

Builders have to be socially conscious, says Pranab **Construction industry urged to work closely with NSDC**



Mr Pranab Mukherjee, Union Finance Minister, with Mr G.K. Vasan, Union Minister of Shipping, at the All India Builder's convention in Chennai on Sunday.

Our Bureau

Chennai, Jan. 23

Rapid urbanisation and infrastructure growth are not just a commercial opportunity for builders, but also a social challenge that they must help address, said the Union Finance Minister, Mr Pranab Mukherjee.

Builders must work closely with the Government to tap this opportunity responsibly to address the challenge of affordability in housing, technology and skilled human resource constraints in infrastructure.

Mr Mukherjee urged the construction industry to work with the National Skill Development Corporation to enable skill creation by setting up a Construction Sector Skill Council. The NSDC estimates that construction sector will need 3.3 crore more skilled workforce by 2022.

Realty sector

Realty sector also has to be sensitive to the social dimension of housing through appropriate pricing and strong ethical practices. Careful planning and strategy is needed to address the

housing deficit, meet the growing demand and provide quality urban services. This is not about commercial enterprise as there is a larger social dimension, the Minister said at the inaugural of the three-day 24 {+t} {+h} All India Builders Convention.

The construction industry will benefit from the rapid infrastructure growth as the next five years will see investment of over Rs 41 lakh crore into infrastructure development. Technology support, customers' needs, cost and adequate skilled workforce need to come together for the targets to be achieved. The cost of construction materials in project cost ranges is 40-60 per cent and the corresponding cost of equipment is 5-20 per cent depending on the sector.

Shipping industry

The Minister of Shipping, Mr G.K. Vasan, said the construction industry has to participate actively in public-private partnerships. Infrastructure constraints can hit economic growth. The Shipping Ministry in its agenda for 2020 announced recently has targeted increase in port efficiencies and growing the port capacity to 3,200 million tonnes from the present 617 million tonnes.

The convention chairman, Mr R. Radhakrishnan, called for the establishment of a ministry of construction to address the needs of the sector. Fluctuations in prices of construction material seriously threaten infrastructure development. A regulatory authority is needed to monitor prices of cement and steel, he said.

Documents relating to Government construction contracts are archaic and need to be updated to suit modern requirements and on par with international practices. Funding agencies such as the Asian Development Bank insist on equitable contract documents, he said.