Between the Eleventh and Fourteenth Century of the current era, Nannaya, Tikkana and Errana, the poets known as the Trinity of Telugu Literature, composed the Andhra Mahabharatam.

Telugu literature probably began to take shape with the composition of this great epic in Telugu.

In the Thirteenth century, RanganathaRamayanam by Gonabudda Reddy was a pioneering work in Telugu on the theme of Ramayana.

This great piece of literary work has now become integral to the Telugu culture.

Telugu has rich literary and grammatical traditions.

Various forms of literature abound in the Telugu language, such as Prabandhams, which are stories written in verse form.

Telugu literature has also resorted to a unique form of verse called Champu, which is a beautiful mixture of prose and poetry.

To make Telugu literature more comprehensible to the masses and draw more admirers to the language, Dwipadas, or couplets, and Satakas, or hundred verses, came to be written.

These include the Dasarathi Sataka and Vemana Sataka.

Telugu grammar owes much to Paravastu Chinnayya Soori, who undertook extensive research on the grammar of the language and wrote Baala Vyakaranamu in the 19th century.

The Sixteenth and Seventeenth centuries are considered the golden age of Telugu literature.

The first original poetic novel in Telugu literature, Kala Purnodayam, was written by Pingaliu Soorana, who was a pioneer in Telugu classical poetry.

Krishna Deva Raya's Amuktha Malyadha, which blended the eternal and the temporal in a grand poetic style while describing an interesting tale, is considered a Maha Kavya, besides Peddhana's Manu Charithra.

The modern trend in Telugu literature began in the Nineteenth century, marked by several influential writers.

Gurajada Venkata Appa Rao, considered the father of modern Telugu literature, adhered to a poetic style that was pure, lucid, vivacious and clear.

He wrote Kanya Sulkam, which is considered a landmark play for its clear message of social reform.

Another Telugu novel dedicated to the cause of social emancipation is Mala Palli by Unnava Lakshmi Narayana, a freedom fighter, who also fought against untouchability.

The literary movement in Telugu has continued with the same vigour in the post-Independence era.

Several reputed writers have contributed to the growth and enrichment of this language.

Viswanatha Satyanarayana, a versatile writer and author of more than 100 works, was bestowed with the Jnanpith Award in 1970 for his popular literary work, Ramayana Kalpa Vriksham.

Dr. C. Narayana Reddy received the Jnanpith Award in 1988 for Viswambara.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Four Indian languages namely Tamil, Sanskrit, Telugu and Kannada have been classified as classical languages in India.

Telugu language, with its credentials of a long surviving rich cultural heritage, was declared a classical language in India in 2008.

Telugu is today spoken in several parts of the country such as Pondicherry, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, besides Andhra Pradesh.

Its reach also extends beyond the shores of the country.

Telugu-speaking Indian diaspora are present in significant numbers in the USA, the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Malaysia, Singapore, Mauritius, and South Africa.

It is important that the antiquity of Telugu language and civilization must be further explored.

Having declared Telugu a classical language, it our responsibility to make every effort for its healthy growth and development so that posterity can benefit from the vast knowledge and ideas that rest within this language.

There is a need to have concrete plans for creating awareness about Telugu language and literature among today's youth.

Steps must be taken to consolidate all research works on Telugu history undertaken so far and to identify and encourage new research projects.

The use of Telugu in public administration and education should also be popularized.

Languages are not merely a means of communication.

Our languages and literature are our heritage.

They define and reflect the roots of our society.

The promotion of literature cannot take place on the basis of Government support alone.

I urge all stakeholders to contribute meaningfully towards preserving, encouraging and promoting Indian languages and literature.

There is no dearth of creativity and talent in Indian languages.

While Indian writing in English has excited the world, we need to create platforms to provide greater exposure to Indian languages so that the creativity embedded in Indian literature is spread across the world.

The fourth World Telugu Conference is an opportunity for the eminent personalities, poets, writers, intellectuals and artists gathered here to give a new dimension and vision to the Telugu language.

I am told that this Conference is being held in Andhra Pradesh after a long gap of 37 years.

It would be useful to hold such conferences more frequently.

I am sure that ideas and action points that emerge from this Conference will be examined by the State Government and measures undertaken to translate them into reality.

