

**POLICY DIALOGUE**  
**(Theme : A Way Forward)**  
**Organised By:**  
**AMITY INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC POLICY (jointly with)**  
**AMITY INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**  
**in association with**  
**CENTRE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY, NEW DELHI**  
**ON 31 JANURAY, 2017 (HALF DAY)**

**Event Report**

Amity Institute of Public Policy and Amity Institute of International Studies, in association with Centre for Civil Society, successfully conducted a 'Policy Dialogue' on January 31, 2017.

The dialogue was a first of its kind initiative in the university, and was graced with the presence of an esteemed panel of specialists involved with various facets of the policy-making process. Students from several different institutes within the university such as the Law School, Department of Mass communication, Social Sciences, among others, were in attendance for the event.

Policy dialogues involve deliberations by people from different groups and seeks to include diverse voices into the policy making process. The policy dialogue was conducted with the aim of giving an opportunity to the students to understand the intricacies of policymaking and engage actively with it. The dynamic panel of experts shared their diverse experiences, and provided intellectual stimulation to students who had not had any formal exposure to the field yet. The panel also addressed the different ways through which interested students can build a career in policy making process and contribute meaningfully to the nation's public policy.

- The program commenced at 2:17pm. Prof. Bindra – Director, Amity Institute of International Studies, gave a welcome address to the esteemed panel.
- At 2:30 revered Dr. Balwinder Shukla - Vice Chancellor, Amity University, addressed the audience and reflected on the association of Amity University with Centre for Civil Society. She described this partnership as “a favorable endeavor” for the students. She encouraged the students to use the opportunity to examine and understand the policy process, for the upliftment of the society. She appreciated the idea of ‘Public Policy Dialogue’ and labeled it as a great initiative in the academic domain.
- Dr.Tushar K. Nath – Director, Amity Institute of Public Policy, introduced the Policy Dialogue and its purpose. He emphasized on choice and accountability associated with Policymaking. He also touched upon the importance of holding Policy Dialogues at the university level, and the need to inculcate a

culture to engage the students for building a better policy response mechanism in India. He officially declared the dialogue 'open' at 2:40 pm.

- Ms. Samta Arora- Director, Centre for Civil Society, then introduced the Panel Members. The Panel discussion was chaired and moderated by Prof. Marmar Mukopadhyay- Distinguished Academic and Former Director, NIEPA, MHRD, Govt. of India. The Panel consisted of Dr.Amir Ullah Khan, Dr. Hindol Sen Gupta, Dr.K.Sanyal, Prof. Baladas Ghoshal, and Ms. Mallika Ahluwalia.

Ms. Mallika Ahluwalia, CEO and Co-founder of the Partition Museum Project, was the first panelist to address the audience. She drew upon her background as a policy analyst and consultant to encourage the audience to create new avenues for themselves in order to act as an agent of social change. Ms. Ahluwalia shed light on her Partition Museum Project that seeks to commemorate an essential event in world history that had been largely overlooked until now. The Partition of 1947 is the world's largest human migration that impacted over 18 million people and their families in the sub-continent. She emphasized on the need for building a Partition memorial on the lines of landmarks such as the Holocaust Museum, and September 11 museum. Her team has been successful in initiating this movement and is working actively to collect media and memories of personal stories from those that were affected first-hand. She underlined the need of capturing the culture, heritage and history of past and preserve, through Museum, for future generation to relate. She concluded by highlighting the importance of linking past heritage with current practices while conceptualizing policies and invited the participation of youth in building their own paths to engage in policy making, ensuring the impact it can bring in the long run.

Dr.Hindol Sengupta was the next to address the audience. He discussed the importance of 'public', an essential key word in policy framing. He argued about the changes the Economic Liberalization policy had brought in India .He reflected on per-capita 'hope' as an instrument (marker) of measure of nation's growth. And described it by exemplifying the actions taken by the current generations in shaping their lives that the past generations could not ever have even 'hoped' for. He talked about the thesis written by Chandra Prasad, an eminent dalit economist, who conducted a research in a prominent dalit area (inflicted by caste barriers) about the changes brought about by liberalization. His thesis concluded that caste has physical manifestations and the economic liberalization has brought amongst the dalits self-realisation and an essence of self-respect. Thus, breaking the caste barriers and bridging the gaps between the communities.

