

HT

Café



Plug
& Play

Multitask Master

The Nokia N95 does have a lot of talents and abilities. Check out the full review.

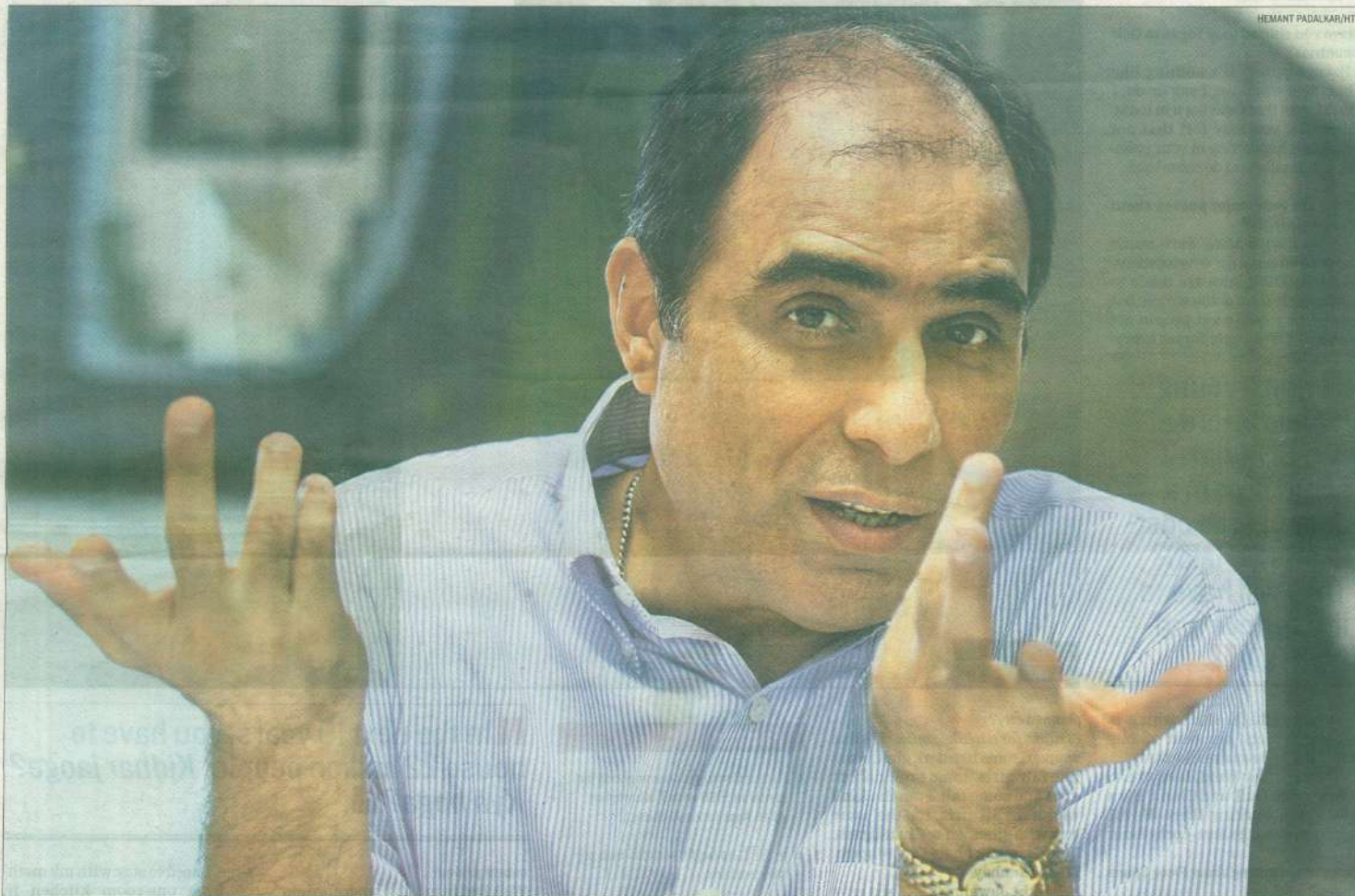
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Not with my boyfriend

Why is Dia Mirza avoiding Kunal Kapoor these days? **page 6**

IT'S ALL THERE.. every day, the city's sparkle, sizzle, sauce and surprises galore



HEMANT PADALKAR/HT

'WHY DON'T POLITICIANS PAY FOR A HOUSE?'

HE'S OFTEN ACCUSED OF BEING OUTSPOKEN..

to the point of being brash. And yet, his earnestness is evident as he peers into the blueprints of the next architectural marvel in Dubai sprawled on the table. **Hafeez Contractor** unwinds with **Amita Amin-Shinde** on his bricks and cement fetish, his FSI-peeves and the frustration of working in a restricted environment.

What does it take to create a cross-section of architecture like you have done?

An open mind. I want to provide services to everyone. God has given me the resources to do a rich man's house, a poor man's house. So why shouldn't I make the most of that opportunity? You should be able to multi-task.

Does the bigness of a project give you a thrill?

No, not necessarily. And it need not be a project at all..it may be a thought that I'm trying to capture. We were working on this project in China — the blueprint of the building we drew was like a mound..unfortunately it got shelved. Then we were doing a building for Infosys in Mysore — this one didn't get through because Mr Narayan Murthy thought the building was like a snake. The Dubai project is a 120-storey building. But like I said, it's the thought that thrills me, not the size.

