

Minutes

Meeting title	Nation Building Meet
Time and date	2-3 March 2013, 9 am to 5 pm
Chairperson/s	Justice Tewatia (formerly Formerly Chief Justice, Punjab & Haryana High Court and Calcutta High Court); Professor Varun Arya , Member, IIM Ahmedabad Society & Formerly President, IIT Delhi Alumni Association
Location	Seminar Rooms I, II & III, India International Centre, New Delhi
Minute taker	Supratim Basu, Dipinder Sekhon, Anubhuti K. Bhrany
Attendees	See Attachment A , including photographs [INSERT PHOTOS]

Nation Building Meet dedicated to the memory of Professor P.V. Indiresan



The meet started with tribute to Padma Bhushan Profesor P. V. Indiresan, who needs no introduction. The Nation Building Meet was dedicated to his memory. Professor Indiresan was actively involved in the organisation of the Nation Building Meet, but passed away on 24th February 2013 at age 85. He was in Pune at that time and was supposed to chair the Election Commission's technical committee meet on electronic voting machines. Several alumni of IITs and some ex-students of Prof Indiresan, present at the meet, spoke words of tribute.

Background to the Nation Building Meet

For quite some time now, a vast majority of thinking citizens have been voicing their concerns regarding the rapid degeneration of governance and politics in our country. It is hindering the real development of our nation to such an extent that unless some urgent measures are devised and put in place, the political and administrative deterioration would soon reach a point of no return. It may even lead to chaos of unthinkable proportion.

A systemic change in the polity which can provide ethical education, produce honest citizens and effectively tackle the rule of black money, the compromising bureaucracy and the ineffective politicians are the dire needs today. Desired change can only be brought about by a systematic effort and passion to take the matter to its logical conclusion.

To achieve the desired goal, well-meaning citizens and thinkers were invited to meet to infuse the cooperation among all like-minded people and groups so that their dispersed energies are galvanized in unison for achieving the desperately

desired change for good of the people and our country. Participants displayed the wisdom & judiciousness to contribute towards evolving and devising feasible solutions and realistic action plan for nation-building.

Conduct of the Meet

The theme for the Conference was set by Justice Tawatia in his address: **Take the courage to move forward for change**. Members were requested to focus on actions needed to bring about the relevant change, and not an analysis of problems. The aim is to understand what can be done, and then prepare an agenda for change. He suggested that the task before us is difficult but not impossible. And if necessary we have to tackle even something impossible. Prof. Varun Arya mentioned that this is not about feasibility, it is about need of the hour. The situation today is something which makes it completely unavoidable to do something.

Representative members were thereafter invited by Prof. Arya to provide their thoughts. Key themes and recommendations are noted below for further development and action. In the interest of brevity, not all contributors' names have been identified, nor all issues noted. Some of the discussions at the Meet are now available on Youtube.

It is recognised that results of discussions from this Meet only form the seed for much further work, and many issues could not be either raised or adequately discussed.

Key message 1: Systemic reform

A key message from the Meet was that we need systemic reform, not piecemeal focus on individual issues. Eg.:

1. Search for individual remedy has led us to ignore the system-wide issues.
2. Focus on individual problems will leave us in a mess (PP Choudhury)

Key message 2: Importance of values

The Meet emphasised India's innate values which need to be revived.

Swami Ramdev mentioned the importance not just of reforming systems but of reforming people (character). Both must be good for the country to function well. If either or both are bad, we end up with a systemic crisis.

A number of suggestions reflected the need of each of us to take responsibility for ourselves and our social behavior. We have discussed the systemic improvements, but how do we improve 'the man'?

1. Self-reform

- become aware of Citizens' responsibilities. Inculcate moral values in our children (Basant Raj Bhandari)

- We have to first ourselves become honest, a self-introspection is need of the hour (Kanta Sharma)
 - Means are very important – not just the ends. Your character should reflect this – as should any political platform you choose to form part of (Kuldip Nayar).
 - Today we have pleasure without conscience, Knowledge without character, Commerce without morality, Science without humanity, Worship without sacrifice, Politics without principles." We need to become Awakeners. Attach ourselves to some school and teach children, to shape their values when they are young. (Prof J. S. Rajput)
2. Social stigma against corrupt
- We need to socially name and shame those who indulge in wrong doings. But most of us do not mind socially mixing with such people, going to their parties etc ? (Promod Chawla)
3. Citizenship
- India is suffering from a “Crisis of faith” in its government and governance (O. P. Sharma)
 - Solution is not to complain but instead of being subjects, we need to become citizens.
 - We should introspect on why we pay bribes (Mr. Madan)
4. Our education system focuses only on IQ. It also needs to focus equally on SQ (spiritual quotient) and EQ (emotional quotient). (Krishan Khanna)

Key message 3: Need for citizen leadership

1. Where are the leaders of India? We need to train the people.
2. Youth power is interested in change but does not have a direction. We must empower youth association with NSS. 60 million youth can be associated within next year (Ramesh Verma).
3. We must participate in democratic process. As citizens we must oppose but deny any thing which is wrong. We must participate in community activities. (Basant Raj Bhandari)

Key message 4: Both political and non-political action

The Meet emphasised the role of both of the political and non-political aspects. Either way, we need to get over the crisis of confidence that has taken over the entire educated and middle-class citizens of India (Shantanu Bhagwat).

