



Institute of
Policy Studies
and Advocacy

Celebrating 10 Years of IPSA

A Policy Dialogues on

Viksit Bharat 2047:

Prospects and Challenges in Advancing the Sustainable Development Agenda

Venue: Indian Social Institute, Lodhi Road, New Delhi

Date: 1st August ,2026 (Saturday)



The Institute of Policy Studies and Advocacy (IPSA) marked its tenth anniversary by organising a policy dialogue titled “Viksit Bharat 2047: Prospects and Challenges in Advancing Sustainable Development” at the Indian Social Science Institute, New Delhi, on Saturday. The event brought together economists, policy experts, academics, civil society representatives and government officials to critically examine India’s ambition of becoming a developed nation by 2047.

The discussions reflected a wide range of perspectives on the government’s Viksit Bharat vision. While several speakers questioned the feasibility of the current roadmap and highlighted structural economic and social challenges, a representative from NITI Aayog outlined the government’s strategy to transform India into a developed and self-reliant nation through investments in skills, research, infrastructure and inclusive growth.



Delivering the keynote address, Prof. Arun Kumar, former Professor of Economics at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), argued that India’s aspiration to become a developed country by 2047 is constrained by unreliable economic data, widening inequality, inadequate investment in research and education, and persistent weaknesses in employment generation.

Describing India’s statistical system as operating under a fog of data, Prof. Kumar contended that the country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) estimates fail to capture the realities of the vast unorganised sector. According to him, flawed data leads policymakers to formulate strategies based on an inaccurate assessment of the economy, thereby obscuring the real challenges confronting the country.

He explained that India’s per capita income currently stands at around 2,700 US dollars and would need to increase to approximately 14,000 dollars by 2047 to match the

threshold generally associated with developed economies. Achieving this, he argued, would require sustained annual real GDP growth of around 8.5 per cent over the next two decades. However, he maintained that the target would become even more difficult as developed countries continue to expand economically and the Indian rupee depreciates against the US dollar.

Prof. Kumar cautioned that economic growth alone cannot define development. Even if India succeeds in increasing its national income, extreme inequality could leave a significant proportion of the population deprived of the benefits of growth.

He pointed to India's low expenditure on research and development, about 0.8 per cent of GDP which, he noted, remains far below countries such as China, South Korea and Israel. This technological dependence, coupled with the migration of skilled professionals abroad, weakens India's capacity for innovation and strategic autonomy, he argued.

He also criticised insufficient public investment in education, poor learning outcomes and the prevalence of plagiarism within higher education institutions, warning that these factors undermine the country's long-term innovation potential.

Drawing attention to the labour market, Prof. Kumar observed that nearly 94 per cent of India's workforce remains employed in the low-income unorganised sector. He argued that unemployment, underemployment and disguised unemployment continue to suppress domestic demand and limit inclusive prosperity.

Looking ahead, he identified artificial intelligence-driven job displacement, climate change, rising global inequality driven by technology giants and shifting geopolitical dynamics as four major challenges confronting India. Rather than relying on distant projections, he urged policymakers to focus on structural reforms in education, research, employment generation and statistical systems to achieve genuinely inclusive and sustainable development.

Prof. Santosh Mehrotra, Research Fellow at the IZA Institute of Labour Economics, Luxembourg, questioned both the vision and implementation of the government's Viksit Bharat agenda, arguing that India presently lacks a credible roadmap to achieve developed-country status.

Congratulating IPSA on completing ten years, he referred to his recent book, *India Out of Work: Rethinking India's Growth Story*, and urged policymakers to rethink India's development priorities.

According to Prof. Mehrotra, India should aspire to become a high human development country rather than merely a high-income economy. He argued that improvements in health, education, employment and social security should receive greater attention than aggregate GDP figures or the size of the economy.



He criticised the absence of an institutional framework comparable to the erstwhile Planning Commission and National Development Council, arguing that the present roadmap had not emerged through comprehensive national consultation.

Prof. Mehrotra observed that India's demographic dividend is approaching its conclusion, with only about 15 years remaining before the country begins experiencing the challenges associated with an ageing society. He stressed that India needs to generate approximately 12 million non-farm jobs every year, while current employment creation remains roughly half that level because average GDP growth has remained around 6.8 per cent, below the 8 per cent considered necessary for sustained transformation.

He pointed to increasing dependence on agriculture, declining manufacturing's contribution to gross value added and falling manufacturing employment as indicators of stalled structural transformation.

Expressing concern over low public expenditure on health and education, rising graduate unemployment and the absence of social security for nearly 90 per cent of India's informal workforce, Prof. Mehrotra advocated a comprehensive manufacturing strategy, stronger support for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and higher tax revenues to finance development. He also argued that policy interventions such as demonetisation, GST implementation and the COVID-19 lockdown had significantly disrupted employment generation and economic transformation.

