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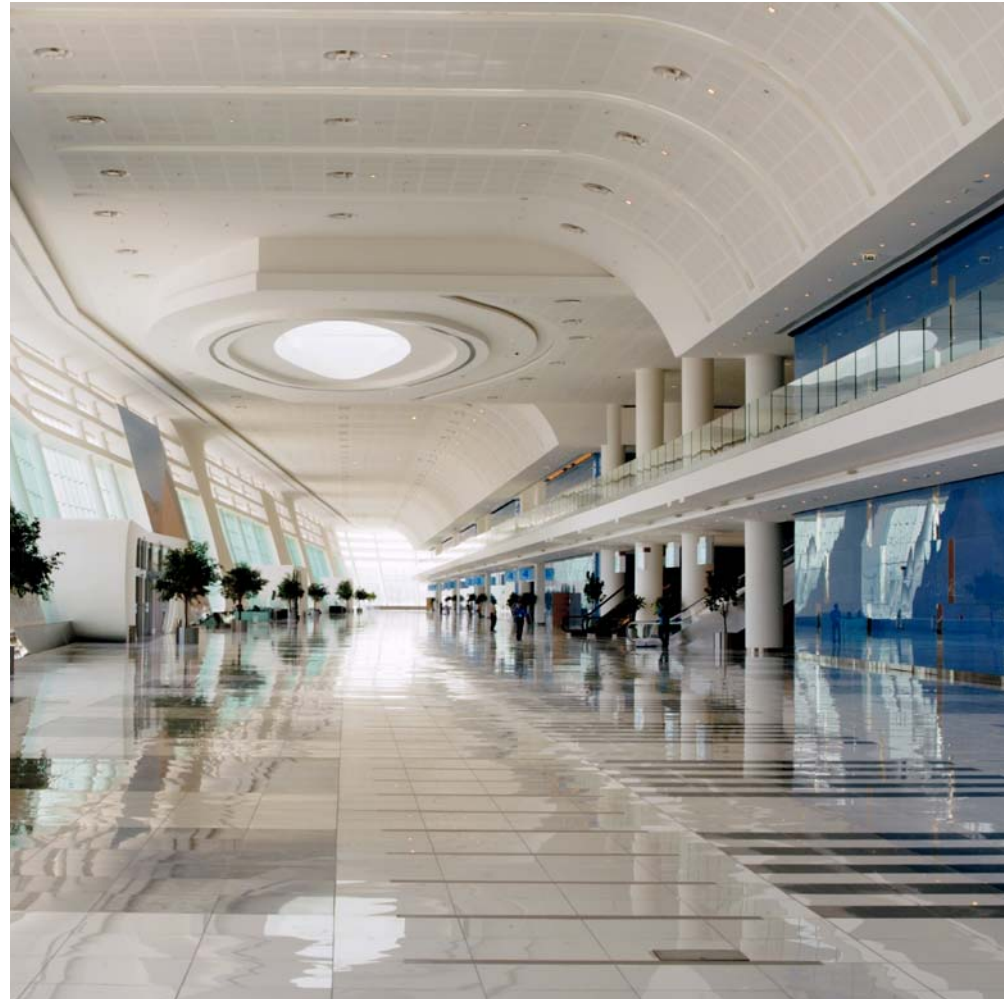
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Architecture: Malik Architecture

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Gypsum ceilings for convention centres

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Anutone ceilings, in every possible format and finish, fulfil an architect's needs for form and function - aesthetics, performance, budget - transforming commercial interiors into great spaces that ensure users remain inspired!

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INTERIORS

BODY N BEAUTY
DESIGN(ED) FOR LIFE

The tenets of architectural design have changed tremendously in the last few years, thanks to technology advances, and, along with them the changing mindsets in tune with the demands of time (now to be read as 'environment'). Enlightened concepts – bold and innovative designs, enriched products and systems, and whole new ways of living - have come to shape human endeavour. The designs are often worlds of wonder. However, are all the fanciful designs safe for human life? Particularly when it comes to interior design it's as intriguing a poser as it can get. If not, where and why some new age designs are going awry?

