

## Hiranandani Group — Building better communities

**ICJ:** Today, Hiranandani Construction Pvt Ltd is synonymous with quality construction of housing and commercial premises. How did it all begin?

**NH:** It all began about 25 years ago, when my brother, Surendra, and I decided that real estate development offered the best outlet for us to express our entrepreneurial spirit. The work towards quality construction was an apparition fuelled by the fact that all over the world, quality in real estate was taken for granted. However, in our country, even the reinforced concrete structures were neglected and shoddy work was apparent all over the country.

**ICJ:** Could you please briefly highlight the major achievements of the Hiranandani Group?

**NH:** The Hiranandani Group has worked on real estate projects for more than 2 decades and has created small and large real estate projects in the residential, industrial, commercial and retail sectors. Later on, we have diversified into hospital, entertainment, retail, infotech, education and horticulture. The metamorphosis of the

place from a lonely hillside quarry with about 20 trees to one that is bustling with activity, with over 5 acres of greenery, as well as top-of-the-line commercial, residential, recreational and educational facilities is something we all cherish. We are also in the process of putting up a 110-bed hospital which will have state-of-the-art equipment and facilities as well. Hiranandani Estates in Thane has also provided us with a deep sense of satisfaction as we have not only been able to improve upon our pioneering ef-

forts at Powai but are also incorporating the technological changes that the last two decades have brought upon all of us.

**ICJ:** With the availability of easy home-loans at affordable rates of interest, the housing sector in urban India is showing healthy signs of growth. What are the steps needed to sustain and enhance this tempo?

**NH:** The Government of India has a vision to provide "Housing for all"

### Niranjan Hiranandani



**Mr Niranjan Hiranandani** is the Managing Director of the Hiranandani Group of Companies (including construction). The group is today considered as a producer of good quality housing and commercial premises in the country for which the group has won prestigious awards. Apart from construction, the group has diversified into education, horticulture, hospitality, entertainment, information technology, customer interaction centres and retail.

A commerce graduate and a financial cost accountant, Mr Hiranandani is on the board of many government committees. Currently, he is the president of the Maharashtra Chambers of Housing Industry (MCHI), member of Task Force for Reforms in Housing And Urban Development, Government of India, member of the Study Group on Slum Rehabilitation Scheme (Maharashtra Government), Chairman of Mumbai City, Development & Environment Committee of Indian Merchant Chambers (IMC), to mention a few. He had also been the ex-director of Housing and Urban Development Corporation Ltd (HUDCO).

by the year 2010. Towards achieving this, they have brought out a, National Habitat Policy. This policy was discussed in the Lok Sabha and approved by the Opposition as well. It is a wonderful document in which many key issues have been addressed for creating sustained growth in the housing sector. It only needs to be "enforced" / implemented at all levels down the line and the results will be there for all to see.

I believe, that the State Governments need to take appropriate steps to scrap Urban Land Ceiling (ULC), rationalise stamp duty and improve the processes of sanctioning building plans, a clear cut policy of eradication of slums and its upgradation needs to be worked out in earnest.

**ICJ:** Earlier, we used to build bungalows and isolated buildings. Today, the emphasis is on the development of townships and housing colonies. Your own slogan also says "Building Better Communities". Could you please briefly tell us about the significance of this new trend?

**NH:** As the world heads toward becoming a global community with telecommunication breaking down distance and time barriers, people are starting to look for more quality and meaning in their endeavours. A self-contained township provides the opportunities for more interaction, wide and varied exposure and most importantly, minimised travel – ergo more time for self and family. From a developer's point of

view, there are plenty of opportunities in exploiting economies of scale, using the larger tract of land to plan out the development, provide more open spaces, more modern amenities and facilities and generally a better environment for communal living and sharing.

**ICJ:** What are latest trends in commercial property development?

**"There are plenty of opportunities in exploiting economies of scale, using the larger tract of land to plan out the development, provide more open spaces, more modern amenities and facilities and generally a better environment for communal living and sharing"**

**NH:** The information technology revolution has rewritten the way in which commercial properties are to be developed. They want to locate in knowledge corridors and require ready-to-move in spaces with uninterrupted power supply and all other services in operational mode. They can move their business locale across the globe very rapidly. So, from a developer's perspective, he would need to anticipate the IT industry needs that he can cater to

**"In other conventional areas of concreting, we are exploring the use of 4<sup>th</sup> generation plasticisers with an aim to achieve high strength and durable concrete which is crack free, homogenous and durable"**

and prepare for it from at least a year or more in advance. Obviously, this has its attendant risks. There

are also changes in materials, equipments, systems, procedures, etc which one needs to try and keep abreast with for efficient functioning.

**ICJ:** What is your opinion on the "Urban Land Ceiling Act" and "Rent Act"?

**NH:** The ULC Act is an antiquated law that should have been buried a long time ago. It was introduced during the Emergency of 1976 with the intention of preventing hoarding of land in private hands as well as facilitating the government in executing social and common welfare schemes. The implementation of this scheme was a monumental failure. It only served to further complicate an already complex situation. I have stated this from numerous platforms and many prominent luminaries from the legal and business world have also voiced the same sentiment. Mr Ram Jethmalani deserves kudos for having scrapped the ULC Act at the Centre, when he was Law Minister. However, land being a State subject, many States are yet to follow suit and scrap the Act. It is also very unfortunate that leading, progressive states like Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh are still clinging onto this draconian Act.

The Rent Act is another such law that only served to create artificial shortages in housing, especially in metro cities like Mumbai and New Delhi. People have kept apartments locked up for years and years for fear that they may not get it back when they have need for it. Locked up premises tend to decay and later require extensive repairs. This is a national waste. The recent amendments will definitely help. However, the flat owner needs to be

convinced that not only is his asset safe, but that in case he needs to, he has recourse to a legal system that will work quickly and efficiently without costing him exorbitant amounts of money and decades in times.

**ICJ:** You have a strong R&D department; what are the areas of its focus?

**NH:** The use of admixtures and chemicals is a continual and on-going R&D effort. The objectives will naturally vary with the application. For instance, in compound paving, a wear resistant surface, achieving greater strength with a leaner concrete mix, opening the road to traffic quickly are the focus areas. In other conventional areas of concreting, we are exploring the

use of 4<sup>th</sup> generation plasticizers with an aim to achieve high strength and durable concrete which is crack free, homogenous and durable.

---

**"Through IT and telecom, we are heading towards a borderless world. International operating practices in environmental and other systems will need to be put into place"**

---

**ICJ:** Your commitment to environmental conservation is well known. In this context, TERI is planning to introduce green building rating system in India on the lines of LEED (USA) and BREEAM (UK).

**What steps are needed to popularise such systems amongst builders?**

**NH:** As mentioned earlier, through IT and telecom, we are heading towards a borderless world. International operating practices in environmental and other systems will need to be put into place. A seminar on green buildings was held last year in Hyderabad. More such seminars and workshops will be required to help disseminate the information to all levels.

**ICJ:** What are your plans for the future?

**NH:** Our projects in Powai and Thane are on-going and we are actively looking at other projects. I think our by-line "Building Better Communities" expresses our future plans quite aptly.

• • •