

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE,
WHILE RECEIVING THE NATIONAL INNOVATION COUNCIL'S REPORT
TO THE PEOPLE 2013**

Rashtrapati Bhavan : 19-11-2013

Shri Jairam Ramesh, Minister of Rural Development,
Dr. Sam Pitroda, Chairman, National Innovation Council,
Delegates of Third Global Innovation Round Table,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to receive the third annual 'Report to the People' of the National Innovation Council. The Council was constituted by the Prime Minister to realise the vision of the Government of making this decade as India's 'Decade of Innovation'. Over the last three years, the Council has been undertaking various initiatives towards creating a Roadmap for Innovation in the country. At the outset, I would like to congratulate Dr. Sam Pitroda, Chairman, National Innovation Council and his team for taking innovative steps for realization of the vision of the Government.

2. Knowledge and Innovation are the twin pillars around which nations will compete, grow and prosper in the 21st Century. Strengthening the country's knowledge and innovation ecosystem is critical to ensure a brighter future for our young and to enhance competitive advantage in an increasingly globalised world. In the Indian context innovation is especially critical, not only for growth and development, but, because, we have a huge reservoir of unmet needs in critical

areas of economy such as health, education, energy, housing and agriculture. These needs have not been met through conventional approaches. Applying the lens of innovation to these critical-needs sectors can not only generate new solutions to solve old problems, but also enable the development process to become more inclusive by serving a large section of underserved populations at the bottom of economic pyramid.

3. India's biggest strength in the coming years is going to be her demographic dividend. More than fifty percent of our population is under 25 years and soon one fifth of the world's working age population will be in our country. Innovation is thus critical to address the needs of our younger generation in a sustainable manner and for creating new opportunities for them. Innovating in the areas of education, skill development, and entrepreneurship can enable our youth to emerge as the work force not only for India, but also for the world, as working age populations decline globally.

4. Governments around the world are making concerted efforts to encourage innovation. India, too, dedicated 2010-20 as a decade of innovation. Government of India has announced a Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) Policy for innovation-led development. The success of this policy will require creation of an eco-system, collaboration and adoption of best global practices for innovation activities to thrive. I am happy that National Innovation Council has been working through international collaborations by inviting the top brains around the globe for Global Innovation Round Table. The eco-system for innovation based on access, equity and excellence will ensure that innovation becomes a way of life in this country.

5. Today, we are in the midst of exciting times as we have access to new tools, technology and connectivity and these platforms can ignite innovation like never before.

These new tools and platforms will have a massive impact on organisational structures, delivery models and business processes, where innovation will be critical. We as a nation must be ready for this new wave of innovations.

6. All our efforts should focus on inclusive growth, affordability, scalability and sustainability. Our pervasive model of innovation 'of the people, by the people and for the people' should truly empower the nation and in the process lead to creation of wealth for the stakeholders. This Indian approach of inclusive innovation can also emerge as a model for sustainable development for the world to emulate.

7. The Council is in the final stages of launching the India Inclusive Innovation Fund (IIIF), in collaboration with the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises. This fund is the first of its kind in the world, that will back creative new solutions to developmental challenges - projects that improve quality of life for the poor. Many innovative ideas suffer due to lack of funding options. This fund, through appropriate structure, will ensure that this does not happen in India any more.

8. India has an estimated 5,000 small and medium scale regional industry clusters and 85,000 MSME units which are employing over 10 lakh people. These units are not functioning at the optimal level. I am told that the National Innovation Council has been working towards the creation of an ecosystem for seeding

innovations in these small and medium enterprises, by facilitating the creation of Innovation Clusters to drive job creation and productivity.

9. I am happy to learn that National Innovation Council has piloted the Innovation Cluster models in 7 Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) clusters in the past 24 months. By successfully demonstrating 10 new products, 12 new processes and 2 new centres, the MSME cluster pilots have opened the doors for positive impact in these units benefitting over a million employees. I am happy to note that this pilot initiative was through minimal incremental investments made by the stakeholders. This initiative opens up a new window of opportunity for Small and Medium Enterprises to compete and grow using the low cost solutions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

10. The National Innovation Council has suggested the creation of a Meta University riding on National Knowledge Network, which will reinterpret the concept of a university as not just a traditional, physical space of learning, but as a repository of knowledge and information that can be delivered in multiple ways, and can be accessed from anywhere and anytime. This would offer a collaborative and multi-disciplinary learning platform, where students enrolled in a primary college/university will be able to take courses available in other universities and colleges.

11. The Institutions of repute in the country have been given a platform to identify their strengths and weaknesses and supplement the academic and infrastructure weakness by using this innovative concept. It may address the core concern of Indian higher education system which is facing shortage of quality manpower and infrastructure to deliver the quality education.

12. The Council has launched the '**TOD FOD JOD**' (TFJ) initiative which aims to provide a hands-on learning environment, where students can de-construct, re-construct or re-purpose everyday objects that they see or use. This initiative is an exciting step in fostering creative thinking and analytical skills amongst the students.

13. The Father of our Nation, Mahatma Gandhi had said, "India lives in its villages." He also advocated for 'village swaraj'. We have been making attempts through conventional means to improve the lives of people living in villages. In spite of our best efforts, we are still away from our goal. Government has launched an ambitious programme to connect two lakh fifty thousand Panchayats in the country through optic fibre based broadband. The empowerment of people through innovative ICT applications will transform the way people live, think, work and take decisions in villages. This will be closer to the dreams of Mahatma Gandhi, who saw villages as nerve centres of India.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

14. India is a developing country and we have several milestones to achieve before we attain the status of a developed nation. The only way we can leapfrog to a status of a developed nation is by using innovation as a ladder. I urge each and every citizen of this country to be a part of the innovation movement which has started in this country. I also urge the universities, colleges and schools to be in the forefront of these innovation initiatives and contribute in all possible manners in realizing our goal of inclusive development and growth.

15. I wish Dr. Sam Pitroda and his team at the National Innovation Council great success in their pioneering initiatives and remain hopeful that the work of the Council will make a significant impact in transforming the country into an 'Innovation Nation'.

Jai Hind.