I offer my best wishes to the large number of Telugu speakers who have assembled here for this important cause.

I wish the Conference a grand success.

Thank you.

Jai Hind!

I am happy to be here in this historic city of Allahabad to deliver this Convocation Address.

Situated as it is at the confluence of three rivers, Ganga, Yamuna and the mythological Saraswati, Allahabad has traditionally been the seat of spirituality, knowledge and learning.

It was also the epicentre of India's movement for independence and citizens of this city formed the vanguard of our freedom struggle.

The foundation stone of Motilal Nehru National Institute of Technology (MNNIT), then a Regional Engineering College was laid on 3rd May, 1961 by Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru while Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri formally inaugurated the College building on 18th April, 1965.

The institution they helped to create and nurture has today grown into one of India's finest in the field of technical education.

The Government of India, recognising MNNIT's efforts, has accorded it the status of an Institution of National Importance.

It is heartening to note that all 14 Departments of the Institute are today offering Ph.D. programmes.

I would like to congratulate all the bright young minds who are passing through its hallowed portals and hope that over time they shall leave an indelible mark on the country's progress.

In terms of Purchasing Power Parity (PPP), we are the third largest economy in the world.

The growth rate that our country enjoys is second only to China among the major economies in the world.

In six out of the last nine years, we managed a growth rate in excess of 8%.

Though the growth rate had slightly contracted since 2010-11 in the face of global economic meltdown, India has been able to withstand the crisis and has shown a remarkable resilience.

One of the key factors behind India's economic resilience is the strong foundation it has established since independence and in the early implementation of our plans in the field of higher education.

It is through education that we build intellectual capital and create a skilled workforce which can contribute directly to the nation's output.

Research is an advanced product of education.

Research leads to innovation, technological advancement and process perfection, which in turn shifts production frontiers and creates capacity for future growth.

This is an important moment in the evolution of the higher education framework in our country.

We have reason to be optimistic.

At the end of financial year 2011-12, the overall figures revealed a total of 659 degree awarding institutions and 33,023 colleges.

Enrolment to higher education institutions in the country increased from 1.39 crore in 2006-07 to 2.18 crore in 2011-12.

The Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education is targeted to increase from nearly 18% at present to about 25% by 2016-17.

However, despite these achievements, it is widely recognized that our country's education system is burdened with demands of both quantity and quality.

We need many more universities and technical institutions to be able to address the higher education needs of our increasing number of students.

What we need most is to provide good quality education.

I want to share with you my sense of disappointment on seeing, in recent reports, that not a single Indian University or Institute of higher learning figure in the list of top 200 Universities in the world.

Whether the Survey reflects the true position of our Universities and Institutes is beside the point.

Befitting our growing economic power status, we must raise the standards of our higher education to a level that we reach undisputedly among the top ten or at least top fifty in the world in the coming years.

In a globalised world, Indian institutions should aim not only at becoming top universities in India but also establish themselves as world class universities with international standards of research, teaching and learning.

To maintain high standards, institutions must constantly upgrade themselves.

They must not only invest in infrastructure and use the latest technology in the imparting of education, but also engage outstanding faculty and update their courses and curriculum constantly with changing times and requirements.

There is urgent need to develop a curriculum that will encourage the growth of research and innovation.

Research is a key area where there is tremendous potential and need for a concerted drive.

Last year, for an estimated 260 lakh students at the under-graduate level and above, there were only one lakh PhD students in our country.

We lag far behind many other countries in research and innovation.

The total number of patent applications filed by Indians in 2010 was only around six thousand, which pales in comparison to over 3 lakh applications filed by Chinese, around 1.7 lakh filed by Germans, 4.64 lakh filed by Japanese, and 4.2 lakh filed by Americans.

The number of applications for patents filed by Indians comprised only 0.3% of the total applications filed in the world.

The Government of India's 12th Plan Strategy includes a series of initiatives in the field of higher education.

These include the establishment of more Central Universities, greater emphasis on technical education and distance learning, academic reforms, interest subsidy on education loans, establishment of innovation universities, expansion of existing institutions and a focus on better quality in research, infrastructure, faculty and curriculum content.

The strategy gives due emphasis to greater outreach and more opportunities for all sections of our society.

