



Public Affairs Forum of India

PAFI UPDATES

Advancing the practice of Public Affairs, Public Policy & Advocacy

JANUARY 2026 - MARCH 2026 | VOLUME 6

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ANNUAL LECTURE

THE EVOLUTION OF PUBLIC POLICY AND THE LESSONS DRAWN

TUESDAY, JANUARY 13, 2026



Chief Guest – **Dr Ajay Kumar**, Chairman, Union Public Service Commission (UPSC)

The session shed light on India's dynamic policy landscape, with Dr Kumar emphasising that robust policy frameworks and sustained government engagement with the private sector are pivotal to fostering innovation and building trust. He advocated for a mindset shift among policymakers in fast-evolving economies, urging them to act as partners and collaborators rather than gatekeepers. Trust-based governance.

PAFI ROUNDTABLES

INDIA'S READINESS FOR AGRIBUSINESS INNOVATION: REGULATORY LANDSCAPE AND GDP PROJECTIONS BY 2035

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 06, 2026

The discussion assessed India's agribusiness and innovation preparedness in alignment with the Viksit Bharat 2047 vision. Key emphases included regulatory reforms towards enablement, technology integration, and sustainable practices to transition from volume-led to value-driven growth, which can unlock substantial GDP contributions by 2035. Building trust between public and private stakeholders emerged as an important first step on this journey.



Guest: **Luis Alfredo Pérez**, Executive VP, Africa & Asia, YARA International;

Dr. Rajiv Kumar, Former Vice Chairman, NITI AAYOG, Chairman of Pahle India Foundation

STRATEGIC CONVERGENCE: ENGAGEMENT WITH THE INDO-PACIFIC AND AFRICA – THE ROLE OF PUBLIC POLICY AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11, 2026

The session provided perspectives on the evolving geopolitical landscape, emerging strategic interests in Africa, and the opportunities for India and Indian companies at this pivotal moment. As India's global engagement deepens, public policy and public affairs will play an increasingly important role in helping businesses understand geopolitical shifts, engage governments constructively, and build durable international partnerships.



Guest: **Ernie Bower**, Founder, President, and CEO of BowerGroupAsia

TRUST, TECHNOLOGY AND THE EVOLVING ROLE OF BUSINESS IN A CHANGING WORLD

THURSDAY, MARCH 19, 2026

This was a timely roundtable as trust is emerging as a core pillar of public policy—shaping how institutions engage, how markets function, and how societies navigate change. The session began with a presentation on the Edelman Trust Barometer 2026 by Richard Edelman, which examined trends shaping institutional trust in India.



Guest: **Richard Edelman**, President and Chief Executive Officer, Edelman

PAFI DIALOGUES

INDIAN ECONOMY: SNAPSHOT & EXPECTATIONS AHEAD

TUESDAY, JANUARY 13, 2026

The session provided multiple perspectives on the economy's trajectory and expectations for the upcoming budget. The discussion revolved around the outlook for the year ahead amid the latest geopolitical events and the analysis of core economic markers: GDP, employment and investment.



Panellists - **Ashok Malik**, Partner and Chair (India), The Asia Group ; **Prachi Mishra**, Professor of Economics, Director and Head, Isaac Center for Public Policy, Ashoka University; **Pranab Dhal Samanta**, Executive Editor (Politics), The Economic Times; **Rahul Ahluwalia**, Founding Director, Foundation for Economic Development

INSIGHTS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE UNION BUDGET

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2026

The session reflected on the need to invest in national capabilities and on the importance of building an import substitution framework that supports India's swadeshi movement. He also mentioned how corporates must actively take part in nation-building and the role that recent trade agreements will play in embedding India in the global supply chain.



Chief Guest - **Dr. V Anantha Nagewaran**, Chief Economic Advisor, Government of India

PANEL DISCUSSION ON THE UNION BUDGET 2026-27

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2026

The panel discussed how the Union Budget 2026-27 can support the private sector in driving investment, alongside the external challenges facing India and the need for continued industry reforms. The discussion explored India's economic outlook for the years ahead and what this budget means for businesses, including both its opportunities and gaps.



