

Business Models and Institutions Needed to Fight Corruption

Ideas India 2009 – Day 2 delivers unique ideas to face India's developmental challenges

Addressing some of the most complex development challenges of India like corruption, water usage and regional instability, the speakers at various sessions at the 2nd day of Ideas India 2009, organised by the Aspen Institute India in New Delhi, deliberated on actionable solutions.

Almost all hands went up among the audience when Moderator Amb Kishan Rana, Former Indian Ambassador to Germany, asked the central question of the session, **“Has Corruption Become A Way of Life?”** Most, however, earnestly believed that something could be done about the situation. Lord Meghnad Desai, Development Economist, urged the business community to take up political lobbying to simplify legislation, such that “the power to delay” that rests with administrators of laws and the mistrust between the Power and the Citizen is minimized. Mr Shaffi Mather, Social Entrepreneur & Lawyer explained his initiative of a sustainable business model to fight corruption. Legislating Whistleblowing laws, making media aberrations such as paid slander a punishable offense and enabling anonymous reporting of bribery and corruption can also go a long. Since fighting corruption as an individual is extremely difficult, it was suggested to bring together like-minded people in a forum to collectively fight corruption.

The complex challenges in water usage and management were highlighted at the session on **“Why is India not Following the Water Mantra of Reduce, Recycle, Replenish?”** While the rural poor are forced to buy unsafe water from the so called water mafia, the government subsidizes unclean water for urban areas. Following the failure of the State in providing potable water, business Funds are exploring the option of giving charge of local water bodies to local communities and developing business models around it. It is only through a Social Entrepreneurship and community involvement, assisted by a supportive institutional framework that solve water issues in India that encompass domestic, industrial, agriculture and ecological needs. Moderated by Gopal Srinivasan , Chairman and Managing Director, TVS Capital Funds Ltd, the distinguished session panelists included Mr Suresh Prabhu, Former Minister for Energy, Govt of India; Mr Nikhil Sawhney, Executive Director, Triveni Engineering and Industries Ltd.; Mr Varun Sahni, India Director, Acumen Fund and Mr Manoj Kumar, CEO, Naandi Foundation.

The consensus that emerged at the panel discussion on **‘Explaining Instability In South Asia: A Legacy of Colonialism or Pangs of Rising Diverse Democracies’** was that instability in South Asia has its roots in the varying perceptions on nationalism, strong foreign policy, lack of leadership and good governance, and has little do with the region's colonial heritage. Citing the example of Sri Lanka, Prof Sumantra Bose of the London School of Economics said that instability in the country had its origins in the majoritarian system that sought to deny equal rights to the Tamil minority. Come Carpentier, Convenor of the Editorial Board, World Affairs Journal, said that governments the world over were starting to make traditional systems an integral part of their polity. “While regional economic cooperation can be an antidote to instability, political credibility is the very basis for any stability,” said Amb G Parthasarthy, Visiting Professor, Centre for Policy Research. Pointing to the inherently apolitical defence forces that India inherited from the British post-Independence, Vice-Admiral (retd) P S Das said that in India the civilian leadership had allied with the bureaucracy to create a credibly government structure while in Pakistan and elsewhere the civilian leadership had joined hands with the army leadership, creating a leadership vacuum in the process.

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