Progress of a country cannot be guaranteed unless all sections of society take part in nation building to their full potential.

Women must be accepted and seen as equal or more than equal partners in our progress and prosperity as a nation.

The participation of women in higher education is, in general, lower than men, and in engineering, the situation is even more acute.

I am told that in MNNIT, the percentage of female students in the last ten years was around 8%.

This is woefully short of what we should envisage as a nation of equal opportunity.

I am hopeful that engineering as a discipline and a career of choice will attract many more girl students in the future.

I take a moment here to express my deep distress over the recent incident of brutal violence against a young girl in Delhi.

The Government is alert to the situation and is taking necessary action to ensure that such unfortunate incidents are not repeated in future.

I pray for the speedy recovery of this brave young girl.

Criminal attacks against women often happen in backdrop of negative perceptions about women harboured and propagated by certain elements in society.

This must change.

We must inculcate in every member of our society the highest of respect for women and the youth of the country, particularly students of prestigious institutions like MNNIT must take the lead in this regard.

I appreciate the justified anger of the youth over this ghastly incident but at the same time I humbly remind them that reason should not be thrown to the winds.

Youth must learn to control emotions.

Violence is not the solution.

I am told that one of the security persons on duty passed away today.

I express condolences over the sad demise of this man who passed away in the call of duty.

I share the agony of his family.

I hope this will not be repeated in future.

Throughout the history of mankind, engineering and technology have proved to be the strongest driving forces in the cause of human development and culture.

In addition to the duty towards the academic and technical community, graduating students have a larger social responsibility that they should strive to fulfill.

I am confident that graduates of MNNIT will contribute in abundant measure, to the task of nation building.

I would like to congratulate the degree recipients once again and wish them all success in life and their careers.

I call upon the graduates to uphold the dignity of their education and carry out their responsibilities towards society and the nation.

Keep the flame of innovation alive; never be lulled into complacency and never be lured by short-cuts.

In fact, Kashi or Varanasi - has age old linkages with the people of Nepal.

The Banaras Hindu University since its inception has carried forward this tradition with students from Nepal almost always on its rolls.

Among its alumni are scores of leaders, ministers, parliamentarians, judges, academicians, public figures and citizens from Nepal.

It is indeed most befitting that we are honouring the First Citizen of this great country and close neighbour of ours.

These are endeavours to keep the noble mission of the Mahamana alive.

An intellectual and practical champion of global peace and intercultural harmony, Mahamana sought to draw the best from the eastern learning and western scientific knowledge.

He strived to create a holistic template of education and actualize the same through the Banaras Hindu University which he established in the year 1916.

Banaras Hindu University was the first unitary and residential teaching university of India built through public donations collected by Mahamana.

It is also the first example of community participation in higher education in India.

This university was established to bring about a synergy in ancient traditions and modern understandings as also to align Indian wisdom with western knowledge.

Thus this great seat of learning not only embodied the assertion of Indian genius but also became a site for nourishing the holistic vision of nationalism and universal values.

I am happy to see that Malaviyaji's dream-child, the Banaras Hindu University, has moved from strength to strength and is soon going to complete its centenary.

It is now one of the largest universities in India with maximum number of academic disciplines and departments.

Its illustrious alumni are spread far and wide bringing laurels to the country and society.

Universities are the fountainhead of knowledge and its dissemination.

They have to discover fresh perspectives and assume new responsibilities to meet the imperatives of holistic human and social development.

In this sense, higher education should offer a bridge between scientific knowledge and societal needs.

It stands for the onward march of human race towards even higher objectives.

Malaviyaji accorded great importance to the universal spread of learning and scholarship.

Mahamana was a great votary of women's education.

Mahamana's emphasis on women's education and empowerment should inspire us to redouble efforts in this regard.

Permit me to use this occasion to express deep anguish and dismay over the recent incident of a brutal attack on a 23 year old girl in our capital city of Delhi.

My heart goes out to this young girl and her family who have demonstrated extraordinary courage amidst the worst adversity and I request all of you to join me in praying for her speedy recovery.

The nation has been witness to the anger and rage of our youth who have gathered in the streets of Delhi and other cities to demand stronger measures to ensure the safety of women and more stringent laws to provide deterrent penalty to criminals who endanger our women.

