

**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  
THE GANDHIAN YOUNG TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION AWARDS**

**Rashtrapati Bhavan, March 19, 2018**

1. Good morning to all of you and welcome to Rashtrapati Bhavan for FINE 2018 – the Festival of Innovation and Entrepreneurship. This is a signature event on the Rashtrapati Bhavan calendar. It is part of an effort all of us are making – and must continue to make – to inculcate a culture of innovation in every aspect of Indian society. At the outset, I must congratulate the winners of the Gandhian Young Technological Innovation Awards. I offer my compliments to them, as well as to other grassroots innovators and technologists who may have narrowly missed an award this year. I am confident your contribution will go a long way in making India not only a developed society but also a collaborative society. And above all a society that innovates for itself and for the Global South.
2. The vision of a newer and better India calls for meeting certain developmental milestones, some of these as early as 2022 – when we commemorate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our Independence. It focuses on building an inclusive and happy society, where every individual – every young person – has the opportunity to realise his or her potential. An innovation society will be a goal for such an India. And an innovation culture will be a catalyst to help us reach that goal.
3. This calls for revitalising every link in the innovation value chain. We need schools where children tinker rather than memorise and mug. We need work cultures where young talent looks up and questions – rather than looks down and nods. And of course we need the government to provide a facilitative environment.

4. Among various initiatives of the government of India, one of the most important is encouraging young people to innovate and address unmet needs of society. We have to promote cutting-edge technologies alongside grassroots innovations – so that a pipeline for future applications is generated. Climate change and fluctuations as well as our disease burden – both communicable and non-communicable – are adding to the complexity of the human habitat. The need for technology-driven solutions cannot be ignored.
5. I am conscious that innovations by themselves are not enough. We must also build an ecosystem for converting innovations into enterprises. This requires support for start-ups and for incubating young innovators. The concept of the Festival of Innovation and Entrepreneurship brings the two wings of the bird of imagination together. We need to connect all the links of incubating innovations into enterprises by providing financial, mentoring and policy support.
6. This year's Festival of Innovation and Entrepreneurship is remarkable in that the number of exhibits of grassroots innovations and technologies has almost doubled. Among other things, this indicates innovation opportunities in local communities across our country. With greater emphasis by the government on boosting the economy of communities dependent upon cultivation and processing of bamboo, medicinal and aromatic plants, a special section has been organised for showcasing technologies in these areas. Many of the communities dependent on bamboo live in tribal areas where poverty levels are high. New technologies for cultivation and processing can make a significant difference to their livelihoods.
7. Similarly, a majority of the products based on medicinal plants depend on the extraction of bio-resources from our forests. For conserving bio-diversity and reducing pressure on forests, we have to encourage cultivation of these plants in close cooperation with industry.

8. As I conclude, I wish to appreciate the efforts of the National Innovation Foundation, which has worked closely with the President's Secretariat in putting together the Festival of Innovation and Entrepreneurship and in organising the exhibition. I look forward to more and more people walking in to see the exhibition, which is truly inspiring and educative. I also look forward to collaboration among various wings of the government – such as the Ministries of Science, Technology and Earth Sciences; Agriculture; AYUSH; and Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, as well as the Department of Industrial Promotion, Niti Aayog, the Atal Innovation Mission, and of course the National Innovation Foundation.
  
9. Such synergy will help us harness the talent of our young scientists and grassroots innovators. Our aim must be to produce replicable solutions as well as commercially viable applications. When I come back for the concluding session on March 21, I expect actionable recommendations from the four roundtables that are part of this Festival. And when we meet next year, for FINE 2019, I would like to see the results of concrete collaboration that you foster over the coming days – and the emergence of a new generation of innovator-entrepreneurs.

Thank you  
Jai Hind!