

HIGHLIGHTS FOR FEBRUARY 2008

~SHRACHI GROUP~

DIRECT NEWS

PARTICIPATION IN INDUSTRY ARTICLES:

Coverage appeared in:

- The Economic Times
- The Times of India

FINANCIAL RESULTS OF MAGMA SHRACHI FINANCE LTD:

Coverage appeared in:

- Hindustan Times
- The Telegraph

SNAPSHOTS

The Indian Real Estate Industry is on a roll; be it in the country or outside. The sector has witnessed immense growth in the past couple of years. The phenomenal increase in the Real Estate demand and access to funds were the key drivers for propelling the Indian real estate market into an overdrive. The industry received the much requisite first shot of funding in 2005 wherein the foreign direct investment (FDI) route was opened up for Indian real estate. Since then there has been no looking back, the real estate sector has transformed to reach \$57 billion in 2007, and has a potential to reach \$90 billion by 2012 according to the Eleventh Five Year Plan.

The ever increasing momentum has paved the way for exciting opportunities for both domestic as well as international investors. The real estate industry has multiple stakeholder's right from developers to investors (including private equity funds), financiers, buyers (including Real Estate Investment Trusts) and service providers such as property consultants, contractors and project management companies. A typical consolidation may be triggered by any of these stakeholders. Going forward, we expect the Indian real estate market to witness greater M&A activity driven by consolidation and the growing maturity of the market. This activity would ideally be supported by requisite regulatory framework and inherent attractiveness of the real estate sector.

Wi-Fi systems for DLF buildings - DLF Ltd is implementing Wi-Fi system in all its buildings. In a statement, the company said that it will implement Wi-Fi in all its buildings across the country, enabling its occupants to get an access to enterprise standard connectivity. The Wi-Fi systems will be provided by wireless broadband provider O-Zone Networks Ltd

More to Unitech than hits the eye- If anyone has to look into Unitech's balance sheets closely, he would immediately conclude the company owns roughly 90 acres of real estate in Mumbai. What is not known is that the country's second largest real estate with Ramesh Chandra at the helm actually controls 300 acres in the city - a good part of which is in south Mumbai-home to some of the most expensive properties.

Parsvnath plans first mall in Dehradun- Real estate firm Parsvnath Developers said it would invest Rs 40 crore to construct a mall-cum-multiplex in Dehradun. The project will have a four-screen multiplex and 150,000 sq ft saleable area and is expected to be completed in a year.

Realty FDI, FII break-up vague on pre-IPO stakes - The government has approved a clarification that FII investments in the sector were subject to FDI norms as prescribed by Press Note 2 (2005), which mandates a minimum land area of 10 hectares in case of housing plots and a minimum built up area of 50,000 sq meters in case of construction development projects.

Regulator for housing sector - For the last couple of years we are experiencing a zooming boom in real estate prices. Keeping in view the reports coming in the media, it seems that the trend will never stop at least in the near future or at least in the next 10 years. But the big question is whether the current trend can be sustained or is it just bubble? After seeing the out come of the reckless investments in East Asia and now the sub prime crisis in the US, the time has come to figure out if we are really in need of more and more residential units & the possibility of a crisis emerging in the sector.

India tops in retail supply chain loss - It's not just the booming retail industry in India that's making news internationally, but the alarming shrinkage rates (the percentage of loss of products between manufacture and point of sale) as well.

City to get first eco resort soon - Kolkatans will soon have an eco-friendly resort to spend the weekend. Executed by Safe, the project is funded by DFID through Kolkata Urban Service for Poor's Innovative Challenge Fund. The twin wetlands at Sukantanagr Bheri & Natar Bheri will offer the people a chance to relax in the midst of nature. Members of local self-help groups (SHGs) who are stakeholders in the project mooted by NGO South Asian Forum for Environment (Safe) will run the eco-tourism project.

COMPETITORS IN NEWS

DLF

L&T outbids DLF for Seawoods realty project - L&T out bid the real estate giant DLF and Indiabulls and emerged as the highest bidder at Rs 1,809 cr for the development of an integrated commercial complex at it Seawoods railway station in Navi Mumbai.

Gayatri projects: a smooth road ahead - Gayatri Projects has signed a MoU with real estate major DLF for jointly bidding for built-operate-transfer (BOT) road projects.

DLF presses on with property trust public offer- Developer DLF is still working on listing a \$1.5 billion property trust in Singapore and expects the IPO to be launched in the second quarter of this year, despite bruising market conditions. The country's most valuable property firm had hoped for its initial public offering for its real estate investment trust (REIT) in the first the three months of this year.

Late bird bags IPL title for Rs 200cr - DLF pocketed the Indian Premier League title sponsorship for Rs 200 cr, scuttling out two players un the ring.

DLF - DLF is setting up wi-fi - facilities in all its commercial buildings across the country, allowing all the occupants & visitors to access internet anywhere with high-speed connectivity.

DLF's Rajarhat project - The NewTown Heights at Rajarhat, the maiden housing project of DLF in WB, almost completely sold. The project is spread over 15 acres in the Action Area III of Rajarhat.

Armani-DLF JV to make Delhi-cious retail foray - After evaluating several options, Armani has entered into a 51:49 JV with India's biggest DLF has agreed to give 51% stake - the maximum permissible under single-brand retail norms for foreign investment - to the Indian partner.

Cricket's billion-dollar moment- BCCI's billion-dollar baby, the DLF Indian premier League is all set to take its first steps forward. Close to 80 Indian and international cricketers will be up for grabs in an auction for the eight moolah-loaded franchisees in a first-of-its-kind event. The city-centric franchisees have collectively already splurged \$723.3 million between them to buy out the teams.

Wi-Fi systems for DLF buildings - DLF Ltd is implementing Wi-Fi system in all its buildings. In a statement, the company said that it will implement Wi-Fi in all its buildings across the country, enabling its occupants to get an access to enterprise standard connectivity. The Wi-Fi systems will be provided by wireless broadband provider O-Zone Networks Ltd

Casino Royale in Sikkim - India's biggest real estate player DLF & hospitality chain Sarovar Hotels & Resorts, are on course to separately set up the first local inland casinos in the capital of Sikkim.

UNITECH

Unitech net up 39% as sales rise - Unitech posted a 39% increase in consolidated net profit at Rs 525.78 cr for the quarter ended on 31st December'07 as against 377.84 cr for the corresponding period in the previous year.

More to Unitech than hits the eye- If anyone has to pore over Unitech's balance sheets closely, he would immediately conclude the company owns roughly 90 acres of real estate in Mumbai. What is not known is that the country's second largest real estate with Ramesh Chandra at the helm actually controls 300 acres in the city- a good part of which is in south Mumbai-home to some of the most expensive properties.

Unitech bags Rs 9,000 cr projects - Unitech has bagged two real estate projects in Hyderabad that it would develop over next 8 years at an investment of about Rs 9,000 cr.

PARSVNATH DEVELOPERS LTD.

Parsvnath bottom-line rises by 109 % - Parsvnath Developers has reported more than two-fold jump in the consolidated net profit at 112.57 cr for the quarter ended December 31, 2007 as against Rs 53.87 cr in the same period a year ago.

ITC Fortune Park, Parsvnath join hands for 50hotels- Parsvnath hotels a subsidiary of Parsvnath Developers has signed a memorandum of understanding with ITC Ltd's Fortune Park Hotels to develop 50 hotels across the country in the next 5 years.

Parsvnath, Indiabulls join hands to bid for rly land - Parsvnath Developers & Indiabulls Real Estate have come together to bid for 10 prime locations being offered by the Indian Railways for commercial development across various cities.

Parsvnath in race for Bandra-Kurla plot - Parsvnath Developers is one of at least three Indian developers considering bids for land facing Citigroup Inc.'s office in Mumbai's Bandra-Kurla area, undeterred the reserve price.

Parsvnath Hotels in JV with Royal Orchid- Parsvnath Hotels, a wholly owned subsidiary of Delhi-based real estate developer Parsvnath Developers, is learnt to have a joint venture (JV) with Bangalore based Royal Orchid Hotels. The JV will develop 10 hotels at an investment of Rs 500 crore. The proposed hotels projects are likely to be completed in the next five years. These projects include four five-star and four four-star hotels. In addition, the JV company also plans to develop resorts and service apartments. Over 1,000 rooms are likely to be built under the joint venture.