I am certain that, the Government will take all necessary steps to ensure that such incidents do not occur in future.

I understand agony of your mind but please remember nothing is achieved through violence.

Please take hold of your emotions and act with reason.

The society as a whole has to work to eradicate this menace.

We as a society must work towards changing negative perceptions about women.

Women must be treated with respect and should be provided a safe, secure and congenial environment in which their talents can flower and they can contribute their full share in the building of our nation.

Our history, traditions, religions and cultural values as well as the Constitution demands nothing less.

I hope the faculty and students of an august institution like BHU will take the lead in spreading awareness and sensitizing society at large on gender issues.

The proposed Centres on Human Values and Ethics and Inter-cultural Studies are timely and innovative.

The integration of human values and ethics as well as the inculcation of tolerance and respect for pluralistic ethos in the mainstream education are an absolute imperative today.

I congratulate the University for taking up this most important task with the help of the Ministry of Culture and the National Implementation Committee under the chairmanship of Dr. Karan Singh.

It is appropriate that along with these centres, an archive of Mahamana's works and a special website to disseminate his thoughts and vision would be developed to create awareness and commitment to values, ethics and rights particularly among the youth for enrichment of social and human well being.

The dream of Mahamana of cultural integration of India with the rest of Asia, especially with its South and South East Asian neighbours and promotion of dialogue among them as a means of mutual enrichment and nourishment has been taken up as an important agenda of the University.

We could proceed to build the 21st century as the Asian Century only if we develop relations on the basis of knowledge and understanding of each other.

I am happy that on the occasion of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahamana, the university is proposing to expand that vision to the other regions.

The 150th Birth Anniversary is an opportunity to remember, cherish and act on ideas, vision, and activities of Mahamana Malaviyaji.

That would be the best homage to a powerful visionary and nationalist leader of his times.

Heads of State & Government of ASEAN Member States,

Vice President of India, Shri M. Hamid Ansari,

Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh,

Secretary General of ASEAN, Dr. Surin Pitsuwan,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am extremely happy to welcome you all on this occasion to celebrate the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit.

This year the ASEAN-India Dialogue Partnership has reached a significant milestone.

In two decades of steady development, the ASEAN-India Dialogue Partnership has matured into a Strategic Partnership.

This, to my mind, is a natural coming of age.

This is an auspicious occasion indeed as we embark into a new phase in our relationship - in which we will create an even more comprehensive partnership for peace and prosperity between our nations.

We, in India, perceive our partnership with ASEAN as a pact for growth and economic progress.

We all have a shared vision of promoting peace and stability and we are united in our dream of a new Asia full of promise and opportunities.

There will be challenges but we are confident of our ability to co-operate and address these collectively and successfully in the interest of our peoples.

The essence of the ASEAN and India partnership is that it facilitates and assists each partner country in strengthening its national programmes for sustainable economic and socio-cultural development and in contributing to the growing relevance of Asia globally.

The Asia-Pacific region is today central to the global dialogue on political, economic and security issues.

It is, therefore, natural that ASEAN and India, with their affinities and complementary capacities, come together for the definition of the new economic and security architecture in the region.

We have joined the ASEAN in building strong foundations for this - as a Sectoral Partner of ASEAN in 1992, a full Dialogue Partner in 1996 and a Summit level partner in 2002.

In the last decade, as our respective capacities have grown, our partnership has become all the more relevant.

We have now succeeded in putting in place the structural framework for a comprehensive intensification of our co-operation; and we have developed several far-reaching and well conceived projects and programmes in our collective interest.

India has been consistent in its support to the evolution of ASEAN's central and leading role in this region.

We endorse your objectives for an ASEAN Community by 2015, for a Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity, the Initiative for ASEAN Integration and, most recently, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership.

I am happy to note the significant increase in the people-to-people programmes between ASEAN and India over the last year.

The ASEAN and Indian participants in the Car Rally are witness to the strong ties of affection that bind us.

This was evident in the spontaneous warmth and hospitality that they received in the 8 ASEAN countries and India that they traversed during their 22 day journey.

Our 11 countries participated in this commemorative event with enthusiasm and a sense of great anticipation.

