

## Looking beyond the fog of Doom & Gloom

Dr R K Pachauri, December 26, 2011

I am reminded of a good friend from the World Bank with whom we used to organize an annual training programme at the Administrative Staff College of India in Hyderabad. His contention was that he had a difficult time convincing Indians that they were not doing as badly as they thought and an equally difficult time convincing Pakistanis that they were not doing as well as they thought. In this silly season of politics we in India have been overtaken by a state of despair and depression, which of course has only been multiplied by Anna Hazare's agitation in favour of a strong Lokpal Bill. Indeed, corruption is a dangerous cancer in the body politic of the Indian state, and everything possible has to be done to root out this chronic malady, but as someone who is very focused on multi-tasking, I find it difficult to accept that everything else must come to a halt or slow down till this problem is sorted out. Corruption will not vanish overnight, even while a major national effort is required to deal with it at every level of society.

Meanwhile, we have to build on our strengths, which are abundant. Despite a downturn in economic activity, India is still doing better than most countries with the exception of China. This in fact is a moment when we should focus on long-term challenges facing Indian society, because a less than adequate rate of economic growth gives us room for investments in those sectors which have major long-term benefits. These include public transport, energy efficient housing, improved sanitation and healthcare as well as all aspects of environmental protection. I do not find civil society taking a lead in some of these areas, and I believe it is for organizations like ours which are knowledge producers to provide compelling arguments in favour of some of these initiatives. Besides the introduction of modern information technology and smart solutions would in itself reduce the scope for corruption. During this holiday season as we transition from 2011 to a New Year, can we raise our banner to provide Indian society with directions towards some of these desirable outcomes?