

Conference on the occasion of the visit of an American Architects' Delegation

The Chamber in association with the US Commercial Services, American Consulate in Kolkata, organised a Luncheon Session with a 38- Member visiting Delegation from USA, led by Mr. Mickey Jacob, President and Ms. Jessica Salmoiraghi, Director, Federation Relation and Counsel, the American Institute of Architects, USA on 17th October, 2012 at 10 a.m. at The Oberoi Grand, Kolkata. Mr. Dean R Thompson, Consul General, US Consulate, Kolkata, Ms. Janice Corbett, Regional Director, Office of International Operations, Africa, Middle East and South Africa, Department of Commerce, U.S.A and Mr. Richard Craig, Principal Commercial Officer, Consulate General of USA in Kolkata were also present at the conference.

Ms. Janice Corbett, Regional Director, Office of International Operations, Africa, Middle East and South Africa, Department of Commerce, U.S.A , observed that it had been an excellent experience for her to visit the historic heritage sights in Kolkata. She believed that India and West Bengal in particular can provide great opportunities for the American architecture firms to collaborate with their Indian counterparts. She stated that there are large scope for transfer of technologies and know-how in both the infrastructure and realty sectors of India. A win-win situation can thus be arrived at, through a partnership between Indian and US architectural firms.

Mr. Suranjan Bhanja, CEO-Adapt International , observed that Adapt International has its operation spread out in the different parts of the world. Being a software company, Adapt does not have its operations limited to the architecture segment. However, the architecture segment forms one of the largest segments of the clientele for Adapt International. The company aims to harness potentials from India, China and East Asia to promote its operation in a global manner.

Founded by, Bijan Alami, an eminent software developer, Adapt provides IT Services to all a variety of sectors, Mr. Bhanja stated. Adapt, off late, has selected India to be one of its important base for operation. India, especially the eastern part, according to Mr. Bhanja, offers a cost effective environment and a strategically important location to overseas investors. A positive economic attitude of local competitors and Government in this region, has also made it easier for newly settled foreign players to establish their industrial base. The existence of a large number of world class technical and management institutes generate a quality and cheap labour force which would help in strengthening the managerial capacity of a newly established undertaking, Mr. Bhanja felt.

He emphasised, that the incentives provided by the Government of West Bengal, however, changes with region but the IT Policy implemented is liberal and thus congenial to investment. The existence of a large number of cheap and expert consultancy firms would help in a smooth functioning of the undertaking. Of all the advantages enjoyed by foreign investors in the eastern part of India, the most important benefit is the time-zone advantage, Mr. Bhanja stated.

Prof. Joy Sen, Architecture & Regional Planning, Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur observed that as per Kuznet's Hypothesis, environmental degradation starts after the GDP growth reaches its pinnacle. Similarly, by concentrating on architectural

development of already developed regions of a country, one would be destroying the architectures already in place. Thus, Prof. Sen believed that development of under-developed regions of India was the need of the hour. With the rise in the standard of living of the middle class, there also has been a rise in the standards of architectural demands. Such demands are not only limited to residential housings but are spread over development of healthcare, educational, agricultural, retail, and agricultural premises. The rise in the skilled labour force in India has paralleled the rise in architectural demand. With the change in the attitude of individuals toward technical education and with a greater rate of specialisation, West Bengal would also provide both cheap and attractive human resources to foreign investors.

Mr. Harshvardhan Neotia, Chairman, Gujarat Ambuja Realty observed that it was indeed a good indication that foreign investors in the real estate sector has extended their keenness from business hubs such as Delhi and Mumbai. The real estate sector in India is a booming sector and holds a lot of scope for investors from the United State, Mr. Neotia stated. Through a presentation, he explained the areas of strong co-operation and collaboration among investors of both India and the United States of America.

Mr. Debashis Sen, IAS, Principal Secretary, Urban Development Department, Government of West Bengal observed that the city of Kolkata is facing certain crucial problems such as that of slums due to large scale migration from the village. In this regard, it is necessary to develop important urban regions such as Murshidabad, Malda etc.

Mr. Alapan Bandyopadhyay, Principal Secretary, Municipal Affairs Department, Government of West Bengal stated that Kolkata bears architectural structures of varied ages. These structures are in urgent need for restoration. He urged the foreign investors to conduct a detailed study of these architectural structures and make an effort to retain their beauty.
