminare include energy-efficient walls and roofs; low-flow fixtures and STP-treated water; solar water heating systems; eco-friendly air-conditioning; and parking with electric charging facility - all of which contribute to substantial reduction in electricity and water consumption by the project," explains Desai. Duville Estates' newest project, Riverdale located at Kharadi, Pune, is also going the Green route, obtaining IGBC Gold pre-certification. "Solar power generation is used to supply electricity to common areas which, whilst reducing the cost of electricity, also ensures the project is illuminated," explains Dubash. Eco-friendly waste disposal; water treatment systems to recycle waste water; non-smoking areas to encourage a healthier lifestyle; and spaces designed with consideration for the differently-abled, are other benchmarks of this project.

Building a Green project is just one small step, the real test comes in post-occupancy - something that needs to be critiqued. "The biggest challenge in all the mega projects is the life cycle cost of the buildings and how they are going to be run," believes architect De. "Maintenance cost of these buildings are going to skyrocket. With all the amenities that you are giving, there is an added facility maintenance cost, which will surely hit the pockets. When you can get efficiency in those, it will HOSPITALITY MEETS RESIDENCE Creating an experience that is unique to the residential scene, Four Seasons Private Residences bring the luxury of a Four Seasons hotel or resort into a home. Expected to be the city's most exclusive new address and a flawless setting for elegant living, it is nestled right next to the Four Seasons Hotel in Worli, Mumbai. From single floor residences, North and South duplexes, garden duplexes and penthouses, this extremely luxurious property will have secure private entry lobbies with keyed elevator access. Four Seasons Private Residences Mumbai have on offer some of the largest floor areas and room sizes in the city. In the duplexes, families will enjoy the spaciousness of multiple living areas with the main living and dining areas sprawling over 1,600sq-ft. Bedrooms are generously sized in all residences, with master bedrooms measuring up to 650sq-ft, and the option of a second master bedroom catering to modern-day multi-generational living. Spacious his and hers walk-in closets will lead into elegant five-fixture master bathrooms.

The interior design palettes are carefully selected by Yabu Pushelberg, an international design firm with studios in Toronto and SoHo, New York, founded in 1980 by Glenn Pushelberg and George Yabu. The project is being undertaken by Provenance Land, India's first bespoke lifestyle developer. The group has built five greenfield hospitality projects in partnership with Hyatt International and Four Seasons Hotels & Resorts. This is the first-of-its-kind Hotel Branded Real Estate development to be associated with an international luxury hospitality brand in Mumbai. household to make living comfortable, convenient, healthy and sustainable. "With advanced security, features such as surveillance cameras, locking systems, fire detection and lighting systems; home automation is considered an appropriate solution to keep homes safe. Therefore, it is essential to ensure projects are equipped with state-of-the-art security, adding to the end users' comfort," believes Gaurav Sawhney, president - Sales, Piramal Realty. Architect Anand Shanna, founder and principal, Design Forum International, too, reiterates that automation tools are great for implementing security and convenience. "Smart homes add to the luxury quotient of a residence - wherein technology, lighting controls, etc., also are used to enhance the ambience while saving energy," he says. With the introduction of automation in residential spaces, the processes have been expedited. The ability to control light, sound and facilities around a residential space, at the tap or touch of a button, is the greatest luxury that a home-owner could have.

The Lodha spokesperson opines that intelligent homes are becoming a reality that end-users want, to raise the bar of their life style. But it's not just about comfort and convenience; the need for better security

measures is truly driving this trend. "Your home becomes your castle offering remote surveillance, central locking and notification of activities in real time, even when you are away from home," explains the spokesperson. Energy efficiency is another desirable goal in the endeavour to provide luxurious, automated homes. LOCATION LOCATION LOCATION While location will remain a key factor for luxury development, there is also a greater demand for a place that connects with nature, offers calm and serene surroundings - an environment that facilitates well-being. "In the urban milieu, design inspira- PROJECTS TO WATCH OUT FOR Exquisite by Oberoi Realty consists of three towers of about 50 storeys each, comprising 3BHK apartments and exclusive 5BHK duplexes and penthouses. The duplexes are perched high above at the 46th floor and provide an expansive living-room deck, with larger-than-life view of the greenest patch of Mumbai - Aarey. The project has been designed in a unique architectural style where triangular towers ensure maximised space usage and views.

