

India's mature reaction post - Mumbai siege has surprised the world says Dr. Amartya Sen

Effective democracy depends on activism exhibited by people & opposition

IT Industry has instilled confidence in Indian business



L-R: **Gautam Thapar**, Vice Chairman, Aspen Institute India; Chairman, Avantha Group; **Prof. Amartya Sen**, Lamont University Professor, and Professor of Economics and Philosophy, Harvard University, USA; **Jamshyd Godrej**, Chairman, Aspen Institute India; Chairman and Managing Director, Godrej & Boyce Manufacturing Co.Ltd.; **Tarun Das**, President, Aspen Institute India, and Chief Mentor, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)

"Effectiveness of democratic governance depends on the activism exhibited by the people and opposition, not only at the time of elections, but as a day to day exercise for praising people who are doing well and criticising those who are not. By exercising our voice, we can bring about a positive change in every problem that India faces today", said Dr. Amartya Sen, Nobel Laureate. He was speaking at the Special Plenary Session at Let's Think Ideas India 2008, an initiative by Aspen Institute India organised in New Delhi.

He further said, "The recent barbaric act in Mumbai is the outcome of failure of government, opposition and democracy. On the other hand, globally people are surprised at the maturity of India's reaction. Post the Mumbai crisis, despite anger at administration, lack of security, public at large is not asking for waging a

war on Pakistan." On the complete lack of leadership in the backdrop of Mumbai siege, he pointed out that leadership is not meant to come out of a particular connection or family; it emerges on the basis of dynamism and interaction which should not discriminate amongst the background of people.

Dr Sen further stated, "We cannot set priorities amongst social, economic and political issues. They are all of equal importance for guiding a nation towards development". Referring to a report, on the number of people killed by terrorism are far less than those killed by lightening, he said, "we have to have the ability to understand the plight of others. It is not just the number of people died, but the way people are killed. It just reflects that now it is almost nowhere you can enter without being searched."

Expressing need to change the larger social psyche on gender issue, he shared the outcomes of a study conducted in two Mumbai based hospitals on prevailing gender gap in India. The findings reflect that the condition of a girl child is invariably worse than the condition at which a boy child at the time of hospitalisation. The session saw interaction on diverse issues like disability, Chinese imports, conservation of heritage, poverty, illiteracy and hunger amongst other.

Mr. Jamshyd Godrej, Chairman - Aspen Institute India; Chairman and Managing Director – Godrej & Boyce Manufacturing Co. Ltd., stated, "We are happy to channelize the value system in leadership through the Aspen initiative. Such participations, discussions and involvement of the civil societies help in coming up with ideas and laying solutions.

Thanking Mr. Godrej for leading the CII team to Aspen, 13 years ago, Mr. Tarun Das, President – Aspen Institute India; Chief Mentor – Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)said "the IT industry has raised the confidence in Indian business for making a mark in the world. This confidence can be channelized to address every conceivable problem and challenge India faces."

Mr. Gautam Thapar, Vice Chairman – Aspen Institute India; Chairman – Avantha Group, said, "despite 60 years of Independence, we still suffer from poor implementation of affirmative actions. This is the time that we aspire for higher things collectively rather than high individual desires. We need to address the question, "is the India we live in today the India we want to represent globally?"

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