Parsvnath plans first mall in Dehradun- Real estate firm Parsvnath Developers said it would invest Rs 40 crore to construct a mall-cum-multiplex in Dehradun. The project will have a four-screen multiplex and 150,000 sq ft saleable area and is expected to be completed in a year.

Parsvnath, Indiabulls to bid jointly for rly land - Parsvnath Developers & Indiabulls Real estate have come together to bid for 10 prime location plots being offered by the Railway for commercial development across various cities.

Parsvnath, Orchid in JV - Parsvnath & Royal Orchid have formed a JV, Parsvnath Royal Orchid Hotels, to be developed across the country.

Parsvnath Preston - The group has announced the start of the construction of Parsvnath Preston, a high-end group housing residential project in Sonapat, Haryana. The expected realization is over Rs 500 cr in next three years.

EMAAR MGF

Market woes: Emaar MGF cuts price band ahead of IPO - Stung by the prevailing choppy market conditions, real estate major Emaar MGF Land, which had earlier announced plans to raise up to Rs 7,072 crore through a public offer. The price band for the issue, initially pegged at Rs 610 to 690 per equity a share. This means that the company can raise up to Rs 6,457 crore at the higher end of the asking price.

Bank on this venture - Investors can consider applying to the initial public offer in real estate company, Emaar MGF Land but should retail at least a three-year perspective. The company's shares are on offer from February 1-8 at a price band of Rs 540-630.

Emaar to invest Rs 15k cr in hospitality sector- leading realty firm Emaar MGF, currently in the process of raising up to Rs 6457 crore through an IPO, is planning an investment of Rs 15,000 crore for its pan-India foray in the hospitality segment.

Emmar extends IPO; price band cut again - The IPO Emaar MGF Land Ltd, which was slated to close on 6th February, has been expected 5 days, and its price band revised downwards for the second time.

Emaar MGF IPO sent to backburner - Emaar MGF became the second high profile casualty of the worsening IPO, market, with the company announcing in Friday that it was postponing its public issue to an 'appropriate' time. This happened just a day after Wockhardt Hospitals had to withdraw its Rs 600-odd crore public issue in the face of investor apathy.

Emaar MGF initial public offer draws weak response - the IPO of Emaar MGF Ltd continued to draw poor response from the investors with its issue getting subscribed by only 0.83 times on Thursday.

PURVANKARA PROJECTS

Purvankara plans to invest Rs 1,000 cr - Purvankara Projects, a leading real estate company of Bangalore, plans to start work on four to five hotels in the next one year with an investment of Rs 1,000 cr. On completion of the projects, the company will be controlling an inventory of about 600 to 750 rooms.

Purvankara in talks with PEs - Bangalore based real-estate major Purvankara Projects (PPL) is in the final round of negotiations with four leading private equity firms - Blackstone, Goldman Sachs, AIG and Lehman Brothers - to raise Rs 2,000 cr. Purvankara will be offering 49% stake in five real estate projects spread across four cities - Bangalore, Chennai, Kochi & Hyderabad.

SOBHA DEVELOPERS

Sobha Developers' profit surge 34% - Sobha Developers recorded a 34% growth in net profit during the third quarter stood at Rs 61 cr, up from Rs 46 cr in the same period last year.

Sobha to build malls in Kerala, Karnataka - Sobha Developers plans to develop three malls in south India in 2008-09.

OMAXE LTD.

Omaxe launches 36 acres Royal Residency in Ludhiana - Omaxe has announced the launch of Royal Residency spread over 36 acres approximately, a first of its kind luxury apartments and penthouses with a Spa Village on the up-market destination of Pakhowal Road in Ludhiana.

Omaxe to set up Rs 1,200 cr Raipur township - Omaxe declared that it will set up a township at Raipur (Chattisgarh) with a project value of Rs 1,200 cr.

OTHERS

Uppal Group in JV with QVC realty - Uppal Group announced the signing of 50% JV with Bangalore based QVC Realty which is controlled by private equity firm IL& FS.

GMR delinks realty project- GMR has decided to delink its controversial real estate project from the development of the Delhi International airport.

Pond notice in High Court - Mani Group has moved the HC challenging the legality of notice issued by the state inland fisheries department on a contentious piece of land.

Usha Breco realty - Kolkata based business conglomerate Usha Martin Group, is now foraying into the realty & infrastructure Usha Breco realty Pvt. Ltd, as it has been named, will focus on joint ventures for property development under a profit or revenue sharing arrangement. It is currently projects worth around Rs 250 crore. These include a multi-tenanted IT building in Kolkata for around Rs.

Indiabulls Real estate Ltd has stated that its subsidiary Indiabulls Infrastructure (IIL) has acquired 100% shareholding of Catherine Builders and Developers Pvt Ltd. from DLF Home Developers ltd.

Biyani to ramp up e-Zone operations - Home solutions retail, part of the Future group, is scaling up operations of its premium consumer durable retail format, e-zone.

New flavor for coffee House - Bengal Shelter Ltd, which is building *Varna Parichay*, country's first book mall near Coffee House - has decided to renovate the heritage adda joint and restore it to its former glory.

Ansal defers issue - Ansal Properties & Infrastructure is understood to have deferred its proposed follow-on-public offer to raise about Rs 1,000 crore by a few months.

Park Hotels in land deal- Apeejay Surrendra Park Hotels Ltd, owners of the Park Hotels, has acquired 90,000 square feet land at Wakewadi, Pune to construct a deluxe luxury five star boutique property. The new property, estimated to have 4 lakh square feet built up area with 220 rooms, restaurants and entertainment facilities, will be operational by 2010. The project cost is estimated at approximately Rs 300 crore.

Jain Realty targets high-end buyers with luxury housing projects- Kolkata is going to get its most expensive address soon. Jain Realty Ltd, a subsidiary of the Kolkata-based

Jain Group of Industries is building a number of duplex bungalows right on the heart of the city's most expensive locality, Alipore. Each unit will be priced at a little more than 13 crore, which the Jain Group claims is the costliest independent residential unit in Kolkata so far.

Delton Cables rides on realty buzz- Talks on Delton Cables looking to develop a surplus land of 48-50 acres in its Dharuhera plant in Haryana are turning the spotlight on the company. As per the market buzz, it is in talks with a Delhi-based real estate developer to assess the potential for development. This is expected to unlock value for its shareholders.

HDIL sells development rights for Rs 900 crore- In a significant move in the real estate industry, HDIL, a part of the Wadhawan Group, has sold development rights of its commercial property 4.5 lakh sq ft for Rs 900 crore. The significance to the deal is attached to the per square feet rate of Rs 20,000 charged for the six storey commercial property Kaledonia at Andheri a north western suburb of Mumbai. This comes on the back of the Unitech deal of 8 million sq ft of property, which was sold for Rs 25,000 per sq ft and at a time when real estate prices were expected to correct.

Malls don't pall - Target Rohini Real Estate major Parsvnath Developers declared that it will invest up to Rs 300 cr in the mall being developed in Rohini. The company announced the commencement of construction of the mall christened Parsvnath Mall.

Future group eyes majority stake in proposed venture with Godrej Agrovet - The Future Group is all set to make a foray into rural retailing by riding on the Aadhaar outlets belonging to Godrej Agrovet. The group intends to pick up a majority stake in a separate JV company to be floated by itself & Godrej Agrovet.

GMR to start charters plans Rs 700 cr investment - GMR Infrastructure which has New Delhi, Hyderabad & Istanbul airport projects in its kitty -is now foraying into air charter services. The company is driving into a corporate jet market with a capital expenditure plan of Rs 700 cr.

MHRIL to set up four resorts in Bengal - Mahindra Holidays & resorts India Ltd. has planned to set up at least four resorts in WB with an investment of Rs 200 cr earmarked for the first phase.

INDUSTRY NEWS

Finmin wants SEZ IT incentives scrapped - The finance industry said that as a principle, complete income-tax exemption for SEZ developers and co-developers should be withdrawn.

Creamy layer consumers - The boom in both purchasing power and real estate development has roped in a brand new class of buyers for creamy layer properties. The concept of luxury homes is very much on the rise in India due to ever increasing paying capacity of buyers.

Realty FDI, FII break-up vague on pre-IPO stakes - The government has approved a clarification that FII investments in the sector were subject to FDI norms as prescribed by Press Note 2 (2005), which mandates a minimum land area of 10 hectares in case of housing plots and a minimum built up area of 50,000 sq meters in case of construction development projects.

