Gaming diplomacy for social change

It can be a powerful diplomatic tool given its reach and user base, says Katherine Hadda

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U.S. Consul-General Katherine Hadda on Thursday said given the vast reach of games, gaming can be a powerful diplomatic tool.

Ms. Hadda was speaking at the four-day ‘Games for Good: Designing Games with Social Impact Programme’ which seeks to improve communities through technology and gaming, educate youth in game design and in the process, strengthen ties between countries. “But given its reach and user base, gaming is potentially a powerful diplomatic tool. It brings in hundreds of billions of dollars in revenue around the world every year. And the past decade has seen the rise of mobile gaming through smartphones. It means that the sector now includes people of all ages and demographics,” Ms. Hadda said.

Touching upon the social impact of the initiative, Ms. Hadda said game creators have been trying to make a difference. “Their games can put you in the shoes of refugees, games that can directly address issues such as mental health issues and domestic abuse. Other games can show you how easily communicable diseases can spread, and teach you how to avoid such diseases. Or, how climate change can affect the world,” she said. Ms. Hadda pointed out that the reason to organise the workshop in the city was on account of ‘bright, young people’, top class educational institutions and ‘a visionary local government’.

IT Secretary Jayesh Ranjan offered the State government’s support to ‘five best ideas’ which germinate from the workshop. He also encouraged participants to develop use cases which can be implemented. Mr. Ranjan said there were over 150 VFX and gaming companies in the State and the digital entertainment sphere employs about 20,000 professionals. The four-day workshop would touch upon issues connected to water crisis, disinformation, inter-faith dialogue, human trafficking and countering violent extremism.