

# India really needs basic education

Wu Jiayin

AS is widely acknowledged, India, despite its impressive development in high-paying, high-tech industry in recent years, is lagging somewhat behind China in its overall economic growth.

Many people attribute this to the poor infrastructure in India. Indeed, China has a far greater advantage over India in terms of the length of highways, the length of paved roads, the number of airports as well as high-rise buildings, and so on.

However, as Huang Yasheng points out in his speech held by Three Talk at Three on the Bund, poor infrastructure is actually not so big a hindrance

for the development of India as many suppose it to be. Huang is associate professor of international management, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Sloan School of Management.

The best evidence is that when China began to achieve rapid economic growth in 1980s, its infrastructure was still quite poor. And it was the strong economic growth that enabled China to support its large investments in the improvement of its infrastructure later, but not vice versa.

Another example is in Japan in the 1950s when infrastructure was also a big problem for the country. Once an executive of Toyota was asked how they could ship out their goods to

customers and get supply from their suppliers on a timely basis since they had such poor infrastructure.

The Japanese executive answered that although the infrastructure was poor and the traffic was slow, it was predictably slow. And as long as it was predictable, they could control the timing without much difficulty.

"So infrastructure is not a binding constraint on India's economy in the way that many people assume it to be," says Huang.

What India is actually lagging far behind China in, according to Huang, is its basic education.

"The true miracle with China in 1980s is that the country decided to invest mas-

sively in basic education and health care, especially in rural areas."

But "India's basic education is pathetic, especially when it comes to the young children, young girls," in the words of Vishakha Desai, president and CEO of the Asia Society.

Although in India, basic education is free to everyone, teachers often just don't show up.

And it is ridiculous that students come to school simply for lunch, but not for education.

A country with limited resources should invest those resources in the neediest parts. For India, rather than having "infrastructure obsession," it is more advisable to invest in universalizing its basic education and not just on paper.

Source: Shanghai Daily

美国亚洲协会会长丁嘉文:

## 印度不应盲目加大基础设施投资

本报记者 沈秉贝 发自上海

印度财政部长奇丹巴兰姆24日表示,如果印度希望保持目前的增长水平,制造业和服务业须继续以两位数的速度增长。美国亚洲协会会长丁嘉文(Vishakha N. Desai)同日在上海对《第一财经日报》称,印度首先要加大投资的是制造业。

近年来,印度经济一直以6%-8%的高速度增长,其2006财年的增速达到9.2%。在这种崛起的光环下,众多去印度投资的跨国公司发现,印度的基础设施十多年来改进甚微。

不久前,印度政府宣布将在7年内拨出近300亿美元改造63个二线城市的基础设施。但丁嘉文提醒说,印度确实需要对很多基础设施进行改造,但这不是当下最迫切的。

丁嘉文认为,醉心于投资基

础设施的背后,往往是很多其他领域投资的缺失,比如教育、人力资源等,“而且值得注意的是,印度炫目的GDP增长数字背后是超过9%的失业率。印度颇为自豪的信息产业仅有100万名就业者,相对于其11亿的总人口实在是杯水车薪。”

所以,丁嘉文称,印度首先要投资的应该是制造业,这不仅能缩短贫富差距,更重要的是能扩大就业。

摩根士丹利的数据显示,2003年,中国在基础设施方面的投入是印度的7倍,其占GDP的比例是印度的3倍——当年中国的投入约合1500亿美元(占GDP的10.6%),而印度为210亿美元(占GDP的3.5%)。由于基础设施原因,在印度出口商品的平均时间要比中国多16天。

Source: CBN