Come home to some relief - HDFC, the country's largest home loan financier sprang a surprise by trimming its floating rate on home loans by 25 basis points, or a quarter of a percentage point.

Magor move - The Williamson Magor group will enter the real estate sector by utilizing the cash flows generated from other revenue stream.

Prime price for luxury - City developers have hiked the apartment prices like never before. Because of higher affordability people are willing to invest money to enjoy the amenities individually which, previously, was shared among many. New business development has given out a genre of young achievers with big pockets. Kolkata is witnessing this new trend and according to the developers this trend is here to stay.

RPG to expand retail basket - RPG group retail arm Spencer's is diversifying its product portfolio to develop alternate revenue streams. On terms of retail space, the growth would be over 100% with the addition of 2 million sqft to the current contracted area of 1.5 million sqft. The spread will also increase to 52 cities from 43 currently. Over the next

15 months, Spencer's intends to add at least 550 -600 stores countrywide at an investment of Rs 1,000 crore to push the store count close to 1000 mark. RPG is not keen to induct a foreign partner in the retail venture.

Wipro to get land soon - State IT minister Debdash Das restated that the land tangle that has come on the way of Wipro expanding its presence in the city & Infosys setting up a facility here will be sorted out soon. The Wipro problem has been dragging on for almost two years.

Hinduja Group keen to build medicity near city - The Hinduja Group has evinced an interest to set up a state of the art medicity near the city. The proposed medicity will house a medical college, a dental college; a nurse's training college and a super specialty hospital. The same was announced by Mr. Nirupam Sen, Commerce & Industries Minister, West Bengal. The state Government is directly approaching developers for the proposed deep-sea port.

Wait & watch - The reserve Bank of India's (RBI) third-quarter monetary policy review did little to lift the sagging spirits in the real estate sector. Ironically this has come at a time when the property market has already been witnessing fewer sales even in some of the top cities. However, some positive measures like HDFC's recent reduction of 25 basis points in the prime lending rate for home loans, is no doubt, a move which is bound to help developers. The realty sector was expecting a rate cut from the policy which could have positively impacted the growth in the sector. As per Jones Lang LaSalle Meghraj, the impact will be felt most in the residential sector as this sector has seen the highest price appreciations and is the most sensitive to lending rates.

Realty bug bites Trissur - Investment is pouring into the real estate sector in Trissur, the second largest commercial town in central Kerala after Kochi. Many leading builders, including Sobha Group, have launched projects in Trissur in the recent past. Trissur is the head quarter of many private banks & chit funds in the state.

Realty trust's dividend income may get tax relief - Investors looking to put money in an investment vehicle in the realty segment could be in line for fiscal incentives. The government is vetting a proposal put forward by the securities market regulator to provide for a tax waiver on dividend income of Real Estate Investments trusts (REITs).

ICICI Venture picks up 40% in UDS - ICICI Venture, which is very bullish in Indian realty and related service sectors, has picked up New Vermon Bharat's 40% stake in Chennai-based Updater Services (UDS), India's largest integrated facility management company, for close to Rs 100 cr. Founded in 1985, UDS currently manages in excess of 50 million sqft of space across all segments including corporate, IT parks, industrial & retail.

Era Infra bags low-cost housing contract from DSIIIDC - Era Infra Engineering Ltd (EIEL), an integrated infrastructure development company, has bagged two contracts from Delhi State Industrial & Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd (DSIIDC). The combined value of both the contract is Rs 147.45 cr.

Regulator for housing sector - For the last couple of years we are experiencing a zooming boom in real estate prices. Keeping in view the reports coming in the media, it seems that the trend will never stop at least in the near future or at least in the next 10 years. But the big question is whether the current trend can be sustained or is it just bubble? After seeing the out come of the reckless investments in East Asia and now the sub prime crisis in the US, the time has come to figure out if we are really in need of more and more residential units & the possibility of a crisis emerging in the sector.

Upbeat realtors see black- Builders & investors will get fast approvals if the present 5,000 hectare cap on multi product SEZs is lifted. But the developers must ensure that their overdrive to build on increased SEZ space does not eat into fertile farmland.

High realty costs make catalogue-shopping a hit - Big retailers seem to have hit upon a smart way to keep their cash register ringing by attracting customers through catalogue-shopping. For the first time, HyperCity Retail India Ltd, along with Shopper's Stop has entered into a franchise agreement with UK based Home Retail Group, Agros, to offer multichannel shopping experience to its customers.

ITC welcome hotels plans foray into medical tourism - ITC - Welcome Group Hotel, is testing water for medical tourism needs in India. Through its subsidiary Fortune Park Hotels Ltd., the group would come up with its first property for the specialized tourism in Thane, near Mumbai, by August.

KMDA to upgrade quality control wing - KMDA has lined up several infrastructure development projects with a thrust on the traffic and transportation sector, but it has to depend on outside agencies for conducting quality control tests that are required before executing any project.

City to get first eco resort soon - Kolkatans will soon have an eco-friendly resort to spend the weekend. Executed by Safe, the project is funded by DFID through Kolkata Urban Service for Poor's Innovative Challenge Fund. The twin wetlands at Sukantanagr Bheri & Natar Bheri will offer the people a chance to relax in the midst of nature. Members of local self-help groups (SHGs) who are stakeholders in the project mooted by NGO South Asian Forum for Environment (Safe) will run the eco-tourism project.

Heritage home, luxury lair - Ambuja Realty Group is in talks with the current owners of Bosubari, in Bagbazar, for another boutique hotel in Kolkata.

Hudco interest rates down - The Housing & Urban Development Corporation today reduced its floating interest rates by 25 basis points.

Home loans to be cheaper - After HDFC reduced its interest rate by 25 basis points, ICICI Bank and other public sector banks are thinking of reducing their interest rates by 25 to 50 basis points.

Land of the rising sun - The industrialization drive has hiked land and property prices and brought realtors rushing to Singur.

Aditya Birla retail to invest Rs 10,000 cr for expansion- Aditya Birla Retail the retail of Aditya Birla Group, is planning to invest between Rs 8000 crore to Rs 10,000 crore to expand its operation across the country over a period of 5 years.

Now a home away from home- Realtors are now foraying into leisure residential projects that cater to the dreams of affluent Indians. Chennai based MARG, recently unveiled its luxury housing project with 90 villas spread over 77 acres near Chennai.

KMDA plans more flats for low income groups- The Kolkata Metropolitan Development Authority (KMDA) is planning to construct more flats for people belonging to middle and lower income group.

Hotel stocks under perform on investor concern- Hotel stocks are facing skepticism especially from the large institutional investors, and this has led to several stocks in this sector underperforming the broader market. Analysts highlight that large investors are especially concerned about the rapid expansion currently under way in the 5 star segment and its potential negative impact on average room rates and occupancy rates for hotel chains in the medium term.

Sick government firms can get into real estate- The booming real estate market in India has caught the attention of the Board for Reconstruction of Public Sector Enterprises (BRPSE) as a route for reviving sick public sector units.

Holcim asks NCAER to study rural housing- Cement Manufacturer Holcim group has mandated the National Council for Applied Economic Research to conduct the first comprehensive study on rural housing in India.

Ministry summons 7 states over SEZ status- The Union Commerce ministry has summoned 7 states to ascertain whether they have put in place a single-window service to expedite implementation of SEZs that have received approvals both formal and in principal.

Lower loan rates may greet home buyers - a Political pressure is building in the banks to cut home loan rates. Important ministers in the government have already conveyed as mush to some bank chairmen, and finance minister P. Chidambaram is expected to hard sell softer interest rates when he meets CEOs of public sector banks on February 12.

Realty slowdown is for real - For the first tome in many years, the real estate industry has started predicting a slowdown in commercial real estate, which was considered one of the robust growth drivers for this sector. Some players in the industry feel that rationalization if rents is n evitable because the current market is significantly over - priced.

Kampani co picks up minority stake in Mayatas for Rs 600 cr. - Nimesh Kampapni's real estate arm of Infinite India Investment Management has picked up minority equity stake in Hyderabad based Maytas properties for Rs 600 cr.

