

Making Business Sustainable and Humane

PANCHGANI (Maharashtra), India, November 8:

The second day of the fifth international conference of Caux Initiatives for Business (CIB) saw a solemn beginning. Serenaded by chirping birds, more than 50 participants sat in a circle around a lamp to offer prayers from their respective faiths—followers of Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Tibetan Buddhism and Zoroastrianism sang hymns, poems and chants in different languages, from Hindi and Bengali to Swahili and English.



Friday also witnessed the arrival of more delegates and speakers from different parts of India and abroad. The biennial conference, titled ‘Economic Growth—Possibilities amidst Challenges in Making it Sustainable and Humane’ commenced at Asia Plateau on Thursday. It is being hosted jointly by Initiatives of Change (IofC), India and Japan.

It’s a gift

‘Where do we begin’ and ‘how’ was the question which was delved on in the first formal session of CIB 2013. ‘To bow and to bend we shan’t be ashamed’—participants were struck by the words of a song presented in the morning.

While guiding the session on exploring inner governance, Dr Amit Mukherjee observed that “while all of us are born with gifts, or have developed gifts, some of us hold back in giving those gifts out.” Delegates took time in quiet to consider this, before a gentle buzz filled the hall as people shared their thoughts with each other.



The orthopaedic surgeon from Jamshedpur, India, shared his own experience of making amends for his acts of dishonesty—while he was a student—after adopting the practice of ‘quiet time’.



Mr David Bernard-Stevens recalled the process of defining his core values. The former Senator, who moved from US to Kenya following an inner calling, despite a highly ‘successful’ career, shared his journey of dedicating his life to service.

“I rediscovered my values and my purpose,” said the CEO of Effective Change Consultants, Nairobi, while emphasising on the importance of ‘the time of silence’. “There is more contentment, joy and impact when we do what our hearts know we should do,” he concluded.

‘You can turn the search the searchlight in on me... I can face the future boldly from today’— a touching performance from the AP Chorus of the song *Images* provided the audience with the setting to pause and reflect.



Being the Change

The tone for the first plenary was aptly set by its moderator, Mr Mike Smith, as he echoed Mr Amartya Sen’s emphasis on the symbiosis of economic growth and participatory growth. The Head of Business Programmes, IofC, UK, quoted from the Nobel Laureate’s latest book, *An Uncertain Glory*, to stress on the importance of participatory growth.



At the inauguration on Thursday, participants were touched by the gesture of the Japanese delegation, co-hosts of CIB. Following failed attempts to grow cherry blossoms at the Japanese Garden in Asia Plateau, IofC Japan has gifted a specially-crafted porcelain plate with motifs of Mount Fuji and cherry blossoms.

Development with Justice

The change in Bihar since 2005 was described by Mr Anup Mukerji, former Chief Secretary of the state in eastern India. The IAS officer, who has just retired, shared his conviction of working in the field of primary education. “Good persons work in isolation; we must build a virtuous network,” he affirmed.



“That which is beneficial to the subjects should be the kings’ goal,” Mr Mukerji said, quoting Kautilya’s *Arthashastra*, putting in context the approach of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar. “In democracies, it’s the elected representatives who determine the quality of governance; Mr Kumar brought in good governance,” he added. “Bihar is now relatively safe and its infrastructure is improving. Access to education for the poor, particularly the girl-child, empowerment of women, have all contributed towards creating a trend of participatory growth.”

Tomorrow’s Company

Some of Mr Mukerji’s points resonated in the reflections of Mr Mark Goyder. While introducing his latest book, *Living Tomorrow’s Company: Ultimately It’s about Relationships—Values and Purpose*, he talked about the inclusive approach to success in business. “We cannot separate our role as shareholder with that as a citizen,” the founder of London-based thinkthank, Tomorrow’s Company, observed, while stressing on the need for social inclusion in economic growth.



While commenting that most domestic problems did not have a technocratic solution, he sought a better understanding of the impact of economic processes on the communities that relied on them. The need of the hour, Mr Goyder intoned, was ‘humane capitalism’. “The sacrifice of those who steward the businesses is the key towards creating a culture of value in business,” said the author. “For the past five years, we’ve noticed that listed companies have a lack of ownership responsibility while families that see their destinies attached to their businesses tend to act responsibly and in the interests of their employees and the communities that are impacted by them.”

Mr Sarosh Ghandy, who had written the foreword for the book, did the formal release. The author acknowledged the contribution of Mr Anant Nadkarni, who was present in the audience, in encouraging him to write the book.

Inspired by Mahatma Gandhi’s ‘trusteeship’, Mr Goyder spoke about ‘stewardship’ as a way of thinking. The core appeal of business is to think about the lives of others, especially those who are underprivileged, the author said, adding that progress can be made by people with a vision but answers do not lie in technocratic solutions, but in the human spirit.



He referred to *niti* and *niyati*—the letter and the spirit behind everything we do; the challenge being to find the right balance. Narrating a story he read in the book, *The Land of Raging Ghosts*, he said he was moved by the author’s description of the harvest and how everyone came together and celebrated the rice harvest.



