

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE**  
**AT THE PRESENTATION OF NINTH BIENNIAL GRASSROOTS**  
**INNOVATION AWARDS**

Ceremonial Hall, RBCC: Mar 4, 2017

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1. At the very outset, I would like to welcome guests from India and abroad for participating in the presentation of the ninth national biennial award for grassroots innovations and outstanding traditional knowledge. At the outset, let me congratulate the award winners for their contribution in the sphere of innovation. Behind their beaming faces, which I can see, lie their hard work and perseverance. I am told that more than 33,000 entries were received out of which 32 innovators have been chosen and bestowed with national and state awards today.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

2. Innovation has reached centre-stage in policy-making in the science and technology domain. This has strengthened the resolve of the government to encourage innovation and innovation-based enterprises. At the same time, it has helped in unlocking the latent creative energy of our billion plus people. I take this opportunity to applaud the efforts of the National Innovation Foundation. It has been working diligently in stimulating the creativity and innovativeness at the grassroots level all over the country.
3. As we recognize the unsung heroes of our society today, we also ought to take a pledge to further enrich the eco-system around inclusive innovations. We need all public and private systems around grassroots innovations to become empathetic enablers. And we need to do it, not just for India, but for the whole world. I am happy that Director General of World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), Dr. Francis Gurry, is here with us today. I am sure he will also see how important it is to give due weightage to the source of creativity and innovation emanating at the grassroots. It can generate jobs and livelihood for masses all around the world.

Distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen:

4. The global economy continues to remain weak. The industrial growth is becoming more jobless in nature, even in emerging economies. In such a scenario, the Gandhian model of decentralized, distributed and diversified innovation-based enterprises is perhaps the best way forward to solve the problems. Gandhiji had always wanted to blend modern science and

technology with community knowledge and institutions. His message has become extremely relevant in today's context.

5. National Innovation Foundation has created within the last decade and a half several important conceptual and policy milestones. I have witnessed the creativity of children, school and college students, and grassroots innovators. However, the emergence of an inclusive innovation eco-system uniquely suited to India requires several more steps than what has already been taken by the government and civil society.

Dear Friends:

6. Let me share some of the initiatives at Rashtrapati Bhavan, which are aimed at promoting and augmenting the eco-system for grassroots innovations. To create a feeling of celebration of grassroots and inclusive innovations in the country, the earlier exhibition of innovation has become a week-long Festival of Innovation. The roundtables on inclusive innovations, public service delivery and financing of innovations have seen enthusiastic participation of distinguished experts with many concrete deliverables having emerged from these sessions.
7. The Visitor's Awards for best university, researcher and innovator from central universities was instituted in 2014. These awards provide a link between innovation movement at grassroots level with the institutions of higher education. Excellence is indivisible. A healthy combination of excellence and relevance at all levels of society particularly among academic institutions is called for. The Visitor's Awards are a testimony to that.

Ladies and gentlemen:

8. The institutions of higher learning need to have an interface with grassroots innovators. The academia has to closely study and understand how creative minds among the common man can solve local problems without much help from outside. If they can get support from formal institutions, they can do much more. I called upon the higher educational institutions to organize exhibition of grassroots innovation, invite innovators to the classroom and set up innovation clubs. I am told that ninety representatives from such clubs in different institutions will be meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> March.
9. The innovation clubs encourage students to search, spread and celebrate innovations and sense the unmet social needs. If the inventory of unmet social and technological needs of 6.5 lakh villages and small towns of India can act as a stimulus for research and project work, nothing can stop India

from becoming a world leader in inclusive innovations. Efforts in this direction will have to be complemented by deeper processes, which charge the key stakeholders with missionary zeal to make a difference.

Distinguished participants, dear friends:

10. To speak of myself, I began my career as a teacher first. Hence, I fully understand the role a teacher plays in the life of students. Teachers by their own conduct and example can mould students into responsible human being; sensitive to the problems of society and caring enough to contribute towards their alleviation. Such inspired teachers, who can shape students into creative and innovative individuals, should be encouraged. I have had the privilege to host inspired teachers from central universities and other institutions at Rashtrapati Bhavan under a special initiative called in-residence programme. Such teachers feel motivated to rededicate themselves to the cause of inclusion, excellence and social relevance.
  11. Creative persons like artists, writers and innovation scholars, too, have stayed in-residence at Rashtrapati Bhavan. They have been mentored by scientists, technical experts and policy makers to realize the full depth of their innovations. I will be meeting the fourth batch of these scholars as they start their two-week in-residence programme today. A message that this country cares about grassroots innovations and other creative pursuits should reach everyone.
- Ladies and gentlemen:
12. It is important to imbibe in children a spirit of scientific inquiry. We must encourage them to pursue their curiosity and creativity. We must help them discover the fascination of creating something new. Thousands of visitors including children come to see Rashtrapati Bhavan regularly. A permanent exhibition of inclusive innovations has been installed to highlight cultural creativity and educational, institutional and technological innovations scouted from all over the country. I am sure that this exhibition will inspire every visitor to experiment and innovate.
  13. India is poised to take the fruits of development through initiatives like *Start-up India*, *Digital India* and *Swachh India* to all corners of the country. Ideas of innovators will make a true difference only if all of us in different roles and institutions join hands in creating *samvedan-sheelta* and *srijan-sheelta* (compassion and creativity) in the country. With these few words, I conclude. Let me once again congratulate all the award winners. Let the force of creativity and ingenuity be with you always!

Thank you.  
Jai Hind.

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