We need to get to the root cause of our problems – Poor Governance. We must focus on the practitioners of corruption – name them, shame them, we need not

be afraid. The media has become despicable. Have started Sunday Guardian, being fed up of journalism (Ram Jethmalani).

The leadership for bringing about these changes will have to come from intellectuals and people.

There is a huge amount of discontentment in people and we need to tap this discontentment (D S K Rao)

1. Political

Many participants felt that directly influencing the legislature and executive are key to implementing good solutions:

1. Good people need a lobby. The bad people have their lobbies. We need to unite (Sangeeta)
2. Unless you remove the people sitting in the govt. most of the concerns that we are addressing here are not going to be addressed (Anant Trivedi)
3. People are the masters – they should recognize this and act accordingly. People can get together and elect their own candidates (Ranbir Sharma)
4. Be the change. Better to light a candle than to curse darkness. New alternative which has political courage to challenge populism. Need mechanisms to ensure that those who get into power do not get corrupted when they taste power. (Mr. Anil Chopra)
5. Contesting Elections only way to change the system (Sangeeta)
6. Reforms will need political strength and political activity (Swami Ramdev)
7. Real issues will only come out through discussions at Zilla Parishad/Panchayat levels (Anuj Aggarwal – Maulik Bharat)
8. Need a team of dedicated people who can devote themselves (Subhashis Banerji)
9. Create a political organization – 35 National level convenors, 35 state/UT convenors and 4 x 544 constituency representatives across the country – that is the way to actually build a new political party.
10. It is imperative to have candidates across all constituencies – voters want to see how will their local representative be influential at the state and national level. Single good candidates cannot win, because they have no organisational backing to solve voters' issues (perceived or real) (DSK Rao)
11. Grass roots level approach required – must be able to reach all 543 constituencies.
12. A political alternative is required. Not on Hindutva agenda however. (Mr Anant Trivedi)
13. Good people have to stand up and contest (or start preparing to contest explicitly). Other good people have to join hands and work together to support these good people. Difficult to get good people together while bad people collaborate much more easily. (Shantanu Bhagwat)
14. We should work constructively towards development. Have a positive agenda. (Anil Bhatnagar)

2. Non-political

Many non-political options were also discussed:

1. File PILs in the Supreme Court
2. Create influential lobby groups of eminent people to act as pressure points and influence the process (Shailaja)
3. Empower Individual Citizens.
4. Create Focus and Lobbying groups (Seetha Parthasarathy)
5. Bureaucrats etc (good ones) need to be part of such awakening forum (Mr. G. S. Singhvi)
6. We must undertake awareness campaigns, 'servant leadership institutes' and influence public opinion. (Anil Bhatnagar)

Some specific issues and solutions

Some specific issues were also identified. Suggested solutions are noted below.

1. Rule of Law and Justice

The lack of availability of justice was identified as key problem. India has a legal system, not a justice system (Rohit Chand). If this is not addressed, then it can pose a critical threat to our democracy and institutions.

Suggested solutions:

1. Types of laws:

- Bharat does not understand the rational legal system of "India" (Shailaja).
- Law can be based on political law or spiritual law (truth and values). Current legal system is based on political law. We should endeavour for a values-based justice system (Swami Ramdev).
- Strong deterrence is needed in India. A law enacted in the State of Bihar can be used as template for deterrence. It includes seizure of assets in corruption and crimes against property. These assets are then either auctioned or used for public purposes.
- But harsh laws without checks and balances can lead to extortion of the innocent (Sutirtha Roy).
- Harassment bribes and wilful law violations need to be treated separately (Seetha)

2. Simplify and make clear:

- Corruption is a legacy of colonial laws.
- Change the IPC and simplify laws.
- Translate laws into plain language to let citizens understand them.

3. Make the system efficient:

- Timeliness of justice: set maximum timelines for judicial system to adjudicate, e.g. limit of 1 year for a case to be decided at any level of court (maximum 3 years in the Supreme Court) (Prof. Paintal)

- Justice delayed is justice denied. Fast time-bound justice is possible. Eg. WTO cases are settled within 180-210 days (Basant Raj Bhandari)
- Cost recovery principles: There should be a legal fee which could be charged for every service that is provided.
- Use of technology is to bring in transparency in justice (Arun Mohan)

2. Internal security and police

No rule of law is possible if the following problems are not resolved:

- Kashmir
- North East issues
- The Maoist insurgency (Hem Raj Jain)
- Terrorist activities lead to a vicious cycle in India (H R Bangia)

Suggested solutions:

1. Greater independence to Police. Police should be answerable to the people and not to the political parties (Ramachandran)
2. CBI should be made autonomous and independent.

