

# Housing & Construction

Alpha Solar Energy Systems (Pvt.) Ltd.

## Total Solar Energy solutions in Sri Lanka



**The tasks of the Consultant:**

- Study and advise line ministries on the relevance and competence of consultants to be recruited in future.
- Advise line ministries on market rates for consultancy assignments based on the available information.
- Review the physical progress of assignments.
- Assignments of deliverable reports of the consultant.

**Academic Qualifications:**

- Bachelor's degree from a recognised University or an Institute.
- Postgraduate qualifications will be added qualification.

**Experience:**

- Experience in procurement of consultants under World Bank guidelines.
- Familiar with office equipment, computer network, internet and management for preparing updated procurement plan, monitoring assignments.

**Duration:**

glass which are now a common feature in all modern buildings.

They represent TATA BP Solar India Ltd., which is a joint venture of TATA and BP Solar (a wholly owned subsidiary of British Petroleum). They are located in the Silicon Valley of India, Bangalore and are the largest and most advanced in this region.

"SOLAR THERM" also introduces a new generation of Solar Water Heaters using a very high quality Solar Collector developed by TATA BP Solar India Ltd.

TATA BP Solar has "The Solar Shop" concept and has opened many in India. With the same concept Alpha Solar Energy Systems

Ltd. have just launched opening of "Solar Shops" in Sri Lanka, the first of which was opened in Dambulla on 04th March 2003, and the second one was opened on the 95th in Batticaloa to serve the people in the East.

These shops were declared open by Mr. K. Subramanya, Executive Vice President of TATA BP Solar India Ltd., Alpha Solar Energy Systems Ltd., plans to establish many more "Solar Shops" in various parts of the country.

Together with TATA BP Solar, Alpha Solar Energy Systems Ltd., are committed to help the country to reduce usage of expensive Fossil fuels and also to create a cleaner environment.

## Architects, Architecture and Housing

Dr. MANJITH DAYARATNE

There is a general feeling among most who are familiar with housing, that the essentially complex issues of housing have neither been properly understood nor attempted, particularly in the practitioners world. This obviously is a bold suggestion and is sure to make most housing experts feel uncomfortable. At this point when we are attempting to articulate the future direction of housing however, it is essential that we take this position so that we could re-examine the past, and suggest more meaningful and appropriate approaches which could be attempted at least in the future.

The issues of housing as we know them today are numerous. But almost everyone reasonably familiar with housing issues will agree that they are primarily twofold. On the one hand, there is a need to housing the poor, who cannot house themselves. On the other, there is a shortfall of supply to demand which is ever increasing despite all the investments and innovations. Housing, has begun to be viewed as a problem only as a result of these two sets of objectives not having been achieved in the contemporary world for understandable reasons.

Partly, the society which we have allowed to evolve is to blame, with all its income disparities, resource disparities and social inequalities. Partly, it is the systems that we have put in place in the industry of building which discriminates against the house-building activity. In fact, housing until the poor has been a private individual problem and a manageable community problem, which those communities had resolved quite easily and quite appropriately.

Housing has come to be a problem, and a complex one at that only with the emergence of the governments and other external agencies coming to take responsibility for the management and provision of welfare of the societies and individuals. It is no great secret that the problem of housing begins with each new family formed demanding new accommodation separate from their parental homes specially in the contemporary world. It gets worsened when the families already in some kind of accommodation require more in

terms of the quantity and the quality of the dwelling already occupied to satisfy ever-increasing desires. On the one hand, more space is needed and more conveniences are needed. On the other, architecture of the houses, their locations, arrangements, styles or sizes and the decoration reflect the individuals and their standing and social relations in the society. Houses acquire market values, and acquisition and exchange of dwellings depend on the purchasing power of families. Houses are built by some and occupied by others. They are to be built to certain standards specified by agencies alien to those societies inhabiting them. There are some who know how to build and to build them better, and others who know nothing of construction. In fact, we have come very far away from the self-contained self-sufficient society with ever-increasing populations where everything from a needle to a house are in short supply both in quantity and quality. This certainly is not an individual problem anymore. The governments have got involved, the builders, the contractors, the property developers, the sales managers have all got involved. In the midst of course are also the Architects and those millions of "homeless" people who have not been able to come to terms with this complex issue we seem to be talking about and their simple needs for dwellings to live in.

