



**Address of Ambassador Bhaswati Mukherjee, President, IHC at the 34th
AGM of IHC: 1st March 24**

Dear Members of our Governing Council, Heads and representatives of Institutions, Members of our Habitat Family, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Welcome to the 34th Annual General Body meeting of the India Habitat Centre. The main agenda is the presentation by Director IHC of the 'Annual Report' of the India Habitat Centre along with the audited balance sheet and the accompanying financial statements for the year 2022-23. The detailed activities of the period under review are available in Director's report and will be presented by him.

Among the highlights, the most significant from my perspective was the heart-warming patriotic celebrations centring on 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav', India's 75th year of Independence, in a special programme. 75 years of 'Reel Magic - Looking Back with Nostalgia' added a special flavour to the celebrations with the best that cinema could offer during this period.

The Habitat International Film Festival (HIFF) 2022 also returned to delight us as did the IHC Theatre Festival. Holi was celebrated with joy as was the well known Lohri celebrations after the hiatus imposed by the pandemic.

Habitat, as is clear from the report, has emerged stronger than ever after the pandemic. Many pragmatic and wise decisions were taken by the Governing Council and the Habitat management. In particular, let me highlight the importance of the decision implemented with effect from 1st May 2021 onwards that the Centre should take over the operation of the facilities relating to the hospitality sector. This has yielded huge dividends. The finances of the Centre have also substantially recovered as is clear from the financial statements being presented.

Allow me to highlight some new and major developments:

We welcome India Foundation which joined our IHC family in December 2022 when they occupied the office space surrendered by IL&FS. India Foundation is the latest institution to join as an institutional member.

In my address to the AGM last year, I had mentioned that IHC plans to undertake major renovations and up gradations of the infrastructure. These have taken place or are in final stages of completion as follows:

Renovation/ Refurbishing of Banquet Halls, namely Magnolia, Marigold, Tamarind and Cypress:

Our in-house engineering team completely redeveloped the 'Habitat Hub' area and landscaped it into a remarkably well designed and aesthetic outdoor public space, with interspersed green areas, that can be used for restaurant and banquet purposes as well. This development of the area addressed and successfully resolved the twin problems of seepage from the earlier open land into the basement areas below by ensuring proper drainage and water-proofing, as well as of maintaining the aesthetic beauty of the Hub area throughout the year.

Green Initiative: IHC has applied for GRIHA certification for Existing Buildings (GRIHA-EB) - GRIHA has been acknowledged as India's own green building rating system. In a short space of time, IHC will be a certified Green Building taking advantage of its unique design and other green initiatives taken, as reported in the Annual Report.

IHC continued the process of replacing all Elevators in the Hospitality areas in a phased manner, which shall be equipped with new safety features and modern technology.

The Programmes at IHC continue with its monthly and annual events. Every effort is made to inform our members in advance so that they can participate in larger numbers.

Habitat Library is attracting more members. We have much to offer and it is gratifying to note that so many of our members are authors, judging from our Author's Corner, the last being our dear colleague and team member Dr. Alka Pandey.

IHC launched its new Food Court, Habiteria with kiosks of different cuisines in May 2023. It seats over 200 people indoors and outdoors. It is an amazing multi cuisine experience.

It has been our endeavour to offer a complete food experience, on a pan Indian basis, as well as globally. India's diverse food traditions are an intrinsic element of India's soft power, disseminated through her inclusive cultural and civilisation heritage across millennia. Every region has its own traditions, religions and cultures that influence food habits and patterns of eating.

Shri Rakesh Anand, IHC's talented and innovative head of Food and Beverages Operations with a dedicated staff of over 350 including Services & Kitchen, strives to ensure a unique culinary experience in each of its 6 food outlets.

In the same spirit and conscious that Indian cuisine dates back over 5,000 years and is a vast constellation of culinary influences and traditions, IHC has on 1st November

presented the Indian restaurant in a new avatar as अन्न (pronounced "ann"). This word is commonly used in various Indian languages to refer to food.

After careful thought and reflection, this Sanskrit word was selected, symbolic of 'food' or 'grain' to offer food for the mind and the soul. This is reflected in the carefully crafted menu, which consists of a variety of traditional and regional foods of India. In consonance with this philosophy, the restaurant also offers a feast for the eyes, with displays of vibrant and timeless traditions of Indian art which form our living heritage.

In the same spirit, IHC has commenced a Home cooking series, and invited contributions and suggestions from its members. The response has been good and 3 menus which have been prepared on a trial basis, and which find mention in the new menu. They are intended to provide new regional options, both vegetarian and non-vegetarian.

'Transformations Parivartan' is a new IHC initiative with a high-profile Editorial Board to launch a quarterly for its members and other constituents. The subtlety and complexity of the many shades and hues of India Habitat Centre, seamlessly transforming itself as it moves in step with a new and resurgent India inspired the birth of 'Transformation/ Parivartan'.

The contents reflect the new dynamics of India and of IHC while focussing on some important developments this year, ranging from our G20 Presidency, the transformation of Delhi from its neo colonial shadows to a proud nationalism and a new foreign and economic policy that marks a milestone in the nation's efforts to forge its own destiny.

The production of 'Transformation' helped to demonstrate IHC's unique entity. The symbol of IHC offers a perfect explanation of its 'Mission'. The symbol in its entirety represents the determination of India Habitat Centre to resolve and restore at every level - socio-economic, cultural, environmental and ecological - a balanced, harmonious and improved way of life. This flows from India's cultural and civilizational heritage. Along with Government's active support, the IHC gradually evolved into the dynamic institution of today.

Habitat is now more active on social media. A dynamic team regularly tweets on our activities.

Habitat also recently offered its premises to ACB to host a major Bridge Tournament. This was deeply appreciated by many of you present, who, like me, are keen Bridge players!

I would like to express deep appreciation to the Members of the Governing Council and the IHC Institutional and other Members, for their unstinting support. Let me record our deepest gratitude to Honourable Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas, as well as Housing and Urban Affairs Hardeep Singh Puri, for the continued support and encouragement of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.

We are also grateful to the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, the Delhi Police, the Delhi Pollution Control Committee and other civic and government agencies for their continued cooperation.

I would request you to adopt the Annual Report of the India Habitat Centre, along with the Annual Accounts for the Financial Year 2022-23.

As the 1st woman President of this august institution, I have tried to provide encouragement and guidance to team Habitat as we move Habitat forward to greater success. I would like to thank every member of the Habitat team for their contribution.

As an empowered woman, I have tried to specially support all our talented ladies at every level. They in so many ways represent the invisible hands holding the institution together. President then narrated an inspiring true story of Ms Rekha, one of the House keeping staff of IHC to all present.

I am also committed to improve the proportion of qualified woman members of Habitat. In the words of T.S. Eliot:

“For last year’s words belong to last year’s language,

And next year’s words await another voice,

And to make an end is to make a beginning”.

We have made a great beginning.

Thank you.

Ambassador Bhaswati Mukherjee

President IHC