

Speech by the President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee at the Presentation of National Geoscience Awards 2016

Auditorium, RBCC: April 12, 2017

1. It is indeed a privilege for to be amidst you today on the happy occasion when we are recognizing the hard work and dedication of winners of the National Geoscience Awards for the year 2016.
2. India has a rich tradition of geo-scientific research, both at the institutional and at the academic levels. The National Geoscience Awards, instituted by the Ministry of Mines, is a laudable initiative to honour the contributions and years of dedicated work of geo-scientists. Over the last five decades, these Awards have emerged as the most coveted recognition in the field of geosciences. They have encouraged scientists to achieve higher levels of excellence.
3. It is heartening to find that the recipients of this year's Awards represent a wide spectrum of geo-scientific institutions of the country. It is a pointer to the fact that geoscience today is being pursued with earnest fervour and commitment across the nation. The high standards of research, I hope, will be carried forward by the future generation of scientists.
Ladies and Gentlemen:
4. India today is acclaimed as the fastest growing amongst the major economies of the world. The rapid strides taken by our nation has increased the expectations for enhanced growth and development. In this context, the mining and mineral sector has huge potential as one of the most promising contributors in the continued growth of the country.
5. Significant steps have been taken to ensure the growth of the mining sector. The government has introduced major reforms through the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Act 2015. They are aimed at ensuring larger benefits for the states with transparency being the core objective. A National Mineral Exploration Trust has been established by the Ministry to promote mineral exploration through wider participation of exploration agencies.
Ladies and Gentlemen:
6. Exploitation of the available natural resources for centuries has left an irreversible imprint on our environment. Mahatma Gandhi once observed and I quote: "*There is a sufficiency in the world for man's need but not for man's greed*" (unquote). We have to ensure that our approaches are sustainable. We have to nurture with care our Mother Earth as she has been supporting life on earth through the geologic ages.
7. An increasing population and striving for a higher standard of living has put an all-time high demand for natural energy resources. With this, we have reached a critical threshold of environmental vulnerability. In a scenario such as this, geo-scientists have a central role to play. Geoscientists have developed for themselves a unique perspective about the structure and the evolution of earth through the geological ages. They have deep knowledge of the processes that formed the rivers, oceans, mountains and other diverse landforms. Geo-scientists can help provide solutions for maintaining growth without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own requirements.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

8. Geoscience, with its broad understanding of landscape evolution and earth processes, is most suitably placed to contribute to societal goods. This discipline carries a wide import in the mitigation of natural and man-made hazards; provision of solutions to the impacts of climate change, and the management of fast depleting water resources. Today, the globe is in need of geoscientists much more than before.
9. It is incumbent on nations the world over to move in the path of sustainable growth. In this model, growth and development depends not only on the availability of mineral resources but also on their judicious exploitation. The near surface mineral deposits are depleting very fast. Hence, the geo-scientific community has to step up to meet the demand for future resources by finding deeper sources for the minerals we require. Special emphasis also has to be given for discovery of strategic and critical minerals to make the nation self reliant and reduce dependence on imports from external sources for our strategic needs. While addressing the resource needs of the country, we have to also keep in mind the off-shore regions which hold enormous potential for phosphorites, gas hydrates and seafloor massive sulphides.
Ladies and Gentlemen:
10. The earth, as a geological entity, has no boundaries. In that same vein, geoscience transcends the borders of diverse scientific disciplines. We in general and geo-scientists in particular have to join hands at the national and international levels and across disciplines to evolve converging ideas that will ensure a better tomorrow.
11. Indian contribution to the global understanding of geosciences has been significant. The concept of presence of the Earth's core had its origins in the country. Discovery of the first known evidences of human ancestor from the Indian subcontinent, the *Narmada Man*, has provided an important clue in tracing the history of human evolution. I am sure that such rich tradition of research will be taken to new heights in the coming years.
12. World over, new frontiers of research are emerging. We have inaugurated a geological epoch, *Anthropocene*, based on overwhelming evidences of change in the major earth system processes through human interference. Dedicated groups of scholars are carrying out studies on the *Critical Zone*, to develop an understanding of the role and interplay of the water, soil, rock, air, and biota in the near surface environment of the earth. Indian geoscientists have to face the challenges that these new fields offer and foray with rigour and confidence into the unknown.
Dear Awardees:
13. The honour conferred upon you today in recognition of your dedicated work also reposes higher expectations on you. You have to engage yourselves with renewed vigour to better the high standards of achievement you have set for yourselves. At the same time, it has become your responsibility to disseminate your knowledge among your peer group and younger generation in the best interest of geoscience.
14. My best wishes to you all ! May this be the beginning of a new journey for you, a quest for conquering new horizons!

Thank you.
Jai Hind.