History however tells us that neither Architects (with a capital A) nor Architects had much to do with the vast building activities of housing until the last two or three decades anywhere in the world. Even when they have now got involved, they seem to manage only a very small dent in the context of overall supply that is needed and that is produced. Here again we have had only marginal success in producing the right number of houses of the right kind in the right place and at the right cost.

Shall we say something somewhere has gone wrong.

The major problems of housing are twofold; one is the gap between the supply and the demand which leaves a large part of the population without a house to live. *Ad hoc* arrangements for accommodations crop up and are in

abundance. We call them slums, shanties or substandard houses. The rich, the able and the well-to-do have no problem here. Houses, or forms of accommodation can be found, as long as one is willing to pay and is able to pay. The real issue is in housing the poor, the disabled, and those who cannot build for themselves. Unlike the rich, the poor are compelled to resort to illegal means, since poverty is immediately associated with inability; Squatting, unlawful land invasions, and illegal occupation of houses result in. This is when housing becomes a problem "that really needs to be solved".

If one looks at the problem of housing the poor carefully however, it becomes clear that the real problem there is not that of housing, but poverty. It is no secret that scarcity does not necessarily affect the rich and the well-to-do. It affects the poor, because poverty diminishes the ability to pay, and the ability to obtain many a thing that the rich can obtain without even paying. Poverty diminishes the opportunities available to housing oneself, in two ways. Firstly, as a result of the inability to pay, and secondly as a result of the inability to have access to develop the ability to pay. This vicious circle keeps the poor as the poor and the problem of housing remains largely for the poor, who are unable to afford.

As such, housing for the poor, cannot be addressed as a housing problem alone. Housing is a problem for the poor not because they are not making any effort. It is just the opposite. The scarce resources and their market values make it impossible for the poor to acquire them; the land, the building materials, the labour, and all other services are determined in the marketplace by the market forces appropriate for the haves. The poor are naturally marginalised.

The answer to this question lies fundamentally elsewhere. It is the poverty that makes it impossible for poor to buy land and force them to squat on vacant land. It is impossible for them to buy the right building materials. It is poverty that makes them build slums. It is impossible for them to hire architects to design their dwellings. It is poverty that makes them build slums.

The answer is not in this approach called "housing for the poor"; which suggest that they have different spatial qualities or architectural standards. Their housing dreams are the same and their housing needs are the same. It is perhaps in their ability to realise those dreams, that the differences may lie.

The solution to this has to be twofold. One is not in housing but in poverty alleviation. Enabling people to acquire the means by which they can build what they want. But this is no easy task, and it will have to be a long-term strategy. The other is to enable them to build incrementally; that is that the houses for the poor do not have to end up being the 350 sq.ft. house forever. As in the real world, the houses should grow and grow with the people. As they develop their capacities, and as the family changes, the houses should acquire modifications and grow with time.

In the short term, an approach to housing for the poor as an incremental housing practice has to be there; as an immediate quick remedial action, to provide accommodation for the people who cannot build for themselves. The way to build however is not in typical low-cost housing but in choice-based low-capital housing practices that allow incremental development and evolution.

When we have accepted that housing the poor requires primarily poverty alleviation rather than anything else, the central issues of housing begins to surface. If housing is made, accessible from an economic point of view, then we may ask what kind of houses must be made available in what way, to whom, in what kind of settings and surroundings.

Housing is a term loosely employed to mean a broad spectrum of activities, and is mostly mistakenly identified with house design, or housing projects. But housing goes beyond the mere provision of house units. At the most rudimentary level, Housing is the process enabling the act of dwelling; establishing one's existence as appropriate for his living on earth, in the form of making homes. House designs, and the settlements are intricately intertwined in the process, and architects have a great deal to offer in the process. **Continued on page 34**

## Houses

The perfect solution to the housing problem in Sri Lanka - International Construction Consortium's "KIT HOUSE" concept everlastingly from the innovators in the construction industry.

Fine living at an affordable price!