Panelists – **AK Bhattacharya**, Editorial Director, Business Standard; **Anil Padmanabhan**, Senior Journalist; **Prachi Mishra**, Professor of Economics, Director and Head, Isaac Center for Public Policy, Ashoka University; **Shubhashis Gangopadhyay**, Managing Trustee & Research Director, India Development Foundation (IDF)

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

DELEGATION VISIT TO ASHOKA UNIVERSITY

THURSDAY, MARCH 26, 2026

The visit offered participants a deeper understanding of Ashoka's pioneering approach to holistic liberal arts education—rooted in multidisciplinary learning, critical thinking, and impactful communication. Members also gained perspective on the university's diverse and inclusive academic environment, comprising students from across India and around the world, guided by distinguished faculty.

The visit also included a guided exploration of the Archives of Contemporary India, an exceptional repository within Ashoka's library that preserves and showcases the country's intellectual and cultural history through an extensive collection of archival material.



PANEL DISCUSSION: THE POLICY PIVOT

THURSDAY, MARCH 26, 2026

An afternoon of policy and dialogue at Ashoka University as Ajay Khanna, Co-Founder, PAFI, Anil Padmanabhan, Advisory Council, PAFI, Senior Journalist, and Rakesh Dubey, Managing Committee Member, PAFI, Director - Global Government Affairs, Carlyle Group, led a book discussion on PAFI's first publication, 'The Policy Pivot'. The discussion was moderated by Pramath Raj Sinha, Chairperson, Board of Trustees, Ashoka University.



ARTICLES BY PAFI

FROM DELHI TO DAVOS — A SPIRIT OF DIALOGUE

FRIDAY, JANUARY 09, 2026

Davos, a normally tranquil Alpine town, briefly becomes the epicentre of global decision-making each January as leaders, CEOs, investors and thinkers compress months of debate into an intense week. This year's theme, "A Spirit of Dialogue," shifts the focus from grand declarations to pragmatic listening on geopolitics, AI governance, climate execution and growth — and the conversations off the official programme often matter just as much. **Continue Reading.**

Written By: **Ajay Khanna**

Published By: The Economic Times

BUDGET 2026: A SMALL LINE ITEM THAT CAN HAVE A BIG IMPACT

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 28, 2026

The article proposes extending NIPUN to 2032 and broadening coverage to Grades 3–5, supported by an increase in annual allocations to strengthen teaching-learning materials, early childhood education, teacher capacity building, community mobilisation, and state-level innovation and data systems. It frames these targeted investments as essential, high-impact measures to secure foundational skills at scale and bolster India's long-term human capital and economic prospects. **Continue Reading.**

Written By: **Ajay Khanna and Shaveta Sharma Kukreja**

Published By: Hindustan Times

THE LONG GAME IN POLICY ENGAGEMENT

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2026

his article explains why seemingly slow decisions are frequently deliberate safeguards, how businesses should reframe engagement from short-term transactions to sustained, policy-savvy partnerships, and why boards must recognise public affairs as a strategic governance function. Read on for practical lessons on navigating timelines, translating corporate asks into public-policy logic, and building the credibility that moves systems. **Continue Reading.**

Written By: **Ajay Khanna**

Published By: Economic Times

TURNING AGRICULTURE INTO AN ENGINE OF PROSPERITY

MONDAY, MARCH 02, 2026

India must transform agriculture into a modern agri-business ecosystem that links farmers to markets, rewards quality, and drives value addition. Despite world-class produce at farm level, many growers cannot scale due to weak market linkages, low value addition, and fragmented policy implementation. Practical reforms—strengthening FPOs, better Centre-state coordination, transparent policy, export facilitation, upgraded post-harvest infrastructure, technology at scale, and long-term investment—can double the sector's size and make farming a competitive, aspirational livelihood. **Continue Reading.**

Written By: **Ajay Khanna**

Published By: Hindustan Times

OPINION | THE CREATIVE ECONOMY: WHERE IMAGINATION POWERS GROWTH

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11, 2026

The article examines the growing importance of the creative and experience economy as a key driver of economic growth, employment, and innovation. Drawing on reflections from a range of global and national forums, it highlights how culture, sport, tourism, and the arts are emerging as integral pillars of India's development and global aspirations. **Continue Reading.**

Written By: **Ajay Khanna**

Published By: moneycontrol

PUBLICATIONS

COMPETITION LAW NEWSLETTER

- Volume 32 of Competition Law Newsletter ([Link](#))
- Volume 33 of Competition Law Newsletter ([Link](#))
- Volume 34 of Competition Law Newsletter ([Link](#))



Public Affairs Forum of India

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NEW MEMBERS

JANUARY 2026 - MARCH 2026





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**PAFI
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