

# A 27-storey 'home for a family of four'

# Ambani's \$1 bn vertical palace



MAGNATE: Mukesh Ambani.

Graphic: SUNIL SINGH

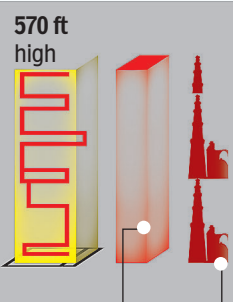


CORBIS

## THE SKY CASTLE

Mukesh Ambani's  
Altamount Road  
dream home

### THE ANTILIA

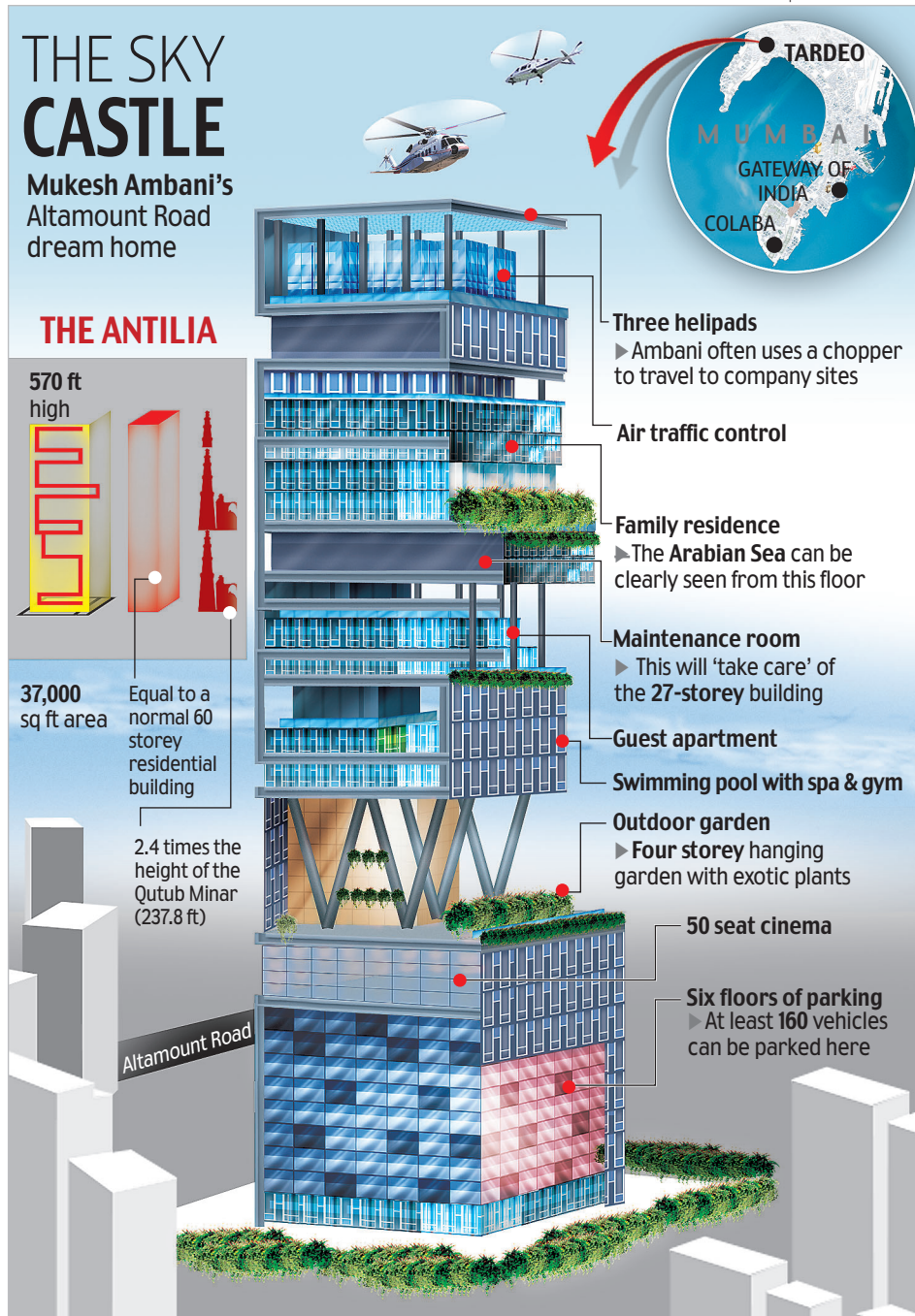


570 ft high  
37,000 sq ft area

Equal to a normal 60 storey residential building

2.4 times the height of the Qutub Minar (237.8 ft)

Altamount Road



Critics decry Antilia as obscenely lavish but Ambani's friends say it's perfect for the family.

THIS is the extravagant £630m (roughly ₹44 billion) home built by billionaire tycoon Mukesh Ambani to house his family-of-four on Mumbai's Altamount road.

Named Antilia, after a mythical island in the Atlantic, the 27-storey building features a health club with a gym and dance studio, a ballroom, at least one swimming pool and a 50-seater cinema.

Towering above the Mumbai skyline, the 37,000sq ft property is 570ft high and also boasts three helipads on its roof, space for 160 vehicles on its lower floors, a swimming pool and nine lifts.

There are countless lounges and ballrooms throughout the building where fine rugs, crystal chandeliers and mirrors feature heavily. There is also a stage for entertainers and a kitchen which can serve hundreds of guests.

Ambani, 53, paid ₹44million (roughly ₹300 crore) to build his dream property, but the city's astronomical property values mean it is now worth 15 times that amount.

