



The 3rd Young Indians Summit

February 2 & 3, 2007

An executive summary



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Promoted by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Young Indians (Yi) is a group of young Indian entrepreneurs, owner-managers and professionals from various walks of life, who've come together with the broad objectives of creating a better future for the Indian youth of today as well and to prepare the leaders of tomorrow. Yi has been able to garner strength from its members, develop focus and most importantly undertake a holistic approach to nation building for a better India with a 'We-can We-will' approach.

The 3rd Young Indians Summit was an excellent example of how a varied group, the members of which have a common aim and spirit, can come together to address a common challenge.

The Summit, spread across two days, was attended by professionals from sectors such as media, politics, education, defence, services, financial services, manufacturing, music, science and social service.

The event was divided into three broad sections – Educating India, Employing India and Engaging India.

On February 2, 2007, the inaugural session was addressed by National Yi Chairman, Narayanan Sethuraman. Sethuraman's welcome note was followed by Pradip Kanakia, Head of the Risk Advisory Practice of KPMG in India.

In his theme address, Kanakia congratulated Yi for its efforts in its Yi Akshara programme which seeks to create a quality 'Learning Resource Centre'.

Farhad Forbes, Chairman- CII's Western region, spoke in detail about the state of the Indian economy and brought out the issue of widening social gaps with appropriate examples.

R. Seshsayee, President CII and MD, Ashok Leyland in his speech questioned the audience about how they were planning on being a part of the changing environment in India. He said that change would take place sooner or later but what is important is whether we choose to be victims, passive participants, active agents or the controllers of the change.

The inauguration ended with a musical performance by the Global Rhythms group from the United States.

The main programme of the summit was held on February 3, with Yi's Net students from across the country presenting their activities and achievements for the year 2006. The Net students of the Mumbai chapter, through song and dance, demonstrated the problems that are faced by today's youth.

The first session on *Educating India* was chaired by Dr. YS Rajan, Principal Advisor, CII. Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Arjun Ray threw light on the challenges in rural

education. He said that the time had come for India to have a definite policy on developing rural youth. He also pointed out that this being the 21st century, the knowledge age, competition between nations and between individuals would be decided by the country and the individuals that have superior education.

Professor Jacob Tharu, Member of Task Force *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan*, who comes from a background in testing and measurement, stated that the problem with measuring the quality and standards in the Indian education system stems from the fact that we rely on student test performance as the key indicator. He said that what is needed is a shift in standards, not only in terms of the output of student learning but also in terms of the various preconditions that will make student learning effective.

A dental physician by qualification, Dr. Radhakrishna Das spoke about the mid-day meals programme of the Government of India and the association with ISKCON to provide meals to 72,000 children daily. Dr. Das explained through a video that the project was not only about feeding children, but also about educating them in the process.

Dr. David Wilkinson, Headmaster at the Mahindra United World College in Pune, spoke about liberal arts education in schools focusing on the fact that it provides intellectual skills as opposed to specialization. The impact of this form of education is in the understanding of problems and generating of solutions to those problems.

The topic for second session was *Employing India*. Anand Kumar, Head of the Ramanujan School of Mathematics and founder of Super 30 through his own story brought out the fact that success is possible even through adversity. Mr. Kumar reinforced the point many other speakers made about change being the collective responsibility of society.

Mr. Balasubramaniam, Head of Management Support at the Dr. Reddy's Foundation took the audience through the DRF's Livelihoods Advancement Business School (LABS) programme. He spoke about the importance of vocational training in reducing the imbalance between the demand and supply of skilled professionals.

Dr. Shakeel Ahmad Khan, Director General at Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan introduced an interesting angle to the session. He expressed his views on the status of rural youth and spoke of the lack of dignity labourers in villages have to deal with. He said that it was important to create trust in our diverse society, to work together and make a change.

The third session on *Engaging India* was conducted in the form of a panel discussion and was moderated by Pradip Kanakia. The Panelists were Rakeysh

O Mehra (Director, Rang De Basanti), Neeraj Mittal (IAS, District Collector, Coimbatore), Govindraj Ethiraj (Editor-New Media, Business Standard, Prahlad Kakar (Ad Film Maker and Director, Genesis Film Production Pvt. Ltd) and Tushar Gandhi (Founder of the Mahatma Gandhi Foundation)

The session addressed issues relating to the widening social gap in the country, disconnect of the youth from the democratic process, the use of technology and media for engaging the youth, and the role youth can play today.

There were some interesting conclusions from the discussion. The main one being that social transformation is the exercise of one's own franchise. Another interesting point was that transformation must take place by advocacy and that one does need to join a political party to take part in the transformation process. Rakeysh O. Mehra made an interesting statement about age not being a barrier to one being called young; everyone can be young at heart and young in their mind, he said.

The closing session was titled *What next – India needs a youth policy*. The speakers at this session were instrumental in summing up the main messages brought out at the summit.

Lt. Gen. SS Mehta stated that our system of education links to certificates, and not to jobs. He was of the opinion that the world is looking at India today as a crucible for an emerging economy trying to display how there can be inclusive growth.

Adi Godrej praised the Indian economy for its progress and said that he expects that over the next 10 -15 years the country's growth rate will be in double digits. He also looks forward to it exceeding China's growth rate. Godrej stated that the youth policy in India must provide opportunity, encourage openness and diversity, and must empower the youth.

While the summit touched upon a host of challenges and solutions related to the youth, one message ran through strong and clear: there has never been a better time to be an Indian living in India. For the youth of the country it is a time to rise and take the first step towards a better tomorrow, and challenge the status quo.

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