

**SPEECH OF SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE,
FORMER PRESIDENT OF INDIA ON THE
OCCASION OF THE 14TH BML MUNJAL AWARDS**

I am happy to be here once again on the occasion of the Annual BML Munjal Awards Ceremony for 'Business Excellence through Learning & Development'. At the outset, I wish to congratulate Shri Sunil Kant Munjal and his entire team for recognizing organizations who have increasingly focused on capability building through Learning & Development in their areas of the businesses.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies & Gentlemen,

2. As we know, The BML Munjal Awards are named after Padma Bhushan Shri Brijmohan Lall Munjal, one of the most respected industrialists of our nation and a man who built Hero Group into the world's largest cycle-maker and Hero Motocorp into the world's largest two-wheeler manufacturer (by volume). I have had the occasion to meet Munjalji several times. The manner in which he lived his life, and built his business along with social enterprises, holds a great lesson for those who are in public life as well as in business. I am delighted to see that the legacy he created, along with his brothers, is being continued and strengthened by the next generation of the Munjal family.

3. These days, making it through the day becomes the goal of most employees, along with taking

home a salary. Unfortunately, both employees and organizations suffer when employee goals fail to evolve beyond those two factors. We have seen this happen in government, and we have also seen this happening in large organizations. However, this is now changing. Jobs are no longer guaranteed. Skills are no longer guaranteed. The emergence of technology, globalization and the service sector has dramatically influenced how the workplace functions, how the workplace thinks and how the workplace delivers; indeed, it has also changed the way governments function, how they think and how they deliver.

4. It is a fact, the automobile industry is facing a major slowdown worldwide. In the case of our country, the automotive industry was one of the fastest growing industries as well as an important driver of the manufacturing sector, contributing around 7% to India's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2018. A slump, therefore, slows not only this industry but other related sectors like tyre, steel and steering manufacturers, due to the cascading effect, and not to forget, the employment of people working in these areas.

5. It is estimated, according to various news reports, that automakers, auto part manufacturers, and dealers taken together have laid off about 3,50,000 workers in the last three months. Thus,

apart from the current downturn affecting mainly the temporary and casual workforce, technological changes like automation has also necessitated restructuring, re-skilling, and manpower adjustments. It is imperative that, given the adverse circumstances, the industry transforms with minimal disruptions by streamlining the automotive businesses, rather than being dependent solely on Government stimulus packages. I notice that a number of captains of this business are present here this evening.

This day and age demands innovative processes, especially when we are aware that there is a policy push towards a transition to electric

vehicles. I exhort each one of you, to address the related problem of acquiring and developing new skill sets for those manning the novel methods along with redeployment or creation of new earning opportunities for the replaced workforce.

6. In these troubled times, those who are entering the workforce or those who are looking to strengthen their careers must be self-evaluating, self-developing and emotionally self-sustaining. Indeed, in times of artificial intelligence and automation, the threat of job loss and redundancy anyways becomes more apparent. In the new world that is evolving, the quality of learning and development that one receives—plays a very important part in shaping or breaking the career of a young man or a woman. When companies strategically invest in their people, they can attract and keep all the best candidates. They are

also able to build a strong work culture, where there is a space for innovation and encouragement to find creative solutions. Having said that, it is also expected of the Government to indulge the industry by hand holding, if not by handing out doles.

7. The 14th BML Munjal Awards for 'Business Excellence through Learning & Development' could not have been at a more opportune time, for when companies strategically invest in their people, they can attract and keep all the best candidates as well as build a strong work culture, where there is a space for innovation and encouragement to find creative solutions. I extend my congratulations to not just the winners but all participating organizations for demonstrating business excellence through

innovations in learning & development along with consistent training, learning & development as a source of competitive advantage.

8. These awards today, form a part of the Mindmine Summit, I am told. The chosen theme of this year's Summit was – 'One Nation, Multiple Destinies.' We hear many conversations today that we are getting stronger as a nation, and we are becoming one nation. This is true, but it is also true that we live in a large and diverse country, with many communities, cultures and languages. We work and interact with so many kinds of people. In our cities, people from all over the country come to work, leading to diverse workplaces.

9. Learning from others around us is the greatest possible learning. I believe that learning is a life-long process and it can come from anywhere. Despite the buzz around the concept of a 'learning organization', I'm struck by how only a few people seem to have embraced the idea of learning from their peers. I think the single most important difference between the corporation of the 20th century and the one of the 21st century lies in the approach, attitude and treatment of human resources. Organizations must invest at all levels of skill development, and not just at the top end.

10. At a broader policy level, we also need to appreciate that people are India's biggest strength and this demographic advantage can

turn into a disadvantage without skilling and training across levels, and for this, vocational education that provides employability as per the requirements of the employers, must be given a pre-eminent place in the education ecosystem of the country. It is the responsibility of state governments – through partnerships, if necessary --to promote the value and importance of top-quality vocational education, and developing this form of education as an alternative to a degree-based education. Korea and Germany have created world-class workforces by giving their population the best vocational education; there is no reason why India cannot do the same.

11. Also, skill development and investment climate go hand in hand. To turn their states into magnets of skill development, it is the

responsibility of state leaderships to act as facilitators and make their states conducive for investors.

12. At the end, I once again congratulate the winners of this year's awards. For the others who were in contention, but have not won, my commendations to them as well. I am sure this experience will spur them on in the future.

Thank You

Jai Hind