

Security under control, says India's Home Minister as India Summit ends

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India's security challenges are no different from those faced by other countries, Palaniappan Chidambaram, Minister of Home Affairs of India, told participants in the closing session of the World Economic Forum's India Economic Summit.

"We are no more vulnerable than other countries," he said. "We believe that we have the capacity to thwart any attack. Should there be an attack, we believe we have the capacity to contain it and respond in a swift and decisive manner." Disruptions of law and order and the threat of terrorism "do not affect our capacity to promote investment and promote growth," Chidambaram stressed.

During the session, the six Summit Co-Chairs reviewed the discussions of the past three days and how to move forward on an agenda to drive "India's next generation of growth", the theme of the meeting. On the need to address the country's poor infrastructure, Carlos Ghosn, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Renault, France; President and Chief Executive Officer, Nissan, Japan; Member of the Foundation Board of the World Economic Forum, said that the government simply needs to execute its plans, including the objective of building 20 kilometres of roads a day. "The millions of new jobs won't happen if the roads are not done," he reckoned.

Speaking on empowering women and educating girls, Indra Nooyi, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, PepsiCo, USA; Global Agenda Council on the Role of Business, called for relevant government ministers to meet with business and civil society leaders to make the issue a priority. "This is no longer a nice-to-have, it is an economic imperative," she remarked.

India has to be more effective in addressing its demographic challenges, especially its "youth bulge" and mobilizing its abundant human resources to ensure that growth is inclusive. "There is a very large problem of execution," said Shumeet Banerji, Chief Executive Officer, Booz & Company, United Kingdom. "If demographic bulges are not educated, that could lead to dislocation and instability." In particular, India must address its skills deficit, the Co-Chairs agreed.

For Baba N. Kalyani, Chairman and Managing Director, Bharat Forge, India, an urgent priority is to bring energy to the 400 million Indians without access to it. This will have to be done in an environmentally responsible way, he said. He also stressed the importance of innovation. "India's advantage is its ability to innovate especially at the low end to produce low-cost products that bring the price point down. This will propel Indian manufacturing forward." William D. Green, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Accenture, USA, agreed. "There is really an opportunity to take talent the country has and deploy it towards innovation. The world is desperate for new business models – how to do things more efficiently. Green manufacturing is something the country can focus on and specialize in."

To achieve India's ambitious growth agenda, its leaders must be held accountable, Chidambaram observed. "The problems are not growing faster than our capacity to find solutions," he contended. "Where the gap is growing is in accountability. We are not holding people accountable." Considering all the challenges discussed during the Summit, Chandra Kochhar, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, ICICI Bank, India, concluded.

"The irony is that each one of these issues can turn into an opportunity or a bottleneck. If we don't invest in infrastructure, for example, it will be a bottleneck to our growth."

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