

# St John's auditorium gets a musical makeover

## It's redesigned in the shape of a tabla; old character retained

S Kushala

kushala.satyanarayana  
@timesgroup.com

TWEETS @SKushala

**W**hen the St John's National Academy of Health Sciences decided to remodel its ageing auditorium, which faced several problems such as water seepage, inadequate sound reinforcement, acoustics and lighting among others, the primary concern was to get a design that would go with the soul of the place. Over the last year, the renovation project was taken up, and today, the auditorium is shaped in the form of the venerable musical instrument, the tabla.

This is the second auditorium after the violin-shaped Chowdiah Memorial Hall in Malleswaram, which is in the form of a musical instrument.

While the foundation and columns of St John's auditorium were strong, the building had issues such as absence of air-conditioning, inadequate toilets, and lack of privacy in green-rooms, apart from general infrastructure being elderly- and differently-abled-unfriendly. "There were no facilities for projectors, acoustics was basic, lighting was conventional and audio-visual infrastructure was poor. Since we were celebrating the St John's golden jubilee in 2013-14, the management felt it would befit the occasion to



**The auditorium is equipped to beam programmes simultaneously to five other halls in campus**

undertake restructuring of the auditorium. Today, the transformation is brilliant," said Dr Tony Raj, vice-dean of St John's Research Institute who is in charge of the project. The management zeroed in on architectural firm Vishwanath Associates for the project.

The initial challenge for the architects with regard to this nearly 25-year-old building was to retain its existing character, yet give it a young, healthy feel by integrating technology and comfort.

Principal architect V Vishwanath said it was not just about upgrading the infrastructure but also a need to cre-

ate a strong identity for the 1,100-capacity auditorium. After extensive sessions, it was decided to redesign the building in the form of a tabla.

"Keeping the existing column structure intact, all the external walls were removed, bringing in a sense of openness and light to the whole structure around the auditorium. Part of the terrace was converted into a break-out area which could accommodate 750 persons. New spaces were created for seminar halls," says Vishwanath.

The soundproofing of the auditorium, which was aimed at insulating the interiors from traffic noise pollution, now provides greater privacy. Air-conditioning units were integrated in the design, the acous-

tics and sound system were upgraded, new seating systems and projectors were brought in and the green rooms were improved significantly.

Also, fire detection and alarm systems were incorporated to improve safety, while ramps and lifts were built to provide easy access to senior citizens and the differently-abled.

With the incorporation of sophisticated technology, the auditorium has been equipped to beam programmes simultaneously to five smaller auditoria in the campus, reaching out to 3,000 people.

Simultaneously, keeping in mind the changes on Koramangala Road, redesigning of the master plan around the auditorium and landscape design was done.