Retailers seek holistic view on sector - The hype around retail is reaching a crescendo with the organised play projected to touch \$30 bn by 2010 from \$ 4 bn currently. But retail, world's second oldest institution after family, is grappling with an array of serious issues threatening the big picture. The Indian retailers expect the Centre to impress upon the states to take a broader view on the sector. With the states having a major say in the affairs of this sector, the Centre role is largely to facilitate "the institutionalizing of retail".

Lower taxes top realtor's wish list - The real estate industry of India is awaiting the Union Budget with a list of expectations, This include simplification of income tax structure, reduction in service and clarification in the FDI related issues.

LIC to develop housing project - LIC is looking to jointly develop close to 1lakh sqft residential premises in the suburb of Borivali in North West Mumbai. The corporation is likely to tie -up with a private player which would be its first residential project in Mumbai after several decades.

Realty bug bites metro post offices- Urban Pos in key commercial areas may soon have to share space with swanky malls, multiplexes. The government plans to raise resources from the realty assets of the postal department.

Banks bracing for sub-prime spillover - Stalked by fear of the escalating global sub-prime crisis, domestic banks have begun taking defensive measures. In metros realty advances and home loans are closely tied to corporates with cross-border receivables, including IT and BPO sectors.

Brandhouse retails draws big plan for luxury retailing - Brandhouse Retails looks to dot the country's retail landscape with several formats & brands. It plans to set up large format multi-brand discount stores and launch a value-for-money private label.

KCP diversifying into hospitality sector - The Chennai based KCP Ltd has announced a Rs 390 cr expansion programme that would see it diversify into the hospitality industry & expand its existing lines of business- cement & foundry.

Narayana Health City to expand to other states - Bangalore based surgeon Dr Devi Shetty is now replicating his pet venture the 5,000 bed Narayana Health City, across states. Biotechnology major Biocon's CEO Ms Kiran Mazumdar Shae, comes on board in her personal capacity: AIG Investments and JP Morgan have come in as private equity investors, together pumping in Rs 400 cr.

Reliance plans big for realty; goes head hunting - Mukesh Ambani's \$ 27 bn corporate house has called for project managers, project architects, and project and design engineers for its real estate projects, in an advertisement in national daily.

Rs 1 lakh homes - Ruling Congress party demanded that its government launch a unique housing loan scheme of Rs 1 lakh to help the poor build their own homes.

Investors lose appetite for IPOs - The euphoria that had engulfed the private capital market at the start of ye year had started to dissipate - rapidly. Wockhardt Hospitals sought a two day extension f its IPO after attracting bids for just over 9.5 % of the 2,5 cr shares it had offered to the public.

Cyber city - The Kerala HC directed public sector HMT & Blue Star realtors Ltd to file their replies by 18 February on a PIL seeking a CBI probe into sale of land for a Rs 4,000 cr cyber city project.

Total recall for retail pioneer - The magnificent edifice on 7 Chowringhee road that housed Asia's best departmental stores till White way Laidlow Co shut down in 1951m is gearing up to welcome shoppers again. Big Bazaar will open in the renovated building.

Realty rally seen losing steam, stocks slide 28% - The bearish stock market has dealt a major blow to investors in shares of realty companies, causing loss to them in the past few weeks. The market sentiment towards the sector is likely to worsen with the withdrawal of high-profile Emaar MGF IPO.

AIM-listed co to invest \$1 bn a year in infra - Real estate fund management company Trikona Capital, which has already invested \$1.4 bn in India, is now planning to up the ante.

New realty investment route - Several new opportunity areas are set to open in the realty sector. Popularly called as the 'neo-asset classes, these include medicities, hospotels, logistics & warehousing, airport port based business districts, mass housing and slum rehabilitation and education infrastructure.

India tops in retail supply chain loss - It's not just the booming retail industry in India that's making news internationally, but the alarming shrinkage rates (the percentage of loss of products between manufacture and point of sale) as well.

Reliance retail plans more format stores - Reliance Retail will see a total investment of Rs 25,000 cr in the next 2-3 years. This investment will be for the complete roll out of its entire retail operations.

Indu Projects bags contract - Indu Projects Ltd (IPL), the Hyderabad -based infrastructure and real estate developer, has bagged the Rs 505 crore contract of Maharashtra's power generation company Mahagenco's 2* 500 MW Bhusawal Thermal Power Station plant project Bhusawal, Maharashtra.

New Reliance Retail format - Reliance Retail's tenth retail format Reliance Wellness, a chain of beauty & wellness products, is looking at Rs 6,000 cr revenues over the next three year.

Realtors' FDI hope face acid test today - The real estate industry's FDI ambitions would be put on test on 8th Feb'08 when the Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB) takes up a plea from Vatika Ltd, a Delhi based real estate company, seeking to retain projects which do not comply with the guidelines laid down by the government for allowing FDI in real estate.

Realty boom brings bonanza for architects - The corporatisation of the realty sector has come as a windfall to young architectural grads who are now reaping the dividends of an unprecedented demand from the industry.

PNB Housing Fin lowers rates - Soon after public sector lenders like Canara Bank and Allahabad Bank slashed home loan rates PNB Housing Finance, a subsidiary of Punjab National Bank, reduced rates by 50 basis points or 0.5%.

The fountain heads - Kolkata's top realtors are roping in some of the best architects in the country, from Charles Correa & Hafeez Contractor to Balkrishna Doshi, Mohit Gujral & Bimal Patel to offer design cues that will give their projects new-age brand equity.

Mumbai jumble - While accelerating growth is the priority for most authorities, realtors and investors, there is some crucial legislation that concerns all, and is fully understood and appreciated by few.

Interior design fair kicks off - An exhibition on interior design - Interior 2008 - was inaugurated at Netaji Indoor Stadium on 7th Feb'08. Organised by the architects, builders, interior decorators & allied business (ABIB) the exhibition will continue till February 12.

Mumbai set for another mega land deal- Three months after its record breaking land deals, the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) is going in for another mega auction. The authority is expected to rake in a minimum of Rs 1,900 crore from the auction, going by the reserve price it has set for five plots in the Bandra Kurla Complex, the city's new business district.

PE players sense deal prospects on maiden offer withdrawals- Signs of weakness in the primary market issuance can bring primary equity (PE) deals to the fore, experts believe, as higher cost of debt may not prompt issuers to borrow significantly.

Rel Retail to sell connected homes concepts- Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Retail has entered into an agreement with Microsoft to launch the "connected homes" concept. Reliance Retail's consumer durable and IT format Reliance Digital, is planning to launch the concept at its upcoming store in Gurgaon in the NCR region.

Russian conglomerate set to enter realty, infra sectors- Russian conglomerate JSFC Sistema plans to foray into the booming market for real estate, hotels, hi-tech electronics, infrastructure and highway development in India. The ventures will be in

addition to Sistema's existing partnerships with Shyam, Telelink where it is planning to launch a nationwide mobile services network.

Hyderabad realty firm plans IPO- The trying times at the stock markets have not deterred the infrastructure and realty companies from approaching the capital markets. Hyderabad based infrastructure and real estate company Indu Projects (IPL) is planning to launch a initial public offering (IPO), in the range of Rs 700 crore, in the next coupled of months.

Rates headed southwards- In its third quarter credit policy review; the RBI maintained the status quo on policy rates. That left a lot of existing and prospective home loan borrowers, who were anticipating a cut, disappointed. However, interest rates in the US are moving south rapidly. Since September the Federal Reserves have cut rates five times. The next credit policy may see some coming the home loan borrower's way.

FBI decreases lending rate- The SBI on Monday slashed the Prime Lending Rate by 0.25 per cent to 12.5 per cent, a decision that will make housing and car loans cheaper. The reduction in PLR is likely to moderate lending rates for all category of borrowers, including housing, corporate, car loan etc. the decision follows up to one per cent cut in housing and consumer loan rates by Canara Bank and Allahabad Bank.

Smart tech pulls huge crowd to interior fair- The 15th annual interior fair-Interior 2008- has proved to be a huge hit with the crowds. The on-going five day exhibition at Netaji Indoor Stadium has been organized by the Association of Architects, Builders, Interior Designers & Allied Products (ABID).

Hidco in land-grab storm- Hidco insisted that the current land owners hand over the plots for Rs 8,000 per cottah. When they refused, the officials threatened them by saying they would not sanction building plans or electricity or water connections if they built houses on the land.

