

- Virus

Needed: Net-zero buildings and robust workplaces

The pandemic has ensured that health and wellness become prominent goals in green building initiatives

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As the world battles the Covid-19 pandemic, health and wellness have taken a predominant place in the country's drive towards green buildings. Be it a new residence, a factory, or a metro project or even retrofitting of old buildings, the aim has always been to make them self-reliant in energy, water, and other resources, hence transforming them into netzero buildings. This effort has gained a new currency in the light of the pandemic.

Says Gopalakrishnan Padmanabhan, Managing Director, Southeast Asia and Middle East, Green Business Certificate Institute of India: "Significantly, health and wellbeing, which have always been a focus area in green buildings, have received special focus now during the pandemic."

The CII Indian Green Building Council, through its rating systems, and the US Green Building Council, among others, have been driving this movement for nearly two decades. Adds Padmanabhan: "USGBC net-zero certification, LEED Zero, represents a new level of achievement in green buildings. The LEED v4.1 is the next generation standard for green building design, construction, operations, and performance." According to him, it raises the bar to address energy efficiency, water conservation, site selection, material selection, day lighting and waste reduction. Apart from being sustainable, these buildings consume fewer resources, reduce operating costs, increase value, and create safer and healthier environments for occupants.

It helps buildings reduce their greenhouse gas/carbon emissions. The focus is on using toxin-free materials for cleaner indoor air.

USGBC has a registered base of over 23 billion sq ft across buildings, factories, metro projects and airports, among others. More than 100 projects around the world are reviewing to attain net-zero status. Says Ravichandran Purushothaman, President, Danfoss India, which has been facilitating the green building movement and has a model facility near Chennai, "The focus on climate change and the need to meet targets by 2030 and 2050 to reduce emissions has brought to the fore the need to go net-zero, decarbonise old buildings/factories, while ensuring that new buildings get more efficient."

He feels that the medium and small industries sector, which forms a major part of the economy, should transform its workplaces. For, only healthy and robust workplaces can be sustainable post the pandemic.