

Davos 2006

INDIA EVERYWHERE



A MEETING GROUND OF INDUSTRY, CULTURE AND OTHER ENDEAVOURS: The World Economic Forum's annual meeting in Davos



The World Economic Forum's Annual Meeting in Davos is perhaps the most important business event in the world. In January 2006, India will be in focus when 3000 global leaders gather in Davos. Keeping in view the importance of Davos, a special campaign titled 'India Everywhere', being led by the Confederation of Indian Industry under the chairmanship of Nandan Nilekani, CEO, President and Managing Director, Infosys, will be unveiled at WEF's Annual Meeting. The campaign is specially designed to focus on the unique value proposition India offers to the world:

- ❖ **India:** The Visionary...Democracy
- ❖ **India:** The Investor's Dream... Free Market
- ❖ **Incredible India:** The Cultural Delight

In less than 2 decades, India has ascended the ladder of global competitiveness and improved its business environment for investors through a consistent focus on economic reforms. Even more creditable is the fact that this growth comes on the back of an ever-strengthening social infrastructure supported by a vibrant democracy.

For the first time ever, leaders across Indian industry and government have come in partnership to deliver one message to the global community - India is open and willing to engage. The delegation from India will include P Chidambaram, Minister of Finance; Kamal Nath, Minister of Commerce & Industry; Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission; Sheila Dikshit, Chief Minister

of Delhi; Vasundhara Raje, Chief Minister of Rajasthan and Oommen Chandy, Chief Minister of Kerala. This is truly symbolic of globalising India and the government's commitment to continued reform. It also reflects the government's thrust on increasing the flow of foreign investment into the country.

India, today, is a hotbed of entrepreneurial activity. Wealth creators and world-beaters are visible in sector after sector. Indeed, the partnership coalition supporting 'India Everywhere' reflects this trend representing a wide array of businesses, from manufacturing to services to agriculture, that are now globally competitive - Bajaj Auto, Bharat Forge, Bharti Enterprises, Deutsche Bank, Godrej, HCC, ICICI Bank, Infosys, ITC, Jet Airways, Jindal Steel, Jubilant Organosys, Mittal Steel, Ranbaxy, Reliance Industries, Sun Group, Taj Hotels, UB Group and Saregama.

The Ministry of Tourism and the India Brand Equity Foundation are also critical partners to the campaign. For the first time, there will be a consistent projection of Brand India spanning the spectrum from the Credible to the Incredible. Prominent outdoor advertising starting from Zurich Airport to Davos city will bring alive the strengths of the 'fastest growing free market democracy'. Several interactive events during the Annual Meeting will ensure Incredible India is visible to delegates every day. The main cultural event, the Grand Soiree, will be a uniquely Indian experience spanning the best in music, cuisine and arts. 'India Hour' at select hotel bars across Davos, every evening, will allow delegates to flavour Indian food, wine, beer, and cocktails.

The effort being invested is unprecedented. So what is the takeaway from this intense exercise to influence a paradigm shift in the way the world perceives India. Let me first try and set the context.

J K Rowling's Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince sold close to a quarter of a million legitimate copies in India on the first day of its release. Monsanto, the international biotech firm, is now marketing genetically altered seeds in India. These are not isolated events. In 2005, India's parliament enacted a new patent protection law significantly raising confidence that intellectual property will receive protection. Despite the change in leader-

ship of successive governments, India has moved unwaveringly in the direction of reform; the momentum is irreversible.

India's economy has more than doubled in real terms since reform began in 1991. Consumer demand, increasing three to five times faster than the economy, reflects the aspirations of a vibrant, growing and young middle class; India is home to 20 per cent of the world's population under the age of 24. With more than 200 television channels offering a window to the world, Indians are perhaps the most rapidly evolving consumers across the globe.

For far too long, perception has lagged reality. I am confident that 'Brand India' will undergo a dramatic shift in positioning after Davos. In many ways, the commitment demonstrated by government and industry, working in partnership, is representative of the changed reality in India. *The Economist's* 'World in 2006' predicts it will be a sweet year for India; the signs are already there. Microsoft announced plans to invest \$1.7 billion in India over the next four years. Earlier, Intel had unveiled plans to invest more than \$1 billion over five years. And in October Cisco Systems announced its own plans to invest \$1.1 billion in India. Conditions now exist in India for increased investment.

As global investors with significant exposure to India have found, predictability in a legitimate democratic environment can be a huge competitive advantage. With 15 years of sustained reforms, India's political economy has matured. This is the message that is now permeating the global community of investors and opinion leaders, and will be re-emphasised at Davos. As a result, I expect more visits to India by global decision-makers, greater investment, and increased partnerships. Davos will serve as a catalyst in solidifying India's position in 2006 as the most attractive investment destination among democracies.

In 2006, I encourage you to challenge your perceptions about India. On that note, I would like to extend warm wishes for a prosperous New Year, and hope that you will begin (or renew) a meaningful partnership with India this year.

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