**SCAI North India Meet**

**Malls Should be Social Spaces, Not Retail Real Estates Structures: SCAI**

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Shopping Centers Association of India (SCAI) Board of Directors’ meeting ***hosted by Select CITYWALK*** was held in Delhi on August 9, 2019. In its inaugural SCAI North India meet, 26 members from the northern region gathered to discuss the role, aim and initiatives of the organization. The two-hour session was attended by SCAI Board of Directors, SCAI members as well as top retail real estate leaders and shopping mall developers.

The following was discussed in the meet

**What is SCAI?**

SCAI, a non-profit organization, was set up with the vision to engage in and encourage the development of the Shopping Centre Industry in India, by equipping it with the requisite knowledge base and operational skillsto enable it to assume its rightful place in society, the economy, and the world. The agenda of SCAI is to create the image of shopping malls as a social centre or community hub. In the meeting, SCAI proposed that shopping centers should be treated as social spaces and not just real estate malls.

**The Purpose of SCAI**

SCAI aims to play an anchor’s role in the evolution of the Indian Shopping Centre Industry. It will consolidate the entity of individual shopping centers, helping them merge into the larger society as an institution of importance. The association aims to achieve this by:

* Work with retail industry stakeholders to increase consumption
* Advocacy & industry representation with government and policymakers
* Focused research into the architecture, aesthetic and design aspects
* Training on centre management, marketing and promotion
* Support Upcoming Centers
* Identify new avenues & techniques for growth

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| **INITIATIVES TAKEN BY SCAI** * 2010-11 - Fought on Development Control Rules (DCR) amendment bill in Mumbai
* 2011-14 – Fought on Open Access case with MSEDCL for Malls in Maharashtra
* Filed a case against Parking issues with the Telangana government
* Filed intervention applications against parking issues in Gujarat and Maharashtra High Courts
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**Agenda of the Meeting**

The agenda of the meeting was:

* Industry Issues & the Benefits of Strengthening SCAI:Discussion with Shopping Centre representatives
* Challenges faced by Shopping Centers in North India.
* Initiatives taken by SCAI so far and what more needs to be done as an industry body.
* Issues that need to be taken up with the appropriate authorities within the city or state and in some cases with the Central authorities.
* To layout the road map of activities to be undertaken by the company in the upcoming financial year including the appointment of senior-level management employees and finalization of membership fee structure.

Speaking on the occasion, **Amitabh Taneja, Chairman**, **SCAI**emphasized the idea of SCAI while pointing out its benefits.

“Everybody in this fraternity realizes that a shopping centre is a great opportunity, therefore it needs to be nurtured well. It is not just real estate. Weshould get together and create a level of understanding, knowledge, research work, training for our teams so that we can move forward and preserve SCAI. We should work with retail industry stakeholders to increase consumption, advocacy of industry, representation of government and policymakers, focused research, architecture, aesthetics, design, central marketing and promotion to support upcoming shopping centers, because we want these malls to be developed with more learning. These learnings could be within the industry and for the developers. SCAI is going to bring forward all these learnings to you,” he explained.

**Rajneesh Mahajan, CEO, Inorbit** **Malls** added to this saying, “One of the key agendas that a shopping centre wishes to take up is to differentiate between real estate and shopping centre business. So, if you see across India, all the by-laws on shopping centre development are applicable to office development as well. Whether it is fire safety, suppression, exit corridors or usage of common spaces, mall developers struggle for licenses for signages. We also struggle to use open spaces for promotions. The rules are so localized that they change from city to city and everywhere there is a new interpretation. Therefore, we want to advocate to the government that a shopping centre is not just a commercial development; it needs certain exemptions that are not applicable or available to some offices.”

**Dinaz Madhukar, Senior Vice President, DLF Luxury Retail & Hospitality** said, "As long as we were discussing issues, water crisis is a very big issue. In the Vasant Kunj complex, we see that we do not have any water and we do not have any government-provided water. The Delhi Jal Board does not give us water. The whole complex does not have a common water supply. In fact, we have written enough letters to the chief minister to whoever comes in our concern, there is nothing left we can do from our side, so I sincerely urge that if we as an industry team up and discuss these issues in timely intervals, it will just make us stronger and I think SCAIis a great initiativefor such issues.”

According to **Yogeshwar Sharma, CEO & Executive Director, Select CITYWALK**, SCAI should aim for positivity towards creating social spaces, by giving fair treatment to all mall developers. “We need to be seen asdoing good for society rather than being the face of capitalism. We need to become more transparent. If we are transparent, then SCAI will certainly come to our rescue. We need more regional directors so that the discussion can come from all streams and be discussed at a national level. They can activate and initiate issues and then we can figure out how to address them at a local or a national level,” he stated.

**Uddhav Poddar - Managing Director, Urban Square, Bhumika Group** stated, “If you look at the mindset of the journalist, judiciary and the administration, it clearly portrays us as capitalists and business-minded individuals. The mall is a large property, lakhs of people come in and for many those who do not like capitalism, we become the soft targets. We must communicate our sustainable initiatives strongly to our visitors. This will help change the mindset of society and will create a better environment.”

**Mukesh Kumar, CEO, Infiniti Mall** agreed, saying, “It is very important to reach out to people and tell them what we are doing. We decided that we have 3 priorities for SCAI to develop – first is advocacy of laws, second is to develop our team and gather data so others can become members and third is to provide requisite training. In three months, we can initiate training for operations, leasing and design and then we can invite experts to conduct workshops.”

**Abhishek Bansal, Executive Director, Pacific India**concurred saying that SCAI can turn out to be a great initiative, provided its directives are carried out in a structured format. He said that the organization should meet up at regular intervals to discuss the basic, as well as not-so-basic, issues faced by malls.

“For example, we proposed an idea to the government to introduce the concept of restaurants and entertainment zones together, which would enhance tourism in a state. Luckily for us, the idea was a hit with the government and the authorities even gave us some concessions in our shopping centers. So, there are a lot of things that can happen if we meet and talk on a regular basis, the first and foremost  being enlisting our priorities like how we should proceed, what are the issues that need immediate addressing, how do we take actionand whether we need any legal or professional advice and the way in which we should go ahead,” he concluded.