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Global work with 'desi' team

MintHomes wants to break new ground by linking Coimbatore with its global realty projects.



Mr Raj Natarajan, Director, MintHomes Pvt Ltd.

R. Yegya Narayanan

Mr Raj Natarajan, Director, MintHomes Pvt Ltd, Coimbatore, is getting ready to hand over the first phase of his residential project in Coimbatore in the next few months to his clients. Nothing new for a developer but something novel has gone into this development.

After three decades in the real-estate business in the US and presence in other countries, Mr Natarajan hopes to bring to bring together the efficiency and systems available elsewhere and take the human resource and skills present in India to add value to his business in other countries. He is creating a platform in Coimbatore for managing his global construction activity. Mr Natarajan is based in Houston, US, and hopes to use the expertise gained in the US in his Indian operations and tap the skills of his Indian staff in running his business worldwide.

Capital and systems

He said Indian employees look for opportunities to work and learn. What he has tried to bring from the US are: capital, systems that enable people to produce the best effort, provide continuity, consistency, and customer service. The US businesses are better geared towards customers, he says.

He said by combining the US and Indian practices, he offers his staff better systems in which they could operate and be 'highly productive'. The workers on the project site in India have safety and security systems in place and their productivity is better. The buyers get products that have international features.

Mr Natarajan, whose international construction business generates around Rs 300 crore income annually, said his US/global business is also set to gain from his Indian experience. He was successful in the US for 25 years and earlier had opportunities to go to South America for pursuing real-estate business. But he was worried about sustaining his work there. He was not comfortable till he came to India.

He said Indian employees "take a lot more initiative and learn a lot more" and once they learn, they are able to sustain the process. Hence, he planned to use India as a base for his international operations. He has opened offices in Eastern Europe and New Zealand and aims to support the operations in the US and other countries from India.

Not just back-office

What the Indian staff would be doing is not mere back-office work, he says. In his international operations, whether in Croatia, Hungary or New Zealand, he would involve the local people because they know the local conditions and culture.

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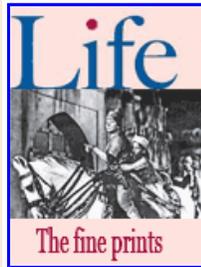
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But the core of the team would come from India. What he has in mind is to use the architectural design capabilities of the Indians. The designs would be taken from India to Croatia to be localised and people from here could go abroad to provide training to the project staff.

He would have on board staff from the US, Croatia, Hungary, New Zealand and India. But it will be the Indian team that will provide 'consistency and continuity' to the process. The software development for all the operations and the support systems would be from Coimbatore. Software development is a key factor in any business to be run efficiently and this would not be mere programming. Even the brochures for projects in other countries would be designed and produced in Coimbatore for which the staff would be sent abroad to help conceptualise it.

People have used Indian talent as 'labour arbitrage' for cost effectiveness. This would not ensure continuous order flow because there could be flight of business to another country if its labour was found to be cheaper than in India.

Mr Natarajan said he planned to increase the staff strength from 55 now to 100 by the end of the year.

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