Another distinctive quality of Exquisite is the double-glazed windows which provide constant source of natural light and minimise ambient noise as compared to traditional windows. Riverdale Residences-I by Duville Estates has three exclusive towers of 3BHK apartments located on the banks of the Mulla Mutha River with unobstructed river and panoramic city views. It is designed by Upton-Hansen Architects, London, "an international firm of architects headed by a team that has worked with the legendary Norman Foster"; principal architects-KIPA Architects; Structural Engineers- JW Consultancy and Landscape Architects- Waho; with Shapoor ji Pallonji, Master Planning & Designing as the main contractors.

Villa Capella by Isprava, located at Parra, Goa, is fully furnished with antique furniture and artefacts sourced from palaces and mansions in India and Europe. With a plot size of 600sq-m, the villa occupies 450sq-m and comprises four en suite bedrooms, swimming pool, sit-out, large terrace, storage room, utility room, separate male and female staff quarters, and a lavish living and dining room. Being a destination address, it offers free one-year property management services. Luminal e by Mahindra Lifespaces at Gurgaon is IGBC Gold pre-certified and offers each residence a corner apartment, with its own private elevator lobby and a unique wrap-around balcony offering an unobstructed view of the Aravallis on one side and the cityscape on the other. An urban river, state-of-the-art clubhouse, gym, squash court, infinity pool and amphitheatre add to the experience for residents. L'Artista, Pune, offers 3-4 BHK art-inspired, bespoke residences, with only two spacious and stylish apartments on each floor.

Designed by the London/ Mumbai-based studio SAV, it is architecturally inspired by the trees of Pune's gardens and their intricate branching network. In keeping with Mahindra Lifespaces' focus on design integrated with sustainability, L'Artista is also responsible towards the environment; rainwater harvesting, top-soil preservation, alternative building materials and health-friendly interiors - ensuring the project is truly in harmony with nature. New Cuffe Parade by Lodha boasts a 75,000sq-ft clubhouse, the largest in India; and is the only development in Mumbai to house designer residences by two world-famous interior designers- Philippe Starck and Kelly Hoppen. The 15acres of open space is three times the size of Wankhede Grounds, a rarity in Mumbai. Residences are detached from each other, each naturally ventilated with three sides open for healthy air circulation and sunlight. Select towers have vertical gardens on every floor all the way up, and a central atrium for fresh air and sunlight. There are private garden residences in every tower, complete with a Frangipani tree.

The development has multi-utility greens and gardens in the form of a greenhouse coming up, which will double up as a tea shack. Also on the anvil is an organic farm and an herb garden. tion must come from acknowledging not only the immediate, but the larger context of what we build. A design must respond to site, site conditions, the city fabric, the socio-cultural situation and the complexities of identity in the modern-day world. These days, most of the luxury residences are being moved away from the city chaos - to the countryside; allowing for a better habitat," states architect Sharma. These days, luxury homes are also typically second homes, or intended for end-use purposes. "For the most part, second home purchases comprise luxury homes for periodic retreats away from core city areas, with the main purpose being to relax and rejuvenate. These second home buyers seek large, comfortable spaces, interesting facades and themes, and amenities that enable leisurely weekend getaways amidst scenic, natural surroundings," says Desai. These homes are, therefore, usually located away from core urban areas, towards the outskirts of the city or in popular weekend destinations. CHANGES AND IMPROVEMENTS "Development is our right.

But again, sustainable development is our responsibility," asserts Gupta, when questioned about improvements and changes the real estate sector needs to witness. "In cities, especially Mumbai, infrastructure is severely burdened, complex ownership/land tenure have complicated matters for redevelopment, the building permissions process is tedious and fraught with unanticipated delays impacting the economic viability of most projects - political will and civic pride have limited priority. In such a hostile environment, large-scale redevelopment remains a challenging proposition," he explains. The trick will be in formulating viable mechanisms to share responsibility and accountability in implementing solutions.

From an architect's perspective, this proves to be a massive hurdle too. "Each state has its by-laws. If an architect has to practice in different states, he has to know about the latest developments in those particular states. Each state is revising their development plans. For me, this is the biggest challenge to balance and still keep the project running," shares De. Since the approval process is tedious and time consuming, Sawhney suggests, "Using innovative construction techniques should be one of the key focus areas in the real estate projects, in order to meet the ever-increasing and changing customer needs and requirements." A key detriment in unlocking the true potential of luxury projects is that there can be an over-emphasis on the builder's requirements as opposed to that of the end users.

