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Pushing the Agenda for Sustainability

The Distinguished Sustainability Lecture Series in Singapore gathered prominent thought leaders in green buildings to deliver an insightful and enriching knowledge session.

Sustainability as a practice has becoming increasingly commonplace, held as a response to a world blighted by environmental damage and climate change. People are growing more cognizant of the detrimental effects caused by humanity’s impact on the physical environment, and are now taking greater, more concrete measures to mitigate the damage.

Convened by Carrier and Otis, part of UTC Building & Industrial Systems, a unit of United Technologies Corp (UTC), the Distinguished Sustainability Lecture Series (DSLS) held a session in Singapore on 2 December 2014. Launched in 2011, the lecture series is designed to assemble sustainability thought
leaders and international building industry experts to transform the built environment and has reached nearly 3000 professionals through 24 lectures in 13 countries. The DSLS in Singapore was supported by the Singapore Green Building Council.

Held in the Grand Ballroom of the Hilton Hotel, close to 150 professionals, key decision-makers and academicians turned up in force to take in the various schools of thought regarding the subject of sustainability. The speaker line-up was stellar as well, comprising an eclectic mix of industry leaders and experts with an immense wealth of experience and also well-versed in their respective fields.

Mr John Mandyck, chief sustainability officer, UTC Building & Industrial Systems, opened the lecture with the global context for sustainability action, discussing the various business, environmental and social trends driving the demand for green buildings across the world. Stating that urbanisation is the trend of our time, Mr Mandyck highlighted that there is now a green building revolution, with 44 percent of new construction in the USA now green, as compared to the 2 percent figure in 2005. As the world’s population continues to grow, more and large megacities are needed to house these people, and buildings will be staples of the urban landscape, necessitating their need to be environmentally-friendly and sustainable.

Mr Mandyck also cited that the next evolution of green buildings will be about health. The green building movement now has been all about reducing the environmental impact on the natural environment, but the way forward will be about reducing the impact on human health and improving productivity. Studies have shown that 90 percent of the cost of the building stems from salaries and the benefits of the people dwelling within. Green buildings therefore have the ability to have impacts on the health of people in those buildings. In closing, Mr Mandyck reiterated that green buildings are both good business and environmental decisions.
The U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) is a pioneer of the modern sustainability movement, and it has been instrumental in defining the vision of better buildings for people and the environment. The internationally-recognised Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design or LEED as it is more commonly known, has become the basis, inspiration and reference for many green building rating tools around the world. Mr Rick Fedrizzi, President, CEO and Founding Chair of the USGBC, began his presentation by citing the importance on having green buildings for everyone within this generation. He states that green building is about building value, relying on the aspects of green buildings to create clean, safe and healthier places for people to live, work and play in.

Mr Fedrizzi states that the best part about green buildings is not the fact that they produce less waste, save energy and other resources, but it is about the protection of the precious assets within the buildings – the people. Green buildings have positive effects on the occupants’ health, their ability to function, their ability to heal and their ability to learn. Therefore, a green building is needed for everyone in this generation, to ensure that safety, health and well-being of the people in a changing world.

Mr Bob Fox, Partner of Cook Fox Architects, brought participants through a journey of returning to nature through science and architecture, exploring the elements of true high-performance architecture and the value of human connection to the natural environment. Mr Fox spearheaded the design of the Bank of America Tower, which became the first US office tower
to achieve a LEED Platinum rating. He also spoke of biophilic design, a school of thought that endeavours to improve occupant well-being by bringing nature into the indoor space by using materials and patterns that resemble nature while allowing for expansive views.

Rounding up the lecture, Mr Lim Tow Fok, General Manager, Property Management & Knowledge Management, Keppel Land International Limited, shared with the audience Keppel Land’s sustainability journey. Keppel Land has demonstrated a fervent emphasis on sustainability, and has in place a robust framework to ensure that sustainability goals set in place are realistic, achievable and subsequently met. These measures and more led Keppel Land to be crowned one of the Winners in the inaugural WorldGBC Asia Pacific Awards 2014 for Leadership in Green Building.

As Southeast Asia and the rest of the world continues towards urbanisation, the lecture series provided an update to the current outlook of the green building movement, serving as a checkpoint for sustainability efforts.
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