

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
ON THE OCCASION OF INAUGURATION OF THE FESTIVAL
OF INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND
PRESENTATION OF 10TH BIENNIAL NATIONAL GRASSROOTS
INNOVATION AWARDS**

Gandhinagar, March 15, 2019

1. I am very happy to be here with all of you at FINE 2019 – the Festival of Innovation and Entrepreneurship. This Festival is a celebration of creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship. Till 2018, it had been hosted at Rashtrapati Bhavan. This year it was decided to organise it outside Rashtrapati Bhavan. Earlier people used to come to the Festival, this year the Festival has come to the people. And indeed I am glad that this Festival is being organised here in Gujarat for two reasons. Firstly, Gujarat is known as a land of innovation and entrepreneurship. And secondly, this Festival is being held here during the year in which we are celebrating the 150th birth anniversary of perhaps the greatest Gujarati of all time, the Father of our Nation, Mahatma Gandhi.
2. Gandhiji strongly advocated finding local solutions to local problems. This thought was inherent in his idea of Gram Swaraj. It is a matter of immense satisfaction that this Festival sees participation from several grassroots innovators who have been inspired to find effective solutions to problems that they experienced in their communities. I congratulate all the award winners. I hope they will continue to be an inspiration for society. The creativity and efforts they have put in to conceive practical solutions to everyday problems is commendable.
3. Participants at this Festival come from different parts of India. Clearly, the spirit of innovation is noticeable all across our country. This is a welcome trend and I commend the National Innovation Foundation for organising this Festival that provides innovators

from across the country an opportunity to share their experiences and exchange ideas.

4. The National Innovation Foundation was established in year 2000, with the assistance of Department of Science and Technology, Government of India. Ever since, it has made a big contribution to strengthen the grassroots technological innovations and outstanding traditional knowledge in the country. I am happy to learn that NIF has created a huge database of ideas, innovations and traditional knowledge practices from all over the country. It has recognised over 800 grassroots innovators through awards. And, it has had hundred of innovations validated through our institutions. Furthermore, the NIF has dozens of patents, design registrations and trademark applications. The support that NIF has extended to the grassroots innovators is laudable and so have been the accomplishments of innovators themselves.
5. A reflection of this good work is seen in the fact that three innovators who were incubated by NIF have been selected for the Padma Shri this year. These innovators are Shri Jagdish Prasad Parikh who developed a new variety of cauliflower, Shri Uddhab Kumar Bharali who developed a Pomegranate Deseeder, Arecanut peeler and a Bamboo splitting machine, and Shri Vallabhbai Vasrambhai Marvaniya who developed an improved carrot variety. I am told that thousands of farmers and citizens have benefited from their innovations. Incidentally, like some of you got the awards today, these three innovators had also received the Biennial National Grassroots Innovation Award in past. In fact, NIF's award was the first recognition for their innovations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

6. As we seek to meet important developmental goals and build a caring, inclusive and happy society, we have to draw upon the power of innovation to find solutions to our concerns in diverse domains such as health, education, food security, energy access, environmental protection, and national security. We have to make

all efforts to promote an innovation culture and become an innovation society. This will provide us the best possibility of ensuring that every young Indian will have an opportunity to realise his or her true potential. In the wider sense, an innovation culture can be a catalyst to help us reach our goals as a society and as a nation.

7. To usher in such a culture calls for revitalising every link in the **innovation value chain**. We need schools where children tinker rather than only memorise. We need work cultures where young talent looks up and questions – rather than looks down and nods. And of course the government will continue to provide a facilitative environment.
8. However, an innovative idea in itself is not enough. It is important to ensure that a creative idea gets the support it needs for its maturing, diffusion and delivery on the ground. Innovation itself is only the first of two key drivers to ensure that any innovation becomes actionable. The second key driver is entrepreneurship, which needs to supplement innovation so as to deliver benefits to our fellow citizens.
9. We need to build an ecosystem for converting innovations into enterprises. These could be commercial or social enterprises; the form does not matter as long as the enterprise enables an innovation to actually make an impact. This necessarily requires support for start-ups and for incubating young innovators. It is critical to connect all the links of incubating innovations into enterprises by providing financial, mentoring and policy support.
10. To be sure, NIF has done just this in many specific cases. But, my suggestion, for the consideration of all present here is to see if we can scale up the impact of our innovations to national and perhaps even global levels. While we are good at supporting the curation of ideas and their mentoring at early stages, we need to strengthen our capacities to connect science, technology and innovation on the one hand with market, commercial success and public good on the other. Such capacity augmentation could be

based on active collaboration among institutions, each with expertise in a relevant domain.

11. By doing so, thousands of innovative ideas that come up can be examined to identify those which could be scaled up for the market, in order to maximize their social and economic benefits. When an innovation matures into an enterprise it not only takes the innovation's benefits to more people but it also leads to creation of both direct and indirect employment.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

12. I am told that during FINE 2019 five roundtables will be organised that will discuss issues such as scaling up and commercialisation of innovations, leveraging innovative technologies for affordable healthcare, balanced nutrition and inclusive development and transforming waste into useful products for wealth creation. Each of these issues is very relevant and important. I am confident that intense and engaging discussions will be held by specialists in each of the roundtables – and will result in concrete recommendations and action points.
13. I compliment the NIF and the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India for their efforts in organising this Festival. By bringing FINE 2019 to Gandhinagar, a larger set of people will get exposure to the discourse and discussions that shape this Festival. No doubt the people of Gujarat, who have been innovative in themselves and in so many different ways, will also draw value from the Festival.
14. As I conclude, I congratulate all the innovators, whether from the informal or formal sector, the scientists, students, teachers, mentors, policy makers, government officials, friends from industry and academia, and members of the public, for their enthusiastic participation in this Festival. I am sure there will be several takeaways for each one of you. I would like to mention one such takeaway for all of you. That is, the need for us to ensure that innovative ideas mature into sustainable enterprises in order to

maximise the innovation's benefit to society and the nation. May every innovation inspire another – and may the innovation journey continue!

Thank you,
Jai Hind!