[Download the original attachment](http://mail.google.com/mail/?view=att&th=120194477bc3e16e&attid=0.1&disp=attd&realattid=f_fsfwsw4j&zw)

[Download the original attachment](http://mail.google.com/mail/?view=att&th=120194477bc3e16e&attid=0.1&disp=attd&realattid=f_fsfwsw4j&zw)

**Minutes of the Annual General Body Meeting of COMMON CAUSE held at Common Cause House, New Delhi on March 26, 2011.**

Mr. Vikram Lal, President, Common Cause Society, chaired the Annual General Body Meeting, which was called to order at 11.00 A.M. The meeting was adjourned for fifteen minutes since the quorum was not complete till 11.15 A.M. The AGM was reconvened at 11.30 A.M with twelve members in attendance.

The Chairman welcomed the participants and introduced the members of the Governing Council to them. He stated that the induction of Mr. Paranjoy Guha Thakurta, distinguished journalist and educator, will enrich the talent pool of the Governing Council. Thereafter, he requested the Director, Mr. Kamal Kant Jaswal, to proceed with the items on the agenda.

**Consideration of the Annual Report and adoption of the Annual Accounts**

The Director recapitulated the salient features of the Annual Report of the Society for the year 2009-10 and briefly apprised the members of the current status of the cases mentioned therein. The members expressed their satisfaction over the information presented. Mr. Lalit Nirula proposed that the Annual Report and Audited Accounts of the Society be adopted. Dr. Ashok Khosla seconded the motion, which was adopted unanimously.

**Appointment of Auditors for the year 2010-2011**

The Chairman informed the members that the work of the Auditors, M/S VKGN & Associates Chartered Accountants, continued to be satisfactory. Thereupon Mr.Lalit Nirula proposed that they be reappointed for the year 2010-11. The proposal was seconded by Mr. V.K. Taneja and adopted unanimously.

**Activities and Programmes**

The Director stated that the Society continues to make use of the instrument of Public Interest Litigation (PIL) to seek redress for the common problems of the public. At present, the Society is pursuing eight writ petitions and an intervention application in the Supreme Court and three writ petitions and an intervention application in the High Court of Delhi. Many of the writ petitions have been pending for a long time. The longest pending writ petition, which prays for expediting the establishment of the institution of Lokpal to ensure probity in public life, dates back to 1995. This demand has now become the rallying point of the mass movement launched under the aegis of India Against Corruption campaign for enactment of the Jan Lokpal Bill. Common Cause has been a core constituent of this campaign and has played a seminal role in its evolution.

In contrast, the writ petition filed by the Society in association with the Centre for Public Interest Litigation in October 2010 to challenge the appointment of Mr. P.J. Thomas as Central Vigilance Commissioner was disposed of by the Supreme Court with remarkable alacrity on March 3, 2011, holding the impugned appointment to be *non est.* The Society intends to take advantage of this landmark decision to press for a revamp of the system of appointment to constitutional and statutory bodies with a view to minimizing the scope for arbitrariness and abuse of executive discretion in such appointments.

The general body lauded the efforts made by the Society in concert with other like-minded institutions to highlight the irregularities in the allocation of 2 G spectrum and grant of telecom licences. The PIL on this issue, which is in its final phase, has already had a significant impact in terms of a revamp of the telecom policy and action against delinquent operators.

The Director reviewed the progress made in implementation of the directions of the Supreme Court on police reforms in general and in the formulation of a progressive police law for the National Capital Territory of Delhi in particular. He also recapitulated the gains made in the enforcement of labour laws in the construction industry and the implementation of welfare schemes for the construction workers of Delhi and apprised the participants of the status of the initiatives in the fields of democratic decentralization, civil service reforms and establishment of an RTI portal to enhance the effectiveness of this instrument of public accountability and transparency. The general body appreciated the steps taken by the Society.

**Mr Mahinder Singh** complimented the management on its determined pursuit of the mission and objective of the Society. He welcomed the recent judgment of the Supreme Court in the case of Aruna Shanbaug, which has legalized passive euthanasia in the case of patients in a permanent vegetative state. This judgment, however, does not go far enough: the need of the conjuncture is to legalize active euthanasia, subject to certain safeguards. As the proportion of the very old in the country’s population continues to increase, more and more people will want to take charge of their lives and opt to die with dignity, without having to undergo the indignity of protracted and debilitating terminal illnesses. Mr. Mahinder Singh mentioned that in the 95th year of his life, the thought of euthanasia is always on his mind. He urged the Society to review its position on this issue of great importance to people like him.

**Mr. V.K. Taneja** suggested that profiles of the members of the governing council should be published in the next issue of the Society’s journal.

**Mr. V.K. Chohdda** underlined the urgency of electoral reforms, without which the quality of governance cannot be improved. The political parties should have the responsibility to adopt an objective criterion for selection of candidates to be fielded by them. Mr. Chohdda presented his propositon of a multi-criteria rating system, which assigns weightages to factors such as education, social service, gender, criminal record, income tax record, social disadvantage (Schedule Caste/Schedule Tribe), etc. In his opinion, its adoption by the political parties would raise the standards of politics in the country and facilitate the task of nation building. He also suggested that electronic voting machines should be made tamper-proof.

Referring to the recent cases of murderous assault on RTI activists, he urged that the identity of applicants seeking sensitive information should be protected. Mr. Chohdda also pleaded for introduction of a centralised system of school admissions to obviate the need for the candidates and their guardians to go through the hassles and expense of applying to a large number of schools.

Mr. V. K. Chohdda regretted that very few members of the Society take an active part in its governance and attend meetings of its general body. He reiterated the suggestion made in the last AGM that the management of the Society should take proactive measures to reach out to the members by e-mail, SMS and telephone and urge them to participate in the AGM.

The Director clarified that most of the members of the Society were enrolled in the 1980’s and 1990’s and apart from their address, no personal details are on record. The efforts made in the last few years to compile a database of life members have not elicited much response and very few members have furnished their personal particulars. The Chairman felt that concerted efforts, including visits to members’ recorded addresses, need to be made to ascertain the live membership of the Society. A beginning could be made with the National Capital Territory of Delhi, which accounts for the bulk of the Society’s membership.

**Elections**

The Chairman informed the members that in accordance with the Rules of the Society, the two oldest members, namely Dr. B.P. Mathur and Maj. Gen. (Retd.) J.P. Gupta, were due to retire on the day of the general body meeting and that both of them had offered themselves for re-election. Mr. Lalit Nirula proposed that Dr. B.P. Mathur be re-elected. The proposal was seconded by Dr. Ashok Khosla. Thereafter, Dr. Ashok Khosla proposed that Maj. Gen. (Retd.) J.P. Gupta be re-elected. This proposal was seconded by Mr. V.K. Taneja. Both the proposals were unanimously approved by the House.

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

**(Vikram Lal)**

Chairman