

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB
MUKHERJEE AT THE PRESENTATION OF DR. APJ ABDUL KALAM
IGNITE AWARDS**

IIM, Ahmedabad, Gujarat: 30 November, 2015

I am happy to be amidst you today in this prestigious institute which has excelled in higher education and provided leadership for the management and business education in the country. The fusion of excellence and relevance in this campus, which has been exhibited through the creative and innovative ideas of young children from all over the country, makes this institute magnetically charged with ideas and energies.

2. At the outset, I would like to congratulate the young award winners whose creative ideas and innovations are at display at the exhibition organized by National Innovation Foundation. It is heartening to see so many creative young minds tackling some of the challenges faced by our society at such a young age. This certainly augurs well for the future of our country.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

3. Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad has had an illustrious history. It has excelled in academics and given the best of the management talent to India and to the whole world. Today, you can find the alumni of IIM-Ahmedabad working in corporates, governments, public services and in many other areas. The alumni of this institute have expanded the brand IIM-Ahmedabad globally. Today, I call upon the faculty, students, and alumni of IIM-Ahmedabad to continue to engage with creative minds from industry, business, entrepreneurs, society leaders and with those who work at the grassroots. The Institute must continue to address the pressing issues confronting today's society. It must strive to be a beacon of knowledge, nurture other institutions with generous mentorship, and maintain a culture that blends the drive for excellence and performance with the spirit of collaboration and compassion.

4. IIM-Ahmedabad has been committed to supporting innovation and entrepreneurship. The Institute's Center for Innovation Incubation and Entrepreneurship has been doing path-breaking work in strengthening the ecosystem of innovation in Ahmedabad, Pune, Jaipur, and other cities all over India. I understand this institute is launching a course focused on

entrepreneurship in its PGP curriculum. This programme offers scholarships to students and encourage them in pursuing entrepreneurial dreams early in their careers. Elective courses such as *Shodh Yatra* and *Rural Immersion Module* encourage students to experience how innovation is sparked at the grassroots and among the underprivileged. These kinds of innovative programmes will help in realizing the entrepreneurial goals identified through “Start-up India, Stand-up India” initiative.

5. National Innovation Foundation and IIM-Ahmedabad, has given a global identity to the Indian model of social innovation. An appreciable effort has been made by various student clubs for community outreach activities. One of the intended objectives of this community outreach has been to learn from the disadvantaged section of the society and also to encourage them to dream bigger. I would encourage the Institute to continue investing energy and resources in nurturing innovations that accelerate the nation’s economic progress and create a sustainable inclusive society.

6. Recognizing the centrality of innovation to economic and social progress, President’s Secretariat has taken a number of initiatives to bring inclusive innovations to the center stage of country’s consciousness. Innovation scholars, writers, artists, inspired teachers and students from central institutions are being invited to stay at the Rashtrapati Bhavan for a period of two weeks. These In-Residence Programmes are aimed to celebrate the spirit of innovation and creativity and to recognize and learn from the success stories of the individuals who have contributed to the cause of society and the nation in their own way.

7. Innovation is key to economic development and reflects the maturity of a nation and society to respond to the emerging needs and challenges. Innovation is a continuous process and needs to be nurtured at each and every step. Realizing the importance of innovation in the life of a nation and society, Rashtrapati Bhavan has started the tradition of hosting the Festival of Innovations. The first Festival of Innovations was held in Rashtrapati Bhavan during March, 2015 in collaboration with the National Innovation Foundation. This Festival endeavored to link grassroots innovators with innovative minds at different levels in diverse fields. The second Festival of Innovations will be held in March, 2016. I take this opportunity to invite the participants who are here today, to participate in the Festival of Innovations and take your ideas to a global level.

8. Innovation, higher education and industry need to be closely networked for maximum benefit of the society. Any innovation happening either at the grassroots level or in the higher educational institutions must be linked to the industry for commercialization of the innovation. For this, as the Visitor of 114 central institutions, I have been asking the institutions to establish strong industry-academic inter-linkages. This is one of the ways to readily bring the innovations in the market. For this to happen, I have been encouraging the institutes of higher learning to collaborate with the institutes and industry within India and abroad for creating a conducive ecosystem for nurturing innovation and research. In the recently held Visitor's Conference at Rashtrapati Bhavan, the Indian academic institutions concluded 43 MoUs with the industry in diverse fields. I hope that these kinds of industry-academia collaborations will help the academic institutions in aligning their activities with the needs of the industry and society.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

9. I am told that National Innovation Foundation received over 28,000 submissions for the Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam IGNITE Competition, 2015 from all the States and Union Territories of the country. It is a great tribute by the children of our country to late Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, recipient of Bharat Ratna and former President of India. The renaming of Award in the memory of Dr. Kalam is a fitting tribute to him, who always ignited the young minds through his visionary leadership and creative ideas. I compliment the National Innovation Foundation for this initiative.

10. Today, I visited the innovation exhibition and found lots of ideas and innovations which can address the needs of developing society, particularly the elderly people and weaker sections of the society. The children have proved that innovative spirits can dispel any amount of inertia and replace it with exciting new possibilities. I am very optimistic about our future when I see the younger generation which does not want to live indefinitely with unsolved problems. Innovations from creative youngsters are the best examples of "Samvedna se srijansheelta" (innovation from compassion or empathy). India is a country of 1.2 billion creative minds. The constructive use of these billions of minds can free the Indian society from many of the problems which we are facing today. It is for each one of us as an individual to make a commitment and to dedicate oneself for solving the problems of society and country.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

11. IIM-Ahmedabad is a world class institution and a leader in the field of management education. I am happy that IIM-Ahmedabad is mentoring IIM-Nagpur to create a new leader in the field of management education. Today, this institute has taken a leadership role in making suggestions for improving higher education system in India and for nurturing innovation ecosystem. The suggestions made today here show the commitment of this institute in two very important and critical drivers of the economy – higher education and innovation. I will always look forward to see the leadership flowing from this great institute in the areas of work relevant to governance, public policy, innovation, higher education and entrepreneurship.

12. I once again compliment all the young award winners and hope that they will continue to keep thinking creatively and ensuring an inclusive and innovative future for our country. I wish you all a great future and hope that you will spare no effort in contributing towards inclusive development of India.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.