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'I got married at the age of 41.. not because I couldn't perform'

HEMANT PADALKAR/HT

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Have you shifted your focus to Gulf countries?

(Takes a pause) It's nothing like that. See, whatever I say or do, I can't forget that I was born in India. Likewise, you may feel that not enough is happening in your country..but finally, you do come back.

What are your major peeves about working in India?

(Sighs) I wish laws were much more conducive for development. Most building laws are made to curb people from doing wrong..but in the process, good people get punished. This only forces every-

|| Can a young couple afford a two BHK flat of 1,000 sq ft in a decent area costing Rs 60 lakh? They will have to live on love and fresh air ||



one to do illegal stuff..which is wrong. Ninety per cent of our building by-laws are like that.

On the other hand, laws are so open in the Gulf and China, it's a real thrill working there. How I wish laws change here. I pray for it.

Are you are talking about Floor Space Index?

Yes, I wonder why are we restricting our FSI? People need to be housed. Is it that I am making my floors and ceilings in gold that per square feet price should be anywhere from Rs 4,000 to Rs 60,000?

We need to create an economy of abundance, instead of making people pay the price of scarcity—we are creating it.

Take Hyderabad—there is unrestricted FSI. All you need to do is provide for infrastructure, car park and sewage treatment and you can build what you like. It's not applicable in Mumbai or Delhi.

Is Delhi better planned than Mumbai? That's a myth.. look at old Delhi. New Delhi was planned 80-90 years back.. that's why roads are better, spacious and it gets more money than Mumbai.

Mumbai wasn't planned.. it grew from a small fishing village to a port town to what it is now. That's the charm of Mumbai.

Which according to you is the best-

planned city?

(Thinks for a while..smiles) It's like women.. some like dark girls, some like fair girls, some prefer short girls and some tall. I am the kind who likes all girls. It's the same way with cities..I like Chandigarh, I like Bombay. I hate Chandigarh, I hate Bombay.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru gave Chandigarh a carte blanche. But then the down side to it is that after 8 pm, the roads are deserted. You fear being mugged. If my car broke down there, I would have difficulty getting a lift.

In Mumbai, that won't be the case.

You seem to be quite outspoken..What if your wife, Pearl, reads this interview, won't she get upset?

(Laughing) Why? Tell me what is wrong? I am a normal human being. And it's better to be frank. If I am not, tell me.. every man is like that. But because of certain circumstances, he is a hypocrite.

If I am a hypocrite I won't be able to work the minute you walk off. I don't want to have any burden of what I have talked. I have never fooled you. You wake me up in the middle of the night, I'll say the same thing. So there's nothing wrong.

What's your take on Navi Mumbai? Waste of land.. nothing else. 19 mil-

Factfile

- Hafeez Contractor commenced his career in 1968 with T. Kharaghat as an Apprentice Architect.
- In 1982, he began with his own private practice.
- Between 1977 and 1980, Hafeez has been a visiting faculty at the Academy of Architecture, Mumbai.
- He is a member of the Bombay Heritage Committee and New Delhi Lutyens Bungalow Zone Review Committee.
- His wife Pearl is an interior designer by profession.

lion is Mumbai's population.. everyone needs a shelter. What is the proposed population of Mumbai in 10 years? 30 million. You know how many people are staying in slums now? 60 per cent of the 19 million.

Twenty per cent stay in dilapidated houses.. that's about two million. So in the next 10 years, you have to house 22 million people. *Kidhar jaoge? Kya hoga?* Does anyone have the answer?

Who is to be blamed for the steep real

|| In the next 10 years, you have to house 22 million people. *Kidhar jaoge? Kya hoga?* ||

estate prices?

Well, I want to know where are our politicians and bureaucrats? Are the hypocrites listening? Let us start by throwing them out of their free allotted houses. I wonder, why don't politicians pay for a house.

Look at the pay packet of an average individual and the skyrocketing real-estate prices.

Can a young couple afford a two BHK flat of 1,000 sq ft in a decent area costing Rs 60 lakh? The couple will have to live on love and fresh air. And how many years of income will go into owning a flat? A lifetime.

Is that the reason why you took a long time to get married?

Yes. I got married at the age of 41..not because I couldn't perform *(laughs)*.. but because I could not buy a house. *Abhi loan miti hai*..It was difficult to get a housing loan then. My first preference was buying an office. I bought it at a throwaway price.

Not that I couldn't have got married. But the girls I used to like were from rich families. And at the

time, I used to stay with my mother in a one-room kitchen in Gwalior Tank. The first house I bought was for Rs 3 lakh.

That's the reason I understand a 25-year-old's dilemma..he wants to get married. But can't buy his dream house.

Tell me, what according to you is masterpiece architecture?

Ha ha.. it's all rubbish. See, a fellow who has made a small house in mud and bamboo, with his limited resources can be a much better masterpiece than the tallest skyscraper or the Rockefeller Centre in Manhattan.

Weren't you inspired by Charles Correa's work at one point?

I don't deny that there was a time when his work appealed to me. But we all have to move on. Maybe, he's on a different path and I am on a different path.

As for inspiration, everything and everyone is my inspiration including the yellow flowers I see every morning from my window.

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