

# Renewing and restoring IIM Ahmedabad

The Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad (IIM-A) director Ashish Nanda tells us about the restoration work in progress  
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The 'Harvard steps' at IIM-A. Photo: Ramesh Dave/Mint

In 1962, one of India's greatest modern architects, Balkrishna Doshi, invited another modernist, American architect Louis Kahn, to design the 60-acre campus of IIM-A. The construction began soon after and was completed in 1974, the year Kahn died in New York. He never saw the completed building.

More than four decades later, IIM-A is undergoing restoration; welcome news in the wake of the overnight and brutal demolition of another modern building, the Hall of Nations at Pragati Maidan in Delhi, in April. “Over the years, the campus has suffered routine wear and tear, which an exposed brick building is susceptible to. And post the debilitating earthquake a decade ago (Bhuj), there has been some structural damage,” says Ashish Nanda, IIM-A director.

IIM-A began by approaching UK-based Peter Inskip + Peter Jenkins, a firm that specializes in advisory work on Louis Kahn-designed buildings across the world. After a visit to Ahmedabad and a survey, the firm drafted suggestions on the restoration of the heritage campus. IIM-A then sent out an open invitation to architecture firms, and finally chose Somaya & Kalappa (SNK) for the job. With principal architect Brinda Somaya, the Mumbai-based firm has previously worked on the conservation of the 1878-built neo-gothic Rajabai Clock Tower and Mumbai University Library in Fort, Mumbai.

The restoration of the heritage campus at IIM-A—which includes the library, some classrooms and seminar rooms, the faculty wing and 18 dormitories—is in progress. Work started in March 2016, and is expected to take another year. “As a first step, we started with the library and one of the dorms, D15. Last March, as the academic year ended, we moved the entire library (a collection of 250,000 books and related materials) from its current building to another one. That transition itself was quite remarkable. Literally, one day students were coming to one library and next day to another,” says Nanda.

The exterior will be conserved but internally, the complex will be updated with modern interiors, technology, lighting, and made disabled-friendly. “As we go through this process, we are also renewing and upgrading,” says Nanda.