Prof. Dibyendu Maiti criticised the prevailing economic framework for placing excessive reliance on markets and monetary policy while neglecting the role of institutions and civil society.

Tracing developments in economic thought from Milton Friedman to Robert Lucas, he argued that contemporary policy frameworks have progressively reduced the state's role on the assumption that markets can resolve most economic challenges efficiently.

According to Prof. Maiti, such an approach weakens democratic rights because citizens increasingly become recipients of welfare rather than participants enjoying employment opportunities and economic ownership.

He argued that sustainable long-term growth requires greater public investment, development of human capital and technological progress rather than monetary measures alone.

Based on current growth trajectories, he suggested that India may not achieve its development goals until the end of the century.

Prof. Maiti also highlighted climate change as a major threat to economic growth, warning that rising temperatures adversely affect GDP. He called for stronger environmental policies, greater state intervention and wider institutional participation to address pollution and promote sustainable development.



Dr. Tanvir Aejaz, Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science at Ramjas College, University of Delhi, argued that the vision of Viksit Bharat would remain largely a political slogan unless supported by effective public policies.

He maintained that national development requires citizens to possess the capacity to aspire, which depends fundamentally on access to quality education and healthcare.

Dr. Aeijaz criticised policies that encourage privatisation while weakening public institutions and explained that public policy encompasses both governmental action and deliberate inaction.

Highlighting the role of academia, he stated that universities contribute to policymaking through research, knowledge generation and critical analysis. However, he expressed concern regarding declining educational standards, restrictions on academic freedom and the exclusion of independent scholars from policy processes.

He linked the problems facing young people to broader structural changes in contemporary capitalism and criticised civil society organisations for insufficient engagement with social movements.

According to him, independent research, academic autonomy and evidence-based policymaking remain indispensable for meaningful national development.

Dr. Nesar Ahmad, Founder Director of the Budget Analysis and Research Centre (BARC) Trust, Jaipur, highlighted the indispensable role of civil society organisations in shaping public policy, ensuring accountability and protecting democratic rights.

He explained that civil society includes non-governmental organisations, community-based organisations, student groups, think tanks and social movements, each contributing differently despite increasing regulatory challenges, particularly after 2014.

Dr. Ahmad observed the growing corporatisation of NGOs and increasing individualisation of social movements in recent years.

Drawing upon historical examples, he outlined civil society's contribution to major legislative and policy reforms, including the Vishakha Guidelines, the Right to Information Act, the Right to Education Act, the National Food Security Act and the Land Acquisition Act of 2013.

He also referred to campaigns led by women's organisations, farmers' groups, Dalit movements and youth organisations that influenced legislative and policy reforms.

Concluding his remarks, he asserted that civil society would continue to remain a vital democratic force, stating that if one group is restricted, others will continue to advocate for citizens' rights.



Presenting the government's perspective, Dr. Muniraju S.B., Deputy Advisor (Public Finance and Policy Analysis) at NITI Aayog, emphasised that Vision 2047 seeks to transform India into a developed nation by harnessing its demographic advantage.

He noted that India's student population exceeds the total population of the United States, making investments in education and skill development critical for future economic growth.

Highlighting structural changes in the economy, he observed that while agriculture once dominated India's economy, the services sector now contributes more than 57 per cent of gross value addition.

Dr. Muniraju argued that equipping young people with modern skills would enable them to strengthen India's economy while meeting global demand for skilled professionals, particularly in countries such as Japan, Germany and the Gulf region.

He also highlighted the achievements of the Indian diaspora and its substantial remittances as evidence of India's growing global contribution.

According to him, the government has committed ₹1 lakh crore towards research and development to promote innovation, quantum technologies and the Make in India initiative.

He further referred to welfare programmes, scholarships and financial assistance aimed at supporting disadvantaged communities and ensuring inclusive development.

Concluding his address, he stressed that government initiatives alone would not be sufficient and called upon every citizen to contribute actively towards achieving the goals of Vision 2047 through continuous skill development and participation in nation-building.



The programme commenced with introductory remarks by Dr. Jawed Alam Khan, Executive Director of the Institute of Policy Studies and Advocacy, who welcomed participants as IPSA celebrated its tenth anniversary.

The first session was coordinated by Dr. Khalid Khan, Head of the Department of Economics at Kazi Nazrul Islami Mahavidyalaya, while Dr. Protiva Kundu, Fellow, Education and Skills at the Centre for Social and Economic Progress, moderated the proceedings.

The second session was coordinated by Dr. Manjur Ali, Assistant Professor at Giri Institute of Development Studies, and moderated by Annie Namala, Executive Director of the Centre for Social Equity and Inclusion.

The event concluded with a vote of thanks delivered by Gaurav Kumar Singh of the Institute of Policy Studies and Advocacy, bringing to a close a day-long discussion that examined the opportunities, limitations and policy choices shaping India's aspiration to become a developed nation by 2047.

