

Brief Report --- National Conference on Complying to and Leveraging Clause-135 of Companies Bill, 2012 for Maximum Impact: A Government Industry Dialogue

16th July 2013, ITC Chola, Chennai

The day long National Conference on Clause-135 held at ITC Grand Chola, Chennai on 16 July 2013 was a resounding success with more than 75 participants representing companies across different sectors and geographies. The corporate representation at the conference would contribute more than INR 1000 crore to CSR projects annually, once the Companies Bill gets passed. The participants included board of directors, company secretaries and head of foundations amongst others.

The Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs was the Knowledge Partner for this conference which was supported by the British High Commission, Madras Chamber of Commerce and Industry, NASSCOM Foundation and driven by NextGen- The Sustainability Management company from IIM-Bangalore.

Mr. T. Shivaraman (President, MCCI and CEO, Managing Director & CEO, Shriram EPC Ltd) and Mr. Jamie Cribb (Deputy Head of Mission and Head of UK Trade and Investment Chennai, British High Commission) made the introductory remarks.

Dr. BhaskarChatterjee (DG & CEO, IICA) delivered the key note address and highlighted the catalytic role of the Bill in creating an enabling environment for well-structured, long-term CSR strategies and projects that can effectively solve the countries' social, economic and environmental issues. Dr. Chatterjee also highlighted several important provisions in the Bill on CSR Policy and spending by companies. He explained at length the governments thought process in the form of the latest version of the Draft CSR Rules. These have been widely shared across the country with all concerned in order to

receive feedback. His in-depth presentation was followed by an elaborate Q&A session with participants who had a number of queries on Clause 135.

Following the Q&A session, participants heard from Mr. Madhavan, CEO, Cognizant Foundation and Ms. Vidya Shankar, Trustee & Honorary CEO, Shriram Foundation on CSR strategies and programs in their organizations and the impact of Clause 135 on their companies. This was followed by a panel discussion led by Ms. Rita Soni (CEO, NASSCOM Foundation) to garner global and local perspectives from leading MNCs on their CSR best practices as well as specific challenges they would face as MNCs in the implementation of Clause 135.

The resounding message from the Conference was that corporates wanted to be guided along closely in the implementation of Clause 135, and the session with Dr. Bhaskar Chatterjee helped immensely to provide clarity to corporates on the next steps.

Mr. Nikhil Pant, Chief Programme Officer, National Foundation for CSR (NFCSR) at the IICA presented the way forward and shared how the NFCSR was gearing up for the rollout of the CSR agenda in the country. For this, it was developing a national NGO hub to facilitate projects, evolving a data analysis portal for CSR research, initiating CSR trainings and consultancies, setting up a CSR Gateway, facilitating collaborative projects through a 'Cloud' and taking up Sustainability at the national level. He emphasized that IICAs dialogue with the industry and civil society with regard to the CSR Bill had created much awareness on the subject and the rollout of the new agenda was likely to happen due to compliance or the market, or both.

This Conference successfully brought together all the different stakeholders of Clause 135 onto a single platform, where they were able to express their perspective and concerns, and work towards collaborating for a better overall impact of the Clause.

Nikhil Pant

Dated: 24th July 2013