

India should take action internally without waiting for a global climate change deal: Ideas India 2009 Panel

Climate Change, Homeland Security and Women's Empowerment emerge as major themes of Ideas India 2009 grand finale

Climate Change, Homeland Security and Women's Empowerment were discussed at length on the final day of Ideas India 2009, organised in New Delhi by the Aspen Institute India. At the session "**Can India Chart a New Course in the Fight Against Climate Change?**", moderated by Mr Chandrajit Banerjee, Director General, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), the panelists agreed that India can take leadership in developing new technologies and global negotiations and to tackle emissions. Mr Arun Maira, Member Planning Commission said that government, the scientific and industrial communities and civil society must engage on the issue. Mr Suresh Prabhu, former Minister of Energy, commented that the world must adhere to the limits of 350 ppm global emissions and a per capita basis for negotiations. Ms Seema Arora, Head, Center of Excellence for Sustainable Development, touched upon the positive developments of companies taking the lead for voluntary disclosure of carbon intensity. The Green Building movement in India has also taken off as companies are realizing that lower energy usage lowers costs. While India must work on a global agreement, there is much that India can do internally without waiting for a global climate change deal. India should create a post-industrial technology revolution. Companies should innovate in developing new products as well as new business models that would mould business objectives with climate change compulsions. India's energy mix must be diversified with greater usage of clean energy and less dependence on fossil fuels.

The Session "**Lessons of 26/11: Is India Safer?**" explored the question of whether India is safer since the tragedy of 26/11 and what lessons have been learnt since that fateful day. Moderator Mr. Sugata Srinivasaraju, Associate Editor (South), Outlook magazine said the tragedy changed India's view of the world and world's view towards India. Mr P S Das, Vice Admiral (Retd), Indian Navy said the incidents like this can be avoided through proper management and coordination of intelligence agencies, defense agencies and civilian resources. He added that greater authority must also lead to greater accountability of resources. Mr S K Lambah, Special Envoy to the Prime Minister said, the Government of India has taken several steps to avoid any repetition of the incident. He said, the setting up of National Intelligence Agency, beefing up of National Security Guards (NSG) and Central Industrial Security Forces (CISF) are some of the steps taken by government to strengthen India's security. Mr Ajai Chowdhry, Founding member, HCL said that technology should be leveraged to strengthen security. He said all the intelligence and security agencies must have the backing of technology.

Each panelist – Ms Geetanjali Chanda, Senior Lecturer, Women's Gender and Sexuality Studies, Yale University; Ms Sumita Ghose, Executive Director, Rangasutra; Mr CV Madhukar, Founder and Director, PRS Legislative Research and Ms Bhairavi Jani, Director at SCA Group of Companies – at the session "**Empowering India's Women: Is Enough Being Done?**" brought a different perspective to the issue. The session was moderated by Ms Navita Mahajan, Independent Researcher and Academic, and Director, The Northern India Rubber Mills. The concept of "Empowerment" means power from within and therefore reflects that empowerment cannot be patronizingly handed down. In Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen's concept of "niti", enough has been done in

terms of laws and policies on paper. However, in terms of “nyaya” or on the ground justice, Indian society is far behind in giving women an equal footing. Even though much still needs to be done in making the workplace environment gender neutral in providing equal opportunity, Corporate India seems to be doing a tad better; the situation is graver at the family and society level. Some ideas to empower women include rethinking property and transfer laws; making the woman of the household as the lead figure in ration cards; building a more conducive and comfortable work environment; enhancing the reach of literacy and re-examining the content of our education; rethinking reservation structure; as a society, demanding a more constructive role from the media and being a role model in promoting fairness.