

Top guns get down to tackling corruption

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Former CEC Lyngdoh, former DGP JF Ribeiro, former CJI RC Lahoti part of India Rejuvenation Initiative to pin down accountability

LUCKNOW, JUNE 24: Voting for action over debate, a task force of veterans, once occupying seniormost positions in their departments, has formed the India Rejuvenation Initiative (Bharat Punarothhan Abhiyan) to take on corruption. The group, with the support of a few senior government officials, has resolved to direct action to fix accountability and encourage probity.

The initiative comprises a who's who of names in public life — former Chief Justice of India Justice RC Lahoti, former Chief Election Commissioner JM Lyngdoh, former Comptroller and Auditor-General VK Shunglu, former Chairman of University Grants Commission Dr Hari Gautam, former Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal S Krishnaswamy and former Punjab Director-General of Police JF Ribeiro as its active members. Besides these active members, are several educationists, senior IAS and IPS officers who will offer their services as and when needed.

Lyngdoh said public life had deteriorated sharply and that the casualties were for all to see. "While meeting from time to time with like-minded people, we realised that there was a great need to systematically prevent corrupt and negative elements from occupying key positions. It was also felt that honest public servants should be supported strongly when they stand against misdeeds," the former CEC said over phone from his home in Rangareddy in Andhra Pradesh. "The corrupt officers are well known to their colleagues. Whenever we come to know that the government is going to appoint a wrong officer on a key post, the members will meet the authorities and request to reconsider the decision. We can also resort to other democratic means to curb such practices as and when required."

The group has resolved to adopt legal and democratic means to bring about changes and improve accountability in all matters of importance to the public and the nation. Vijay Shankar Pandey, a senior IAS officer of Uttar Pradesh, who is also a member of the IRI, told The Sunday Express that the group had decided to expose corruption, gross inaction and inefficiency in high places. "Wrong people can be identified very easily. The first step would be to write to the government much before a key position is assigned to them. Whenever an upright officer fights against their corrupt colleagues, the group will support them in their initiatives," he said.

The group is also against "VIP facilities" for the privileged few as public servants at the cost of the common man and law abiding citizens. The group will work to strengthen decentralised governance and has appealed to the people to mobilise public opinion and ensure that "political executives" and bureaucrats remain public servants and don't assume the role of "masters".

"I know it's a very difficult proposition to fight corruption but some beginning has to be made," said Ribeiro. He cited the instance of the Public Concern for Governance Trust which he, along with former Cabinet Secretary BG Verghese and Dr RK Anand, medical director of Jaslok Hospital, started in Maharashtra three years ago. "This group in Mumbai is moving courts, helping good officers and taking several initiatives. The need is for the civil society to join such efforts. There should be pressure groups in every state," Ribeiro said.

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