

**Press Information Bureau
Government of India
Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions**

11-February-2014 17:45 IST

**National Seminar on Combating Corruption: Role of Accountability Institutions,
Investigating Agencies, Civil Society and Media organized by the CVC**

Shri Pranab Mukherjee, the Hon'ble President of India today inaugurated a two day National seminar organized by the Central Vigilance Commission to commemorate its Golden Jubilee at the Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi. The occasion was marked by the release of a postal stamp on the CVC by the President and the release of a coffee table book on the institution of the CVC by the Prime Minister.

Speaking on the occasion, Shri Mukherjee commended the role played by the CVC in the past decades and emphasized the need for institutional and individual probity. He noted that the institutional framework for vigilance oversight in the country has been progressively strengthened through legal provisions and the Vineet Narain case which led to the Central Vigilance Act 2003, he commended the RTI Act, 2005 which had ushered in a new era of transparency and accountability and noted that the recent Lokpal Act, 2013 was part of the continuing commitment of the Government. He also referred to the several other draft legislations which were intended to strengthen the framework.

The President also noted that corruption remains a stumbling block to national progress as it increases transaction costs and reduces efficiency of public services. Noting that the CVC has several innovative initiatives to its credit, like leveraging technology tools including e-procurement, reverse auction and concept of Integrity Pacts, he called upon the CVC to proactively raise public awareness. Noting that media was a force multipliers, he also called upon the media and civil society to voluntarily exercise responsibility and restraint and underscored that vilification campaigns should not be allowed to defame or destroy reputations and that vigilance should not become an obstacle to responsible and bold governance initiatives. He called upon the CVC to proactively lead the charge against corruption and become an ally to good governance & bold decision making.

The Prime Minister who also spoke on the occasion welcomed the current debate and stressed that public awareness increases and public authorities as more responsive. He underscored the need for the governance process to be efficient, effective and responsive along with transparency and accountability if the ends of good governance were to be achieved. Dr Singh called for augmenting professional expertise in organisations like CVC and CBI. He welcomed informed discussions but said complex public policy issues should not be oversimplified.

Dr. Singh exhorted credibility institutions like CVC to champion the cause of men of integrity and not stifle honest officers or harass them for bonafide mistakes. He mentioned that autonomy of investigating agencies has been an endeavour of the government, the political executive also needs to be objective. He expressed optimism that the reform oriented Bills in Parliament, if enacted, would augment institutional capacity in this direction.

The Leader of the Opposition in Parliament, Smt. Sushma Swaraj expressed that oversight is often not acceptable to public authorities. In her view the institutional oversight mechanisms are essential in democracy for requisite checks & balances. Commending the CVC's role as the flag bearer of integrity in administration and transparency in governance, Smt. Swaraj added that the institutional environment in the country needed to be strengthened as part of our responsibility to future generations.

Speaking on the occasion the Law Minister, Shri Kapil Sibal called for a sustained and collective effort to pave the way for a corruption free society. He observed that in a young, aspirational India public perception of corruption had increased.

Shri V Narayanswamy, Minister of State for Personnel and Pensions stated that several legislations were on the anvil as part of Government's efforts including the Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Bill, 2013, The Public Procurement Bill, 2013 and the Whistle Blowers Bill, 2011. He also emphasized Government's commitment to anti corruption initiatives which had led to India signing on several multilateral initiatives against organized and multi jurisdictional corruption.

In his remarks, Shri Pradeep Kumar, the Chief Vigilance Commissioner referred to the deepening of democracy, spread of education, penetration of technology and the growth of media in society which were drivers of the anti corruption movement in contemporary India. He outlines the evolution of the CVC as an institution for vigilance oversight and mentioned that the CVC had strived to maintain standards of independence and objectivity.

The two-day seminar focuses on the major causes of corruption in public life and the role of its major stakeholders in combating it. Comprising of 3 Plenary sessions and 4 Breakout sessions, the seminar will deliberate on the institutional adequacies and shortcomings, issues of autonomy and accountability, including that of the CBI and judiciary and the need for electoral reforms to create an ethical environment of transparency and integrity. The Sessions planned also cover the application of technology as an enabler and the role of the corporate sector through improved disclosure norms, governance ethics and compliance. A discussion on the role of the media and civil society as important stakeholders is also scheduled in order

to address the concerns pertaining to corporate ownership and objectivity of news reporting.

The speakers and panelists at the seminar have been drawn from various professional fields and experience in order to provide the way for an objective and inter-disciplinary discussion. Senior civil servants from the Central and State Governments and Public Sector Undertakings, civil society and media representatives apart from institutions like Universities, National Law School, Indian Institute of Mass Communication, etc.

In very well attended sessions, the eminent speakers who shared their perspectives included Shri Kapil Sibal, Minister of Law & Justice; Dr. Jayaprakash Narayan, Activist; Prof. (Dr) R Venkata Rao, Vice Chancellor, NLSU, Bengaluru; Justice A.P. Shah, Chairman Law Commission; Shri Vinod Rai, Former C&AG; Shri Ranjit Sinha, Director, CBI; Shri J. Satyanarayana, Secretary, Ministry of Information & Technology; Ms. Sudha Sharma, Chairman, CBDT; Shri M.J. Joseph, Addl. Secretary, Ministry of Corporate Affairs; and Dr. Arup Roy Choudhury, CMD, NTPC.

Two Plenary Sessions are scheduled tomorrow including one on assessing the way forward for the CVC followed by a Valedictory Session to be chaired by Justice Sathasivam, the Chief Justice of India. Breakout Sessions tomorrow include separate ones on Corporate Ethics, Electoral Reforms and Political Accountability as well as the Role of Media and Civil Society.
