**Minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee of Common Cause**

The Executive Committee of Common Cause met at Common Cause House on February 11, 2015 at 3:30 p.m. Shri Vikram Lal, Dr. Divya Jalan, Shri Kamal Jaswal and Dr. Vipul Mudgal attended the meeting.

The Director reviewed the developments since the last meeting of the Committee held on January 16, 2015. The progress made in the construction of a conference facility on the 3rd floor of Common Cause House was noted with satisfaction.

**Sequel to Delhi Assembly elections**

The Committee hoped that the significance of the outcome of the Delhi Assembly elections would not be lost on the political establishment, which should now be more amenable to reviving the stalled process of political reforms. The Committee also felt that it was incumbent on concerned civil society groups and public-spirited individuals to offer their considered suggestions to the new government in regard to the design of policies and programmes for addressing the key issues of governance. In this context, it was suggested that Common Cause could do the groundwork on the following initiatives, which have the potential to be game-changers, like the Right to Information Act.

* Formulation of a transparent Conflict of Interest Policy: The Draft Policy will take into account the international best practices and the ground realities in India. Hopefully, its adoption by the AAP government would induce other governments to follow suit and promote ethical governance.
* Compilation of the best practices in the implementation of the Right to Education across the country, particularly the innovations leading to significant improvements in the learning outcomes in the public education system. This may be followed by the design of a PPP initiative for a pilot project for identifying the most suitable innovations for the National Capital Territory.
* Proposition for a Rainwater Harvesting Policy to arrest the precipitous drop in the water table and replenish the depleted groundwater reservoirs in the NCT. This will be based on an in-depth study of successful experiences in other urban agglomerations, notably Chennai.

**Disquieting developments in some of the PILs**​

Our PIL seeking a thorough investigation by the CBI and the Income Tax Department into well documented allegations of corruption against Shri Virbhadra Singh came up for hearing before the Delhi High Court on January 29, 2015. Shri Prashant Bhushan had withdrawn from the PIL in the wake of persistent questioning of the maintainability of the petition by Shri Kapil Sibal, counsel for Shri Virbhadra Singh, on the ground that it was motivated by Shri Prashant Bhushan's alleged animosity with his client. Shri Arvind Nigam, Senior Advocate, was appearing for Common Cause in the matter since then.

At the last hearing, opting not to adjudicate as to the *bona fides* of the petitioner**,**the Chief Justice’s bench discharged Common Cause and appointed two *amicus curiae* to assist it in assessing whether there was any public interest in the petition and to suggest the future course of action in the matter which has been posted for March 26, 2015.

The order of discharge has been framed as a consent order. Our legal team is of the view that since the incontrovertible evidence of corruption by Shri Virbhadra Singh marshalled by us is to be taken into consideration by the *amicus curiae,*our purpose is being achieved. Hence, it has been decided not to challenge the order of discharge.

The Committee endorsed the decision and observed that in the light of this experience the Society should continue to focus on combating corruption at the systemic level and not expend its limited resources in the pursuit of cases of individual malfeasance.

The Committee was apprised of the curious case of inexplicable listings and de-listings of our PIL in the Orissa High Court highlighting the arbitrary and irregular allotment of prime residential plots to influential persons, including serving High Court judges. The matter was suddenly taken up on January 19 in the absence of our counsel, who is based in Delhi. All possible precautions are being taken to preclude the possibility of the dismissal of the PIL.

The meeting ended with a vote of thanks to the Chair.

**(Vikram Lal)**