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# Aii news

  
ASPEN INSTITUTE INDIA

## INDIA LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE CLASS 3

Aspen Institute India proudly graduated Class 3 of The India Leadership Initiative in May 2012. This cohort who had named themselves "The 3rd Generation" comprised of eighteen Fellows from a cross section of Indian society, met between 16-20th, May 2012 at Westin Sohna for their fourth and final graduating seminar. They were joined by their families over the graduation weekend.

Essential to the program was the implementation of the basic ideals of leadership learnt over the course of the initiative. Fellows had to devise and execute a project with a social mission. They were introduced to the project in the first seminar following which they shared their written Project Concepts at the start of the second seminar. During the Globalization seminar, they

received constructive critique and feedback from group members, as also moderators and peers. It culminated with the fourth and final seminar when the Fellows presented their Final Project Reports and shared their key milestones and challenges, taking away written feedback from the other Fellows and using it to further scale up their projects, even after the completion of the Seminar.

As the Fellows fondly reflected on the last 18 months and the completion of the initiative, they felt charged and were full of ideas. Inspired and motivated, they were ready for what was out there and Aspen Institute India wishes them the best of luck with the challenges that await them in the future.

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The Class of *ILI 3*

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## INDIA-MYANMAR: A DEVELOPMENT CORRIDOR

Myanmar's recently successful by-elections have finally started it along the path to democracy. The transition of leadership will provide India with an opportunity to fix previously strained relations with its North Eastern neighbor and thus counteract increasing Chinese influence in the neighborhood. Myanmar, which is strategically sandwiched between China and India, provides several important areas for bilateral co-

operation including security, trade and investment, energy, infrastructure development and capacity building. Furthermore, as the "big brother" of the region it is imperative that India encourages democracy in its neighborhood through strong and dynamic ties with Myanmar.

Thus, with the objective of enhancing ties and expanding cooperation, Aspen Institute India, on 4th May 2012, organized a Round Table on



*S K Lambah and Tarun Das*

"India-Myanmar: A Development Corridor" under the Chairmanship of SK Lambah. Following the Round Table, a report titled "India's Moment with Myanmar: The Promise

and Challenges of a New Relationship" was brought out in order to share the conclusions of the round table with a wider audience

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## FIRST ROUND TABLE ON HOW GOVERNMENTS AND CITIZENS CAN WORK TOGETHER FOR EFFICIENT EXPENDITURE MANAGEMENT

The global economic crisis has had severe constricting effects on the Indian economy. A ballooning fiscal deficit and less than op-

timistic growth forecast for this financial year warrants a relook at our government expenditure policy. Aspen Institute India, in collabora-

tion with India Spend, organized the first Round Table on "How Governments and Citizens Can Work Together for Efficient Expenditure Management" on April 30th, 2012. The Round Table was chaired by Mr. N.K Singh, Member of Parliament.

The objective behind this series was to understand and analyze government spending and to trace the flow of money into the various flagship schemes, particularly those related to key national heads of expenditure such as education, agriculture and health. The Round Table tried to answer three broad questions. Firstly, how can all the data and insights into gov-

ernment expenditure and related policy be used by businessman or public policy enthusiasts? Put another way, how can transparency be profitable? Secondly, how can the government create a more robust open data framework that fosters greater accountability and participation with the key stakeholders in India's economy and future? And thirdly, can a taxpayer get a better handle on how his tax rupees are working? Can a taxpayer contribute to this process?

It was understood during the deliberations that we need to make citizens aware of their rights. If citizens have an intelligent understanding of the available schemes, then they can learn how to get public goods and services delivered to them effectively.

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*L to R: Govindraj Ethiraj, Tarun Das, N K Singh, T N Ninan, Yamini Aiyar*



◀ Dinner session during the XVII US-India dialogue

## XVII US-INDIA STRATEGIC DIALOGUE

With relations between Pakistan and the US still tense and the threat of US sanctions on Iran looming, The Aspen Institute India, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Aspen Strategy Group, US or-

ganized the XVII US-India Strategic Dialogue organized the India-US strategic dialogue in Washington DC from 11th to the 13th of May, 2012. It was found that an overarching strategic dialogue was necessary

to review progress in relations, provide policy guidance and propose new areas of cooperation.

The priority in Indian political circles still remains with 'strategic autonomy', and India's decision not to support

the US on Libya and Syria has led to disappointment on the US side. Both India and the US are looking for the next big ticket item that will propel the bilateral relationship forward. On the business side, recent government actions such as the Vodafone taxation case and the perception of policy paralysis are hurting investor confidence in India.