India Hospitality drops plan to buy Nirulas- India Hospitality Corp (IHC)- a UK listed investment company said it has dropped its plan to acquire Indian Restaurant chain Nirula's. The company said in a regulatory filing here that it was excited about India's multifaceted hospitality and food service industry that provide a plethora of consolidation

opportunities and the company would continue to evaluate additional opportunities and deploy capital selectivity into projects with attractive risk-return profile.

India's largest bank, State Bank of India, has cut its prime lending rate by 0.25 percentage point to 12.50%. This will result in lower interest rates on all loans offered by it, including housing and consumer loans. And now that SBI has done so, other banks are likely to follow suit.

Govt unlocks VSNL land bank- The Telecom Commission (TC) the department of Telecom's (DoT) arms responsible for approving all policies, has cleared the government's proposal to auction 773 acres of surplus VSNL land. Back-of-the-envelope calculations show the land would be about over Rs 10,000 crore.

Global uncertainties likely to hit realty investments- Tough lending norms, an unfavorable primary market and sub-prime woes may squeeze the money flow in the Indian property market. Real estate deals are expected to slow down and fancy valuations projected by developers could a deep correction.

Needed a realty check- Rationalization of FDI and taxes, uniformity and reduction in stamp duty rates, infrastructure status for the hospitality sectors and reduction in home loan rates are some of the major demands of the real estate sector. With the budget round the corner, the country's real estate sector, has been recording phenomenal transformation and growth, and has seen a series of reforms during the last few years is still asking for more now.

Can you actually budget for the real estate sector- Indian real estate sector has seen significant changes in the past apart from the spurt in prices to dizzying heights. The composition of the industry players have changed with the earlier predominantly regional players consisting of private enterprises increasingly moving not only towards a pan Indian presence, but also approaching Indian and global capital markets for raising capital.

Vishal Retail another store- Retail store operator Vishal Retail announced inaugurating yet another showroom at Moradabad in UP. The showroom is spread over an area of 23,500 sqft.

Investors deserting stocks linked to power, realty- Patterns in stock price declines on Monday showed that investors dumped stocks that had strong linkages either to the power sector or to realty. The much anticipated listing of Anil Ambani Group company Reliance power saw the stock losing 17 per cent relative to its offer price. The real estate sector came in for significant selling as well. The unsuccessful Emaar-MGF IPO and the recent sector downgrades by several foreign brokerages on Indian Real Estate saw BSE Realty index ending 6.3 percent lower from last Friday's closing.

World's first 'green city' in UAE desert - The construction work of the world's first green city has started in the Gulf. The city will be built at a cost of 11.3 bn pound over an 8 year period and be home to 50,000 people and 1,500business.

FM asks banks to lend more - Finance Minister asked the state-run banks to ensure adequate loans for housing and consumer durables, as these are have been partly affected by a 'conscious' moderation in credit flow over the past one year.

Retail sector over valued, says Hypercity chief - Retail hype has led to overvaluation of the sector, which will ultimately drove consolidation drive consolidation. With the entry of large investors, the profit to earning (PE) ratio of retail stocks is sky rocking.

Banks: Credit blues - Banks have bee trimming interest rates in a bid to create demand. The latest to do so are SBI & Canara Bank, which have paired their benchmark rates by 25 basis points.

ICICI-Pru to launch first fixed maturity plan for retail investors - ICICI - Following the success of the foreign banks Prudential is offering selling bonds linked to the Nifty to the retail investors.

BoM cuts loan rates - Bank of Maharashtra has reduced the lending rate in housing, education & SME loans by 25 - 50 basis points.

Area-wise tax put off again - The Calcutta Municipal corporation has deferred for the third time the introduction of an area-wise structure of property tax, setting April 2009 as the new deadline.

Big retailers to take care of mom & pop- India Inc is all set to script an Indian model for retail growth. The centre has asked big retailers to chart out an India specific strategy for organised retail, which would result in inclusive growth of mom & pop outlets.

Damac set to invest \$ 5 bn - Damac Properties, the largest private developer in the ME, has firmed up plans to invest \$ 5 billion (Rs 19,700 crore) over the next three to five years in India's burgeoning real estate market.

Dewan Housing debentures - Dewan Housing Finance Corporation Ltd has said that at the extraordinary general meeting of the company, the members decided to issue and allot convertible debentures to qualified institutional buyers and to issue global depository receipts or American depository receipts.

Jubilant to grow retail presence its southern cities - Total Hypermarket and Mall, the retail venture of the Rs 5,000 cr jubilant group is looking at South Indian Cities to expand its hypermarket footprint in the country.

Next retail plans tie-up with US co bright Star Logistics - Videocon's next retail plans tie-up with US co Bright star logistics, a \$ 3 bn US based distribution company in the category of mobile devices.

Rs 63.26 lakh distributed for housing - The J&K Government distributed cheques worth Rs 63.26 lakh among 230 families living below poverty line for constructing their houses under the Indira Avas Yojana (IAY) at Baramulla district.

Property trusts could soon debut in India - India could follow other Asian countries this year in creating a market for real estate investment trusts, making it easier for investors to buy into the country's sparkling new office blocks and shopping malls.

Twin flyovers to pleas Road Mess near South City - A three member task force including Kolkata Police, NMDA & k Municipal Corporation has come up with a new traffic dispersal proposal, which involves building not one but two flyovers.

Sunset clause extension may stem slowdown in housing - Budget 2008-09 may bring some good news for housing project developers. Finance minister consider extending the

sunset clause for such projects, which is ending on March 31, 2008. The move may find favour in a bid to stem slowdown in the housing sector.

Bush places \$ 170 bn bet on retail therapy - President George Bush signed into law on Wednesday a \$ 170 bn fiscal stimulus package designed to jolt the US economy back into health in the second half of this year.

Green Rooms - with Technopolis and many other similar projects in pipeline city developers are coming up with more green buildings as the IT companies & other corporate houses are willing to pay Rs 5-10 extra per sqft to build green buildings that enhance the productivity of the employees. A report shows that American business nearly loses \$ 80 bn a year most of it because its loss in productivity.

Biotech to fuel realty in south, west, report - The biotechnology sector is expected to invest 140million sqft to office demand within India by 2010.

Life in a studio - Studio apartments are becoming more & more popular with IT professionals & top executives who are single in their lives.

Toughs hold up New town work - Construction activity in Newtown has come up to a halt for the past three weeks for the local toughs who control the raw material supply. The cost overrun has already touched Rs 300 crore and the situation is getting grave for builders.

Global commercial real estate investment hits record - Global direct commercial real estate investment rose by \$ 59 billion y-o-y to \$ 759 billion in 2007, according to Jones Lang LaSalle's latest global real estate capital research. The rose follows a turbulent year that saw record transaction volumes across all regions globally to reach \$ 394 billion in the first six months followed by a reduced volume of \$ 365 billion in the second half.

SEZ it all! - Mangalore, a city close to the India's Silicon Valley - Bangalore failed to woo the investors. However, the expected IT/ ITeS special economic zones in and around the city is set to change the landscape.

Scissor hand on civic heritage list - The civic body is set to raze the list of heritage buildings, erasing more than 600 structures from among 1,365. A six-member committee is formed by the municipal commissioner to grade the heritage structures.

Keeping customers loyal - Retail chains in the city today offers not just alluring discounts on modest purchases but a host of temptations, including loyalty bonus cards with special privileges for regular buyers. Companies are even trying to incorporate that personal touch strategy by wishing customers a happy birthday or happy anniversary.

Mall Print - with numerous shopping malls / supermarkets coming up in the city, Metro has done a research on what benefits the books and book lovers have received from these malls.

Walk-in homes - Developers have gone step further to provide buyers with apartments that are completely furnished as per the tastes of the buyers. Virtually, a buyer can walk onto a newly bought apartment with just a suitcase in hand.

Developers want end to supplier raj - Authorities at Kolkata Airport and developers in adjoining areas have called for an end to the monopoly over construction material supply by syndicates that enjoy political patronage.

Mortgage guarantee firms can start ops - In a far-reaching consequence, which might lead to softening in the home loan rates, RBI finalized the guidelines on registration and operation of a mortgage guarantee company, which would provide guarantee to a home loan lending institution against any default.

Weeklong book festival at Varna Parichay - India's first book mall will host a festival from next year that will be unique in its setting - the air-conditioned interiors of a mega bazaar. There will be no pollution because of its venue. The mall will accommodate about 600 stalls inviting from Kolkata Book Fair regulars as well as foreign publishers.

India ranks 3rd in realty - Indian realty sector figures in the top three property markets, after US & China.