Geographic connectivity between ASEAN and India is a strategic asset.

We are neighbours with long-standing maritime links.

The ASEAN India Car Rally and the sail training ship INS Sudarshini's expedition to ASEAN countries have not only brought goodwill and awareness along the route that they took but they also brought together multitudes of people in virtual connectivity.

These were people who were following the events real time and, speaking to each other through their growing network of electronic mail, through blogs and twitter.

I note that our increasing co-operation in the key sectors of tourism, agriculture, environment, renewable energy, information technology and space allows us to develop innovative approaches to anticipate and address future challenges.

Our focus on building capacities and synergies, of improving our mutual connectivity and encouraging economic trade and investment among ourselves is equally important for the development of our human resources, and for bringing stability and prosperity to our people.

Our trade has surpassed our expectations.

We are now looking at ways and means to enhance co-operation between our Small and Medium Enterprises and entrepreneurial sectors.

We should take full advantage of our complementarities through more ambitious agreements; we should catalyse the flows of investments and goods and services, and link the synergies of our youth; we should facilitate the joint initiatives of the industrial sectors in our respective countries and we should improve the infrastructural capacity in our region to meet the aspirations and ambitions of our peoples.

Your deliberations earlier today at the Plenary of the Commemorative Summit have set the agenda and showed the way for our collective efforts in the days to come.

India's engagement with the ASEAN has grown in a manner that is commensurate with the increase in our collective capacities, our growing economic integration and the evolving politico-security context in the Asia-Pacific.

We have established a robust framework for co-operation under the Plan of Action to Implement the ASEAN-India Partnership for Peace, Progress and Shared Prosperity (2010-15).

The ASEAN countries are central to India's Look East Policy.

ASEAN continues to be our natural partner in the Asia Pacific region.

I would also like to emphasize that our future priorities must attach special importance to our ongoing co-operation in the knowledge and skills sector and make it easier for our professionals, entrepreneurs, students and tourists to travel between our countries.

Our growing engagement in areas such as maritime security and counter-terrorism is important to meet these common challenges.

Given our cultural affinity, an example of which we witnessed here today, physical proximity, and shared priorities, the ASEAN-India relationship is showing increasing evidence of becoming more comprehensive and strategic in nature.

As we have articulated in the vision statement, a closer integration between ASEAN and India will be to the mutual benefit of the nations that we represent this historic evening.

With these words, Excellencies, I invite you to join me in raising a toast to the strong future of the ASEAN-India Strategic Partnership, to the progress and prosperity of all our peoples and to our lasting friendship.

It is indeed a moment of joy and nostalgia to be back at the college where I spent four of the best years of my youth.

It seems like yesterday that I was admitted for the I.Sc course in 1952.

I went on to do the B.A course from 1953-56 and I distinctly remember collecting my graduation mark sheet on the 13th of August, 1956 from this college.

There were at that time eight boys' hostels in the college.

My batchmates included Gopal Sarkar, Shri Sasthi Kinkar Das, Prof. Amal Mukhopadhyay, Prof. Dwipendu Banerjee, Shri Balaram De, Shri Ganga Charan Mishra, Shri Rajat Kumar Mishra, Shri Angshu Bhusan Bhattacharyya, Sri Sambhu Gopal Das, Sri Jatadhari Malakar and Shri Bimalendu Naskar.

I recall them and their families vividly.

I am very happy to see some of them here today.

It is with great respect and reverence that I remember the Principal, Professor Arun Sen.

They remained in my heart all these years.

It has since been an eventful journey for me, full of challenges but I have been fortunate as there have also been so many rewards along the way.

This is an important moment in the evolution of the higher education framework in our country.

We have reason to be optimistic.

At the end of financial year 2011-12, the overall figures revealed a total of 659 degree awarding institutions and 33,023 colleges.

This indicates that enrolment to higher education institutions in the country has increased, from 1.39 crore in 2006-07 to 2.18 crore in 2011-12.

However, the challenge remains - to maintain and upgrade the standard of education imparted in these institutions.

The other urgent need is to train and motivate their teaching staff.

Universities need to develop in their students a scientific temper and a curriculum that will encourage the growth of research and innovation.

This is a positive development.

