

IIT Bombay is organising an Institute Colloquium on Thursday, February 9, 2012. The details are as follows:



by

Professor André Béteille
Professor Emeritus
University of Delhi

Title : **'The Institutions of Democracy'**
Day & Date : Thursday, February 9, 2012
Time : 5.15 p.m.
Venue : F.C. Kohli Auditorium, KReSIT Building

All are invited.

Abstract: The two dangers by which democracy is threatened are anarchy and the abuse of power. In India, the development of relatively strong democratic institutions such as the Parliament, the Supreme Court and the political parties provide a bulwark against such threats. This talk will examine three institutions of Indian democracy – the legislature, the higher judiciary and political parties. There are many maladies from which each institution suffers today. In particular, there is enormous tension between two ideas of democracy – the constitutional which rests on the 'rule of law' and the populist, which relies on the 'rule of numbers'. While political parties and legislatures are often governed by considerations of numbers, the judiciary is concerned with the rule of law. The implications of this strife are examined. At the same time, civil society movements by themselves cannot be a substitute, and the rule of the military always menaces. While trust in Indian democratic institutions is currently at an all-time low, the talk explores their role in enabling us to manage our political affairs without falling into the predicaments faced by countries in our neighborhood and in west Asia.

About the Speaker:

Professor André Béteille is perhaps contemporary India's most well-known sociologist. He was born in Chandannagore close to Kolkata in West Bengal, and did his graduate and post-graduate studies in Anthropology from University of Calcutta. Subsequently, he joined University of Delhi as a lecturer from where he also received his doctorate in Sociology.

He had a long life association with the faculty of Sociology at the Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi, where he is currently Professor Emeritus of Sociology. Prof. Béteille had also taught at Oxford University, Cambridge University, the University of Chicago, and the London School of Economics.

The Government of India awarded the Padma Bhushan to Prof. Béteille in 2005 for his immense contribution in the field of sociological thought. He also served as a member of the National Knowledge Commission for some time. He was made National Research Professor in 2006. The Government of India appointed Prof. Béteille as Chairman of the Indian Council of Social Science Research for a three-year term, a responsibility which he discharged with distinction.

Prof. Béteille has written extensively on almost all the current issues of Indian society. He has a number of books, essays, and other publications in scholarly journals to his credit. His writings look at the contradictions between the idea of equality and the practice of inequality, caste hierarchies, and making basic rights available to all, irrespective of individual merit and need, the idea of institutions and of democracy.

Some of the important books he authored are: *Universities at the Crossroads*, *Marxism and Class Analysis*, *Ideology and Social Science*, *Sociology: Essays on Approach and Method*, *Chronicles of Our Time*, *Caste, Class and Power: Changing Patterns of Stratification in Tanjore Village*, *Antimonies of Society: Essays on Ideologies and Institutions*, *Anti-Utopia: Essential Writings of Prof. André Béteille*, among many others.