Revenue loss may lead to SEZ policy reversal - SEZ policy runs the risk of being reversed, in terms of attractive tax exemptions it offers, with the government's finances coming under stress.

Hypercity to develop stores in tier II cities - Raheja owned retail chain, Hypercity is mulling an investment of around Rs 1,500 crore for the development of 68 hyper markets and 250 convenient stores named 'Expresscity' across the country in the next five years.

RIL goes on safari in Kenya - Nairobi, where American companies are flocking to set up their back offices, will soon be the scene of giant real estate projects manned by a joint company in which RIL holds a majority stake.

Developers shrug off India REIT plans - Indian Property developers are expected to turn overseas to list real estate investment Trusts as proposed local rules favour funds and small investors rather than real estate companies.

A room for the Mr. Common man - Developing clusters of budget homes in India is gaining popularity among the builders and people under housing stress have finally begun to dream.

NRIs can easily get home loans in India - NRIs can take home loans from the bank they have an account with.

Is Faridabad Indian realty's next destination? - The real estate boom in the city has transformed the skyline of Faridabad over the last few years.

Foundation laid for IT / ITes SEZ - Rajasthan CM has laid the foundation stone of Silicon City at Bhiwandi, a notified IT / ITes SEZ.

Greenspaces, Calmac in MOU - New Jersey based Calmac Manufacturing Corporation has signed a MoU with Selecto Systems for setting up GreenSpaces, an IT / ITes SEZ in Faridabad.

Luxury flats in Firozabad - SNG Developers has showcased a sample flat of 'Crystal Castle', a group housing development project in the heart of Firozabad.

Realty bug bites corporate houses - With land prices on the rise, large business houses now appear to be increasingly aware of their excess property holdings and the valuations it could fetch in addition to their *regular stream of businesses*.

Lotus India gearing up for real estate funds - Lotus India Mutual Fund, which came into existence in 2006, currently has Rs 10,000 crore of asset under management (AUM).

Realty salaries go through the roof- Real estate witnessed the highest salary growth followed by the energy sector in 2007, according to India specific salary increase survey conducted by Hewitt Associates, a human resource services firm. Hewitt Associates, which surveyed nearly 600 foreign-owned, locally-owned and joint venture companies, found that the employees in India have received an average salary increase of 15.1% in 2007, up from 14.4% in 2006.

Allahabad Bank rates- Allahabad Bank has decided to cut rates on lending as well as on some term deposits. The lending rates on retail credit has been reduced by 50=100 basis points which includes housing loans, loans for consumer durables, car loans and education loans. Interest rates on deposits have been reduced by 25 basis points in all time buckets having the tenure of 2 years and above up to 10 year.

SBI cuts home loan rates - After months of installments going only up, they are set to come down. This follows by a decision by four PSU banks led by the State Bank of India to further cut their prime lending rates (PLR) by 0.25% to 0.50 %.

Helipad on roof, Noida bets on mother of all complexes - Noida Authority now wants to add a roof top helipad to the list of amenities in a proposed multi-facility complex at Sector - 15.

Only 8% Rajarhat land allotted for public use - Just 8% of the much touted township, NewTown, has been set aside for institutional or public utility projects. And this includes hospitals, five star hotels, multiplexes, even golf clubs and many other such hunting grounds for the super rich.

SBI, Canara cut rates again - In a concerted move, four public sector banks cut their benchmark prime lending rates (PLRs). SBI, Canara Bank cut their PLRs by 25 basis points for the second time in just over a week, while Bank of India & Union 50 basis points.

Wal-Mart retail plans on track, first store in Aug - Global retail giant Wal-Mart said it will have no problem if it does not use its moniker on retail store signages in India. Wal-Mart & Rollin Ford are making a 50:50 JV to enter Indian market.

India not ready for big retail yet, says Sweden IKEA - Sweden firm IKEA thinks that Indian retail market is flawed and that it is not even an 'emerging one' worth entering right now. Reliance Retail thinks foreigners need to understand and adapt to local conditions to be successful in India.

Indian Hotels wins bid for Andaman resort - Indian Hotels Company has won the bid to develop resort on Radhanagar beach at Havelock Island in Andaman & Nicobar islands.

Jharkhand to get its first five-star hotel - With the Radisson tie-up, Gupta Estates Private Ltd, a family-run company, will take its debut in the hospitality sector through building Jharkhand's first five star hotel.

Bharti Retail could drop Wal-Mart tag - Wal-Mart VC indicated that Bharti Retail may not use the Wal-Mart name for its front-end retail stores.

Hotels ride high on room rates- Hotel companies continued to perform well in the third quarter on account of higher average room rates (ARRs). Despite concerns of oversupply in some pockets, the industry showed robust numbers against the same quarter last year. The net profit across the industry ranged from 30-53 per cent. Explaining the performance, an analyst from ICICI said that traditionally, the December quarter is a boom quarter for the hotel industry. However, with delayed supplies, the room rates remained strong across medium and big hotel companies discarding concerns of a slowdown.

Tatas scouting for hotels in US- Curtains are not yet down on Tatas' offer to buy out global premium hotel chain Orient Express, but India's most visible business house in the US is scouting for more luxury hotels in the US. They are looking for luxury business hotels in San Francisco, New York, Chicago and Miami.

Anand Jain plans international realty fund- Anand Jain, a close associate of Reliance Industries (RIL) chairman Mukesh Ambani, is raising a bulge bracket real estate fund for investing in overseas assets. The Mauritius based fund, which will be advised by Jai Corp, a company promoted by Mr. Jain, is in talks to make one of its initial investments in the World islands project, a manmade archipelago of Dubai coast promoted by billionaire ruler Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al Maktoum and Nakheel Properties. The target size of Mr. Jain's planned international realty fund is still under wraps, but it will invest primarily in growth markets stretching from the Arabian Gulf to Far East. At a later stage it could invest in other markets.

Welspun retail to rope in PE player or hit St to fund apex - Home furnishing retailer. Welspun Retail is planning to rope in private equity player or go public to fund its expansion plans. The company was looking to raising funds through PE or IPO route but didn't give quantum or timeframe for it.

Indian real estate on a roll- The Indian real estate has gained a lot of traction from both within and outside the country in the past couple of years. A huge pent up demand and access to funds were the key drivers for propelling the Indian real estate market into an overdrive. The industry needed the much needed first shot of funding in 2005 wherein the foreign direct investment (FDI) route was open for Indian Real estate. Since then the Indian real estate has transformed to reach \$57 billion in 2007, and has a potential to reach \$90 billion by 2012 according to the Eleventh Five Year Plan. The accelerating growth momentum has paved the way for exciting opportunities for both domestic as well as international investors. The real estate has multiple stakeholders right from developers to investors, financiers, buyers and service providers such as property consultants, contractors and project management companies.

Manor makeovers- Past is perfect right now. A slew of ionic buildings in Kolkata is readying for a new-age avatar as boutique hotels or commercial space as the city experiments with the tried and tested formula of preservation that has worked in several global metros. Also in the anvil, a cut in property tax for heritage building owners to help preserve Kolkata's history.

Markets dynamics behind rising estate prices- Stating that market dynamics are governing property prices in and around the city, state minister for commerce and industries directly told IT companies not to make a hue and cry over it. He said that if there is a demand-supply gap, then the prices are bound to go up. A greater demand than supply for land is, in fact, a positive sign that investors are willing to come to the state. The price that one pays for the land does not remain very significant in the long run.

Bharti may chuck brand Wal-Mart- The Wal-Mart brand may not come to India anytime soon. Bharti retail, with which the US retail giant has tied up for its India entry may not use the Walmart name for its front-end retail stores. Managing Director, Bharti Enterprises, said that financial rollout plans for the retail and cash and carry stores would be made in April, and brand names for the retail and cash and carry stores would be announced then. He did not confirm whether the stores would carry the Walmart name.

Endorsing luxury hotel brands- The Leading Hotels of the World has 10 members in India including seven Taj properties, Uppal's Orchid in New Delhi, Umaid Bhavan Palace in Jodhpur and the Rambagh Palace in Jaipur. The company is looking at representing a few more brands in the country soon. Mark Greedy, the company's Vice President says that India is a fertile market for luxury hotel brands. He also says that this is the consequence of the growth in aviation, inventory of hotels, increase in the concept of luxury travel and putting financial systems in place.

