

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB
MUKHERJEE AT THE SPECIAL PLENARY SESSION AT SUMMIT
ON “MENTORING GRASSROOTS ENTREPRENEURS IN SMART
GRAMS FOR INCLUSIVE GROWTH”**

AUDITORIUM, RBCC: 5th APRIL, 2017

A very good evening!

It is a privilege for me to be present amidst you to welcome you all to Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Dear Friends,

I am very happy to be amidst the entrepreneurs, present and future, from the SMARTGRAMS and Gurugram, who have chosen to travel with us the distance from a Village to SMARTGRAM. It warms my heart to see the idea of SMARTGRAM which originated from our experience of developing President's Estate into a Smart Township take wings with its successful implementation, within a short span of 8 months, in 5 selected villages of Haryana. I have always held that India will grow when whole of India grows. With 68 percent of our population still living in villages in the rural areas, smart development can take place only if villages and villagers become smart. Last year, in the month of May the President's Estate became a Smart Township. I was convinced that the initiative undertaken in the President's Estate can, with some experimentation, be extended to our villages. Central to my thought process was Mahatma Gandhi's vision of a self-reliant village. Our new Gandhian model is an effort

to develop a policy paradigm based on convergence of resources of both the Central and State governments, PRIs, Public and Private sector organizations, NGOs and enlightened citizens to make our villages economically vibrant, socially harmonious and to the extent possible, self-reliant.

Friends,

For us, a smart village is essentially 3 'H'- Humane, Hi-tech and Happy which ensures an enhanced quality of life that contributes to the harmony, happiness and well-being of our village dwellers. It must have the required basic physical and social infrastructure with a layer of smart information and communication embedded in the infrastructure to improve governance and delivery of services, livelihood and economic opportunities. I am grateful to the government of Haryana for their immediate acceptance and proactive support to our SMARTGRAM project. Under this Initiative, we are working in the fields of Infrastructure Development, Health and Wellness, Education, Agriculture, Energy and Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and have so far made substantial progress. The five villages today have 24X7 electricity, Common Service Centers, Training Centers and medical clinics and wellness centres. So far, more than 30 organizations have joined the SMARTGRAM consortium. These include, government organizations, public, private and philanthropic organizations, academic institutions and of course the villagers themselves. Involvement of so many actors from various fields has led to development of a model where the schemes of the Central Government, State Government, efforts of academic institutions, Panchayati Raj Institutions and private Individuals have

converged to bring synergy in the development of rural areas. I thank all the organizations and Institutions partnering with us for their support. Encouraged by our early successes, we have expanded the project from 5 to 50 villages in the region in the month of February this year. I am confident of expanding this project to 100 villages by the end of May 2017.

Dear Friends,

Of the various projects and programs currently underway in the SMARTGRAM villages, Skill training being imparted to the youth and women of the villages and development of their entrepreneurial potential has had the most useful impact. I must appreciate the work being done by NSDC and NIFTEM in the field of Skill development. I am told that close to 1200 persons have been trained in close to 15 trades out of which a large number have got placement too. Some of the entrepreneurs trained and supported by NIFTEM have started their own enterprises and many more are in the process of doing so. I wish all of them great success in their future endeavours.

A potential entrepreneur from village needs support in the form of skills training, mentoring and financing of the project. I am happy that Bhartiya Yuva Shakti Trust, chaired by Shri Rahul Bajaj has partnered our SMARTGRAM project and has agreed to provide mentoring support to the potential entrepreneurs. A Mentor has to handhold the budding entrepreneur at almost each step and give him the confidence to stand on his own. We must aim to develop at least 5 entrepreneurs from each village who will create jobs for others in the vicinity. Migration of village youth to the cities can be

tackled by creating job opportunities in the villages through enterprises based on village resources, agriculture and farm based products. Organization of Business Idea Contest in the SMARTGRAMs and in Gurgaon was a novel idea. I congratulate the winners of the contest and wish them all the best for their journey to become successful entrepreneurs.

Dear Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I always believe that if India has to become a great economic power, it has to invest heavily in innovation and entrepreneurship. My experience tells me that every Indian mind is an innovative mind. It has the potential to come up with the solution to our problems. We need people to turn problems into opportunities and work at expanding the scale of operation. Today, we have government programs like Start-up India, Stand-Up India and Atal Innovation Mission to support the entrepreneurs in generation of Ideas, its incubation and the financing of the start ups. In the recent past we have seen a large number of successful startups from India that have made name in the world. There are many more that have done well in various fields like, agriculture, health care, education, skills. Even if some of them fail, they still show us the way to success.

Today, roughly, 12 million youth enter into the labour market every year. Population below the age of 35 years is about 65%. The Indian innovation strategy has to focus on generating ideas that promote inclusive growth and benefit those who are at the bottom of the socio-economic pyramid. Imparting skill and providing gainful employment is essential for meeting the demographic challenge and

for harnessing the enthusiasm, energy and ambition of our youth to contribute to economic development. India has a huge domestic market and this provides an advantage for the enterprises that use local material and technologies to produce low cost but good quality products for the market.

Dear Friends,

On the occasion of the Silver Jubilee celebrations of BYST, I compliment its leadership for their Initiatives and wish them success in all their future endeavors. Today, our heroes from the SMARTGRAMs of Haryana, other successful entrepreneurs from all over the country, industry mentors and other champions of the entrepreneurial eco-system have gathered here in a true 'meeting of the minds'. Let our interactions be brilliant and meaningful. Let us all take this mentoring movement for entrepreneurship development forward. Let us all contribute to it through a true spirit of service to this great nation.

Thank you

Jai Hind