

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB
MUKHERJEE AT THE LAKSHMIPAT SINGHANIA- IIM, LUCKNOW
NATIONAL LEADERSHIP AWARDS - 2011**

Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi : 30-11-2012

I am extremely delighted to be amongst all of you today for the presentation of the Lakshmipat Singhania- IIM Lucknow National Leadership Awards 2011. I take this opportunity to congratulate the JK Organization and the Indian Institute of Management, Lucknow for instituting these Awards in three major categories viz. Business, Science and Technology and Community Service and Social Upliftment.

2. I am told that since the inception of the awards in 2004, eminent Indians have been honoured for their leadership qualities and contributions to Indian society in these three categories. Each one of the award winners today have distinguished themselves by their excellence and achievements and are role models for the nation. I offer my congratulations and best wishes to each of them.

3. IIM Lucknow over the last 25 years has emerged as a leading institution not only for management education but also for research and consultancy activities. Apart from Leadership Development, it is also committed to piloting several socially relevant research and consultancy projects in agriculture, entrepreneurship, health management, education, IT and rural development.

4. Late Lakshmipat Singhanian, in whose honour this Award has been instituted, was a visionary and a business leader with outstanding qualities. His entrepreneurial spirit and contribution to Indian business and society at large is well known and bears no repetition. It is thus appropriate that the two organisations namely IIM- Lucknow and JK Organisation should join hands in instituting the National Leadership Awards in the memory of Late Lakshmipat Singhanian.

5. I still remember when Netaji, as President of the 51st Session of Indian National Congress in Haripura, on the banks of the river Tapti, reminded us that (quote) "our chief national problems are eradication of poverty, illiteracy and disease" (unquote).

6. Freedom then meant political and economic freedom. Political freedom was won by a generation of giants, led by Mahatma Gandhi, who fought with selfless, unflinching conviction against British rule. Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, Baba Saheb Ambedkar, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Sarojini Naidu and many others charted the road-map of independent India. Corporate leaders like Lala Lakshmipat Singhanian, JRD Tata, G.D.Birla similarly contributed in ensuring economic development.

7. India has come a long way since then. Various policies and initiatives, including economic reforms, have brought about significant improvements in living standards as also quality of life. As a country, however, we face many challenges as we

march forward. There are still many areas and regions where economic growth is lagging behind and where social parameters are much lower than the rest of the country.

8. For India's political and economic stability, it is important that we have truly "inclusive" growth - growth that benefits each and every citizen of the country especially those who are at the margins of society and at the base of the socio-economic pyramid. The challenges being large and diverse, India needs grass-root leaders who place people and their problems at the centre of the social, economic and political discourse. It is only when we work together and each Indian feels empowered to contribute to the task of nation building that we shall be able to combat poverty, malnutrition, hunger and disease.

9. India today stands at the cusp of greatness- while there are many challenges ahead, there are also boundless opportunities. We are passing through a phase of unprecedented demographic change which is likely to contribute to a substantially increased labour force. The bulk of this increase is likely to take place in the relatively younger age group of 20-35 years which would make India one of the youngest nations in the world. In 2020, the average Indian will be only 29 years old as compared to an average age of 37 for China and the US, 45 for West Europe and 48 for Japan. It is clear that the youth of India, who are the leaders of tomorrow, shall aspire for higher standards of living, better service delivery and increased transparency and accountability. They must,

however, not only be the beneficiaries of this change process but also the drivers of it. For this to happen it is necessary that the State, in partnership with the private sector, provides opportunities for education, skill-enhancement and capacity building. There is also a special need to empower women who shall act as catalysts for change. Recognising this, the 11th Five Year Plan sought to address this challenge by providing a comprehensive strategy for inclusive development, building on the growing strength of the economy in the past decades.

10. It is necessary that India provides quality education to its population in order to reap the full benefits of the demographic dividend. The 12th Plan Approach Paper accordingly focuses on teacher training and evaluation and measures to enforce accountability. It also stresses the need to build capacity in secondary schools to absorb the pass-outs from expanded primary enrolments. The Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education must be targeted to increase from nearly 18% at present to about 25% by 2016-17.

11. On the eve of India's 66th Independence Day on August 14th this year, I had observed that the glass of modern India is more than half-full. I had said that we are equal children before our mother; and India asks each one of us, in whatever role we play in the complex drama of nation building, to do our duty with integrity, commitment and unflinching loyalty to the values enshrined in our Constitution. If each of us follows this principle,

I am confident that India will become a more vibrant, dynamic and prosperous nation.

12. The awardees who have been honoured today are being recognised for the passion that they have brought to their work, the excellence which they have achieved and the spirit of enterprise that they have displayed. It is these qualities which have enabled them to contribute to significant social change and it is these qualities which all of us should emulate. I once again offer my best congratulations to all of them and wish them all success in their future endeavours.

Jai Hind!!