While information technology has been put effectively at the disposal of distance learning programmes, more innovative use of technology needs to be made so that besides increasing its coverage, modules can be devised that are more user-friendly.

Research is a key requirement where there is a potential and a need for a concerted drive.

Last year, for an estimated 260 lakh students at the under-graduate level and above, there were only one lakh PhD students.

This needs to be given a boost.

A study of the incentive structure for a research student would indicate how he or she can be incentivized to move towards research.

Government of India's 12th Plan Strategy includes a series of initiatives.

These include the establishment of more Central Universities, greater emphasis on technical education and distance learning, academic reforms, interest subsidy on education loans, establishment of innovation universities, expansion of existing institutions and a focus on better quality - in research, infrastructure, faculty and curriculum content.

The strategy gives due emphasis to greater outreach and more opportunities for all the sections of our society.

Governance reforms and restructuring will also be a timely measure.

All these initiatives are welcome and outcome oriented.

We should support Government's efforts through private partnerships as much as we can and wherever these are possible and feasible.

As we stand on the threshold of the centenary of Asia's first Nobel Prize to Gurudev in 1913, we remember with reverence his idea of the vibration between the self and the world, especially with reference to his special regard for China.

The idea of civilizational meeting of the world through knowledge of each others cultures and literature was an idea that had fascinated Tagore.

At Visva-Bharati, he had asserted that in whatever is the best of civilization, every single individual can state his right.

Tagore had realized the special role of Asia in the pattern of vibrations between the self and the world.

But he had also carefully noted the movements of the ideas of spirituality, non-violence and tolerance across the borders especially through the message of Buddhism.

It was this historical bond that he sought to revitalize.

Interestingly Tagore's winning the Nobel Prize was also a moment of reassertion of an Asian dignity within China.

As early as 1915 his poems and stories had been translated into Chinese.

The tumultuous reception that he received from poets and intellectuals in 1924 served as testimony to the appeal of his ideas among the Chinese literati.

The keynote of Tagore's Talks in China in 1924 emphasized the necessity of the two Asian neighbours to strengthen bonds across culture and together strive for the welfare of its citizens rather than look for material greed or power.

Tagore's attempt to build bridges was however not a mere utopian dream.

At Visva-Bharati, where he had initiated the study of world cultures, he started the programme for Chinese studies in 1921, with the help of Sylvan Levi, Vidusekhara Sastri and Lin Wo Jiang.

The turning point arrived when Tagore met Tan Yun Shan in 1927 at Singapore.

Tan Yun Shan's visit to Santiniketan in 1928 saw the founding of the Sino Indian Societies in China and India leading to the inauguration of Cheena Bhavana in April 1937.

The vibrations that Tagore had dreamt of had attained reality with the able help of Tan Yun Shan.

Over a period of time the Cheena Bhavana in particular has housed rare books, bridged cultures and been a first in the people to people relationship with China that is so vital for global harmony.

In 1957, the Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai was conferred the Deshikottama by Visva-Bharati creating a new chapter in Sino Indian relations.

We often see nations as monoliths with rigid boundaries.

But visionaries like Tagore have made us realize that literature, histories and cultures represent common ideals of humanity that transcend national limits.

It is this sense of a shared humanity, a Visva-Bodh that Tagore sang of in his literature and music and attempted to realize at Visva-Bharati.

It is thus fitting that the celebration of Asia's first Nobel prize should be initiated at Visva-Bharati and be an occasion, not only to reiterate our historical bonds, but the need for cooperation and close exchange of ideas in the future.

India and China stand on the threshold of a leap into an exciting phase of global exchange, where harnessing of ideas and resources for global welfare can serve as a major fulcrum for world peace and welfare.

This seminar thus will not merely celebrate the award of a Nobel Prize to an individual; it will celebrate the potential of the idea of exchange, co-operation and multiculturalism.

I congratulate Visva Bharati for the true spirit of universal cooperation and inclusion that it has displayed while celebrating Gurudev's 150th Birth Anniversary.

Under the guidance of the National Committee headed by the Prime Minister and the National Implementation Committee, that I had the honour to head as the then Finance Minister; Visva-Bharati has worked in perfect collaboration with governmental agencies, so as to bring out Tagore's vision, achievements and works before the entire world.

