

The Speech by Shri S Jaipal Reddy at 7th Biennial Grassroots Innovation Award function

Honble President of India, Sri Pranab Mukherjee, Dr Mashelkar, the Chairperson of National Innovation Foundation, Dr Anil Gupta, the brain behind NIF, Dr Ramasami, Secretary Department of Science and Technology, Dr Bramhachari, DG, CSIR, Secretaries to the members of Global Research Alliance from various countries, grass root innovators, award winners, exhibitors, scientists and staff of all departments, guests, members of the Media, Ladies and Gentlemen, let me add my own words of welcome to all of you on behalf of the Ministry of Science and Technology.

Honble President Ji, let me thank you for consenting to give away the awards to the innovators. This is an extra-ordinarily special function. Sir, you have through this act conveyed your trust in our innovators. They have accomplished extra-ordinary feat of innovating with limited financial resources. They leverage their experienced based learning for societal benefits.

Innovation could be considered as a process which leads to the conversion of knowledge into value or wealth. In centres of advanced research, returns to the inventor and investors from innovation are focused. In some sense, grass-root innovation operates on a different principle. It aims to democratize innovation both as a process and product. It has the potential to “include the excluded”. Sir, you have conveyed a strong message in support of Grass-root innovation as a movement by gracing this function and hosting it in the Rashtrapathi Bhawan.

National Innovation Foundation is a unique organization. In some sense, the mission and vision of NIF remain unmatched. There is a societal purpose to their mission. NIF serves to link innovation with public and social good. NIF is engaged in scouting and nourishing grass root innovations as they occur in real life conditions. I learn that NIF has been able to register as many as 1, 70,000 grass root innovation practices over the last few years. I understand also that NIF has generated net work across the length and breadth of the country. Their network extends to almost all districts in the country. All these were accomplished with meagre resources of about Rs 1.6 to 1.8 crores of annual interest earned from a corpus of Rs 20 crores for many years, I gather.

I am told that in one of the award functions held in an earlier year, the then the Honble President elicited a promise from Ministry of Science and Technology that NIF would soon become an autonomous Grant-in Aid institution of Department of Science and Technology. I am delighted that the promise has been kept. NIF is currently an autonomous institution of the Ministry of Science and Technology. NIF strives to add values to grass root innovation as an inherent part of the country-specific innovation ecosystem.

I learn that today about 50 plus awards are going to be given away. Over the years, about 550-600 people have received awards over seven year period through the effort of NIF. It is an impressive tally. To me these 550 – 600 people are not just awardees. They are heroes of special kind; whose work has come to be recognized and celebrated at the highest levels. By awarding grass-root innovators, we are not recognizing the individuals but also celebrating the process of democratization of innovation.

The grass root innovations stem from the people who add extra-ordinary values to their real-life experience. Grass root innovators are solution designers of extra-ordinary ability. They solve problems that many people face in day-to day life. They combine relevance with excellence. They have a potential to make larger impact. Their solutions are affordable. Therefore grass-root innovations could benefit many more people. I am convinced that India enjoys a unique opportunity to leverage the grass root innovation potential. In our quest, affordable and inclusive social innovations, grass root innovation system occupies special place.

I am happy to know that NIF has been able to secure patents for many of the grass root innovators. It is truly an act of goodness. We need to valorise also some of the amazing innovations emanating from the Grass root segment. We may have to add values to the knowledge and make them commercially succeed. Scaling the impact of beneficial effects of successful grass root innovations is the next best step forward.

I am aware that in the recent budget of India an allocation of Rs 200 crores has been made leveraging the commercialization potentials of some of the innovate leads gained from various sources including those from NIF. I would like to urge NIF to set up an institutional mechanism and serve as a platform for scaling up the benefits of grass-root innovations. Jaipur foot is a statement to the world in favour of affordable innovations. We need to leverage such cost-effective innovative solutions and share them with world. Open source innovations seem the best course of action for inclusive growth. I would like to urge the NIF and the grass root innovation network to work for the cause of inclusive development through a sustainable supply of affordable innovations.

Pandit Nehru strived for mainstreaming science in the development process of the country. Today's function symbolises to some extent the desire of India to connect science with people. Honble President ji, with your benedictions, my ministry hopes to serve the cause of faster, sustainable and inclusive growth through the tools of science. My friends receiving awards today, I have a request to make to you. Your spirit of innovation is a message in itself. Let your spirit of venture into innovations spread by sharing it with more people. Let me congratulate all of you for this act of nobility and wish you all resounding success to your future endeavours.

Thank you and Jai Hind