Just a few weeks ago, when a supposedly modern cineplex in the Indian national capital region (NCR) suffered a major fire mishap, it raised the question of safety of design – more than the error in human handling – of the structure. Ironically, it came close to reliving what went down into the annals of Indian entertainment history as the worst ever disaster- the *Uphaar* Tragedy.

When the infamous *Uphaar* tragedy unfolded 13 years ago in the same

NCR, notwithstanding the primary cause(s) of the mishap, most people in the design industry then opined that the typical way the cinema was designed also contributed to the



Bhavanashi Ramakrishna

gravity of the disaster. That the products, systems and methods adopted for cinema design and construction rendered life safety vulnerable, they felt. Considering the 'age' during which the cinema was designed, and the methodologies/ systems that were in practice, the assumption was convincing. However, a new public entertainment venue, with a modern design package in place, almost reliving that horror was intriguing for many.

There had been couple of other instances too in the recent weeks that raised the safety question in public spaces. While it was an intrigue to many, there was consensus amongst design experts that though the products used were of top quality with international safety credentials, the systems employed in design were not, and that rendered them non-protective against mishaps.

In fact, design experts often rue that most project teams consider and value the fire-rating (FR) credentials of only the products and give a blissful

omission to the systems with which the products are used- say the frames, joint fillers, accessories. Often the product is fire-rated but the economising efforts of the project teams make the supporting systems low-quality local or not fire-rated as a result of which neither the product nor the system performs in case of mishap.

Notwithstanding furnishings like seating, flooring, etc. which are vulnerable to fire, walls and ceilings play an indispensable role in protecting life and property against fire – or such other mishap – for, they play host to electrical wiring, HVAC ducting and other circuitry. If these two important interior surface components are given due importance as to their safety against mishaps, the venues are almost foolproof all the time.

A case in point can be Salon Slats, or Snazz Designpanels, or Serge Series that come in woods, gypsum and metals respectively. All of them come with highest European and quality norms and tested to most stringent safety standards. The fire-rated variants of these products might cost some 25 per cent extra in comparison to the non fire-rated but that is the demarcating line between one's concern for safety and otherwise.

Similarly, the support systems. In fact, the support systems are what become casualties of budgetary concerns. Suspension systems for ceiling solutions such as Skelet Uno or Skelet Trellis come with lab-certified quality norms and safety standards that safeguard the space against not only eventualities but also seasonal impacts. That they are non-combustible, rust-proof, age-resistant, and seismic-proof, ensures safety to life and property against any eventuality. They also box the



services such as HVAC, lighting, and other plenum accessories more securely than conventional systems, hence, they are better in preventing any damage to the system from spreading to the interiors. What's more, they come in many design variants and provide for an exposed plenum that allows aesthetics with easy maintenance too.

Similar are, of course, the wall supporting systems. A techno-commercial system solution like Strut provides both body and beauty to the interior surface. Pioneered and popularised by Bengaluru-based Anutone as KEN technology, Strut brings to the walled surface three important features:

- Knurling - fully dot knurled for better strength, enhanced fastener grip
- Edging - full seaming of sharp edges for more strength, straight line finish, safety

- Notching - V-notch sightline for more strength and precise joints

With the Strut in place, apart from strength the project gets improved fire resistance – the much needed ingredient in today's design specs – and superior acoustic performance.

Arguably, strong supporting system is as indispensable as strong product, if not more important. For, the risk of going for cheaper alternative would befall not on the project team but the space owners, and the gullible endusers of the given time. It is therefore, necessary that the project teams get sensitised to the safety requirements of the modern day living – particularly in these times of terror and unforeseen threats – and adopt safety systems of space design.

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