At the same time, it was a recognition that in his texts, the reflection of the deepest truths and cadences of Indian philosophy and literature could restart itself in the world.

It is Tagore's perfect sense of synergy and joy - the joy of submission to a divine power, the joy of surrendering the self, of participating in the vast expanse of nature and realizing the nooks and corners of humanity that made him relevant in 1913, and continues to make him relevant today.

Tagore received the Nobel award with nonchalance and humility because it was testament to his ideas of global harmony, exchange of cultures and an assertion of the joy and dignity of life.

A hundred years have passed.

This centenary celebration will pay homage to the beauty of that idea of collapsing boundaries, human love and selfless service.

It gives me immense pleasure to be here today at Sulur, to award Standards to 25 Squadron and 33 Squadron of the Indian Air Force.

Both these flying units have a rich tradition of valour and courage and have rendered distinguished service to the nation since their inception.

Their personnel, both past and present, have set the highest standards in pursuit of excellence that others would do well to emulate.

For their selfless devotion, professionalism and courage in the face of adversity, the nation honours them today.

The Indian Air Force has won many laurels in the defence of our nation.

The operational capability of the Indian Air Force constitutes an important cutting edge of the nation's military strength.

Since we gained independence, the Indian Air Force, besides safeguarding the sovereignty of our nation, has always been available to provide humanitarian assistance during disasters both within and outside the nation.

I do remember that, the Air Force had flown relief supply in 2005 to a place as far as the US when Katrina had struck New Orleans.

In 2008, the Indian Air Force flew relief supplies to earthquake hit South-western province of Sichuan in China.

India stands for peace and its foreign policy is focused on the achievement of this objective.

Therefore, effective deterrence is the cornerstone of our defence policy.

But effective deterrence requires the maintenance of a force that can be called upon at any time, to secure the sovereignty of our nation.

Our armed force, of which the men and women who stand before us, symbolizes, this capability.

The courage and determination of our air warriors is a matter of pride for the nation.

They have earned it by their performance during multi-national exercises within India and abroad.

The Air Force of some of the most advanced nations have also marveled at the technical and tactical capability of our men and women.

This has been achieved through a disciplined and strenuous training regime.

Our air warriors have also been selected to be a part of U.N. peacekeeping missions.

This is a testimony to your capabilities, discipline and excellence.

It has been a pillar of support in providing security and succor, besides playing a critical role in development of J&K and the entire northern region.

During the 1965 and 1971 wars and Kargil Operations, the aircraft of the 25 Squadron had even in the face of heavy odds, airlifted critical supplies for the troops and performed some very important operations.

The Squadron has provided swift relief to fellow citizens in almost all natural calamities including Bhuj earthquake and Tsunami relief.

The performance of the 25 Squadron in national and international exercises is a result of high standards of professionalism attained by the squadron personnel.

The 33 Squadron is a premier Transport squadron of the Indian Air Force.

The Squadron participated in both 1965 and 1971 wars.

The Squadron played a major role in the Indian Peace Keeping Force operations in Sri Lanka in 1989.

After tsunami struck our island territories, the personnel of 33 Squadron flew extensive relief operations, bringing much needed respite to the local populace.

The Squadron has also been maintaining an effective air bridge to our island territories.

I am confident that the squadron will continue to attain greater heights of glory in the years to come.

It was extremely heartening to see the high standards of parade displayed by the air warriors of both the squadrons.

My compliments to all of you.

In acknowledgement and recognition of their outstanding performance over the years, I award the President's Standard to 25 Squadron and 33 Squadron.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge and compliment the personnel and families of both these squadrons, both past and present, for their continued sacrifice and service to the nation.

The nation is indeed proud of you.

I am happy to be here today at the Northern India Chief Ministers' Conclave being organized by the PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

It gives me immense pleasure to share my thoughts with the political leaders who steer some of the largest States of the country and some of the Captains of the Indian industry to discuss an issue of immediate and great relevance to all of us.

The PHD Chamber, in its history spanning more than a century, has endeavoured to build synergy between the Government and the Industry for the progress of our nation.

I congratulate the Chamber for this initiative.

India is, today, among the fastest growing countries in the world.

The decadal average growth rate, which was 1.9 per cent in the Eighties, increased to 7.3 per cent in the last decade.

