

UK/India: Retail, Food and Drink: Accessing Opportunities
19th Feb, 2013, Taj Palace, New Delhi

FICCI Retail Committee on 19th Feb organized a Round table for facilitating a discourse amongst India & UK Retailers. The session was chaired by Lord Gulam Noon, Noon Products Ltd & Chancellor, University of East London from UK and by Mr. Bijou Kurien, President & CE – Lifestyle, Reliance Retail from India.

Lord Gulam Noon welcomed the delegates and emphasized that both UK and India needs to learn from each other. He pointed out that the potential of Indian Retail market is huge. The retail sector contributes 10% of GDP and 8% of employment. He was of the view that with the opening up of the sector, the small businesses will not see negative impact, in fact, they will also grow with the entry of the foreign players. The big take away from this was that the wastage in terms of fruits and vegetables would be arrested.

Mr. Bijou Kurien highlighted that consumption is less in India as compared to UK. The consumption in India is one-sixth of what a person consumes in UK. He also indicated that 35% of the fruits and vegetables get wasted. He mentioned that we have an evolving Retail market but it would require technology, expertise and capital. He highlighted on the dynamism of Indian Consumption, the efforts that a retailer needs to put in to be able to give “Value for Money”.

Further in the session, Mr. Abheek Singhi, Partner and Director, Boston Consulting Group & Prof Arpita Mukherjee, Professor, ICRIER discussed on the status of current FDI policy in Multi Brand Retail and deliberated upon the conditions therein. Both the think tanks feel that there has to a unique and a right business model tailor-made for India. It is imperative to invest time and efforts in R&D and building trust.

To present the success story in Single Brand Retail, Mr. Utsav Seth, CEO & MD, Pavers England talked about Pavers England Ltd. He clearly mentioned that with the size and dynamism which country like India offers a retailer has to come with an absolute commitment for a medium to long term investment with emphasis on value creation rather than the P&L expectation.

The delegation had immense variety from both the sides.

From UK side we had Mr. Jan Smits, CEO, Asia Middle East & Africa, Intercontinental Hotels; Mr. Paul Deep Wouhra , Director, East End Foods; Mr. Tony Deep Wouhra , Chairman, East End Foods; Mr. Moni Varma, Founder and Chairman, Veetee Rice; Mr. Tim Stonehouse, Sales Director, Muntons; Mr. Frances McAuley, International Director, Debenhams; Mr. Peter Simon, Founder Monsoon and Accessorize; Mr. Paul Walsh, CEO Diageo; Mr. Amarjit Basi, Principal, New College Nottingham; Mr. Peter Armitage; Chairman, OCS; Lord Karan Bilimoria, Chairman, Cobra Beer; Mr. James Torquil McIntosh, Director, Sybarite Architects; Mr. Richard Scudamore, Chief Executive, Premier League; Mr. Nigel Lang, Managing Director, Flitabout; Mr. Ian Wright, Corporate Relations Director, Diageo; Mr. John Scott, Head of Business Development, Debenhams.

The Indian delegation comprised of Mr. Raj Jain, MD & CEO, Bharti-Walmart; Mr. Sanjay Kapoor, MD, Genesis Luxury; Mr. Sanjeev Mohanty, MD, Benetton India; Mr. Pranay Sinha, MD, Star Centres; Mr. Ankur Bhatia, Bird Group; Mr. Dev Amritesh, President & COO, Dunkin Donuts India; Mr. Ajit Joshi, CEO & MD, Infiniti Retail (CROMA); Ms. Saloni Nangia; Mr. Justin Sargent, MD, Nielsen India; Mr. Akash Gupta,

PWC Coopers; Mr. Sameer Barde, Director Corporate Affairs, Tesco; Mr. Venu Nair, MD, Marks & Spencer; Mr. Kumar Rajagopalan, CEO, Retailers Association of India; etc.

There were intense discussions on how supermarkets can not only boost GDP but solve a lot of other problems like employment, infrastructure, etc. The existing skill gap in the sector was also highlighted. Understanding of complex inter-state and inter-city tax structure which varies from state to state and also from product to product was highlighted as an imperative tool to success in India. New College, Nottingham informed about their courses in retailing and their latest venture in India.

Mr. Satnam Arora also shared his experience of working with supermarkets.

The event provided a wonderful opportunity of networking for our retailers. FICCI is hopeful to see future joint ventures and success stories emerging from this interaction.