



English rendering of the text of Prime Minister's address to the Young Entrepreneurs at the "Champions of Change" initiative organised by NITI Aayog on 17 August 2017

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Friends, today my job was to listen, to understand you people. Listening to you, understanding to you is necessary for this reason also, and I used to say it publicly and it is my conviction also, because it's such a large country and if the government is in the illusion that it is running this country then it's difficult to say what will be the fate of the country. There was a poet – Shail Chaturvedi in the earlier generation. He had written a very good satire, he wrote: once a politician was travelling in a car, he told his driver that he would drive the car that day. The driver replied that he would get off the car. The politician asked him why? The driver responded that sir: this is a car not the government that anyone can run. That is why this is not a new concept in our country. If we go back a little, not much, just 50 years then we will realize that the government's role, it's presence was minimal. The social structure was such that it could be used to place emphasis on the facilities for the society. Can anyone tell me that these libraries built at several places, were these built by the governments? Several leaders of the society, as per their interest, used to build these facilities. Even education, education in our country was completely changed when money, business and commercial interests were associated with it. However, there was a time when the entire education system was developed by the people engaged in the social charity activities and it was mostly done with a sense of dedication. Even water was supplied to the areas facing water shortage under a social structure. If we travel towards Rajasthan or Gujarat then the water ponds that we see were not built by the governments. Common public used to run these projects and those who were the leaders of the society they used to do these things. And that is why that the governments may be creating the system but the development was always done through the various organs of the society, it was done due to their strength, their power and their dedication. Time has changed and we will have to adjust our systems in the changed times. This is an effort in that direction that there will be someone in the society with money power, someone with knowledge power, someone with experience and someone will have the dedication to selfless service. These powers that are scattered, if they are arranged in one thread then it can create such a garland that can bring more glory to mother India. So this is that effort to figure out how to connect such powers of the society?

If you keep a keen eye on the functioning of the government then there are many things that are not reported in media because there are several things that may not be newsworthy, but there are several others that are newsworthy. You must have seen how these Padma awards – Padma Shri, Padma Vibhush – were decided by the government. If you had made an attempt, then you would know the way. If a politician recommends a name, if a government functionary, that too is a politician, recommends a name, so most of the time those doctors who treat politicians, they are considered eligible for Padma awards.

We carried out a small reform, we said nobody's recommendation is needed for this. Anyone can send details online for himself or for someone else. If somebody has read something in newspaper, then he can send its clipping saying that look: I came to know about such a person. And plenty of such information was received by us. This young team was not publicly aware about someone like this, there were not aware about those faces but they started looking into the available material, they shortlisted them. Then the committee that was formed which did this work and you must have seen that such people are getting Padma Shri these days that were unknown heroes. You must have seen that Padma Shri was given to a Muslim Boy from Bengal this time. What the matter was? His own mother had died and what was the reason? Medical treatment was not available. His mother's death shook his conscience and he started carrying patients to doctors on his motor cycle. He worked very hard, he incurred the expenditure of petrol himself. And he became famous in the entire area as Ambulance Uncle. He was doing this selfless service in those areas of Assam and Bengal. It came to the notice of the government and such people were given Padma Shri. I mean to say that in every corner of the country everyone has something useful and the government's effort is to connect that. We want to connect the government with common people by bringing it out of the files. Our effort is to have this two-way approach and as a result we have created a system.