The senior eminent academic – Dr. Baladas Ghoshal, followed Dr. Sengupta's address. With an illustrious career and a distinguished body of work to his name,

Prof. Ghoshal is considered to be an expert on South East Asian Studies in India. He currently serves as the Secretary General and Director at the Society for Indian Ocean Studies. He is also an honorary Distinguished Fellow at the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, and a Visiting Senior Fellow at the Centre for Policy Research. Prof. Ghoshal began by defining Public Policy as a set of “action-oriented strategies with a broad vision that are directed towards the public for their collective benefit.” He highlighted the shortcomings of the Indian policy-making process, which is largely based on a ‘fire-brigade’ approach. He presented his analysis of a number of foreign policy measures enacted by India, especially towards China, to emphasize on the need for adopting a scientific approach to the policy making process. He stressed upon the requirement for a structural mechanism for pre-emptive scenario building in order to identify alternatives for effective policy-making. Dr Ghoshal concluded his address by hoping that with the passage of time, the Indian system would be more receptive towards opinions of specialists and experts in the field rather than just muddling-through challenges with ‘last-minute’ policies.

This was followed by an address by Dr. Kaushiki Sanyal, who brings over a decade’s experience in the public policy domain. She advocated the need for active participation of the youth in the policy making process, instead of just passive criticism of the government. She encouraged the audience to have a voice in the decision-making process to bring about greater change in the society. In her address, she focused on the various platforms through which the young generation can contribute meaningfully to nation-building. She highlighted the diverse ways, such as joining the civil services, working with local communities at the grass-roots, advocacy groups, filing RTI applications etc, which can be used to engage with the public. She concluded by urging students to undertake research work and utilize their analytical skills to tackle complex governance problems through a data-backed approach.

Dr. Amir Ullah Khan, a Development and Trade Economist with a brilliant academic background, addressed the audience next. He is currently an advisor to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and the Wadhvani Foundation. Dr. Khan began his speech with an interactive session where he sought answers from the audience on the biggest policy problem faced by our country, in their opinion. The audience provided a varied response, with answers ranging across a vast span of issues including poverty, corruption, and education. He then enlightened the audience on the pressing problem of Gender-related issues and quoted vital statistics to assert that ‘state of women’ show the worst result. The audience was shook by the data provided, especially that only 27% of women in India participate in the workforce. He also explained how child-marriage and ill-health still poses a big threat to the socio-economic development of the poor in India. He further drew upon a comparative assessment of social indicators of Bangladesh and India over the last three decades. While, India still struggles with slow results in health and education

sector, Bangladesh has been on a rapidly growing upward trajectory. This, Dr. Khan attributed to a robust and active civil society which can play a greater role in developmental initiatives. He concluded by asking two open questions that provided much fodder to the audience to deliberate upon. The first urging them to think deeper about the motivation behind developmental schemes such as MNREGA, and the second about analyzing the long-term effects of the recent demonetization, not only on the market, but also on the majority public that it directly impacts. His speech managed to create a spirit of active participation and enthusiasm among the young students

The panel was concluded with Professor Marmar Mukhopadhyay's address. Dr Mukhopadhyay is one of the prominent figures in the field of education policy making. He is the author of Quality management in Higher Education, Total Quality Management in Education and several other books. He is a member of CIBE and chairman of CIBE Sub-Committee on Universalization of Secondary Education. He is also the member of various working committees of planning commission. Professor Mukopadhyay, in his speech, stated that Policy dialogue is an informative, futuristic and imaginative process. It is based on findings on an issue. He explained that "policy dialogue" comprises of two words, policy and dialogue. Policy is a political statement on a subject of public interest and dialogue may refer to seminars, conferences and even informal talks. Key element of any policy according to him is inclusion and any policy maker should analyze the adverse effects that it might have. For instance, education policies in India only include government institutions, leaving behind the private institutions, when in fact about 40% of students are enrolled in private ones. This shows the importance of inclusion. Some policies have good intentions attached to them, however they turn out to have negative externalities that outweigh the positive ones. Therefore, policies are a work of balance and opportunity costs. He ended his speech by saying that the concept of Policy dialogue hasn't evolved as much and therefore efforts like these need to be encouraged and further developed.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Policy Dialogue was then concluded by a question and answers section, where the audience members satisfied their curiosities by interacting with the panelists. This was followed by a vote of thanks and a promise to continue with several such dialogues in the future to deliberate on impertinent policy issues in the country.