



NEW COURTS BLOCK AT DELHI HIGH COURT NEW DELHI

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The Delhi High Court, New Courts Complex

As India marches forward as a vibrant democracy and strives to find a place amongst the comity of Great nations, it must ensure for its citizens, social and economic equity.

- Its institutions must grow and rise to the complex challenges of a large and diverse nation.
- It must ensure that non - violence and civil discourse are the prime tools for dispute resolution.
- It must ensure that the justice system is sovereign, fair and applies firmly, equally and expeditiously to all and reaffirm the supremacy of righteousness and fair play.
- It must ensure that the capacity of adjudication is upscale to meet the growing and expansive needs of India to ensure social justice, civil justice, and gender justice is real for all alike

In keeping with these principles, The Delhi high court embarked on an ambitious plan in 2013 to increase capacity by 40 percent in four years and 60 percent by 2020. A broad master plan was created that envisioned a combination of redevelopment, building afresh on unbuilt land and reallocation of functions within the existing built form. The architects were cognizant of the special context in which the High Court is sited, in the heart of Lutyens Delhi, an adjunct to Sher-Shah's vintage – khair-ul-manzil and set aside a fairly modern high court building designed by architect Benjamin in the 1970s. The task was to somehow create a visual vocabulary that could bridge 500 years of discordance with a harmonious note. Architecture is the art of handling complexity and Contradictions, and quite clearly the project was about capacity up-gradation with contextual reference. The architect Goonmeet Singh Chauhan's (T.C.S Architects) thoughts are captured thus:



expression must be reverend to context, both of Lutyens Delhi and 'The Delhi High Court. Continuity of visual theme must be blended skillfully with the newness of the possibility that contemporary materials and technology have to offer. The pace of change that is reflected though must be slow. Continuum must win over revolutionary change, much like a modern avatar of the old order."

The dominant visual character of the existing High Court is defined by a solid horizontal mass at the second-floor level, supported on eight rectangular columns and a pattern of vertical ribs in stone on the lower two floors that are recessed behind the imposing rectangular colonnade.

The new blocks mimic this character and also uses a similar high podium with grand steps, and waterscape in the foreground.

The material palette, however, shifts from painting to a combination of sandblasted Dholpur stone and Red Agra stone to blend with the NGMA (National Gallery of Modern Art) that sits on the adjacent spot. Even the sizes, pattern and texture of the stone follow a similar meter & rhythm. The upper two floors recede in a stepped manner and the top of the building is crowned with a hovering pergola that cantilevers up to 6m, is supported on a series of tall square columns and creates a distinctive silhouette that resembles the silhouette of Jaipur house with its Rajasthan inspired eaves (chajjas). Their cantilevers have a floating horizontal character and accomplish the twin objectives of creating a play of light and shade with building and also play along its scale.

While the view from Sher Shah Suri road gives the impression of a very Austenesque character, when seen from within the campus, it marries beautifully with the rectilinear character of the existing high court building.

As one walks up closer, however, another interesting facet gets revealed. The landscape and especially the flooring in random cobblestone and landscape embellishments draw heavily in terms of symbolism from sher – shah's khair-ul-manzil almost as if this structure was made atop a relic. The façade also uses a geometric pattern on some vertical stone panels that bind it with its historic context.

The courtrooms are the engines of the judicial infrastructure and so it was decided to add a new block – referred to as 'C' blocks as an annex, so that the existing and adjacent new block could function as a single entity, allowing easy movement of people and documents between two.

The new 'C' block accommodates 15 courtrooms across four floors and 9 Registrars' Courts on the ground floor. 16 new chambers for Judges and 9 new chambers for Junior



for lady members have also been provisioned.

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