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SKYWATCH

FORECAST: Mainly clear sky.

TEMPERATURE: MAXIMUM 38.3 degrees C, 2 degrees C above normal, and MINIMUM 22.3 degrees C, 2 degrees C above normal

That's the way to build a walkway

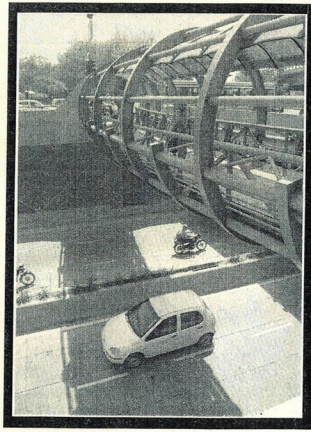
ANUBHUTI VISHNOI
NEW DELHI, APRIL 12

PEDESTRIANS hardly seem to be on the mind of planners laying out Delhi's roads and flyovers. This disturbed architect Saurabh Gupta so much that, when the Delhi Tourism & Transportation Development Corporation (DTTDC) approached him to help design underpasses at Prem Bari Pul and Moolchand on Ring Road, he decided to make a statement.

"My designs at both places are about trying to highlight pedestrian movement... to give pedestrian facilities a facelift. So the Moolchand underpass is flanked on either side by circular steel walkways and ends with subways in dynamic patterns, that catch the eye," said Gupta, director of Archohm, Delhi.

Unlike the many unused subways and footbridges in Delhi, the subways at Moolchand crossroads stand out proudly with curved, vaulted roofs and vibrant aqua-blue mosaics.

"Subways across the Capital have repeated the same design," said Gupta. "I have just given them an interesting shape so that pedestrian facilities can become important city landmarks. More so, to make a statement on how unthoughtfully and unimaginatively we design our city infrastructure. We have used simple, inexpensive material for the designs with the usual polycarbonate sheets for roofs of subways and original Delhi stone."



Architect Saurabh Gupta designed the underpass at Moolchand (left). He has made it eye-catching and pedestrian-friendly. "I have just given it an interesting shape so that pedestrian facilities can become important city landmarks... We wanted a new, changed look and designs that broke away from the old set patterns. We are getting a good response. All this did not, however, mean a steep bill for DTTDC," said Gupta.
Photo by Vikram Sharma

Jose Kurien, DTTDC's chief engineer, said this is the first time they have roped in the services of an architect to design their underpass and it has paid off.

"We wanted a new, changed look and designs that broke away from the old set patterns. We are getting a good response. We have constructed Delhi's first walkway and new look subway at Moolchand and both are done with creativity. At Prem Bari Pul underpass, the architect used the Commonwealth Games motif to decorate the walls and it looks great. All this did not, however, mean a steep bill for DTTDC and that's why it's a good idea," Kurien said.

At Rs 38.68 crore, the Moolchand underpass, one of the busiest intersections in Delhi, handles 14,000 Passenger Car Units (PCUs) per hour. DTTDC was also cautious about the general unpopularity of subways and conducted a three-day survey in the area before deciding on the exact location of the facility.

"We went to residents of the area for suggestions, observed where exactly people were crossing the road and also watched pedestrian movement in peak hours. After the correct location was identified and the subway was ready for use, we put up four-foot grills along the central median so that people would take the subway and not run across the road," said K C Pant, in-charge of DTTDC's Moolchand project. "The opened subway is seeing good usage so far. While the roofing on the rest of the subways will be up by May 15 this year, getting escalators installed – again, a first time again for any subway — will take longer. We have drawn up estimates and are awaiting clearance," he said.

Within a week of marriage, girl's family kills husband