The India-US relationship has now reached a level where individual setbacks have a minimal effect on bilateral ties. But in order for the relationship to progress certain issues need streamlining and domestic compulsions must be set aside for both the nations' welfare.

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## US-INDIA-IRAN: MAXIMIZING FLEXIBILITY, MINIMIZING DISCORD

Indian aspirations for a stronger relationship with the United States have put it in a conundrum vis-à-vis Iran. With the prospect of US sanctions intensifying in July, India must leverage its relationship with a key strategic partner (US) aga-inst an economic downturn and spiraling energy demands. Caught between a Shia Iran, Sunni GCC and messianic Israel, India

stands to jeopardize its dynamic relations with the Middle East. With over 6 million Indians employed by the GCC, any conflict in the region would adversely affect the Indian population while severely limiting India's ability to influence the situation.

Acknowledging the necessity for a well thought out foreign policy strategy for the Middle East, Aspen

Institute India organized a Round Table on "US - India - Iran: Maximizing Flexibility, Minimizing Discord" to formulate a strategy that doesn't set back India's relations with the US and Israel, while simultaneously maintaining pe-ace in the

region and securing future crude oil supplies. The Round Table was chaired by Ambassador Naresh Chandra and took place on the 8th of June. Ambassador R M Abhyankar made a detailed presentation.

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Round Table in progress

# INDIAN DEMOCRACY AND THE QUEST FOR ELECTORAL REFORMS



L to R: Rahul Bajaj, S Y Quraishi, Tarun Das

India, the largest democracy in the world, prides itself on the vibrant and stable nature of its democratic system. Amidst all manner of obstacles such as radical ethno-religious diversity, widespread poverty, corruption we can still depend upon free and fair elections. However, in light of recent trends such as the crimi-

nalisation of politics, the use of money power, unaccounted money, paid news etc. it is essential that we adopt certain electoral reforms so that we may maintain our pristine democratic legacy.

In order to highlight major issues in the election reform debate, Aspen Institute India organized a session on

“Electoral Reforms: Dream or Reality” on March 15th, 2012. Panelists included Dr. S.Y. Quraishi, Chief Election Commissioner, Mr. Rahul Bajaj, Chairman, Bajaj Group of Companies and Mr. Tarun Das, Founder Trustee of Aspen India.

Drawing attention to the realities of India’s political state

of affairs, the panelists pointed out that India is perpetually in election mode; voters are constantly under election fatigue. It is necessary that we do not have elections every year, that elections are funded by state governments and voters have the right to reject a candidate.

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# FIFTH INDIA-SINGAPORE STRATEGIC DIALOGUE

India and Singapore share strong and dynamic bilateral relations. The first India-Singapore dialogue was launched in 2007 to enhance cooperation and exchange between these two nations. The Fifth India Singapore Dialogue organized by Aspen Institute India, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Institute of

South Asian Studies (ISAS) and National University of Singapore (NUS) took place on 28th May, 2012. The strategic dialogue has been growing in significance amidst a buildup of strong relations between both countries. The Free Trade Agreement signed in 2005, was the first FTA India concluded with a South East Asian coun-

try. Singapore is the second largest investor in India and accounts for a third of total trade between India and Asian.

The dialogue concluded that there was large scope for improving people to people and cultural contact between India and Singapore. The Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor offers exciting possibilities for in-

vestments in the infrastructure sector and Singapore can help India in skill training of its ever expanding work force. Singapore respects the Indian private sector’s strengths in IT, software, pharmaceuticals, etc. and would welcome increased investment by Indian companies in these and other sectors.

The Indian connection endures in Singapore and is evident in its linguistics, religious and culinary traditions, where as Singapore is a firm favourite amongst Indian students and tourists. It is thus evident that future prospects for India-Singapore relations are very bright.

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Participants of the Fifth India-Singapore dialogue

## WHY AREN'T CHILDREN LEARNING?

We are three years away from 2015, the year when the Millennium Development Goal of Universal Education is to be achieved. The school attendance numbers are definitely looking better in most parts of the world. The debate today has shifted to the quality of students graduating from schools.

In India, for example, nearly 60 percent of children in grade 4 cannot read a sim-

ple story at grade 2 level, and 76 percent cannot do simple division according to a study conducted by Pratham. In an interactive session conducted by Aspen India's Kolkata chapter on March 30, 2012, Dr. Abhijeet Banerjee, professor at MIT, presented some facts about India's education system and why true learning was not taking place.

