

*Introduction of Mr. Vinod Rai, Eleventh Comptroller & Auditor General of India (CAG), by Mr. Bharat Doshi on the occasion of the Twenty-second Lalit Doshi Memorial Lecture on 4th August 2016*

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Good evening friends,

It is my privilege and honour today to introduce Mr. Vinod Rai, the Eleventh Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG), on the occasion of the annual Lalit Doshi Memorial Lecture, twenty-second in the series.

Sir, you will remember that our paths had literally crossed for the first time when we both were consecutive speakers at a training programme for bankers organised by CAFRAL in November 2013. As we had met only a couple of times thereafter, I requested my senior friend, Mr. Piyush Mankad, former Finance Secretary, (who is present here today) to approach you and request you to give a convenient time to two of the Trustees of the foundation to discuss the possibility of your delivering the lecture today. We met Mr. Vinod Rai in Mumbai, Mr. Bongirwar and myself, over a cup of coffee we talked about Lalit Doshi and his memories, we talked about Mr. Vinod Rai's memories, about his role as CAG and also many other matters and Mr. Rai very readily accepted to deliver this lecture today. We thank you for doing so Sir. There was one more request, which was unusual, Mr. Rai had commitments, he is a visiting research fellow at the National Institute of Singapore, and we wanted him to come on 4th August, because 4th August happens to be Lalit's birthday. He said he will try, but what I could appreciate was that he sensed our sentiments at that very point and within a week he re-arranged his diary and accepted 4th August. Thank you again, Sir, for your positive response! Incidentally if you look at the brochure you will find that most of the lectures were delivered on 4th August. The first lecture was delivered by Mr. Narayan Vaghul whose birthday is also on 4th August.

Friends, while introducing our distinguished speakers, I like not to read out their Resume, as we anyway print a shorter version of the same in the invitation card. I will therefore try to share some lesser known aspects, some picked up from the internet, some picked up during a personal chat we had with the speaker and some from the story of his life "Not Just an Accountant - The Diary of the Nation's Conscience Keeper".

We all know, during his tenure as the 11th CAG of India, at the pinnacle of his career how he brought new vigour and relevance to the 153-year-old institution of CAG, a Constitutional Authority; to make it a more effective weapon in the fight against corruption in the highest rungs of power. Sir, you did your duty with courage and conviction and without fear or favour.

Scandals after scandals were unearthed. It was poetic that the various scandals had names which had alphabetical and phonetic alliteration – CAG investigates CWG, CAG opens Coalgate, CAG and 2G and so on.

Under his stewardship, CAG reports were made more accessible and comprehensible to the common man, especially, through Noddy books, a miniature version of the massive CAG reports written lucidly in 18 to 20 pages, you do not have to run through 400 / 500 pages of the full report, but you get the gist of it. Just as the nation was shocked at that time, we also started seeing a slowdown in executive action and stagnation in policy making. Was there a cause and effect relationship? This discussion led us to the choice of the topic today.

Over a cup of coffee – the same cup – in the same meeting, not another meeting, we suggested to Mr. Rai to choose any topic that he would like to speak on. He responded – you tell me whatever you think would be relevant and what your audience will like. It was Mr. Bongirwar who raised the thorny question which many public servants ask – does the fear of audit result in inaction? After one or two variations, the title was articulated “Effect of Audit – Good Governance or Policy Paralysis”.

Mr. Rai is very friendly and self-effacing person, not aggressive, and he accepted the topic with a smile.

Born in 1948, in an Army family, in Ghazipur in Uttar Pradesh, Mr Rai holds a Masters of Economics degree from University of Delhi and Master of Public Administration from Harvard University.

He is a 1972 batch Kerala cadre officer of Indian Administrative Service. Whenever you talk about an IAS Officer, you should remember two things – which Cadre and which Batch. He was sent for training to Nagaland where he exhibited signs of unusual independence and courage.

An episode I would like to recount today - He was a trainee with no powers, he single-handedly retrieved the dead body of the Deputy Commissioner of Zunheboto, Mr. K.K.Gupta, IAS officer of the 1969 batch who was ambushed and killed by militants while on official tour. The news had spread like wild fire in town. Mr.Rai took a jeep and a driver and told the driver that they were headed for Phek, another town in the same direction. When the road forked, he directed the driver to take the lane to Zunheboto and the driver showed reluctance, having heard of the incident. Mr. Rai could persuade the driver to continue. When they reached Zunheboto, it was late at night and Mr.Rai took charge of the body of his superior. It was an act of extreme courage considering the risk involved.

Being from Kerala Cadre Mr Rai was first posted as the sub-collector of Thrissur District, later on he became the Collector. Later Mr. Rai played a pivotal role in making Kerala as the leading exporter of spices.

Subsequently he served with distinction at the Centre in the Ministries of Commerce, Finance and Defence.

His contribution as CAG was recognised by his global peers and in international media and I am sure, it must have been a cherished moment of pride for him when his alma mater, Hindu College University of Delhi honoured him as alumnus of the decade!

He is now also the Visiting Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of South Asian Studies in the National University of Singapore.

Post his retirement, Mr.Rai was recently appointed as the Chairman of the Bank Board Bureau which will search and select heads of Public Sector Banks and help them in developing differentiated strategies and capital raising plans through innovative financial methods and instruments.

During the personal discussion with him, it transpired that he is very interested in gardening. In his own words he is a '*Mali*' (a gardener). I will further add -he is a *Mali* with green fingers – the analogy is a perfect fit. A *Mali* unearths the weeds and removes them and he also identifies the good plants for further care and nourishment. During his reign as the Comptroller and Auditor General, as a conscience keeper of the nation, as a good *Mali*, he followed his passion and exposed and unearthed many weeds and now as the Chairman of the Bank Board Bureau he will pick the best leaders and nurture them.

Friends, in the very first line of the preface of his book he has quoted Benjamin Franklin: "If you would not be forgotten as soon as you are dead, either write something worth reading or do something worth writing".

Sir I can say with conviction that your past and future achievements will be discussed and written about for years to come.

We eagerly look forward to your lecture later this evening.

Thank You.