

Bengal Chamber fetes iconic members

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Kolkata: The Bengal Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI), which traces its origins to 1833, felicitated some of its oldest and fittest members on Friday, raising a toast to their successful journeys.

The plaques to Balmer Lawrie, Andrew Yule, CESC, F Harley and Gillanders Arbuthnot were bestowed physically, as part of BCCI's maiden "Annual Corporate Heritage Recognition" event.

The online panel discussion on "Industrial Heritage of Kolkata" that followed, in association with Intach, was an instant hit with the audience, for the sheer historical anecdotes that the participants had to tell.

Gautam Ray, executive director (HR and admin), CESC, spoke of how Calcutta was electrified barely a decade after London to achieve a "milestone in the world's electrical energy". Not many would be aware that among CESC's first consumers were Bank of Bengal (SBI) and Bengal Club, Governor House and Calcutta

High Court, said Ray.

According to K Mohan, director (personnel), Andrew Yule, his 56,000-strong employee company in 1947 had grossed a Rs 23crore turnover and paid Rs 1.8crore to the state exchequer, to become one of the highest revenue contributors those days.

Balmer Lawrie CMD Adika Ratna Sekhar said, "Our company, which celebrates its 156th Foundation Day on February 2, never made a loss because it always saw the changes coming and changed itself accordingly."

Namit Shah, MD, F Harley and Co, claimed his organisation, founded in 1825, was the oldest. "We have been a small fish in a large pond. Our Rs 30-40crore company managed to sail through because we were nimble-footed, did not carry the baggage of huge assets."

Intach director GM Kapur, who is BCCI's chairperson, heritage committee, said, "The webinar has given us quite a few insights into corporate strategies and could well serve as lessons in advanced company management."

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