"It is mainly the commercials that are looked at, while the end-users' requirements cannot be taken into consideration if builders are looking to maximise their profits as much as they can," warns Shall. "At Isprava, we are re-defining luxury real estate by only catering to our end-users' needs while keeping in mind the aesthetics of the home as well."

Manju Yagnik, vice-chairperson, Nahar Group, believes that we need to focus on growing vertically now - "so there are more open spaces, wider infrastructure and roads, better connectivity and educational spaces." She also feels it is important to have a local expert on board, especially for landscapes. "Landscaping from Europe and Singapore, has brought a major change, but it is not practical if sustainability, maintenance or tropical growth are not considered," she adds. The development sector cannot ignore the environment concerns in their race towards productivity and profitability, with energy consumption and emissions cycles increasing, "in fact, for a country that is urbanising as rapidly as India, with a significant part of its cityscapes yet to be built, Green homes offer many opportunities to achieve widespread energy savings while reducing costs and emissions. The luxury homes segment, in particular, offers scope to implement innovative, environment-friendly ideas and initiatives that might be ahead of the curve," feels Desai.

At Mahindra Lifespaces, our sustainability journey is driven by our focus on positively impacting the environment and standing tall and offering residents a panoramic view of the sea, Indiabulls' upcoming project is a residential glass house like no other. "In the Indian architectural context, users or clients can't experience or enjoy the expanse of glass from floor to ceiling - those residences aren't common as yet. In a way, our project scores here. The landscape, structure, amenities and concierge services would be reminiscent of New York or Chicago architecture; concepts that predominantly highlight the glitz and glamour quotient along with functional requirements. However, along with glamour and sheen of glass, for Indian customers, privacy is an important feature that is one of the highlights of this project," states Sukhiya Kulkarni, VP- Engineering & Design (Indiabulls Real Estate). Architect Anupam De, principal, Anupam De Associates, desired a particular shade of blue which didn't exist in the then portfolio of Saint-Gobain Glass India. The team at Saint-Gobain Glass India developed a new product in SGG Nano series to meet the architect's vision. The product comes with advanced solar control and thermal insulation, allowing solar and thermal benefits at one go, providing inhabitants all-year comfort. With optimum light transmission, the views are clear with reduced glare, taking the luxury quotient sky-high. The energy efficiency and optimum day lighting are well aligned with the project's vision of sustainable design. "This is one of the select cases where all three of us - the builder, the promoter and the glass maker - collaborated for a world-class residence and a truly luxurious landmark of the skyline of Mumbai," shares Kulkarni. The communities surrounding our developments, while also ensuring profitable growth and adequate returns to stakeholders. As one of the first companies in India to launch the Green homes movement, today all our developments incorporate Green architecture and a sustainable supply chain. Our first affordable housing project in India -

Happiest, Avadi - has recently been awarded India's first IGBC Platinum certification J for Green Affordable Housing. "We have partnered with TERI to drive research on Green buildings and materials specific to Indian climate zones, and are a founding member of the Sustainable Housing Leadership Consortium - a CEO-led think tank that aims to mainstream Green buildings in the country," adds Desai. The widespread adoption of resource-conscious design, development and building operations can ensure an equitable and inclusive future for our cities and towns. But it is also important to note that the cost of good design cannot come cheap. "The common man must understand the value of good architecture and design - and must recognise the consequence of an architect on board. This change of thought will bring about a change in our built environment," hopes Sharma. People, today, have higher aspirations compared to the previous generation, says the Lodhia spokesperson.

The change in mindset of the second generation of customers is a positive force leading to the escalation in this trend. Even though the first-generation entrepreneurs made money, they were reluctant to spend on luxury housing - but this generation believes that luxury must be enjoyed. After seeing the success of their parents, the second generation of consumers is ready to take the standard of living to the next level, wanting to enjoy their success and even inspiring their parents. As an architect, De cautions that luxury projects shouldn't be associated simply with a high-priced market. "It should talk of the space that is available, in context of the city, and how it can enhance the lifestyle of a person who resides in that project." Luxury needs to be more concerned with providing an experience rather than multiple amenities, such that it can contribute to the holistic well-being of a person.

