

Mr. R. R. Ankola, President FCBM, Past Presidents of the Federation, Managing Committee Members, Past Presidents and senior members of EICMA, my dear friends, ladies and gentlemen,

Today, with great pride and humility, I accept the mantle of leadership of the Eastern India Corrugated Box Manufacturers' Association. I am grateful for the trust you have bestowed and appreciate the confidence expressed by the members of EICMA. I am delighted to be entrusted with the association's success and am committed to guide it into the future. Thank you.

Leading this association is like building a house - one storey at a time. Each of the fourteen previous presidents orchestrated the construction of a new storey, building on the base, laid by his predecessors. Each leader responded to the challenges of his time. Sri M. L. Bengani, Sri Garewal, Mr. B. N. Ghosh, Mr. A. M. Ghosh, Mr. A. B. Ajmera, Mr. S. N. Harlalka, Sri D. D. Kothari, Dani ji, Sri. R.G. Agarwala, Sri B. D. Kothari, Binoy da, Biplab da, have all gone on to become legends. Being a successor to my dear friends Hemant Saraogi and Bharat Kedia, is by no means an easy task – they have raised the bar and trying to emulate their achievements will be difficult. Your association, conceived on the pavement on Colootala Street, which started on a steam engine driven by Ajmeraji, B. N. Ghosh and others, is today running like the Duranta or the Shatabdi Express.

So, what will the next storey of the house -- the storey that we will build together -- look like? Fortunately, the association upon which we build, has a strong base. We do not have to rebuild the foundations of the house

because Bharat and his predecessors have left it sound. We must strive to maintain the mission that has served the association so well.

But the world is changing and we must change with it. New technologies are coming in everyday. Manufacturing practices are being re-visited. Hot competition. Price pressure. We have to adapt to these changes to survive.

Recently, there has been a marked increase in the capacity – by upgrading existing units and also new entrant in the industry. This is a healthy sign. There is space for everyone. We just have to keep our eyes and ears open and create and develop new markets.

While we all pile on one multinational company, fighting for space, there is an untapped or under-utilised market for packaging of fruits and vegetables and horticultural produce. Your association, with assistance from FCBM, KCBMA and WICMA, has already taken the initiative in that direction and I personally would request you to come forward and approach whatever local contacts you may have, in creating this market which has huge potential for our industry. The association and the federation will always assist you in your endeavour.

I am fortunate to have a vibrant and dedicated team this year. Chokhaniji, our treasurer - inspite of his failing health, has ensured that the financial health of EICMA remain safe and sound. Presidents may come and go, but EICMA cannot afford to let go of this treasure from the treasurer's post. Quiet and subdued by nature, but always reliable when a responsibility is given to him, Narendra is an asset in the VP's chair.

Young and dynamic, Mohit Bajaj, Hon. Secretary is a live wire dynamite – too full of energy and vigour. He is a young man, whose exploits are spread across the country and even abroad. So much so that, Harish bhai and Rohit bhai have taken it upon themselves to dissipate some of his energy from time to time. I am lucky to have him on board along with other members of the managing committee, past presidents and above all – the members of this association. It's a good team and we hope to perform well. And ofcourse, the captain is only as good as his team.

I hope we will increase membership and grow good sustainable members. Let's face it, the industry we are in, do require more people!

Talking about our industry my friends, we are a green industry. What we manufacture is re-cycleable and bio-degradable. A “biodegradable” product has the ability to break down, safely and relatively quickly, by biological means, into the raw materials of nature and disappear into the environment - biodegrading into the soil. So at the end of the day, our boxes become dust, mitti – whether they are manufactured from semi-automatic plant or from automatic plant. Despite my pathetic accent, I cannot resist from quoting Baba Sk. Farid –

Vekh Farida, Mitti Khulli, Mitti Uthay Mitti Dulli,
Mitti Hassey Mitti Rovay,
Ant Mitti da Mitti Hovay,
Na kar Bandy meri meri
Na eh teri, na eh meri

Thank you my friends for coming today to share this celebration of the association. No one gets to this point in a career alone, and I am grateful for the support of many people. I would like to acknowledge my family, friends, mentors, and colleagues. I particularly want to thank my wife, Reshme, for tolerating me for so many years. I hope she appreciates the fact that I have atleast got rid of one vice against my name.

There is one regret I have though – I wish my father was here today. Probably he would have said – “I hope you do justice to your job”. I am sure, he is watching over me from somewhere. My maa is here today and I seek her blessings.

Let me close by saying, “Let the past go; look to the future. This association is greater than any individual. Stand by it. Its foundations are laid in honour and good faith. It will shed light, give cheers, and multiply earnestness, in the years yet to come.”

I cannot wish for a better future for Team EICMA and for the next storey we will build together.

Thank you very much