

## Press Release

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### **Think Tanks can Gear Policy Solutions: Rail Minister, Suresh Prabhu**

May 9-11, New Delhi: “Policy making is complex. Working without a policy or working with the wrong policy can both cause problems. The best choice is to have the right policy and allow the government to implement it. For this, we need to partner with multi-disciplinary experts; this is where think tanks come in,” said Railway Minister Suresh Prabhu.

He was speaking through a recorded video at the inauguration of a workshop on Policy Research, organised by the Center for Study of Science, Technology and Policy (CSTEP) and the Think Tank Initiative (TTI), at the India Habitat Centre in New Delhi, on May 09, 2017.

Noting how think tanks had benefited the government, businesses and development in the US, the Minister hoped that the same could be achieved in India as well.

“Think tanks will play a big role in helping the government leapfrog into solving new generation of issues such as water, climate change, strategic relations, environment, energy, defence, infrastructure, governance, agriculture, education and healthcare - all of them need thinking, ideas,” Mr Prabhu said.

Dr Anshu Bharadwaj, Executive Director, CSTEP pointed out that the growing number of foreign think tanks and multi-national consultancies in India indicates the existence of demand for high quality research.

“Policy makers need knowledge partners in the complex process of formulating policy; consulting agencies, academic institutions are all centres of excellence, along with individuals, civil servants who have accumulated expertise in different domains- they all contribute to the policy making process. But what makes a think tank truly exceptional is thinking beyond the horizon- finding a balance between what is important today against what will be important tomorrow,” he said.

Dr Ajay Mathur, Director General, TERI said that the goal of a think tank is to provide inputs for change. “Considering the time constraints of policy makers, the onus is on think tanks to raise the priority of issues by ensuring high quality analysis and through effective engagement,” he said.

A panel of experts including representatives from domestic philanthropy, international funding agency and Indian think tank discussed issues in ‘Generating High Quality Think Tanks in India’. The takeaway from the panel discussion was this: While most governments rely on think tanks owing to attributes such as lack of bias, these think tanks are usually embedded in ministries and the quality of research is poor. It is therefore, important to take the discussion table out of ministries to incorporate stand-alone think tanks.

This workshop was organised as a part of a capacity building project on policy research, funded by the International Development and Research Centre (IDRC), Canada. This project is 18



months long, including seven institutions, namely Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW), Centre for Policy Dialogue (Bangladesh), TERI, Shakti Sustainable Energy Foundation, Public Affairs Centre (PAC), ISET (Nepal) and CSTEP. The training modules of this project will focus on building capacity and skills in choosing appropriate research methodologies, using the most effective mode and format of communication and designing and leading effective policy research projects.

Note to the Editor:

Center for Study of Science, technology and Policy (CSTEP) is a not-for-profit research organisation established in June 2005 under Section 25 of The Companies Act, 1956. CSTEP was founded by Dr V.S. Arunachalam, former Scientific Advisor to India's Defence Minister. Dr Anshu Bharadwaj, a former member of the Indian Administrative Service, is the Executive Director of CSTEP. CSTEP has emerged to become one of India's well regarded think tanks. The Center has a multi-disciplinary research team of 85 (including 15 PhDs) in Engineering, Information Technology, Public Policy, Natural Sciences, Social Science, Economics and Management. CSTEP's approach to policy research is quantitative, objective and computation intensive. CSTEP has established robust research groups in several areas. In Energy Studies and Climate Policy, its focus is on technologies and policy options for low carbon and inclusive energy growth. The Urban Infrastructure group examines models and tools for transportation, sanitation and urban development in cities and towns that are scalable and sustainable. In Materials Research programme, the Center is studying advanced materials for energy storage and clean energy technologies.

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