

THE ASIAN AGE

'Engineers have more say than architects'

Mumbai, Nov. 3: India has around 140 schools of architecture that produce about 4,000 architects each year. But only about 40,000 architects are registered with the Council of Architecture to serve a population of over a billion.

"Since the number of architects is grossly inadequate, most of the architectural work in the country is carried out by non-architect engineers or masons who double up as petty contractors," says a review of the profession.

Further, though architects like to consider themselves a part of the westernised elite transforming the country, their actual status in society as effective professionals is low, says one of a series of papers published in the latest issue of the German architectural journal *Archplus*, focussing on "India's Insular Urbanism".

This special issue was released in time for the November 1-3, 2007 Urban Age conference held in Mumbai. This conference was part of a series of nine

being held between February 2005 and November 2009 in New York, Shanghai, London, Mexico City, Johannesburg, Berlin, Mumbai and Sao Paulo (December 2008) and Istanbul (November 2009).

Architect, urban planner and conservation consultant A.G. Krishna Menon contends that the advice of Indian architects is "routinely substituted by others who hold influential opinions about the architectural product, thus reducing the economic worth of architectural

services in the market-place".

In India, engineers have greater authority in deciding architectural issues compared to architects "whose contributions are reduced to merely manipulating the facade of the building under construction".

Mr Menon argues that the "burgeoning of architectural schools" in India over the past decade-and-a-half led to a "precipitous drop" in educational standards, and the shortage of architects worsened the "debilitating

colonial pedagogic agenda that imparts vocational training".

There is praise, however, for some institutions — the School of Architecture at the Centre for Environment and Planning (CEPT) of the University of Ahmedabad, the Kamala Raheja Vidyaniidhi Institute of Architecture and Environmental Studies (KRVI) and the Rizvi College of Architecture in Mumbai. (IANS)