

## **Speech by The President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee at the inauguration of seminar being organized on The Occasion of Golden Jubilee Celebrations of Central Vigilance Commission**

Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi : 11.02.2014

I am happy to inaugurate this seminar being organized on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC). I congratulate all Central Vigilance Commissioners, past and present as well as staff who have worked for the CVC over the years, for their commendable service to the nation. It is fitting that the Department of Posts has decided to release a stamp on this important occasion. I also commend the CVC for bringing out a Coffee Table Book on the occasion.

The CVC was first constituted by the Government of India through a Resolution in the year 1964, following a debate in the Parliament in June, 1962. Members of Parliament expressed concern over corruption in public administration and sought remedial measures. Consequently, then Home Minister Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri set up a Committee to look into the matter under the Chairmanship of Shri K. Santhanam, Member of Parliament.

The Santhanam Committee identified four major causes of corruption. They were:

- (i) Administrative delays,
- (ii) Government taking upon itself more than what it could manage by way of regulatory functions,
- (iii) Scope for personal discretion in the exercise of powers vested in different categories of Government servants, and
- (iv) Cumbersome procedures in dealing with various matters which were of importance to citizens in their day to day affairs.

The sad reality is that none of these problems have gone away. Fifty years later, they continue to plague our governance system.

The CVC was the result of the Santhanam Committee's recommendation that an apex body be set up for exercising general superintendence over vigilance administration in Government. Over the years, successive Governments have progressively strengthened the institutional framework for addressing corruption with the establishment of the Central Bureau of Investigation, the Directorate of Enforcement, State Anti-Corruption agencies and Lokayuktas. The legal framework was also expanded with the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 etc. supplementing the Indian Penal Code and the Criminal

Procedure Code. Further, transparent policies of recruitment and promotion were drawn up. Elaborate conduct rules have been established to promote integrity in public services. The Supreme Court and High Courts have also through public interest litigation contributed to the battle against nepotism and corruption. As the Prime Minister mentioned Vineet Narain case was a landmark judgement in this regard.

The land mark Right to Information Act 2005 ushered in a new era of transparency and accountability in governance. Further, the enactment of the Lokpal Act, 2013 marks a major step forward in strengthening the institutional framework for addressing corruption. Our Prime Minister has spoken about several other legislations pending before Parliament. Once enacted, they will add to the formidable array of measures in place to address corruption.

Friends, while there has been no let up in our national efforts to root out corruption, we have to acknowledge our limited success in this regard. Corruption remains a major stumbling block in the progress of our nation. It has increased transaction costs, reduced efficiency of public services, distorted decision making processes and undermined the moral fibre of our society. Corruption has reinforced inequities and limited access to public services by the common man, especially the poor.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have all been witness to the huge public outcry over corruption in recent times. The air is thick with despair and cynicism. There is urgent need to restore the faith of our people in our governance system and the credibility of our institutions. Introducing in Parliament the Resolution for establishing the CVC, Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri observed, and I quote, "Stamping out corruption is a very tough job, but I say so in all seriousness that we would be failing in our duty if we do not tackle this problem seriously and with determination". Unquote. The fact that corruption has proved to be intractable should not make us lose confidence in our abilities to address this problem. As Shastriji said, this is our duty and we must confront the challenge head on. Let us redouble our efforts and address corruption on a war-footing. The CVC has an important role to play in this regard.

The Central Vigilance Commission Act, 2003, provides extensive powers to the CVC, including reviewing progress of applications pending with competent authorities for sanction of prosecution and exercising superintendence over vigilance administrations of various Central Government Ministries, Departments and organizations. The CVC has powers to protect 'Whistle Blowers' under the Public Interest Disclosure Resolution, 2004. The CVC is principal advisor to the Government on all matters relating to vigilance administration and is required to conduct vigilance audits of various systems and procedures in organizations as well as assist managements establish effective internal control systems and procedures. The CVC must re-energise itself and pro-actively lead the charge against corruption.

While corruption is a global phenomenon, rapidly growing developing countries like India face a particularly difficult challenge. Ensuring sustainable growth, eliminating poverty, raising the quality of life, promoting industrialization, providing jobs etc. require quick decision making by the Executive. If the Executive has to deliver results and demonstrate efficient governance, it

needs to have substantial financial powers. At the same time, provision of such financial powers and administrative discretion in governance gives rise to opportunities for nepotism and corruption.

The CVC must expeditiously investigate all allegations of corruption without fear or favour. It must, at the same time ensure that vilification campaigns to destroy reputations and careers are not carried out in the name of checking corruption. The CVC should be an ally to good governance and facilitate speedy, responsible and bold decision making in the interests of the country. Members of the CVC and its staff must also set an example by maintaining the highest standards of probity in the discharge of their functions.

I compliment the CVC for having chosen as the theme of today's seminar the role of Accountability Institutions, Investigating Agencies, Civil Society and Media. As has been seen in recent times, civil society and media, especially the 'new' media, can be initiators of positive change as well as force multipliers.

The CVC has in the past introduced many innovations such as e-procurement, reverse auction by leveraging technology, integrity pacts, independent external monitors etc. I hope this seminar will help the CVC evolve many more such instruments and explore new dimensions in our fight against corruption.

As I have said elsewhere, corruption is a cancer that erodes our democracy and weakens the foundations of our state. A large number opinion polls and surveys reveal that corruption is among the foremost concerns of our citizens. We must engage in serious introspection on how both, 'petty' corruption which affects the public at large and 'grand' corruption involving the higher echelons of government can be eliminated.

I call upon the CVC to lead the way in cleansing our Government and contribute to reversing the cynicism of public towards Government functionaries. I am confident the CVC will continue to function as a strong and effective body, making useful contribution to enhancing probity in governance and checking corruption as well as mal-administration.

I extend my best wishes for the success of the seminar and all other future activities of CVC.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.