

Text of Dinner Speech of Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas Shri Dharmendra Pradhan at the 7th Asian Ministerial Energy Roundtable in Bangkok

Following is the text of the speech delivered by Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Minister of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Shri Dharmendra Pradhan at the welcome dinner of 7th Asian Ministerial Energy Roundtable at Bangkok, Thailand on 1st November, 2017.

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"I am privileged to be here for this important event which brings together Ministers from several crucial countries as far as energy is concerned. Asia has some of the largest producers as well as the largest consumers of energy. I am glad that IEF regularly organizes the Asian Ministerial Energy Roundtable. I attended the last edition of Asian Ministerial Energy Roundtable at Doha in 2015. I am happy that many of my distinguished friends from several countries are also here today for this important dialogue. Such meetings allow regional focus on key areas on the energy landscape.

IEF, in my view, is the most representative International Organization on Energy as its membership accounts for 90% of global supply in oil and gas. The 72 members are spread over six continents. IEF therefore, provides the best global platform, to both producers and consumers, to deliberate on global energy issues. This is the only organization where there are no entry barriers for any country to join. I have also seen it work closely with other organizations such as OPEC, IEA and International Gas Union (IGU). I also note that 18 of the Member countries of G20 are members of IEF. It is, therefore, important that IEF plays a much more prominent role in its engagement with G20 countries.

It is apt and timely that the theme for this event is about the transition in global energy markets. I took over as the Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas of India about 40 months back. When I reflect on this period, I feel that we are on the cusp of a transition. In the last few years, we have seen low oil prices, increasing role of gas in the energy mix, abundant supply of gas, new players entering both the oil and gas market, loosening up of the inflexible LNG market and the rise of renewables and EVs.

As it should be in a perfect market economy, there are today a very large number of producers of oil and gas across the globe promoting free market pricing. This has led to a shift of the traditional centre of gravity in the world of oil and gas. The role of OPEC is gradually changing from price determination to price stabilization. While the world is witnessing this phenomenal change, it is in our mutual interest to play a constructive role in promoting responsible pricing, building infrastructure, removing distortions such as Asian Premium for oil and destination clause and oil price linkage for gas.

Friends, even as we deliberate on the transition in global energy markets, I would exhort the learned gathering here to also think over what innovations and collaborations can be done in the technology domain to pursue our shared objectives. Over the past couple of years, the term 4th Industrial Revolution has been much talked about. We all have read and heard that the 4th Industrial Revolution will be triggered by ideas, smart thinking and fusion of technologies across physical, digital and biological domains and will fundamentally alter our way of life as we know it today. Artificial Intelligence, Robotics, Internet of Things, Machine Learning, 3D Printing, Nano sensors, Energy Storage, Driverless Cars - there are so many technologies which, we are told, will eventually reshape our world.

I can not but help notice that despite being one of the world's leading economies till the 17th century, India missed the first three industrial revolutions, largely due to colonization and its aftereffects. Even as we talk about the 4th industrial revolution, it is pertinent to remember that till today, about 17% of the world population, or about 1.3 billion people, do not have access to electricity, which largely powered the 2nd Industrial Revolution. Likewise, even today about 50% of people globally are deprived of internet access which is one of the key drivers of the 3rd industrial revolution. So, even as India aspires to lead the world in the 4th wave of industrial revolution, a large cross-section of its population, as in other developing countries of Asia, is yet to reap the full benefits of the 2nd and the 3rd industrial revolutions. This is where, I believe, the defining role of this dialogue sets in. I am confident that this platform would also provide an opportunity to direct our efforts to promote Energy Access, Energy Efficiency, Energy Sustainability and Energy Security, as articulated by Prime Minister of India Mr. Narendra Modi.

India will host the next IEF Ministerial Meeting in New Delhi on April 10-12, 2018. After receiving inputs from Member countries, we are in the process of drawing up a rich and engaging schedule for the event. I will soon be sending you formal invitations. Meanwhile, I take this opportunity to invite all of you to the Ministerial meeting in New Delhi and add value to this event. I look forward to seeing you all in Delhi soon. "

