

Report on the Interactive session on “Houston: A Gateway to the Americas”

The World Trade Centre Mumbai and All India Association of Industries with Greater Houston Partnership held a delegation meet at the South Lounge, WTC Complex on April 20, 2015. The main aim of this meet was to boost trade connections between the delegation and the WTC members and invitees. The delegation was headed by Mayor Annise Parker and was accompanied by Deanna Abdeen, Deputy Principal Officer, Consulate General of the United States in Mumbai, Bob Pertierra, Chief Economic Development Officer, Greater Houston partnership & World Trade Center Houston, Ashok Garg, President, The Indo-American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Houston and Jagdip Ahluwalia, Executive Director, The Indo-American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Houston. The delegation had representatives from business concerns in the sectors of oil & gas, aviation, aerospace, engineering consultancy, construction, medical & healthcare, IT, logistics & distribution and energy were present.

The mission was to focus on increasing trade and investment between Mumbai and Houston in a wide array of sectors to include energy, civil aviation, manufacturing, engineering, infrastructure, skills and human resource development, healthcare, transportation and oil and gas.

Vijay Kalantri, Vice Chairman, MVIRDC World Trade Centre & President All India Association of Industries welcomed the guests and mentioned the importance of India's partnership with US to realize the 7.5% economic growth in 2015 (forecast by the IMF). Highlighting the energy requirement of India, he hinted at the possibility of benefiting from the shale gas production in US.

Deanna, in her opening address said that the India-US relation was going through exciting times. Both the Indian and US governments are committed to expanding and deepening India-US Partnership in economic, strategic and technological dimensions. She added that the bilateral trade was nearly US\$100 billion with optimism to increase it to US\$500 billion in the coming years. She spoke of PM Modi's visit to US and the post effects on US-India trade. While introducing Houston, she said that the city was a natural partner in the relationship and that the two countries already shared extensive business, trade and cultural ties.

Providing an overview on the City of Houston, Mayor Parker said that Houston is ranked 4th largest city in the US and in the world. India is 6th in trade with Houston. Indo-US economic ties are pegged at US\$ 500 billion in the sectors of power, energy and in recycling management. It is one of the strongest economies in US and the best place to

do business in term of its geographic location with India. Houston is not just the oil capital but also the economic centre of Texas. It is an international city having practically all Indian dialects being spoken.

She also noted that the Houston-Galveston Customs District is the third busiest gateway for US-Indian trade by sea and air. Exports to India totalled USD 1.5 billion in 2014 while imports from the country totalled USD 3.2 billion in 2014.

Bob Pertierra, Chief Economic Development Officer, Greater Houston Partnership, in his remarks said that Houston and India had a total trade worth US 4.7 billion which has grown four times. Houston is the 4th largest contributor to US GDP. Thereafter, he presented a video on Houston.

Capt. Somesh Batra proposed the vote of thanks. The event ended with a cultural program by Sunita Bhuyan, the renowned musician and a violinist in the Indian style of Hindustani music.