

PM's remarks at the book release function of the Scientific Advisory Council to the Prime Minister

Monday, July 08, 2013



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Report by India Education bureau, New Delhi:

Following is the text of the Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh's remarks after the release of the book "Science in India (2004-13): Decade of achievements and rising aspirations", compiled by the 'Scientific Advisory Council to the Prime Minister', in New Delhi today:

"It gives me great joy to be present for the release of this important book that traces the march of science in India over the last decade and underlines the significant achievements that have been recorded.

Since coming to power nearly a decade ago, our government has taken a number of foundational steps to promote India's long-term economic and social transformation through the use of science. Many of these initiatives owe a great deal to policy suggestions and inputs from the Scientific Advisory Council to the Prime Minister. Let me therefore congratulate Prof. Rao and the larger scientific community you represent for these remarkable achievements. It is only appropriate that these are properly documented and publicized, so that we can build on them and use the roadmap identified by the Council to lead India to knowledge, prosperity and power.

Based on the recommendations and advice received from the Council, the Government has built five new Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research, eight new IITs and many advanced centres of higher learning during this period of the decade. A vigorous effort has been made to attract Indian diaspora for research careers in India and as we have heard from some distinguished scientists here, this is indeed beginning to pay off. The Council has also prepared a vision document and road maps for developing the national science sector, which we need to take forward in a planned manner over the next few years.

Our efforts during the last decade have focused on two broad themes. First, we have attempted to strengthen and expand our institutional mechanism for scientific research. Secondly, we have tried to leverage science to address the longstanding practical problems afflicting our people, be it disease, malnutrition, lack of energy or sanitation and provision of safe drinking water. I have always believed that our scientists must provide viable solutions to pressing national problems of food and nutrition security, energy and environment security and water and sanitation related problems. We also require new approaches to make our innovations green and affordable to many.

Healthy economic growth through much of this period has made it possible for our science sector to gain critical strength and participate in the nation building processes more effectively than in the past. Today, even though our economic growth has slowed down somewhat, our aspirations in science must not flag and the momentum gained in the science sector must not be lost, for they create the very fundamentals for sustained growth and well-being.

The new Science, Technology and Innovation Policy launched earlier this year aims to make India a global leader in science. For this to happen, we need a regular supply of talent. We need strong and high-quality educational and scientific institutions to identify and mentor talent. We also need an ecosystem in which applications of new scientific knowledge can be seamlessly integrated with innovation to drive the path of economic progress and prosperity and solve the unique problems of our people.

Adequate funding is no doubt critical for science and our Government has accorded high priority to this aspect. Unfortunately, private sector investment into R&D has not grown fast enough for us to double the overall national investments into R&D from the current level of

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1% of GDP to 2%. Increasing private sector investments into R&D and making possible conversion of knowledge into value and wealth remains a challenge that I would like the Council to look into.

Science is a tool to empower and emancipate our people. Unless our internal asymmetries are bridged, India will continue to figure poorly in various human development rankings. I would urge the scientific community to discover new methods for improved delivery of our R&D outputs. Public and political understanding of the opportunities offered by new and emerging technologies must be enhanced considerably. I would like the Council to spearhead a change of mindsets, so that we remain open to the use of new technologies for addressing pressing national priorities.

In conclusion, I have no hesitation in stating that the achievements of Indian science during the last decade have without doubt been very impressive. But we must not rest on our laurels. Based on our record, we can and we must aim higher in the years ahead. I am confident that this Scientific Advisory Council and Prof. CNR Rao's leadership, will continue to push the frontiers of Indian science simultaneously in the twin dimensions of excellence and relevance, as mentioned by Shri Jaipal Reddy.

With these words, I wish you well in your noble endeavours."