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Abhijeet Banerjee speaking at the session



Session in Progress

## OUR VOICE, OUR JOURNEY—II

In an evening of honest sharing, women achievers from different walks of life came together to narrate stories about the journey of their lives. The second edition of "Our Voice, Our Journey" held on March 22nd, 2012 jointly with American Centre, Kolkata, to celebrate International Women's Day.

The session explored the experiences of successful women like eminent writer, academic and parliamentarian

Krishna Bose; first woman police officer in charge of a station Debashree Chatterjee; Advocate and social activist Maitrayee Trivedi Dasgupta; entrepreneur and MD of the Hatch Fund, Anupama Arya, Fellow of the Aspen India leadership program. Brinda Dasgupta, a young student, freelance writer and founder of the Safe City campaign was present as the voice of the up and coming generation.

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## THE SHRI RAM ASPEN LEADERSHIP SCHOOL



Aspen India known for fostering values based leadership, collaborated with The Shri Ram School, one of India's finest private schools to offer a unique 2-week residential program for students of grade 9-12

from May 26th to June 9. The aim of the Program was to build leadership skills and enlighten them to move from thought to action and from success to significance. The camp site was Shivpuri in



L to R: Mark Parkinson, Kiran Pasricha, Manju Bharat Ram and Gautam Thapar

Rishikesh, next to the river Ganges. The intense yet fun filled curriculum comprised of Socratic dialogue, leadership studies, adventure sports and experimental learning helping to uncover the hidden

leader within.

The group included 28 students, 16 girls and 12 boys, enrolled from 10 different schools from Delhi, Gurgaon, Mumbai, Pune, and Nagpur.

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◀ *Ken Roth addressing the audience*

## EMERGING INDIA AND GLOBAL CHALLENGES

India's immense military and elevated economic position has led to its emergence as a

global power. Consequently it is being increasingly pressed to take up positions on a range of global issues that are not necessarily in its immediate line of sight. Amidst such a backdrop, Aspen India decided to hold a talk on "Emerging India and Global Challenges" March 23, 2012, in order to discuss upcoming global issues that India must address in a manner befitting its newly acquired status.

To discuss the emerging scenario and present his unique insight was Mr. Ken-

neth Roth, Executive Director, Human Rights Watch. The key note speaker at the session, Mr. Roth was appreciative of India's stand on certain recent issues including the vote against Sri Lanka at a session of the UN Security Council. He highlights the power of India's example, which represents a liberal, democratic and open alternative to the Chinese model. The session was chaired by Ms. Indrani Bagchi, Diplomatic Editor, The Times of India

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## NON ALIGNMENT 2.0: A NEW REALITY?

India's evolution from a mixed economy to one that has a capitalist framework has not only transformed the Indian economy but also catapulted it into an elite group of nations that can affect global changes. Given the scale of India's progress, the Center for Policy Research published a document titled Non Alignment 2.0 that attempts to outline "the basic principles that should guide India's foreign and strategic policy over the next decade". Aspen Institute India organized a panel discussion on March 21st, 2012 to discuss this report and analyze its findings.

The discussion was moderated by Mr. Ajay Shukla, Con-

sulting Editor (Strategic Affairs), Business Standard; and the panel consisted of Mr. Shyam Saran (one of the co-authors of the paper) and Dr. Ashley Tellis from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Mr. Saran argued that in order for India to expand its global role and influence, it is imperative that it sustain current levels of economic growth, continue to build state capacity and empower civil society. India's relations with the outside world should be such that it has sufficient autonomy and strategic space in which to execute foreign policy.

Dr. Ashley Tellis construed his response to Non Alignment 2.0 as that of "respect-

ful ambivalence". While acknowledging that the subject matter of the paper is extremely complex, he argues that in an international order

characterized by geostrategic competition, nonalignment is perhaps not the most optimal policy.

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*L to R: Ajay Shukla, Shyam Saran and Ashley Tellis*



Wendy Sherman in conversation with Tarun Das

## UPHOLDING DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE RULE OF LAW: **CAN THE COMMONWEALTH PLAY A CREDIBLE ROLE?**

With the pressures of an increasingly globalized and ever evolving international system, the Commonwealth has felt an underlying need to reform itself and redefine its role in the international environment. In this context, Aspen India in collaboration with the High Commission of Canada, organized a session titled "Upholding Democracy, Human Rights and the Rule of Law: Can the Commonwealth play a credible role?" on April 12, 2012.

the quality of life of over 2.1 billion Commonwealth citizens through best health practices, educational attainment, freedom of action, women rights, human rights etc.

