

Puneities hail the Citizens' Manifesto : India 2067 campaign

Merinews, India's 1st citizen journalism news portal organised a two-day interactive seminar on 'Citizens' Manifesto: India 2067' in Pune. People from all walks of life came together for the meet, which brought about a new awakening.

Gurgaon, Haryana, July 29, 2008 /[India PRwire](#)/ -- CULTURAL CAPITAL of Maharashtra – Pune, came all out to participate in the Peoples' Seminar on writing the Citizens Manifesto: India 2067. The two day interactive seminar held on July 26 and 27, 2008 was organized by merinews™ - The 1st citizen journalism news portal on India which was attended by Citizen journalists, social activists, conscious citizens of Pune and nearby regions. The 3rd Citizen Journalists' Meet was held at Symbiosis Institute of Distance Learning, Pune on Saturday (July 26).

"Unless we debate on democracy there can be no change," opined Ujjwal K Chowdhury, dean Symbiosis International University and the director of Symbiosis Institute of Media and Communication. He added that before anything else the first thing we need to implement in order to move towards a progressive direction is to provide free and compulsory education for all children below 14 years. He pointed out the fact that many issues that otherwise may not figure in any political party manifestos should find a place in the People's manifesto, namely electoral reforms, education, women's reservation bill among others. He also said "the top to bottom approach where media is concerned has to be done away with and in order to do so a platform like merinews has an important role to play."

The CEO and Editor-in-Chief of merinews, Vipul Kant Upadhyay said that the need for a Citizens' Manifesto is to trigger a chain reaction. He asked the citizens of this country to come forward and voice their opinion as citizen journalists.

Quoting erudite Chanakya, he explained, "Three things are of great importance for any political system (raj-tantra). These are education (siksha), security: police and army (suraksha) and intelligence and spy (guptachar). Though the country has achieved a high literacy, it has not been 'educated' in the true sense of the word. A teacher's social prestige and economic standards are quite low. How would such a person be enthused to help lay the foundation of the society?" Similarly, a low-salaried policeman is a soft target for corruption. If their needs are taken care of, in cash and kind, corruption could be stemmed largely. About intelligence he said that he would touch that subject another time.

Upadhyay asked, "We have completed 60 years of independence and what have we achieved in the last 60 years. I believe that we have that we are scored shorter than what we should have. How many cities in our country have uninterrupted 24x7 water supply and electricity? The basic necessities of an ordinary citizen have not been taken care of. We all know what our problems are, it is time that we look at possible solutions to these problems. The idea of the Citizens' Manifesto is that the people of India come forward and write about their vision of India in the coming years and suggest solutions to the problems dogging our country." He also pointed out the existing leadership crisis, corruption and law and order issues that the country faces today.

Centre for Youth Development Activities (CYDA) president Mathew Mattam said that Manifesto like these are a dream and it's time that we turn our dream into reality. He said that we Indians need to learn to be more disciplined. His wish list for the manifesto India 2067 included, no politician should be permitted to contest election for more than four times, politicians in parliament should be below 45 yrs of age. Secondly, why 33 per cent? There should be 50 per cent reservation for women, there should be no Indian featured in the Forbes list of the richest in the world, the disparity between the rich and poor divide should decrease. Stating his last wish for the manifesto, he said, no person should die of hunger and the farmers' income should be more than what a clerk earns.

Meanwhile, Dr Manjit Singh, a scientist said that biotechnology will provide bread and butter to people in the coming 20-30 years. He further said that science adds another dimension to the dream of the manifesto. He added that our prime focus should be on our deteriorating health sector and each citizen should have a fundamental right to health and stressed upon the need to setup small enterprises for farmers.

Prof Subhash Dhuliya professor and head of education, research and training unit of IGNOU, said that citizen participation can bridge the gap between government manifesto and citizen's manifesto. He stressed the need to launch media literacy campaign for general public.

Thereafter, some citizens came forward and voiced their opinions on the issues that plague our society and suggested as what can be done to help curb these problems. Among them was a prominent Merinews CJ from Nasik Prabir Ghose, who suggested that 'no-vote' option should be introduced in Electronic Voting Machines.

Another citizen, Commodore Rajan Vir dwelled on the perils of 'two Indias', one rich and prosperous and the larger India (about 80 per cent in villages and towns) that is deprived and poor. He also cautioned about the threat of population rise, stating that no one is prepared for the unimaginable numbers of schools and hospitals that we would need by the year 2067.

Geeta Vir, Commodore Rajan's wife, a social activist, suggested that the education system of UK should be our benchmark. She stressed that vocational training should be introduced for children after class VII.

A participant from UK, Paul Heron, spoke in the capacity of an outsider. He said that in India people elect leaders instead of public servants. If they do not perform they should be recalled from public offices. He also stressed upon the need of safety and security of a citizen journalist and suggested that it should be included in the Manifesto.

Shefali Sagar, Director Editorial, merinews proposed the vote of thanks. Vineet Tiwari, general manager, Lokmat, Pune was also present on the occasion.

Merinews organises seminar at SIMC:

On the second day, merinews organised an interactive seminar with the students of Symbiosis on 'Citizens' Manifesto: India 2067', at Symbiosis Institute of Mass Communication, Pune. The seminar was successful in motivating and enthusing the students towards participation in the Citizen's Manifesto campaign. Many young students gave their sparkling and fresh viewpoints on what should be included in the Manifesto.

The event was attended by Vipul Kant Upadhyay, Editor-in-Chief, merinews, Ujjwal K Chowdhury, dean Symbiosis International University and the director of Symbiosis Institute of Media and Communication, Ramesh Menon, an award winning journalist (Ramnath Goenka Excellence in Journalism), Shefali Sagar, Editorial Director, merinews and Raja Bellare, a social activist.

About Manifesto: 'Citizens' Manifesto: India 2067'

Merinews has initiated a revolutionary campaign called 'Citizens' Manifesto: India 2067'. This unique experiment involves the masses for the sole goal of identifying issues, problems, challenges that we are facing today. The Manifesto serves as a guide to real solutions suggested by the citizens. The aim is to create a vision document and chalk out a road map for the next 60 years. Would India, a nation of a billion plus people develop into a super power?

Notes to Editor

Merinews is India's first citizen journalism news portal. Emanating from the need to empower democracy by providing a media to the people of the country to communicate with one and all. Merinews.com is an effort to provide one such platform to interact and express. It's a news platform for collective wisdom 'of the people, by the people and for the people'.

Merinews is the winner of India's best e-content award for the Year 2006 Official Honoree at Webby Awards 2007 alongside the likes of Bloomberg.com, aolnews.com and cnn.com. Merinews ranks fifth in the world in the participatory news category.

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