



## **Report on Thought Leadership Lecture and launch of CUTS International Public Policy Centre (CIPPoLC)**

*Date: July 04, 2014*

*Place: HCM, RIPA, Jaipur*

### **Background**

CUTS has been organising Thought Leadership Lectures with the aim of providing an opportunity to share knowledge and expand the dialogue on various contemporary policy discourses on trade, regulatory and governance issues, among scholars, leaders in government and business, and the public at large.

In this series, a Thought Leadership Lecture was organised to mark the launch of CUTS International Public Policy Centre (CIPPoLC) on July 04, 2014. The Lecture was delivered by two eminent experts – Sanjaya Baru, Director for Geo-Economics and Strategy, International Institute of Strategic Studies and author of the book '*An Accidental Prime Minister: The Making and Unmaking of Manmohan Singh*' and P C Parakh, Former Secretary, Ministry of Coal and author of book '*Crusader or Conspirator: Coalgate and other Truths*'.

The event was chaired by Narpal Singh Rajvi, MLA, Rajasthan State Assembly and former Minister, Government of Rajasthan. CIPPoLC was launched by Ashok Jha, former Finance Secretary and Chairman, CIPPoLC. M L Mehta, former Chief Secretary, Rajasthan and Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General, CUTS International was also present on the occasion.

### **Welcome Remarks**

Pradeep S Mehta opened the session by introducing the panellists briefly. He then requested the Chair of CIPPoLC, Ashok Jha, to speak a few words.

### **Ashok Jha**

Ashok Jha appreciated the initiative of CUTS to launch CIPPoLC. He expounded on the future role of the Centre and said it would look at myriad issues ranging from governance, trade, regulation, foreign policy and advocacy, to name just a few. He said that although modelled on the lines of India Habitat Centre and India International Centre, this Centre will be *sui generis*. Complimenting Pradeep S Mehta, he said that he has got together a galaxy of eminent people for the Governing Council of the Centre and read out their names one by one.

Articulating the role of CIPPoLC, he said it will encourage people to come together at a platform that will not only provide facilities, such as conferencing, exhibition, guest rooms etc. but also aims to be a think tank par excellence.

Adding to Jha's remarks, Pradeep S Mehta apprised the audience about CUTS 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary lectures series which has also been a platform to discuss ideas of public policy and strategic interest. A volume of 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Lecture series was released by the panellists.

### **Narpat Singh Rajvi**

Rajvi chaired the event and spoke at length about the importance of public debate. He cited examples from his experience of being a bureaucrat and a legislator, and emphasised on governance gaps. He shared insights on subjects, such as trade liberalisation, entrepreneurship, mining, water sharing, power etc. He concluded by saying that he hoped CIPPoLC would create a conducive environment and platform to discuss many such issues and assist government in better policy decisions.

### **PC Parakh**

PC Parakh was one of the two guest speakers who were invited to speak on their books to mark the launch of CIPPoLC. The other speaker was Sanjaya Baru. Speaking on his book entitled 'Conspirator or Crusader: *Coalgate and other Truths*' Parakh said that the book is not about the government or the former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and was also not funded by members of the opposition, as has been sometimes alleged. He emphasised that his book talks about relationship between bureaucrats and political masters. He said that the Comptroller and Auditor General was unfairly criticised for going outside its mandate on Coalgate scam.

He said for effective governance a harmonious relationship between the two is necessary. But he also pointed out that unfortunately there is deterioration in the quality of civil servants and standards have fallen from what they used to be in 1960 to what they are now.

He also said that constructive criticism in public interest is necessary and enough time must be given to civil servants to work and produce results to give good governance. Citing the case of Durga Shakti Nagpal, who was suspended for taking on sand mafia, he said such cases send wrong messages to young civil servants.

Regarding the coal policy, he explained shortcomings in coal mining policy and said his suggestion to the Prime Minister was to modify policy for allocation and allow open bidding. However, the then Coal Minister did not let this pass. This resulted in Coalgate.

Going back to his book, he said that it is good to note that young civil servants are reading his book, and realising that it is still possible to perform without fear or favour.

### **Sanjaya Baru**

Next to PC Parakh was Sanjaya Baru to speak on his book – 'Accidental Prime Minister: *The Making and Unmaking of Manmohan Singh*'. He said that there is a text, context and subtext to the book. The subtext of his book points to the fact that strong leadership is necessary in order to draw the best out of civil service and political leadership.

He said, in the UPA government a vacuum was created due to unwillingness of Manmohan Singh to emerge out of his shell. In 2014 elections, public has tried to fill that vacuum. He said leadership vacuum had made the Prime Minister object of ridicule.

He said that books like his enable people to understand how government functions, and thus fits well with the launch of the CIPPoIC. It explains the manner in which political decision making was done when there was a split between political and executive power.

He also urged readers to focus on chapters dealing with foreign policy which in the present day controversy seem to have been forgotten.

### **Floor Discussion**

The well-attended event saw a rich intellectual interaction among the speakers and the participants. The interaction involved several questions being asked as well as various issues being highlight by participants.

Reacting to a question on whether it is possible to weed out corruption from the coal sector by officers at various levels, Parakh replied that to some extent it is possible but political support is needed. He said a good example would be e-auction of coal that was started by him.

On being quizzed on the timing of his book, Baru's short answer was that the timing has only added to credibility of the book.

Replying to the question on how to bring efficiency in the coal sector, Parakh said that Coal India has to face competition. With existing equipment and manpower, it can produce double the power but there are not enough incentives to increase efficiency. He said there are many problems currently, for instance, utilisation is less than 50 per cent and workers do not work for more than four-five hours a day. He said the focus on productivity is low. Adding to this, he said that problems of land acquisition, environment clearances, forest laws etc. cause further delay and need to be tackled

On a general query on who is responsible for inaction today – civil service or the political class, the unanimous answer was that both the civil service and political class are equally responsible. The ministers often get bad advice, which needs to change.

### **Vote of Thanks**

A vote of thanks was delivered by M L Mehta. He extended his gratitude towards CUTS for organising the event and thanked Parakh and Baru for sharing their views. He said by virtue of being in a peculiar position, bureaucrats are expected to have personal loyalty towards political class. A bureaucrat needs to do a fine balancing between the two.