

Meeting between the Chief Minister of Odisha and the Consul-General of Thailand, Kolkata and Staff on 5th July, 2013 in Bhubaneswar

The interactive meeting of Mr. Prasittidesh Sorasatra, the Consul-General, Kolkata and staff with the Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik took place on 5th July, 2013 at the Secretariat. The meeting was attended by Mr Injeti Srinivas, the development commissioner-cum-additional secretary, Mr Suresh Ch. Mahapatra, principal secretary to government, G. Mathi Vathanan, commissioner-cum-secretary commerce and transport, parliamentary affairs Government of Odisha, chairman-cum-managing director of Industrial Promotion and Investment Corporation of Odisha Ltd. (a Government of Odisha undertaking), Sanjeev Kumar Chadha, director of horticulture and secretary, Vishal K. Dev, chairman-cum-managing director of Odisha Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation (a Government of Odisha undertaking) and many more. The media and press like the Political Business Daily, the New Indian Express, the Times of India, the Telegraph, and Orissa Post and some local news channels like Orissa Time were present to cover the meeting. The development commissioner-cum-additional Chief Secretary, Injeti Srinivas started the discussion by introducing the various sectors in Odisha. He highlighted the strong Buddhist heritage in Ratnagiri, Dhauli, Udaygiri, Ganjam, Phoolbani and so on. The Bhubaneswar airport will be upgraded to International airport. He mentioned that Thailand has a great strength in aquaculture, agriculture, food sector like food processing and packaging. Odisha is also progressive in these sectors. He pointed out Odisha and Thailand's potentials where both can work jointly. Firstly, in the area of food sector, food parks can be set up in collaboration between Odisha and Thailand. These parks can be equipped with the state of the art food processing where Thailand has mastery and can share their knowledge.

Another area of collaboration can be in auto parts, motor parts, steel plants, communication, energy, electronics and computers, tourism, agriculture and so on. Thirdly, he spoke about Thailand's efficiency in Disaster Management. Disaster Management agencies are possible between Thailand and Odisha. Fourthly, Bhubaneswar is working hard to develop its education sector and its health sector is also growing day by day. There can be exchange of students between Thailand and Odisha. A part from this Thailand can join hands with Odisha in Micro small industrial sectors. Area of fisheries is also an important sector where the investment can be forwarded. Both Thailand and Odisha can participate in joint business councils and set up joint forums and have joint ventures.

Mr. Srinivas also proposed that Thailand and Odisha can set up Buddhist Circuit as Odisha has lot to offer to Buddhism culturally. He also said that since the Ministry of External Affairs is strengthening the relation between India and the BIMSTEC countries and Odisha being a very core region in this area so the state has lot to offer. He introduced the Shamuka project which is a beach project in Puri. The State Government through Odisha Tourism Development Corporation has decided to develop the Shamuka beach to attract tourists. The Shamuka beach project is envisaged to come up on over 3000 acres of land. The Shamuka beach would include 5/4 star hotels, resorts, spa, convention centre, golf course,

exhibition complex, eco parks and so on. The State Government is developing the necessary support infrastructure in the areas like road, telecommunications, and electricity and so on.

The Consul-General of the Royal Thai Consulate-General Kolkata, Mr Prasittidesh Vichitsorasatra put forward the close cultural ties between Thailand and India which has been there for a very long time-since Lord Buddha and Chandragupta. The Thai crown prince has visited Bodhgaya in India several times. 70 % of Thai visitors come to India to visit Bodhgaya. He called in for joint ventures and investments in hotel management and resorts in Bodhgaya as it is not enough in that area. The Consul-General also said that in a week there are 150 flights between Thailand and 10 other cities in India except in Bhubaneswar which could be possible if there are enough passengers and more business activities and will report to the Thai Government as there are many Buddhist temples in Odisha which the Thai Buddhists can visit.

He also spoke about cooperation in the investment and business fields that Thailand has expertise for example the agro industry Charoen Pokphand (CP) which ranks number one in poultry feed and animal farming in the world. It is already doing business in Chennai and West Bengal. Another company that he mentioned about was the construction company-Italian Thai Development Public Company Limited which is now 100 % Thai company. It was involved in the construction of the new terminal of the Kolkata Airport. It is also working in the construction of the on-going East West metro project in Kolkata and also in a metro project in Delhi. The company has also been involved in the construction of Ahmedabad airport.

A part from this, the Consul-General talked about the country to country interaction. In the past 2 years the former Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva and the current Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra have visited India. This year from 30-31 May, the Indian Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh Visited Thailand. The Consul-General introduced the Board of Investment (BOI) office of Thailand in Mumbai which has been opened in the last month. He said that Indian and Thai businessmen are most welcome to get assistance on business and investment issues from this body.

Thus the meeting was very interactive where the common interests of both the countries came up. Various sectors where both Odisha and Thailand has expertise got highlighted. The meeting is expected to bore fruits in the near future.

Report submitted by: Piu Rahman

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