Plot purchase not takeover- The government said plots would be bought at market price for the Dankuni industrial hub and township instead of being acquired under the acquisition act. The land will then be handed over to DLF, which has paid Rs 55 lakh an acre to the Calcutta Metropolitan Development Authority for the purchase.

Concrete Clinic- A recent national conclave on the urban design has underlined the needs to control Calcutta's growth if the city's core character has to be preserved. The conclave organized by the think tank Centre for Built Environment (CBE) said too many planning agencies has fuelled chaos. It suggested ways to preserve Calcutta's core character and prevent it from descending further into chaos.

Supplier stranglehold halts work- Suppliers to Rajarhat protesting the government diktat against overloading are demanding a 30 per cent rate rise to ferry stone chops, 40-45 per

cent extra to ferry sand and 12 per cent more for bricks. These are deemed absolutely unreasonable by the joint sector companies and outstation developers operating in New Town. There is no end to the stalemate in sight, with two meetings this week involving local CPM leaders, suppliers and developers proving abortive.

Singapore beckons with dream home - Far East Organisation will showcase around 100 villas and 1,200 apartments, each priced between Rs 2.5 crore and Rs 15 crore, at a city hotel on February 23 & 24.

When faith fuels property - Developers are finding a new opportunity in blending spiritual inclinations with real estate projects. Faith is moving the real estate developers now. Temple towns are witnessing a boom that nearly matches the growth in swanky metro suburbs. Haridwar, Rishikesh, Shirdi, Tirupati, Guruvayoor, Vrindavan & Mathura are among the places where many customers are seeking a second home and pure-play investors are happy to join the rush.

Vipul plans to invest Rs 600 crore in Punjab - Delhi-based Vipul Ltd has decided to invest Rs 600 cr in Punjab to develop three mega projects that include Vipul World, a 109 acre mega housing project on Ferozpur Road, Ludhiana and three hotels, one each at Mohali, Ludhiana & Amritsar. The company has entered the hospitality sector in collaboration with Sarobar Hotels & Resorts.

ASSOCHAM pleads for new Master Plan - ASSOCHAM has suggested Delhi Lieutenant Governor and the Delhi Development Authority that development control norms for processing of layouts and building plans of all commercial plots in the capital be undertaken as per the latest Master Plan guidelines, notified in February 2007 and that these be not regulated under directives of the old Master Plan.

Simplifying land records - Hyderabad based Speck System Ltd has launched a new technological solution called Speckadaster. The software will accelerate the planning process and improve land security.

Pre-engineered buildings: Way to go? - The conventional construction industry in the country today is undergoing a change, with one of its most visible aspects being the emergence of Pre-engineered Buildings (PEB).

Office demand booms, supply looms - Demand for office space increased by 22% to reach 50.69million sq.ft. in 2007 across major Indian cities, compared with 41.46 million sq.ft in 2006. However, the total projected supply for 2008 is estimated to be approximately 70.1 million sq.ft, indicating that supply growth could possible be outstripping demand.

Thaw in Rajarhat crisis - The supplier-realtor stand-off over carriage rates, which has held up work in Rajarhat projects for nearly a month, could be resolved by the weekend. Following strict enforcement if the bans on overloading of trucks, the supplier syndicates have been seeking substantial hikes in carriage costs. The rate rise sought is around 30 % for ferrying stone chips, 40-45 % for sand and 12% for bricks.

City to host Realty Expo next week - The Bengal chapter of CREDAI will host a two day conclave on real estate. Christened 'Realty Expo 2008', the conclave, scheduled for February 27 and February 28 followed by a three day exhibit, will showcase a plethora of real estate projects and allied industries under one roof.

BJP wants a regulator for real estate - Senior BJP leader Murli Manohar Joshi is leading a party delegation to PM Dr. Manmohan Singh on Monday to demand the setting up of a real estate regulatory authority.

Retail is another money-spinner - The \$ 12 billion retail industry would get a leg-up from the Indian Premier League (IPL). Many retail majors are planning to tie - up with the UPL franchises.

Bush administration seeks private sector fix for housing - The Bush administration is welcoming the idea of a government bail out for US homeowners facing foreclosure, at least until it is clear whether the private -sector initiatives it champions can work.

BoB cuts prime lending rates, PNB to follow - State owned Bank of Baroda announced a cut in its benchmark prime lending rates (PLR) by 50 basis points to 12.75%. The new rates will be effective from February 27.

UK regulator to set retail hedge fund rules by end of 2008 - Britain's market regulator will set rules opening hedge fund investing to individuals by the end of the year, allowing

the general public to participate in one of the fastest - growing segment of the money management industry.

Future Ventures plans to woo masses for Rs 3750 cr IPO - Future Venture India, the venture capital arm of Kishore Biyani's Future Group, is ready to hit the market with an IPO of around Rs 3,750 crore.

Rapid rollout planned for Reliance Hyper - With four hypermarkets under its belt so far, Reliance Retail plan a super fast rollout of these large-format stores over the next few months and expects to have at least 30 hypermarkets, under two brands, Reliance Mart & Super, up and running by this June. At least 20 of these will be large stores covering 50,000 sqft of space.

BIG Shopping to build 60malls - Big Shopping Centres has announced its entry into India announced its entry into India's retail market with plans to develop 60 stores across the country in next 10 years at an investment of about Rs 9,600.

Global meet on housing - The Architecture & Regional planning Department of the IIT Kharagpur, along with the international Association for housing Science, is organizing a world congress on housing science in Calcutta in November. The conference will deal with issues like the effects of globalization in housing & innovative finance scheme.

Homes for shanty folk - The civic body, prodded by the centre, has taken up construction of housing estates worth 180 cr for people living in shanties in seven pockets of east Calcutta & Garden Reach.

'Half if the malls will close by 2010' - Consolidation in the retail industry would result in nearly 50% of the malls shutting down by march 2010 and the hoopla surrounding the sector would considerably subside by then.

Property tax - KMC is set to introduce its new unit area system to determine property tax 2009-10.

Reliance retail is on its Marks - reliance Industries' deal-making spree to get the best domain expertise in the retail sector is poised for the big one now. RRL is engaged in

‘substantial’ discussions to float an equal joint venture with iconic UK fashion retailer Marks & Spencer (M & S) for apparel, gourmet food & cafes.

Agri-Retail: CPM, FB stress on direct marketing - Both CPM & Forward Bloc are now mulling steps to set up direct marketing centres with modern storage facilities for producers, so that they can get a better bargain.

Impasse over construction near heritage building - The Hoogly District Administration has locked horns with the judicial department over a building coming up on a 5 cottah plot that comes under the office of the SDO Serampore.

Prepaying to reduce liability - Over the past two-three years, housing prices have grown at a compounded annual rate of 30-40 %. Interest rates also went up during this period. If a borrower could borrow at around 8.75% a year ago, he now has to pay 10.5-11%.

Luxury hotel likely to come up in city - The Far-East Organisation, owners of the luxury hotel chain Fullerton, is planning to establish hotel in Kolkata soon.

Housing growth - Increasing focus on quality and segregation of risk classes points to a maturing phase in the country’s real estate economy.

Singapore real estate firm eyes heritage building for acquisition - Singapore based real estate firm ‘Far -East’ is looking at acquiring heritage buildings across major metropolitan cities and turning them into ‘top end’ five star hotels & service centres.

Kerala traders protest against retail chains - Commercial activities came to a virtual halt in Kerala on Saturday as shop-owners downed shutters as part of their half-day protest demanding a legislation to restrict the entry of big retail chains into the state.

Realty, hospitality sectors catch PE firm’s fancy - With IT projects taking a backseat on the investment front, private equity funds are cosyng up to residential, commercial and hospitality spaces in south India.

A million may lose homes in 2008 - In the US, home buyers seek changes in mortgage loan laws to prevent bankruptcy. Otherwise they fear in 2008 a million may lose their homes.

Big comes with open mall concept - Big Shopping Centres is set to introduce the open mall concept in India soon. In partnership with BIG Mauritius, a wholly owned by Lehman Brothers, this project will get off the ground under the banner of Big India Malls Pvt. Ltd.

CREDAI, IP University tie -up - CREDAI NCR and Guru Gobind Indraprastha University have tied up to promote research in real estate related subjects.