It's possible that each one of them might feel that had he been named it would have been better, it would have been better had he been invited. There may be several suggestions but this was the first attempt. It was completely a government effort and therefore it can have several shortcomings. There could be shortcomings in our way of thinking as well but I'd like to institutionalize this. How to institutionalize this? How to convert into a yearly event? And that can be taken as an extension of the government, as you people have created 6 groups, and each group focused on 5 different topics, focused on separate topics. Now this idea is coming to my mind whether these groups can be permanently attached to the concerned ministry. Those who worked on digital, if they offer their time then I can create a group of those people with the concerned ministry, with the concerned officers looking after the work of Digital India in the government. They should get together every month to discuss new things because as the list here informed the people, see this feeling that I don't know this, I don't know what is digital, this is not confined only to the common man, this thinking is present in the government as well. In government digital means: procurement of hardware. In government, digital means replacing the flowerpot with a modern laptop so that we look modern if a visitor comes. So this is the thinking in the government, people in the age group of 50-55 come to the central government, your brain is like that of a person below the age of thirty, I wanted to link the two. This is its beginning. And it's a matter of satisfaction for me that the team that is with me today, a team of secretaries, ministers, suppose if it is a team of 200 people that constantly interacts with me but not as a Prime Minister but I spend my team with them as a colleague. And after the experience of the last three years I can say this that as a farmer ploughs his field he doesn't know about the rain, doesn't know when it will come, doesn't know about what kind of crop or about its output, if crop is harvested then whether he will get the correct price in the market or not; but he keeps ploughing his field, similarly I have thoroughly ploughed the minds of my 200 people. And I can say this thing with experience that today they are eager, they are enthusiastic to accept any seed idea and they are totally ready to associate themselves with that. And I think this in itself is a big change. My senior team in the government is trying to look for opportunities instead of becoming an obstacle in looking for, in understanding and accepting every new thing. And it has encouraged me to associate you people with me. If that obstacle was there then I wouldn't do it, I wouldn't even think about it. Because you people yourself would have become the biggest reason for negativity six months after leaving the place. Then I'd say myself that: just leave it, they all are like this only, they all only just talk. But I am able to muster this courage as I am aware that my main team is very enthusiastic about accepting new things. All the things that you have said, you had discussion with them yesterday, even today these people are present here, some of them are present here. So we have to take forward this things, we have to prolong this effort.

And I will urge you people that there is a large number of people among you who have met face to face for the first time. You might have heard of each other, must have read, and should have known through social media that there is someone who is working in this direction. Now you got familiar with each other, and a team is being created. It's possible that the team will not have all the 212 members, but those groups of 30-35 people must have become familiar with each other that what is the way of thinking of the other person, what's his/her contribution, you would have evaluated all these things.

You would know all these things if somebody wasted other's time and also if someone was doing networking for his business. You would have come to about all these things and that is why you know all the pros and cons. And I am confident that you will focus on these topics in your own way; don't change the topic; if something new happens anywhere in the world then don't divert because of that. Will you continue to add new things, keep adding new things to your area of work? You will modify that, sharpen that and make it more focussed, and these are the ideas. But can you prepare a road map

with the ideas? What resources are required for the achievement? What will be the institutional arrangement? The government functions under some rules, if the rules are required to be changed then how the rules will be amended, what are the rules that are required? Government works on the basis of paper work. Nothing can succeed in the government that is not based on papers, what you can do in this regard? How you can connect these things? Could anyone of you take the lead that lets sit together somewhere after a month? See, you can make a very big contribution; you can create a digital platform in your own way. Someone from your team only should lead this thing and invite new people through that platform in your own way. May be you conduct a debate, arrange a conference through Google Hangout once in a month, you may try to meet once or twice in a year. And if you do all these things and continue to deliberate then you will have the strength to give things on time to the government. And when things are done on time then they lead to very big changes.

Sometimes, the government set up has its own difficulties and it has its own merits as well. You can provide support despite those difficulties. And in our country, it's not like that we require some extra-ordinary things. Small things can lead to very big changes. And you will have to try this, if you look at the functioning of the government then you will see that so many small things have been done that have changed the complete systems. In case of such a simple thing, you tell me whether the citizens of this country should trust his government or not? The straight answer is yes: you should trust your government.

But the government trusts elected corporator, it trusts elected MLA, it trusts a gazetted officer. It was a law that if you have a certificate and you want to apply somewhere then you will have to visit his house to get it certified and he will just stamp it without even looking at it. A boy sits outside and he keeps stamping on everyone's documents by taking money. And after getting it certified you send it to the government. After coming to the power I asked what is the use of this thing? Let them self-certify it, let them self-attest it, we removed that requirement. It's a small thing but it conveys a very big message that I have faith in people of my country and no intermediary is needed. But when your final interview is conducted or a decision is to be taken then you show the original documents that day. And you will find thousands of such things in the three years of this government that have changed things. See, the issue of corruption was discussed here and Kuleen was saying that if we correct the judiciary then everything will be corrected. Kuleen can do this thing.