He will employ 600 staff at the property and his family will live in the top floors, where they will enjoy views of the Arabian Sea.

Ambani has surprised many by constructing Antilia, as he built his business reputation as a private individual who avoided the flamboyance of the ultra-rich.

Hamish McDonald, the author of a history of the family business Ambani and Sons, told British daily *The Guardian*: "Perhaps he has been stung by his portrayal in the media as an introvert."

"Maybe he is making the point that he is a tycoon in his own right," McDonald added.

Numerous powder rooms and reception areas lead off the lobby. Each floor uses different materials to add variety.

The vast building is constructed

from glass, steel and tiles and also features a four-storey hanging garden which is designed to keep the interior cooler in summer and warmer in the winter.

According to *Forbes* magazine, Ambani is worth £18billion (roughly ₹1 trillion). He is the

### 570 ft high Antilia has 3 helipads, 9 lifts & a pool

richest man in India and the fourth richest in the world.

The property's "Asian contemporary" interior has been designed by a US firm.

Ambani will hold a house warming party at his new home later this month.

Among the guests is Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who has previously called on business tycoons to be "role models of moderation".

Shiny Varghese, deputy editor of the *Design Today* magazine, said: "It's so obscenely lavish that I'm not sure too many people will go all that way, but we are heading into the sort of culture where money is not a question when setting up a home."

But Ambani's friends have defended him against charges of excess, with one saying: "He can't just walk into a cinema and watch a film like you or me."

"It's only a family home, just a big one. It's a question of convenience and requirements."

Daily Mail

## LIC to hire and train eunuchs as agents

By M.C. Rajan  
in Chennai

DON'T be surprised if you are approached by an eunuch canvassing for life insurance. After all, they are all set to become the new face of LIC.

The public sector insurance giant has come out with a novel plan to induct eunuchs as insurance agents in this burgeoning yet competitive business.

In a first-of-its-kind initiative, LIC has offered to train eunuchs in the nuances of the trade and eventually recruit them as insurance agents.

The response was overwhelming as 60 eunuchs received training on Friday — jointly organised by the LIC and the Tamil Nadu social welfare department (SWD).

B. Preethi, 23, one of the participants, expressed a desire to be treated the same as others. "We do not like begging. We have no means of employment. All we require is that people trust us and help us lead a normal life."

Some were hopeful of excelling in this field such as S. M. Jayalithaa. "Many of us have contacts with the policemen, shopkeepers. This will come in good stead to sell insurance products," she said.

"This kind of self-employment opportunity will economically empower the transgendered people and will keep them from begging and the ordeal of being a commercial sex worker to make ends meet," SWD director R. Vasuki said, describing the training camp as a progressive move.

Vasuki added that the training camp was primarily intended to facilitate self employment avenues for the eunuch community.

Asserting that this initiative would be expanded to other districts as well, Vasuki said the Tamil Nadu Transgenders Welfare Board has a membership of 3,000 of whom 2,700 have been issued identity cards.

The criterion to become an LIC agent is to have passed the matric/SSLC in the rural areas and senior secondary/plus two in the urban centres.

Those eligible would be given 50 hours of training for a week to enable them to appear for a written examination.

"Once they clear the exams, they would get a licence issued by the insurance regulator Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority and start working," said Senthur Nathan, marketing manager with LIC.

The corporation has plans to conduct similar camps in the districts to get more insurance agents from this community, he added.

Tamil Nadu has been at the forefront in making concerted efforts in integrating eunuchs into the mainstream.

The state government has started issuing ration cards for eunuchs to avail provisions from the public distribution system. A housing programme is also being implemented.

They also have a powerful well wisher in Rajya Sabha MP Kanimozhi, the daughter of chief minister and DMK patriarch M. Karunanidhi.

## Bangalore scientists inch closer to a cure for 'thyroid'

A GROUP of scientists at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) is attempting to develop new drug molecules that could combat hyperthyroidism.

Encouraged by success with the synthesis of a new molecule, the researchers are now looking at 'analogues' (similar compounds), which work more efficiently under normal conditions.

"We are using chemicals available in the market," said Govindasamy Mugesh, associate professor at the IISc's department of inorganic and physical chemistry. "It is not a complex reaction, but scientists hadn't known the exact mechanism by

By Max Martin in Bangalore

which it works."

If the concept that Mugesh and his student Debasish Manna published in the journal *Angewandte Chemie* works at a clinical level, then the molecules could be a safe alternative to current drugs that are used to treat hyperthyroidism.

Hyperthyroidism, which affects millions of Indians, involves overactive tissues within the thyroid gland that cause an overproduction of the thyroid hormones, T4 and T3.

Thyroid hormones control the pace of

processes such as digestion in the body collectively called metabolism.

An excess production of the hormones leads to nervousness, irritability, increased perspiration, heart racing, hand tremors and anxiety. It might also cause insomnia, thinning of the skin and muscular weakness.

Current drugs completely block an enzyme called thyroid peroxidase and cut levels of iodine that is essential to regulate the production of thyroid hormones.

"The molecule we have developed takes a different route and so it helps maintain the optimum balance," Mugesh said.

The route involves the inactivation of thyroid hormones by mimicking an enzyme called deiodinase, which is responsible for controlling thyroid hormone levels.

Earlier efforts to make molecules that mimic deiodinase had been unsuccessful. "It is the first proposition of the mechanism that inactivates the thyroid hormone," said Dr Josef Köhrle, professor for molecular endocrinology at Charité - Medical University, Berlin. "It can possibly lead to drug development."

Scientists caution that more research and trials are needed to develop a drug.



NAGESH OHAL