ITC arm seeks contracts abroad - Fortune Park Hotels, a subsidiary of ITC, is scouting for management contracts in Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, Dubai & Pakistan. A senior spokesperson said Fortune Park has opened its 23rd hotel in Howrah & the group has entered in 43 alliances as management contractors, out of which 23 had been operationalised.

Realty investors sail to Gulf, UK as India market is hot plate - High property ownerships & rental prices in India are forcing many Indian real estate investors to acquire properties in the Gulf countries and the United Kingdom to meet their residential and official needs in these markets.

ITC outfit to set up three hotels - Fortune Park Hotels Ltd, a subsidiary of fast moving consumer goods major ITC Ltd. will set up three deluxe hotels in Kolkata, Bangalore & Coimbatore within a couple of years at an investment of Rs 130 cr.

India to have first green hotel in Hyderabad - After the eco-friendly hotels India will have its first green hotel - The Park Hotel In Hyderabad. The investment in this 280 room hotel, scheduled to start operations by mid-2009, will be around Rs 350 cr, 15% higher than a regular hotel.

Centre to issue notices to 12 approved Goa SEZs - The government has decided to issue show cause notices to developers of 12 approved SEZs in Goa asking them why the approval granted to them should not be withdrawn.

SBI keen on realty trust - SBI Mutual Fund is planning to float a special purpose vehicle for real estate investment management.

Property tax back in Salt Lake - Bidhannagar Municipality decided to collect property tax from residents from fiscal2008-09.

CPM to fix policy on corporates' retail entry - The CPM is going to finalize its policy for licensing and regulating the entry of the corporate sector in the country's retail trade during the 19th party congress to be held in Coimbatore in March end.

Tatas plan home furniture retail with Steinhoff - The Tata Group is reportedly exploring JV plans for home furniture & lifestyle products retailing with Steinhoff International, one of the top five integrated lifestyle furniture suppliers in Europe and Australasia, and the largest in Africa.

ITC mulls more lifestyle stores, ties up with design cos - ITC Ltd's lifestyle retailing business division is planning to expand its retail footprint further by setting up more Wills Lifestyle, John Players & Miss Players stores across the country.

Water tax battle taken to high rises - Mayor Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharya used the CII-KMDA platform to push forward the Kolkata Municipal Corporation's water tax policy. He made good use of the platform as the audience comprised mainly developers & real estate companies.

Promoter arrested for fraud - Somnath Das, a promoter of Bhowanipore area has been arrested by the police on charges of duping a nationalized bank and four flat buyers.

Realty players' upbeat over PPP schemes - The railway budget has brought cheers to the builder community, which hopes to benefit from the government's plan to modernize railway stations.

JNNURM projects to focus on slums in city - KMDA, KMC and officers of the Urban Development & Municipal Affairs ministry held a meeting to discuss issues related to the JNNURM project in Kolkata.

Rs 400 cr Township to come up in Baruipur - Urban Development Minister Mr. Asok Bhattacharya announced that a township will come up in the Baruipur area at a cost of Rs 400 cr.

Affordability of Houses down by 50% in Mumbai - Rising real estate prices & increased interest rates coupled with the demand supply mismatch, has brought down the affordability of residential property in Mumbai over 50% in the last three years.

PSU Housing finance companies' NPA rise says CAG report - Non-performing Assets (NPA) of PSU housing finance companies have gone up while disbursement of housing loans have declined during 2005-06, according to a CAG report.

LMG Brands mulls sourcing from India - LMG Brands a part of the \$ 2 billion Dubai-based Land mark Group, is adopting a wait and watch policy on outsourcing its products from India even as it is firming up its retail presence in the country.

Consumer durables cos bet big on large retail stores- Consumer durables manufacturers are betting big on large format retail stores. These stores are now contributing in a significant way to their overall business, thanks to the perfect ambience and huge display area offered by stores like Croma, Reliance Digital, e-Zone etc. large format retail stores give manufacturers a huge space to display their entire range of products. At the same time, due to availability of various brands in the same store, the customers get an opportunity to evaluate products well and make an informed decision before he splurges on high-end products.

Spicy debut- A Spanish bar opening at South City Mall next month is all set to revolutionize Kolkata's culinary vocabulary, with the scintillating blend of music and drinks tap as, Spanish for appetizers. The biggest splash is in the form of the debut of Food Talk, a 30,000 sq ft food court by the restaurant chain, Blue Foods.

Reliance Fresh aims to become end-to-end food retailer- After spinning off Reliance Fresh as an independent company, Reliance industries is planning to make its food vertical an end-to-end business with a impetus on all its categories ranging from fresh fruits and vegetables to having its own FMGC brands for general trade.

InterContinental plans for Delhi- InterContinental Hotels Group has announced that it will begin development of a Holiday Inn and InterContinental hotel in east Delhi.

Pvt equity funds betting on city properties- Foreign private equity funds are queuing up for biting into the city's burgeoning real estate pie. Over the past 18 months, several large PE transactions have been concluded in addition to the enterprise level hospitality exposure by Credit Suisse in Park Hotels.

Chemists, retail giants lock horns, MRTPC steps in- Those opposing price discounts on medicine at big retail chains like Subhiksha may soon face troubles with the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Commission (MRTPC) asking its investigative arm to probe charges of Restrictive trade practices.

Realty Bytes:

- After the success of Salt Lake and Rajarhat, west Bengal Government is now planning to develop similar integrated townships in Baruipur, Siliguri, Asansol, Kalyani & Haldia.
- Kolkata Municipal Corporation is soon going to ensure that all new housing projects in the city have water meters installed in their premises. Eventually, KMC plans to charge for water used by the individual flats beyond a certain level.
- City based business conglomerate Usha Martin Group plans to foray into the realty and infrastructure business. The Group has floated a new company, Usha Breco Realty Pvt. Ltd.

LIC Housing to combine reverse mortgage with insurance plan - LIC Housing Finance is looking to combine its reverse plan with a whole-life annuity provided by a life insurance.

Property design com Yoo joins hands with Pune's Panchshil realty - Global Property design & development company YOO has announced an alliance with Pune-based real estate developer Panchshil Realty to construct India's first branded apartments.

Sarovar plans Homotel brand of hotels - Sarovar plans to open Homotel brand of hotels in Mumbai, Chandigarh, Pune, Chennai and Baddi.

Survey advises retail investors to take informed decisions - Painted an optimistic picture on expected expansion of activity in the capital market, The economic Survey has said that the strong fundamentals of the economy combined with higher growth would help sustain the interest of domestic and foreign investors in the market.

Double-digit growth requires more reforms - Construction activities are projected to moderate to 9.6% as against 12% Electricity, gas and water supply would be the only saving grace in industrial activities as they are shown to be growing 7.8% against 6%.

L&T to launch Rs 4500 cr PE fund - L&T is entering the private equity space with staggering Rs 4500 cr fund that will invest in real estate related infrastructure projects.

Bangalore beats rest of India in realty price rise - Bangalore has beaten all other cities in rise in property prices, according to data in housing Price Inflation that has been included for the first time in Economic Survey.

Indiabulls to buy dev Property for Rs 1,092 cr - Indiabulls Real Estate Ltd. (IBREL) will acquire its partner Dev Property Development (DPD) in an all-stock deal.

Apollo to set up Rs 280 cr hospital in Mauritius - Apollo Group of Hospitals has formed a JV company - British American Hospitals Enterprise - with British American Investment Co, a business conglomerate in Mauritius, to set up and manage a tertiary care hospital care hospital in Mauritius.

A safe haven - Global Private equity firms are likely to invest US \$ 48 bn in the Indian market over the next two years, with the real estate sector slated to emerge as a key beneficiary, industry body ASSOCHAM said in a paper on 'Private Equity The Money Tree'.

Ten green buildings in city by 2010 - Apart from Forum Projects' IT Park at sector V called 'Technopolis' CII's proposed centre of excellence in Salt Lake and RMZ Ambuja combine's IT Park in the city are some of the local green building projects which are slated to come up by the end of the decade.

PC vows to hasten reforms - Finance, retail to get priority - Finance Minister spelled out his resolve to fast track reforms in financial services & organised retailing even as he unfurled plan to dilute the government's stake in state-owned companies.

Push for FDI in retail - The economic survey called for opening up retail trade to foreign direct investment.

Home and away - With property prices almost catching up with property prices almost catching up with other metros, the city is no longer considered the poor cousin in real estate. And people of Calcutta are looking at buying a second or third home in Singapore or may be in London too.
