

Speech by The President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee on the occasion of The National Technology Day

Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi : 11.05.2013

It is indeed a privilege for me to be present here along with you to participate in the National Technology Day 2013 function. This Day symbolizes the importance the Government attaches to the development of the country's technological capabilities.

The journey of India's emergence as a major technological power has been challenging. I take this opportunity to extend my greetings and gratitude to our scientists, engineers and technologists whose sincere endeavour, untiring commitment and focused vision helped us achieve the status of Nation with high technological capability despite many odds.

Globalization has rewritten the rules of business. Only the most competitive and resilient companies can expect to survive in the fiercely global market. We must make sure we have the capacity to compete, to innovate and to deliver on time. If our systems are strong and robust, the world will respect us and be willing to work with us. In this context, the theme of the National Technology Day this year, "Innovation - Making a Difference", is timely and appropriate.

Innovation is increasingly recognized as the currency of the future. It lends a competitive edge to business, and provides solution for effective governance. It is therefore not surprising that governments around the world are making a concerted effort to encourage innovation. The decade 2010-20 has been declared in India as the decade of innovation. We have formulated the Science, Technology and Innovation Policy this year, aimed at an innovation-led development. This policy calls for an eco-system for innovation activity to thrive in our country. It portrays a need to encourage and recognize innovators, including grass root innovators who by their sheer brilliance have added value to processes to the benefit of the common man.

This policy also addresses the need to right-size our research and development system. India's innovation bottom line is not very encouraging as the number of patent applications filed annually in leading countries like US and China is roughly 12 times more than that of India. India spends only 0.9 per cent of GDP on research and development, which is much below that of China, UK and Israel. We should step up our expenditure on research to pursue innovation in a big way. The private sector, which contributes one-fourth of our country's expenditure on research and development, should also increase their share of spending to levels prevalent in countries such as Japan, US and South Korea.

The future prosperity of India in the new knowledge economy will increasingly depend on its ability to generate new ideas, processes and solutions. The process of innovation shall convert knowledge into social good and economic wealth. In a globally competitive world, India has to unleash its innovation potential to increase capacity, productivity, efficiency and inclusive

growth. The capacity of innovation of India and its people has to become a part and parcel of India's growth and development process. And for it to happen, the spirit of innovation has to permeate all sectors of the economy from universities, businesses and government, to people at all levels.

India today has a number of strengths. With a strong research and development base and academic talent, it has the potential to become a leading innovation player in certain key economic sectors such as biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, automotive components, information technology, software, and IT-enabled services. However, India has around 300 million of its citizens living below the poverty line. Huge disparities exist in terms of access to development initiatives. And this paradox makes India a place of numerous opportunities as well as place of numerous problems. I believe that India can meet the challenges of sustainable inclusive growth by using innovation and technology as key drivers and enablers of growth.

The needs and requirements of our democratic polity are different from the other nations. Our priorities for innovation should be conditioned by our socio-economic realities. The Indian innovation strategy, therefore, has to be different. It should focus on generating ideas that promote inclusive growth and benefit people at the bottom of the socio-economic pyramid. To conceive a sustainable growth strategy, we must focus on inclusive innovation.

We have taken steps to create an innovation eco-system. To formulate innovation strategies and support the innovation 'movement' in the country, we have an institutional framework comprising the National Innovation Council, the State Innovation Councils and Sectoral Innovation Councils. A Rs. 5,000 crore Inclusive Innovation Fund, with public and private sector participation, has been envisaged. It will encourage efforts to design solutions that create livelihood opportunities and skill development for the poor. Twenty innovation clusters are being set up in the country to take the inclusive innovation agenda forward. I am told that an India Innovation web portal is being created to serve as depository of innovations and platform for exchange of ideas.

A strong eco-system for supporting innovation activity will require enthusiastic support and committed participation of all stakeholders. The public sector, private sector, education sector, and our citizens at large must be willing contributors to such efforts. The efforts do not necessarily require any grand platform and can begin from home, school, college, university and work place. It is important to ignite the young minds with the spirit of innovation. We must encourage them to pursue their curiosity and creativity. We must help them discover the fascination of creating something new.

In the Conference of Vice Chancellors of Central Universities held this year, a recommendation was made to set up Innovators Clubs in the Central Universities to facilitate interaction between the teaching and student communities and at the same time grassroots innovators living around the campus. Yesterday, I had the privilege to open the first such club at the Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University (BBAU). I was happy to see the innovations that have been made by the young people. I am confident that this initiative taken by BBAU at Lucknow will soon reach all the 40 Central Universities.

On National Technology Day, I urge all the citizens to take a pledge to make innovation a way of life.

I would like to conclude by saying that innovation in thought, innovation in effort and an all-pervasive innovative spirit can maintain our position and status in the fast changing world, where technological obsolescence is the order of the day. I am confident that our countrymen will rise to the occasion, to take up this challenge and make India a nation with high technological capabilities.