

Festival of Innovations 2016 (Press Conference)

The Festival of Innovations 2016 was inaugurated by Honourable President of India Shri Pranab Mukherjee on March 12, 2016 at the Rashtrapati Bhavan. An exhibition on innovations by grassroots innovators and students is being held as part of the week-long festival organised by the National Innovation Foundation (NIF), an autonomous institution under the Department of Science and Technology, government of India.

At the inaugural function of the second edition of FOIN, Mrs Omita Paul, Secretary to the President, said the programme has been expanded this year to include innovation scholars, writers and artists from across the country.

The first FOIN was held from March 7-13, 2015 at Rashtrapati Bhawan.

Throwing light on the genesis of FOIN, Mrs Omita Paul said, "In 2013, the President met the vice-chancellors of various central universities. During the meeting, he thought of bringing an innovation movement to India. This idea was followed up by directors of IITs, NITs and other central & state universities. This also led to a detailed discussion with NIF's Chairperson, Dr R A Mashelkar and Executive Vice Chairperson Prof Anil K Gupta, also a professor at IIM-A. They gave shape to a seven-day event in the form of discussions and debate to generate new ideas and tap grassroots potential."

This year, FOIN will see a wider participation, both nationally and globally. More than 85 innovation clubs are participating from various universities of the country. Eleven innovation scholars, artists and writers are being hosted by the Hon'ble President at Rashtrapati Bhavan as part of FOIN for two weeks.

Dr Gupta shared details of the programme and said that FOIN will provide a platform for "lessons we have to share and lessons that we can learn."

Mr R A Mashelkar, Chairperson of National Innovation Foundation (NIF), remarked that 1.3 billion people of India represent 1.3 billion minds and we should undertake efforts to tap good ideas from the grassroots.

He also said that no other country has championed innovation like India where the President has opened his residence to innovation scholars and writers in-residence. Mr Mashelkar listed three steps towards boosting innovation potential of India: speed, scaling and sustainability.

He added, "Minds work best when open, akin to a parachute."

Prof Ashutosh Shukla, Secretary, Department of Science and Technology (DST), said, "Innovation is an idea whose time has come. And, DST is the prime mover."

He highlighted how Budget 2016 for innovation has gone up by 600 per cent over the previous years', showing that innovation has bright future in India.

Prof K VijayRaghavan, Secretary, Department of Biotechnology and Chairperson BIRAC, India, asserted that there is a need to shift the focus from app-based e-commerce to innovation and its impact on society.