See, we keep jewellery or cash in the family, we put a lock to protect it. Is that lock is meant to protect from the thief, protect from the robber? They have the power to take away the entire locker; he has the power to break open your lock. It is not to deter him. That lock is meant to prevent our kids from going on the wrong path. You create such systems so that your kids don't develop the wrong habit of taking something out of the locker and use it for immoral things outside the home. We develop these systems for self-discipline. Unfortunately, corruption has been institutionalised. You are not able stop it till the time you develop a counter institutional arrangement.

See, there are so many middlemen in our country, they also need livelihood. That is also an occupation and those who have been left without that occupation they are making so much noise these days: we don't have any work, don't have any work. Several such people visit the house of poor people and ask them: just pay 50 thousand rupees, we will arrange the job of a peon for your son; pay just 20 thousand rupees and we will arrange a temporary job, this kind of middlemen keep roaming around.

After coming to power we decided that in class III and class IV, can anyone tell me that what is the logic of interview? And what kind of psychology has been developed in the world to assess people, someone just enters the room from this side and there is a panel of 3 people and he passes from there in 30 seconds, they just see someone, if they have time then ask question saying: okay, good and the interview is finished.

I have not heard of this kind of scandal anywhere so far. It means that some irregularity was there. After coming to power, this government has decided this thing; more than 65% of government employment was in these categories. I have abolished all the interviews, the computer will decide on the basis of your merit list and those who will top the list will get the job. It's possible that between 2 to 5% undeserving people can get the job but in the previous interview based system the number of such persons was 80%.

I mean to say this is a government that is working on institutional arrangement so that even if a person is of slightly dubious character then the system will take care of it. Sometimes it is possible that people may do something wrong but procedures become useful in saving the situation. In a way today's world is like providing an App for where there is a gap. Apps have become ubiquitous and in a way interface is getting eliminated and dubious people for whom cheating others is a natural thing are getting into this field. They will do all sort of things in one App and next month they will develop another App for their survival. But despite these apprehensions, this technological revolution is leaving a lasting and acceptable impact on human life. Today, there is no resistance technology. And those who say that they are not able to figure out this technology most of them are men not women. See, the most modern technological equipment will be immediately launched in the market; it reaches in the kitchen as a favourable item of the women. All the women, including illiterate women, even the domestic helps, they know how to operate the oven, how to operate other things, they become familiar with all the technology.

User friendly technology has transformed the lives. Can the use of technology in the governance change the way the government functions? You people are from diverse fields but one thing is certain: innovation is life. If there is no innovation, then it's stagnation and there is filth where there is the stagnation. Changes can be brought about through innovation alone. You are in that field, are you promoting the innovation, if somebody is doing the marketing of handicraft products, but has he taught that handicraft artisan to modify his work as per the global requirement with the help of new technology? But if he keeps training them, then we can say, those common people, poor people, those who work in the field of handicraft, in a way you can call it their vocational training, their skill training or technological training, be it understanding of the market, if you train them a bit then they give better results. Even if we inspire a Bamboo furniture maker to manufacture furniture as per the market requirement, as per the requirements of the changed time and as per the comfort of the user then he will automatically get that opportunity.

We should not equate our rural economy, the entire rural economy only with the farming, there is lot more in rural economy other than farming. How we can strengthen this decentralised system? There was a time in our country when the ironsmith of the village was able to meet the needs of the entire village; there was no need to look for things outside the village. A cobbler of the village was able to requirement was able to meet the requirement of entire village and there was no need to look outside the village. But the economy gradually changed in such a way that the Tatas became the biggest ironsmith and Bata became the biggest cobbler and the village was in the loss. So the change that has come about, the change is not a bad thing but how we integrate the decentralised system with it? If we are able to integrate this then we will create a power, we will develop a system that will be used in sustaining the country's economy. Have you....the start-up, this start-up is not a fashionable thing. You must have seen that that there is a different kind of start-up world for digital software but the other start-ups that have emerged, they have found the solutions for daily problems and they have targeted the rural base.

Around a year ago, I had visited Sikkim. Sikkim is the first organic state in India. Very few people would be aware about this. The entire state is organic. They have developed the entire state as organic one by continuously working for 13-14 years. And all our Himalaya states have the potential to develop organic state capitals. When I visited Sikkim, I visited Sikkim for their organic festival. It was an event to dedicate Sikkim to the country as an organic state.

