

# CONNECT

Issue 66 - 19th January, 2012

## Come Together Adieu 2011!

*The going away of 2011 has meant many a "coming together" - be it in politics, sports, business or the nation in general. Chetan Sharma, Editor in Chief reminisces about the year gone by, which he suggests has been nothing*



*short of historic, teaching us similar things in different ways!*

First, the Lok Sabha came together to pass the Lokpal Bill—targeted to check corruption by making accounts transparent and increase accountability. The opposition came together to deny the bill a constitutional status. Anti corruption activist Anna Hazare's followers came together to register their protest against what they term as an ineffective bill. Much awaited for the last four decades and much debated for the last four months, the Lokpal Bill could not find favor even when the Upper House came together to pass it. Aimed at strengthening the system, it has been termed as weak given that it excluded media, corporates and the CBI from its ambit. Both the inclusion of the prime minister and exclusion of defence and security forces was largely hailed. The option given to the states to form a Lokayukta evoked a mixed response. Pranab Mukherjee's statement – "Aspire for the best, but don't give up the good," is both telling and fair. Given the momentum, this nation can ill afford stagnation. The bill shall at some stage have to be cleared.

The Lok Sabha also passed another anti graft bill specifically giving protection to whistle blowers. It's a big blow to the corrupt. This means if you steal and somebody squeals, then you're a done deal. In other words, uncover the stealer and give cover to the squealer. The saying "clean as a whistle" now becomes "come clean, else the whistle shall blow". The bill however would have no justification without justice. A strong judiciary with a weak Lokpal is unacceptable. The reverse is worse, more so, in a country where it takes years to jail and at times, just a few minutes to bail. Also with the lack of constitutional status the bill is vulnerable. It can be repealed by a simple ordinance should a future government not want it.

In the world of business, the highlight was the possibility of an alliance in Reliance. Normally a seven year itch is a threat to unification. Not for the late Dhirubhai's family which came together for the first time after 7 years to commemorate his 80th birth anniversary. The result was an immediate jump in the stock prices of the financially weaker Anil Ambani's shares. Good anticipation, poor presumption. Family reunion does not mean business union. Assuming it is, the respective businesses may lack synergies. Besides Mukesh's support to Anil's bleeding companies would bring down the valuation of the parent company RIL. Then, the thaw in the relationship actually started post the result of the RIL-RNRL verdict in 2010. Anil the loser felt let down. Mukesh the winner seemingly mellowed down. Anil withdrew the INR 10,000 crore defamation case against Mukesh and then hived off Reliance Infratel, thereby enabling Mukesh to use its infrastructure to roll out his telecom network. So a unification at some stage has always been on the minds of Dalal Street. The big plus from the alliance should it happen would be the removal of wasteful negativity. The positives of "brothers in arms" is lesser than the negatives of "brothers in harm". Administrative synergies( if not direct business ones) themselves would be a major gain. It is felt that both are good at PR - Anil at Public Relations and Mukesh at Private Relations. When combined it builds equity and brand equity. The latter brings in value while the former accounts for valuations. With recession overseas and receding political clout at home, it may just be the solution to what used to be "the ever reliable" Reliance.

People came together in various parts of the country to celebrate India's National Anthem 'Jana Gana Mana', sung for the first time, exactly a hundred years ago. A Brahma hymn, composed by Asia's first Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore it had its fair share of

controversies chosen as it was over Iqbal's "Sare Jahan Se Acchha" and Bankimchandra's "Vande Mataram" to be adopted as India's national anthem. Written under the title Bharat Vidhata, its five stanzas should ideally be sung in 52 seconds. Even the laziest of Indians can stand for that long! Each time it is sung it sends a shiver down your spine and a flutter up your heart – The only other place where people feel patriotic is a cricket field where another hundred was in the making – Sachin Tendulkar's hundredth international hundred . Thousands of fans came together at the Melbourne cricket ground hoping to see the little master strike it big. Sachin played a memorable knock but failed to consign it to memory. He got a hundred but in two innings!

Coming from different genres, all these "come togethers" are actually quite similar. They come after battle (In Sachin's case when it comes it shall be after many a battle). They impact the country as a whole. Steeped in controversies and divisiveness, each one of them is historic, momentous and once concluded, call for a celebration. They have an underlying positivity which comes after a length of negativity. Should we say – "All's well that ends well," or rather make it –"All's well that starts unwell". Having said that, my wish is for a good start to 2012 - Happy New Year!

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