

STRATEGY FOR PREVENTION OF CORRUPTION AT POLITICAL LEVEL

It doesn't require a preamble to know that political will is paramount to combat corruption effectively.

2. The media, primarily the electronic media, working in 24x7 mode, could help build a major national campaign against corruption in innovative ways. One significant mechanism is telecasting panel discussion of experts and the conclusive programme of action suggested by them for different stakeholders. The second method is dissemination of survey results carried out by independent agencies regarding dreadful effects of corruption on all aspects of life. But the most potent mechanism is indication of the dire necessity of inclusion of agenda dealing with time-bound action on anti-corruption initiatives in well prioritized manner, in the political manifestoes of all political parties. A sustained campaign could be built through media, activist organizations, NGOs, and civil society, at large. The vast worldwide Indian diaspora, too could be involved in it as their patriotic sentiment would propel them to work proactively for ensuring that the native land has a shining image. The political parties could ill-afford to ignore such demands.

3. Currently, it is seen that wantonly the issue of integrity and probity in public life is given a short shift, in political manifestoes. Whatever cosmetic treatment does exist, makes little mention of any firm commitment for time-bound implementation of the proposed initiatives. The moot question is: whether public could get duly excited on this subject when the political system is seen to assign higher priority in the manifestoes to areas like agricultural, employment, health, education, law and order, infrastructure etc. The answer is in the affirmative if (a) close nexus between corruption and its various deleterious effects could be shown and be exemplified well and be made to look overwhelmingly large; (b) if it could be shown that the political system consistently indulges in hoodwinking the masses by swindling large chunks of money while

implementing the proposed altruistic agenda, or in cornering huge profits and benefits for its cronies, while at the same time, depriving the masses of their rightful dues; (c) if the political people could be shown to be amassing wealth, disproportionate to their legal sources of income and hence committing a heinous crime (d) and if the political system could be shown to consistently indulge in double speak and double standards to subservise their vested interests, and much more. Yes, it must be possible to force the political system to come to terms and accept inclusion in political manifestoes of intelligible time-bound programme - in prioritised manner-in combating corruption in public life. There may be need even to issue supplementary manifesto to cover up the lapse. There could be demonstrable threat that those political parties not doing so would not only tend to lose support of the masses, but also their votes in the forthcoming or subsequent elections.

4. Corruption should be shown to be at the root of all types of socio-economic evils, and greatly responsible, indirectly or directly, for all types of organized violence, and even for perpetuation of terrorism.

5. There is no time to be lost in providing voice to the voiceless, in as effective a way as possible. There is no need for the masses, specially less privileged sections of the society, to suffer in silence, any more.

6. It should be the dharma of all right thinking people, from all walks of life to pull up the socks and to gird up the loins to form a coalition of virtuous forces to combat the hydra-headed monster of corruption, which seems to threaten the very integrity and sovereignty of our great nation.

7. While the experts would compile the main issues, needing inclusion in political manifestoes, for time-bound programme, a few relevant issues, as given below, could be considered favourably :

- i) In 6 month's time passing of Lokpal Bill, at the Centre, and institutionalization of Lokayuktas in the States, wherever the same are not functioning. There should be no room for employment of dilatory tactics, as the task of amendment and finetuning of the legislation could be done, if necessary, after a specific period of review, which in turn, could be prescribed beforehand.
- ii) In 6 month's time ensuing effective implementation of Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2005 and Benami Transactions (Prohibition) Act, 1988 by means of institutionalisation of proper and effective machinery for implementation of the said Acts and the Rules, framed thereunder.
- iii) In 3 month's time deletion of 'single point directive' (legitimized through CVC Act, even in face of Apex court judgment in Hawala case) to enable vigilance and anti-corruption machinery to take up cases against corrupt officials without seeking Govt. approval. There is a wholly unsubstantiated and farcical argument that senior executives are (unduly) harassed and even penalized for taking new initiatives, and for causing mere error of judgments in important decisions.
- iv) In 3 month's time creating effective mechanism to ensure disposal of cases dealing with 'sanction for prosecution', as already mandated by the Apex court in Vineet Narain (Hawala) case.
- v) In 6 month's time ensuring effective implementation of the existing guidelines and rules dealing with proper and prompt disposal of all types of disciplinary cases (without seeking exemption for delay) by way of taking all appropriate measures, including BPR (Business Process Reengineering) and resource reinforcement, etc.
- vi) In 12 month's time creation of effective mechanism for ensuring speedy and time-bound disposal of anti-corruption cases, being dealt with by different courts of law.
- vii) In 12 month's time institutionalisation and implementation of a computer-assisted merit based transparent placement policy, for senior level

executives, in phased manner, which should transcend even tenure system for specified set of executives.

- viii) In 6 month's time ensuring preparation of citizen's charter for all specified major organisations and ensuring converge of other organizations in 12 months time, in accordance with 'Guide' provided by the Government. Availability of citizens' charter on one single website, in a user-friendly manner.
- ix) In accordance with section 4 of RTI Act, 2005 in one year time availability of all relevant information, including statistics of performance, budgetary allocations and utilization about all major, specified organizations, specially those having a public dealing, on one single website, in a user-friendly manner.
- x) In accordance with letter and spirit of Section 4 of RTI Act, 2005 issuance of detailed guidelines to all executives, in 6 months time to have all its important decisions, specially involving specified level of huge outlay etc., to be pre-audited by the public, in a well defined manner, before being put for implementation, to ensure incorporation of stakeholders' views in a transparent manner, in decision making process, and to ensure removal of veil on major activities and decisions of the State, currently shrouded in mystery, for no logical reasons.
- xi) Setting up in 6 month's time of effective vigilance machinery in all important organizations of the States, besides setting up of Statutory Vigilance Commissioner at State level.
- xii) Excepting most emergent situations, complete avoidance of adhoc announcements in the Legislative House or outside, by the political functionaries, and other executives, specially nearer scheduled or expected election time.

Sum up:

8. Administrative Reforms Committees and Commissions have all dealt with these issues unambiguously but, for purely extraneous considerations, these have been ignored for far too long. Now the only requirement is political will to give effective implementation to these areas, in larger public interest.

With that happy scenario, the revenues to the State Govt. could go up to the tune of several hundreds/thousands of crores of rupees and likewise expenditure could come down by hundreds/thousands of crores of rupees, annually, ensuring improvement of various facets of life, as reflected in Human Development Index. At central Govt. level, this effect could be several folds more.

The State is duty bound to provide increasingly higher quality of life to increasingly larger number of people, chiefly the under privileged sections of society and not offer excuses for inaction, or for improper or inadequate action.

9. People have gained enough experience, and are clearly seeing through political gimmicks. They will now vote for only those who value their sentiments, and those who offer, interalia, credible and time-bound anti-corruption policies and programmes and mechanism of their effective implementation, in their political manifestoes.

10. Our prayers for nemesis of corruption, in public life, will hopefully be answered soon.