Referring to India's role in the Commonwealth, Senator Segal emphasized that India is the largest democracy in the world, unrivaled in its diversity. Moreover, India's wisdom developed over the years in the field of democracy as well as its dynamic progress in economic, political, technological spheres makes it a good Commonwealth model to uphold. Therefore India's leadership and engagement with the Commonwealth must continue. The session was chaired by Ms. Indrani Bagchi, Diplomatic Editor, The Times of India

Senator Hugh Segal, keynote speaker and Canada's Special Envoy for Commonwealth Renewal stated that there is need for greater engagement within the grouping in order to establish a credible and effective Commonwealth. Action needs to be taken to improve

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Senator Segal speaking at the session

## THE UNITED STATES & INDIA: AN INDISPENSABLE PARTNERSHIP FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

While speaking to Indian officials and a select audience at an Aspen India event on April 2, 2012, US Under Secretary for Political Affairs Wendy Sherman sparked headlines when she announced that the US had put a \$10 million and \$2 million bounty on LeT Chief Hafiz Saeed and his brother-in-law. The LeT Chief, who is accused of planning and executing the 26/11 terror attacks, now joins the ranks of Mullah Omar and the Qaida chiefs of Iran and Iraq, all of whom carry a reward of \$10 million. Coming at a time when the

US-Pakistan relationship is at an all time low, Under Secretary Sherman declared that India and the US have been successfully collaborating in counter terrorism efforts and it was important that they continued to work together in this regard.

Highlighting the fact that by 2030 India "will be the largest everything", from the largest population to the largest middle class, it is important that India focuses on its youth and does all that it can to improve its education system.

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## MEETING WITH US TREASURY UNDER SECRETARY DAVID COHEN

While on a diplomatic visit to India, US Department of Treasury's Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, David Cohen, was hosted for a luncheon meeting by Aspen India on the 26th of June, 2012. Also in attendance were the current US Ambassador to India, Nancy J. Powell and former Indian Ambassadors to the US, Naresh Chandra and Ronen Sen. The meeting was moderated by Mr. Tarun Das,

Founding Trustee, Aspen Institute India & Former Chief Mentor, CII.

The delegates discussed ways through which both the US and India could protect the international financial system from being exploited by illicit actors. It was pointed out that by denying Al Qaeda access to formal financial networks the US has been able to reduce the terrorist organization to a shadow of its former self, and that it is necessary to continue such ef-



Nancy Powell with David Cohen (R)

orts in order to prevent its affiliates in Yemen, North Africa and Somalia from gaining traction. Going forward India needs to pass certain financial regulatory bills during the monsoon session of the parliament in order to put pressure on illicit fi-

ancial activities. Delegates from both sides agreed that it is important to increase bilateral cooperation and prevent UN designated terrorists groups from using the global financial sector to move funds.

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## 13 KEYS TO THE WHITE HOUSE

The prediction model — based on 13 keys — forecasts the reelection of Barack Obama in the US presidential election to be held on November 6. To convince the audience, a session with Dr. Allan Lichtman — author of *The*

*Keys to the White House*, was organized in Kolkata on May 22, 2012 and in New Delhi on May 30th, 2012. The session in Kolkata was chaired by Dr. Rudrangshu Mukherjee, Opinions Editor, The Telegraph, Kolkata and Ms.

Indrani Bagchi, Diplomatic Editor, The Times of India, in New Delhi.

Dr. Lichtman has been consistently predicting since 2010 that Barack Obama is going to be re-elected as the President of the United States. Speaking about the basis of his forecast, he said "The idea is that elections are basically votes — up or down — on how well the party holding the White House has governed. If the party has governed badly, they lose. If things are going reasonably well, they win. And the keys to prediction are 13 true/false questions, which primarily relate to strength and performance of the party holding the White House".

(Sample some of the key questions: The economy is

not in recession during the election campaign, real per capita economic growth during the term equals or exceeds mean growth during the previous two terms, there is no sustained social unrest during the term, the incumbent administration suffers no major failure in foreign or military affairs, etc.)

An answer of true favours the re-election of the party in power and an answer of false favors the challengers. If six or more keys are false, then the party in power loses. If fewer than six are false, the party holding the White House wins. This time it is Obama and the Democrats... They only have three false keys, which is well short of predicting their defeat.

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Allan Lichtman and Indrani Bagchi