I got to meet two youth there – one guy and one girl. They had gone there straight away after passing out from IIM Ahmadabad. When we were introduced then I thought that they would have come there as tourists. When I enquired them they responded in negative, they told me that they had been staying there for the last six months. When I asked them what they were doing there, they said: we are working in the direction of global marketing of local organic products and our business is growing rapidly in short span of time.

See, this is the new world. I mean our start-ups have tapped these things. How we can empower them, strengthen them, how to add new things in them? Waste to wealth. You cannot imagine that how big this waste to wealth sector is of Indian economy. There is technology in it, innovation is in it, it has recycling, it has all the things and it is necessary for the country. And if we strengthen it, recycling is not new to India; we were accustomed with these things since ages. But due to changes the intermediate link snapped. Now we will have to all these things in an organized manner and if we do all these things then we can bring about the change.

Education, this is true that in the field of education campus placements take place from IIMs. One crore, two crores or three crores, employers hire students by giving this much money. Can't we dream that the teachers should also get campus placement and they also fetch one crore, two crores, three crore or five crores. It's possible, it's very much possible. You meet any India, the richest or the poorest, the most educated or the illiterate and just ask them one question: what is the goal of their life? You will get a common answer: good education to their children. You ask anyone, ask your driver what does he think, he would say: sir, somehow I want to give good education to my kids, I have spent my life time as driver but I want to make him successful.

Sahib, I ask to many people, he may be a driver or a liftman, I mean I ask them whether they are under debt or not? They say: sir, we have taken loan. I asked them why they took the loan. He borrowed the money to send his kids to good schools. It means that if there is a great demand for something in our country then it is for the best teachers. We should develop these best teachers and common man should feel that becoming a teacher is very respectable thing and he can make big contribution through this. Some new models are emerging, plenty of new models, practical and very good models are emerging for this and technology can play a very big role in this thing.

We launch so many satellites and take pride in it. But there were several such transponders that were hanging unutilized in the air. After coming to power we broke those silos, we brought together, space, education and technology sector. Recently, I have dedicated 32 transponders to the education sector alone. And they can deliver education to you, to your homes free of charge for kids. It means technology can help us in providing quality education without dilution, without diversion to common man, to the poorest of the poor.

How we can use technology to bring about changes in the quality of education? If change comes to the quality of education from the bottom then such pressure will become applicable on teachers that they will have to change, this situation is going to be created soon. And that is why this is government's effort to engage people like you, those who have a different world view, who have a sixth sense, who have excitement, enthusiasm, innovations, thinking and ideas. This is my effort how to connect these things with the government and this is a part of that effort.

Similarly, you people and countrymen like you, many people, you see this neither my thinking nor the government's thinking that we can create a New India through government schemes. Unless more than 1.25 billion citizens resolve about New India, unless they decided their role in New India and they don't fulfill that on the basis of self-initiative till that time this will work not finish.

And that is why it should be our endeavor and it is my expectation from you people that wherever you are, will you tell these things to your people? You may have 20 employees, 50, 100 or thousand employees will you ever ask about these things by sitting with them that look, by 2022, we want to take our country to that place, what responsibility can you take? What can you do? We can create this environment that everyone can do a lot.

Sometimes I remember that when I was not in politics there was a big industrialist, he mostly used to lead Gandhian life, used to be in the selfless service mode, one of his family member was associated with Ram Krishna Mission and I also relations with that family because of my association with Ram Krishna Mission. So he once purchased an old decrepit closed mill. Why was that closed? It was closed due to strikes and the issues created by unions. So once I asked him: why did you take this risk? And what is the result, what happened? He gave me a simple answer, he said: "We just bought it and I started visiting that place from the day one and I had decided that for the six months I would go there regularly. And I used to have my lunch in the labor canteen there. I used to sit there and have my meal there. This small decision of mine changes the thinking of the workers towards me. They did not look at me as the owner and I didn't look at them as workers. I used to eat the same thing on their table whatever they used to eat and this brought about a psychological change that they became my family members and they worked so hard that within six months that the failed factory turned profitable."