3. Reform of our democracy and administration

Corruption led by our political leaders is undermining democracy and faith in government.

Suggested Solutions:

1. Electoral reforms

- Campaign finance is the root cause of corruption in India
- How to keep 'dogs and scoundrels out of Lok Sabha' (Ashok Chawla)
- Fast Track Courts for cases against those elected to Parliament and accused of crimes (Prof. Sharat Kumar)
- 136 members of Parliament are chargesheeted, we need to address this issue (Prof. Bhim Singh)
- Election Commission should have teeth to bite wrong doers (Promod Chawla)
- Make the electoral environment 'less hostile' for good people. Today, there isn't a level playing field available (Shantanu Bhagwat)
- Incorporation of right to negative voting (Justice Rajinder Sachar)
- No citizen should be elected as representative more than twice in a lifetime (Madan Kumar Dubey)

2. Reforms of political funding

- All contributions made to the political parties should be transparent and open to scrutiny. It should also be brought in the ambit of RTI (Prof. Deepak Pental)

3. Performance monitoring systems of MPs/MLAs

- Certification program with a Pledge signed up front (implemented partially in Rajasthan) (Prof. K. B. Kothari)

4. Lokpal not the solution

- A view was that it is going to be useless as it will create another level of bureaucracy and corruption. Will add to the systemic woes (Shailaja Chandra)
5. Right to Reject/Right to Recall
 - Important tools for ensuring performance during 5-year terms (Promod Chawla)
 - Difficulty of implementation needs to be overcome.
 6. Section 6A must be scrapped which keeps CVC in political party control.
 7. Article 311 in the Constitution protects bureaucrats. It needs to go. (Krishan Khanna)
 8. Appointment of CJ's and Press Council should be elected by independent bodies (Dr. J C Batra)
 9. Too much concentration of power in India. USA does not permit newspaper owner to own a TV channel and no private company is allowed to have a bank (Justice Rajinder Sachar)
 10. E-governance. Terrorists are using best of the technology to spread terrorism but we have not been able to do so to make governance reach people (H R Bangia)
 11. Create a website like Obama has created "[we the people](#)", where people can lodge complaints (A Siddharth)
 12. Open Government movement
 - Transparency in govt. funding and expenses.
 - Mandatory/pro-active disclosure of information (Pranay Sinha)
 13. Voting should be made compulsory (Amit Mittal).

4. Education

The importance of good education was widely emphasized.

- Education is key to the empowerment of Indian citizens. It was felt that current MPs/MLAs don't want educated people as they would need to upgrade their skill and do more if they wish to be re-elected.
- Each Citizen of India can be a Light – this would lead to the Awakening of India – Teach one Single Child today. (Prof Rajput)
- Education remains the only way to change mindsets and systems permanently.

Suggested Solutions:

1. Focus on pre-primary and primary education
 - This is when the most important parts of intellectual development of a child takes place.
 - Entrepreneurial education should begin from class I (Krishan Khanna)
2. Education vouchers key to reforming primary education

- Private schools are coming up even in villages, as local residents spurn the free government schools and instead pay for the private schools. Typically run by returning residents of the area.
 - Education vouchers is key to reforming the primary education system. (Kamal Sharma)
3. Focus on Vocational education
- India needs a massive expansion of Vocational training – we have a fraction of the capacity that China has created and this is key to gainful employment.
 - Germany has one lakh vocational institutes, China has 5 lakh and India has mere 5000. We also need to use technology to increase vocational education (Krishan Khanna)
4. Decontrol technical and higher education
- Technical and higher education should be completely deregulated. (Krishan Khanna)

5. Farmers Issues

It was noted that farmer's plight is a huge developmental issue for India (Sangwan). Farmers are some of the most skilled citizens of India. We must empower them to solve their problems. We need to acknowledge that agriculture is Indian's biggest private business.

- Need to break mafia action in farming (Harpal Singh)
- Innovation in agriculture will lead to a more productive outcome for everyone.

6. Financial system reform

RBI has failed to integrate the modern and traditional systems of finance in India – this has led to vast disparities and outcomes for Citizens based on geography (Imon Ghosh)

Liechtenstein, Credit Suisse and HSBC need to be investigated.

7. Health

We have Disease Ministry not Health Ministry. We must ensure clean drinking water, uncontaminated three nutritious meals a day, shed on top, chula and toilet for all household. We don't need modern medicine to come in India (B M Hegde).

8. Natural Resources

Natural resources must be distributed in an equitable manner (Suchitra Roy)

Need for a wave in favour of reforms

It was generally agreed that there has to be a strategic plan from here, in terms of identifying volunteers and getting on to ground work. In his closing remarks Swami Ramdev suggested the need to create a reform movement, a wave, that focus on truth, justice and rule of law. It should bring all good people together.

Next steps

Based on these suggestions (and further review of video recordings of the Meet), a draft vision and Agenda for Change will be formulated for further discussion and action plan for the Nation. A Reform Movement will be proposed in detail.