

It's where a man goes when he wants to take a break from the daily decision-making and the cutting edge competition. A private den is the ultimate escape for today's corporate lion...

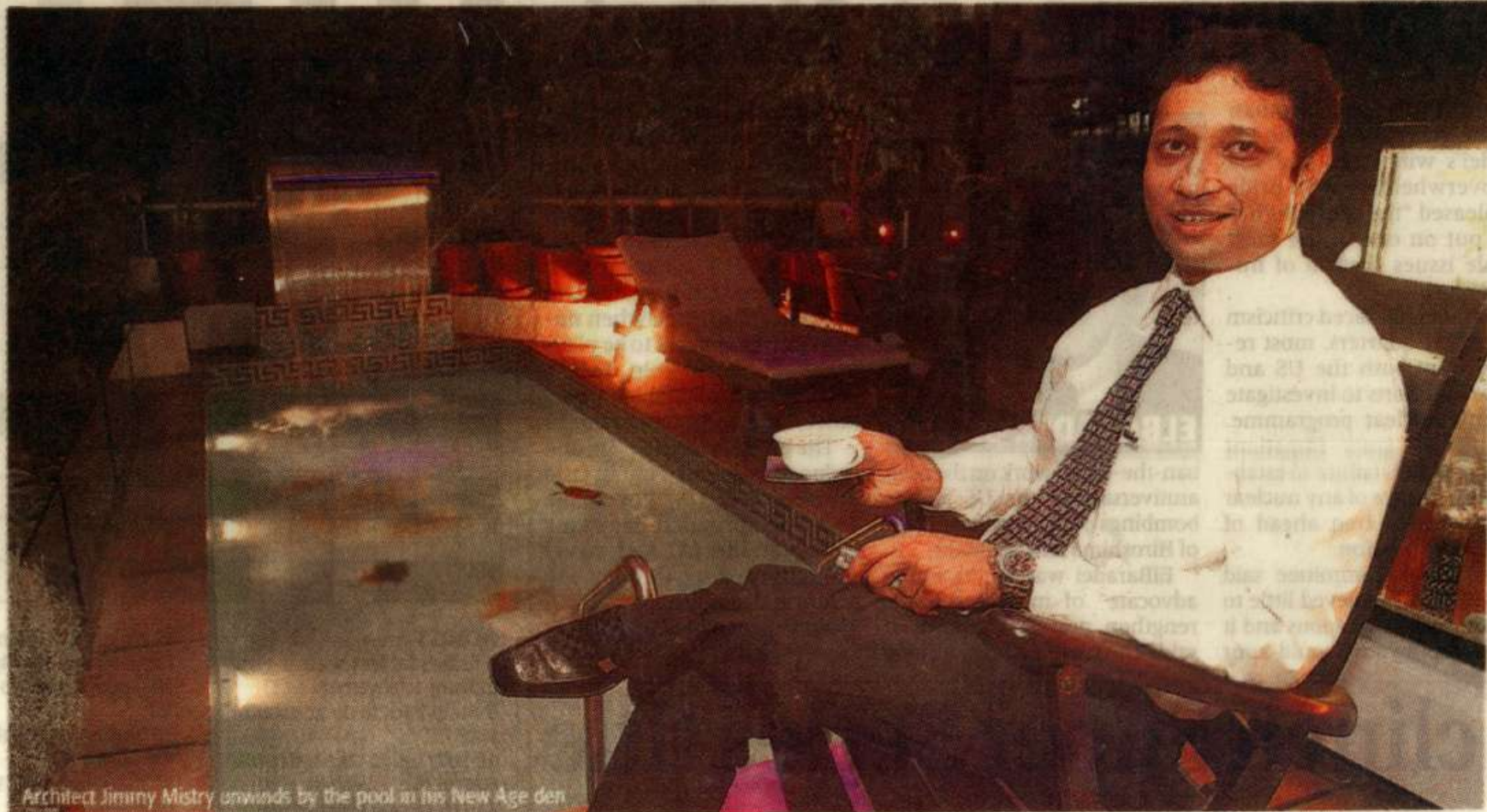
Fareeda Kanga figures out the essential ingredients that go into creating this personal haven

It's that *sanctum sanctorum* where successful power brokers and corporate bigwigs put their feet up and relax, post a stressful day at the workplace or after a powwow with the board. Welcome to the man's den – a domain that spells rest, relaxation and ultimate luxury.