I mean to say that whether you ever, please also ask your colleagues that whether they have ever gathered the 12, 15 or 18-year-old children of your workers, the children of small time workers? Have you told inspirational things to kids of your workers? You see, as soon as you connect with their kids, you will see that they will be dedicated to you for the rest of their lives whether they get increment or not whether they get the bonus or not. I want to bring about these changes. I want to bring about these changes. You tell me that the insurance schemes launched by the government of India on a premium of one rupee per day, there is an insurance scheme that is one rupee per day, Government of India has given such a good package for your employees, it's such a good product, if you deposit 500 rupees in their bank account, in their fix deposit then it will pay their yearly insurance premium. And if some mis-happening takes place in his life then both these are insurance products, two and two, four lakhs rupees will automatically reach to that poor person's family.

These government schemes that are directly related to your workers, can you encourage these schemes? You must have seen that our Gaurav, he would have told you about the digital platform of the government. Many of you would be from the digital field but have not entered in this particular area. Can you push the government by entering into this area in large scale? Can you become a partner in driving the government? I think as we want to move into the direction of change, I think we can move with that much more power in that direction as much more we connect. And whatever we are, we are the citizens of India. In whatever office we are, in whatever system we are, whichever shop we are sitting in, whichever industry we are running, but collectively all of us are one India. It is my effort to fill one 1.25 billion Indians with these feelings and I need your support in this thing.

It's correct that whatever things I think of I can do all of them because I am the Prime Minister, it's not true. I myself will have to navigate through the system. Therefore, it is possible that 40 ideas out of total 59 ideas given by you may not click but even if 10 of your ideas are taken forward then it will be your invaluable contribution to the country. And our efforts should continue with this feeling and despair should not be there.

Friends, one may think that a lot of discussion takes place, we think a lot but what I said, what you said, none of it was acted upon, but a lot of things that have been acted upon are said by you, said by many others and due to these things these changes are taking place and we have to work like this. It's possible that despite very good ideas and suggestions the system may not have the capacity to accept them but gradually its capacity to digest, to accept will increase then good schemes will come forward and they will be accepted, if you associate yourself with us with this feeling.

And I want to develop this thing into institutional mechanism, yearly thing so you are going to give us feedback for its further improvement. Later, you can give your suggestions and ideas through email. You can also give suggestion regarding the people, you can also give suggestion on this program but I'm confident because I came here yesterday evening as well, I got to meet with all of you and even today I got the opportunity to know the ideas of all of you that in how many new ways you can think of things and present them.

Whatever things are there in the government, like I conducted a small experiment. I conducted an experiment of organizing Hackathon. It was done with college students and we invited students from all the IITs. More than 40 thousand students participated in the first round. I asked the government departments to prepare a list of those difficulties, those problems faced by them for whom they did not have a solution. Initially there was resistance. The resistance was like this that I'm a secretary, I'm a joint secretary, I'm a director, how can I tell these are the problems for which I don't have solution, it will be embarrassing for us. So initially it was difficult to tell about these things. However, my office and I relentlessly pursued the issue, finally they shortlisted 400 such issues the solutions for which was yet to be found. Earlier they had the feeling that there was no problem. Then I gave those issues to the students and asked them to organize a Hackathon and find solutions for them. And they worked non-stop for 40 hours in their university campus,

40 thousand Indian students, purely in the age group of sixteen to eighteen and they applied their mind. You will be happy to know that they gave us wonderful solutions. Railway people next day called them for the meeting the next day and implemented some of the things in the railways by adopting them. All the departments have tried to incorporate that solution in their functioning.

If you ask the father of the 16-18-year-old youth of our country about what does his ward do, the father will give 10 minus mark, but the same youth can be so useful for the country. And it is my effort in the work of these 40 thousand students. You also have that capability. And I don't think that there is any difference between me and you in terms of patriotism. We all have equal amount of patriotism, in each one of us, in our thoughts, we all have this feeling that the country should progress. And there are plenty of opportunities for work.

And it is my belief that if we work collectively then the results will be outstanding. And once again to you people, because people say the time is priceless, this may not be the case for others but it is certainly for the rich people. And despite that you spared your time, spared your precious time for that I express my heartfelt gratitude on behalf of the government and I hope that you will remain associated with us. We would keep taking forward our stories. We can meet again as per the topic, as per the region, we can meet in different ways. But we can take things forward. My best wishes to all of you. Thank you.

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