‘Be the change that we want to see in the world’—the session concluded with a song amplifying Mahatma Gandhi’s message.

Bringing Hope

The second plenary was chaired by Dr Eugene Sensenig- Dabbous of Lebanon.

Dr Armin Bruck, MD & CEO of Siemens India, listed the initiatives taken by the German multinational towards sustainability. “Employee engagement has significantly reduced absenteeism, accidents and defects, while increasing productivity and profitability,” he said, while citing statistics. About 40% of the



revenue came from the environment portfolio, he pointed out, highlighting the company's commitment to help customers improve efficiency and performance, while ensuring profits.

Dr Bruck, who would soon move from India to Singapore, told the audience about the 'greening' of the head office at Worli in Mumbai. The ROI was achieved in 1.5 years instead of the forecasted 5 years, he said, adding that similar projects would be extended to the company's 50 offices and 23 factories across the country.

While showing a video about a CSR initiative in association with an NGO, Dr Bruck explained how Project Asha brought light in the lives of villagers of Amle in Maharashtra. "Happy employees are the best requisite for profitability," he affirmed, while acknowledging IofC's roles in Siemens' move from a 'rule-driven' culture to a 'value-driven' culture.

Profit is a Set of Values

According to Mr Shishir Joshipura, MD of SKF India, profit is not just a set of figures, it is a set of values. Describing the Swedish multinational's initiatives in India, he stated that four facilities built in the last four years were LEED Gold certified, illustrating the company's commitment to environment. The operating costs were lower, contributing to a healthier bottomline despite the higher initial costs.



To make the company more humane and inclusive, crèches were started, employees were allowed to bring kids up to four years to office, women were given a year's paid leave post child-birth. Thanks to several such steps, attrition dropped, profits increased, and the company was recognised as the most admired company in the sector last year.

"People will be more loyal to job not organisation," the former Thermax executive averred, while talking about the shift that organisations would face. SKF Care was launched to prepare the company for the future.

SKF Sports Academy, which had trained over 200 students in Pune since 2005, was being expanded to other cities.

The post-tea time witnessed three parallel panel discussions on the sub-themes:

1. Obstacles to Growth and Sustainability in the Absence of Good Governance
2. Leading the Knowledge Worker
3. Business beyond the Bottomline—The Key Purpose for Business

Good Governance

Mr Anil Chopra, VP, Siemens, Mumbai, moderated a discussion on what constitutes growth—can it be measured in GDP terms, or we need to factor in human development index or HDI as well.



"CSR is not a waste of money, it gives tremendous returns," said Mr Sarosh Ghandy, while citing an instance involving Tata Motors, Jamshedpur.

"We learnt that we cannot manipulate people or manage them, we need to lead them," the company's former Resident Director added.

Ms Dorothy Nditu of Kenya and Dr Hasan Youness of Lebanon shared their perspective during the discussions that were held in North East Room.





Know Your Workers

Mr Folker Mittag, former International Controller of 'Varta', Germany, moderated the discussion on knowledge workers. Ms Sue Snyder, Director, Global Management Lead, US, recalled Peter Drucker's role in introducing the concept of knowledge worker. Attrition and unpredictability were among the challenges that the management faces, she told the audience during the interaction in Australia Room.

Stressing that actions from the heart make a difference, she laid out three broad recommendations for the leadership: (a) connection with employees; (b) creating a healthy culture and (c) providing them with challenges in their work—avoiding monotony and giving autonomy. Mr Arun Wakhlu, Executive Chairman, Pragati Leadership Institute, Pune, quoted from the Swedish and Norwegian connotation to the word 'work'—nourishing lives. Mr Mrutunjay Singh, CEO, Persistent Systems, Pune, shared his perspective on the subject.



Beyond the Bottomline



Meanwhile, Prof. V. Shukla moderated a lively discussion on corporate social responsibility. Mr Suresh



Vazirani, CMD, Transasia Bio-Medicals, spoke about the contributions that companies can make to society. Mr Shishir Joshipura observed that business' primary purpose is to create value, one of which is profit. Mr Bedan Mbugua, Director, Herbal Garden Ltd, Nairobi, shared his perspective.



World in the Centre

In the afternoon, responding enthusiastically to the invitation from Grampari, the rural development cum environment centre situated in Asia Plateau.

After dinner, following cups of mint tea, participants saw videos on business philosophies of two enterprises, an Indian and a Malaysian. More than 150 delegates from over 20 countries, including Kenya, Lebanon, Norway, Romania, South Sudan, Taiwan, United Kingdom and United States, are attending the five-day event. The main conference was pre-

ceded by Round Tables in Bangalore, Mumbai, Pune, Jamshedpur and New Delhi.

SIGHTED: The amusing yet charming encounter between a young Tibetan intern at AP and an older Indian delegate: pulling to and fro a dirty dinner plate—who should carry it to the wash-up! 😊