

SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE  
AT THE INAUGURATION OF 33<sup>RD</sup> INDIA INTERNATIONAL TRADE FAIR

Hamsadhwani Theatre, Pragati Maidan,  
New Delhi: 14-11-2013

It is indeed a pleasure for me to be amidst you on the happy occasion of the inauguration ceremony of India International Trade Fair (IITF) – the flagship event of India Trade Promotion Organisation, that is opening its 33<sup>rd</sup> edition today.

2. Trade Fairs of the type and scale of India International Trade Fair have few parallels. IITF – during its course of three decades – has been a successful platform for bringing together nations and furthering international trade relations between the participating countries.

3. The Trade Fair is also a reflection of the strength of Indian entrepreneurship and mirrors the progress made by the small and micro enterprises, which form the backbone of our economy and are perhaps the most crucial link between India's economic growth and social economic transformation. Our MSME units can prosper only if there is a concerted effort at widening the market for their products. I am happy to know that IITF has been consistently helping in meeting the need of this crucial sector, thereby contributing towards meeting the ultimate goal of equitable and inclusive growth of the nation.

4. It is only appropriate that the Trade Fair always opens on the birth anniversary of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India and architect of modern India whose vision was to convert India from a colonial economy to a modern vibrant economy. The fact that a country with a primarily agro-based economy and a burgeoning population could make its presence felt in diverse fields such as heavy industries, communication, nuclear energy, space research, electronics, etc., has been universally acknowledged by the international community.

5. This Trade Fair represents an important facet of India's economic achievements and intrinsic strengths. India's economy is the third largest in the world in terms of purchasing power parity. The substantial growth rate that our country has achieved particularly in the last decade in the context of the global economic crisis speaks of the resilience of the Indian economy. The country's financial integration with the world has also been as rapid as its trade globalisation. Exports have a very important role to play in the economic growth of our country and have the potential to drive the socio-economic development of our country. The contribution that this sector makes to employment is of utmost importance to our vision of equitable and inclusive growth. India is today the world's largest rice exporter and second largest wheat exporter. For the fourth straight month in a row, India's exports have registered a double digit growth of 13.5 per cent in October 2013, which is the highest in the last two years.

6. However, increased trade liberalization and economic cooperation will not count for much unless they result in tangible benefits for our people. Hence, thrust should also be placed on meeting objectives like employment generation and regional development. The last decade has marked a paradigm shift in the development approach towards improving the quality of life of our people. Empowerment of people through entitlements backed by legal guarantees such as NREGA, RTE and Food Security Act have fostered the process of inclusive growth of the country.

7. Any economic development has to have social ramifications. In order to keep pace with the rapid global changes, we need to constantly fine-tune the skills of our work force. There is an urgent need to incorporate skill development and vocational training in the process of our economic growth. The vision of inclusiveness is not just removal of poverty but it encompasses equality of opportunity, as well as economic and social mobility for all sections of society. This must be accompanied by an improvement in the opportunities for economic and social advancement. This outcome can only be ensured if there is a degree of empowerment that creates a true feeling of participation, so necessary in a democratic polity. Empowerment of the

disadvantaged and marginalized groups is an essential part of inclusive growth. The vision must also include a clear commitment to pursue a development process which is environmentally sustainable.

8. The IITF 2013 which is focusing on different aspects of inclusive socio-economic development along with highlighting achievements in service sectors has tremendous potential to contribute to creation of employment opportunities, advancement of technology and circumvention of global communication barriers. I am happy to know that this year, the theme of IITF – “Inclusive Growth” has brought together several hundreds of entrepreneurs from all parts of the country to display their products at the fair. I learn that of 31 States and Union Territories featuring in IITF 2013, Bihar is participating as the ‘Partner State’ while Odisha is the ‘Focus State’. The international exposure offered by IITF to the domestic enterprises is most commendable. I am sure that the IT and Telecom initiatives such as use of mobile application and live webcast of programmes will be highly useful for both visitors and exhibitors. I compliment the organizers for these initiatives.

9. It is heartening to know that a special new feature of IITF 2013 is the creation of an “Innovation Pavilion”, showcasing some innovative ideas developed by students and entrepreneurs. Innovation has already been recognized as the currency of future and is an important impulse for growth. The process of innovation converts knowledge into social good and economic wealth. In this decade of innovation we need to work collectively to ensure that all potential ideas of grassroots innovators are encouraged in the larger national interest. We need to pay closer attention to the creative potential of our society and try to add value to the grassroots innovations to enable commercial and social diffusion.

10. The India International Trade Fair continues to be an important forum to achieve the objectives of working together with the international community towards a united and prosperous world. I extend my warm greetings and felicitations to all the countries participating in IITF and hope that our collective efforts would be rewarded by the best elements of international co-operation in various fields. I understand that this year 25

countries are participating in the Fair of which 'Focus Country' status has been accorded to South Africa. South Africa is India's second largest trading partner in the African continent. India-South Africa bilateral trade has almost doubled in the last four years. I hope that the steadily increasing trade ties between India and South Africa continue to further strengthen in the years ahead. It is also learnt that this year, Japan, which is participating in IITF for the first time has been accorded 'Partner Country' status. Signing of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement with Japan in 2011 has provided a fillip to the already strong and friendly relationship between India and Japan. We value our trade relations with Japan and are currently taking a number of initiatives, both in the Government as well as private sector, to strengthen our long standing trade and economic partnerships. I hope the participating overseas as well as domestic companies go beyond the commercial gains of conducting business, to reach out to the core of the lives of people as a whole.

11. I take this opportunity to congratulate the Ministry of Commerce and Industry as well as ITPO for organizing a fair of this magnitude. I am sure that the business as well as general visitors will find this Trade Fair interesting and useful. I extend my greetings and good wishes to all participants and visitors in this Trade Fair.

12. With these words, I declare the **33rd** India International Trade Fair open.

**Thank you and Jai Hind**