

'India needs right mix of soft power and economic diplomacy'



L-R: **Indrani Bagchi**, Diplomatic Editor, Times of India; **Ashley Tellis**, Senior Associate, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, USA; **S.K.Lambah**, Special Envoy to the Prime Minister of India; **Shashi Tharoor**, Chairman, Afras Ventures and former Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations; Moderator: **Ravi Bhoothalingam**, Founder and Chairman, Manas Advisory

"The importance of India's soft power can hardly be overestimated. But at the same time, economic diplomacy is equally very important. What we need is a right mix of both," said **Mr S K Lambah, Special Envoy to the Prime Minister**.

He was speaking at **'Ideas India 2008', organized by the Aspen Institute India** here today. A number of very pertinent questions were raised during wide-ranging discussions in the Concurrent Session, such as: "How is India placed in the world today?", "Is India a telling example of first world aspirations and persistent developing country problems and legacies?"

Talking about India's vision for the world and its contribution, Mr Lambah said, "India's vision has evolved over a long period and has been shaped by historical experiences and contemporary realities."

Mr Shashi Tharoor, former Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Chairman, Afras Ventures, said, "By all accounts India is certainly more focused, more hard-hitting and more realistic now. Its biggest advantage lies in

the great appeal of its soft power. The dominance and importance of Indian Diaspora all around the world, and especially in the US and the UK, cannot be ignored."

Speaking about India's relationship with its neighbors, he said, "Both our problem as well advantage lies in the fact that we are one of the biggest in the neighbourhood. Of course, our problem gets further accentuated because of the very difficult and complex neighbourhood we have."

"The more we grow, more prosperous we become, and more opportunities we give to our people, the better it would be for India to play a more important role in the world," said Mr Tharoor.

Mr Ashley Tellis, Senior Associate, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, USA, said: "India's quest to be recognized as one of the great powers and key players in the world will take a long time to get materialized. As such, India is still primarily a consumer and it needs to organize itself to exercise its power."

Stressing over the urgent necessity for India to improve its present situation and remove its fundamental weaknesses, he said, "Unless India improves its materialistic circumstances and develop its organizational power, it cannot become an important player in the world arena."

"In India we don't project our soft power. Rather, we live this soft power. This makes India different from other countries. What is now needed for India to do immediately is to secure itself to exercise and execute its soft power," said **Ms Indrani Bagchi, Diplomatic Editor, Times of India**.

Talking about India's relations with her neighbours, she said, "In some ways we can also be held responsible for the present mess and the way we have conducted ourselves with our neighbours. We should have a more judicious view on this issue of crucial importance."

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