"My study or den, as I like to call it, is a place where I unwind and pursue my favourite hobbies," says industrialist Atulya Mafatlal of Mafatlal Industries. A traditionalist when it comes to the décor of this special room, Mafatlal has stuck to the conventional wooden floor, plush sofa and wall-to-wall bookcase look. "I spend up to two hours a day, schedule permitting, in my den pouring over history books (World War II epics are a favourite) and watching National Geographic and the History Channel," he elaborates.

Whilst Mafatlal, like most, uses his den primarily as a library-cum-television or movie watching space, some jetsetters have outfitted their private spaces with a variety of gizmos and gadgets. Castrol India's managing director & CEO, Naveen Kshatriya, relaxes in his den that is adorned with canvases created by artist wife Puja. Sahara's Subrata Roy reportedly has pedicure stations and massage chairs with custom-made furniture from Italy by Poltrona Frau (a division of Ferrari).

"The old design concept of a den resembling a hunting lodge in the Highlands of Scotland is passé," says architect Pinakin Patel. "The Indian male has come a long way from this visual myth of the hunt," he adds. When designing this highly personalised space, Patel suggests one steer away from creating another 'power zone' at home. "Today's CEO is invariably young and trendy, so the den should be a reflection of his attitude and style," he explains.



Architect Jimmy Mistry unwinds by the pool in his New Age den

The lion in his den

"There's no need for the man to assert his position and status in the corporate world through his den with overly fussy interiors. Instead, the décor should help him unwind and take his mind to a place as far away from the office as possible," he suggests.

And it's not just the men who need to create their own space for R&R. For Deepali Goenka, mother of two and direc-

tor of the Rs 2,000 crore Welspun Group, her personal space encompasses a gym since fitness is an important aspect of her life. "I have a home gym where I work out daily before going to work as it keeps me focused and energetic," she says.

In fact, most architects and interior designers claim the rules and lines are blurred as far as the definition of a den is concerned. Yet they tend to agree

that high-tech automation products are here to stay.

"Think LED lighting, plasma or projection televisions, interface panels and even virtual reality walls," says Jimmy Mistry, chief designer of Della Tecnica, Architects & Interior Designers. "It's no longer about good design sense only," he adds. Clients ask for soundproofed rooms so that they can listen to their favourite opera or blast the latest Bollywood hit (as requested by a media mogul who is constructing an entire building for himself at an upmarket Breach Candy address in Mumbai!)

Budgets for the same can run into several lakhs with a single radio frequency controlled panel that controls all switches and electronic devices costing upwards of Rs five lakh or a Bang & Olufsen sound system for Rs 10 lakh, perhaps?

Parveez and Shyam Sunder Aggarwal of Diners Business Services (DBS) are a unique power couple that actually share their den amicably. "I can work on my embroidery in peace because Shyam watches his bang-bang action flicks with headphones on so as not to disturb me!" says Parveez.

10 den dos and don'ts

- Break the visual myth surrounding this space. It needn't be all wood and varnish
- The key is to personalise your den, as it must reflect the user's individuality
- Flooring should ideally be wooden or carpeted. Marble lacks warmth and is too cold for this room
- Select a comfy sofa so that you can become a couch potato by evening. Leather sofas are

popular for this space

- Heavy curtains are essential, especially if you want to watch a movie during the day here and need to block out the light
- It's nice to have a small personal bar and utility area if entertaining guests in the den
- Consult a home automation expert to help fit in all the high-tech gadgets needed so that the acoustics and other elements are perfect

- If space is a problem, then segregate an area that doubles as a home office or workspace too
- Paint the walls a neutral shade. Not too bright as it can get overbearing and make the room look tiny
- If you must keep a reminder of office, then a tiny space displaying trophies or awards can be discreetly tucked into one wall
- Finally, be yourself, break all the rules... it's your space after all!