India's share in World GDP has doubled in the last two decades, from 1.2 per cent in 1991 to 2.4 per cent in 2011.

It became the third largest economy in the world on Purchasing Power Parity basis this year.

We have, therefore, a collective challenge to reverse this deceleration in growth and raise it to 8 to 9 per cent that we had recorded for most of the years in the previous decade.

I need to hardly emphasize that growth is dependent on the investment rate and the efficient use of capital.

The rapid economic growth after 2003-04 was accompanied by a rise in the investment rate.

However, the investment rate has declined after reaching its peak in 2007-08 and for this, we have to create the conditions required for it.

Hence, growth of this sector is vital not only for the overall growth of the economy but also to meet the objectives of employment generation.

The growth in the manufacturing sector, which was 9.7 per cent in 2009-10 and 7.6 per cent in 2010-11, declined to 2.5 per cent in 2011-12.

The share of manufacturing in India's GDP of around 16 per cent, which has been the level since the eighties, is much lower than the comparable economies in Asia such as Thailand, South Korea, China and Malaysia, where its share is between 25 to 34 per cent.

We have the advantage of a demographic dividend.

The average age of population in India is below 30 years and over 60 per cent is in the working age group.

This provides us with a unique advantage for driving future growth.

But, it could also pose a serious challenge of creating 220 million jobs by 2025.

The National Manufacturing Policy that was announced a year ago has addressed this opportunity by aiming to increase the growth rate in manufacturing to 12 to 14 per cent over the medium term.

In another decade, the share of manufacturing in the country's GDP is envisaged to rise to 25 per cent.

To increase the competitiveness of this sector, a host of remedial measures are necessary.

While India ranks favourably in parameters such as Getting Credit and Protecting Investors, our country's rankings in areas such as Starting Business, Dealing with Construction Permits, Enforcing Contracts and Resolving Insolvency are not high.

While the rankings may not truly reflect the ground realities, these are nonetheless indicative of the need for us to change.

Thus, our emphasis should be on strengthening the weak areas so that the manufacturing sector can be benchmarked with the best in the world in terms of its competitiveness.

Research and Development is the basic constituent of promoting innovation.

The culture of research needs to be further augmented in our country.

Only about 6,000 patent applications were filed by Indians in 2010, which is a mere 0.30 per cent of the total applications filed in the world.

India spends only 0.9 per cent of GDP on research and development whereas China spends about 1.2 per cent, UK 1.7 per cent and Israel 4.3 per cent.

We should increase our expenditure in this area to become globally relevant in manufacturing.

In countries such as Japan, the USA and South Korea, the private sector finances a majority of expenditure on industrial research and development.

The share of the private sector in research and development in India is only one-fourth and there is an urgent need to increase it.

To achieve the goal of improving research and development, we have to focus on creating centres of excellence in education.

We do have a large number of engineering and technical institutions.

But with the exception of a few, the others need strengthening.

In the second phase from 2010 to 2014, it has been envisaged to cover another 190 engineering institutions.

I hope that in the next 10 to 15 years time, with all-round improvement in the parameters of competitiveness, the manufacturing sector of this country would contribute meaningfully towards economic growth and employment creation.

Growth in the agriculture sector is important for alleviation of poverty, promotion of inclusive growth, sustenance of food security and generation of employment opportunities.

The average growth rate in Agriculture and Allied Sectors during the Eleventh Plan period was 3.3 per cent, with 2.8 per cent growth in 2011-12, which is the terminal year of the Plan.

To accelerate the overall economic growth rate from the current levels, much higher growth in the Agriculture sector will be required, of say, 4 per cent annually, as envisaged for the Twelfth Plan period.

Improvement in agricultural productivity would be important to accelerate growth in this sector.

Measures to improve productivity such as diversification of high yielding crops, improvement in seed replacement rate, use of high yielding hybrid seeds, improvement in water management practices and promotion of balanced use of fertilizers and pesticides should be some of our areas of focus.

We should also increase the technological base of our agricultural sector.

As the Finance Minister, I had outlined a four-pronged strategy as part of the Union Budget for 2010-11 to push growth in the Agriculture sector.

The four components of the strategy comprised of extending the green revolution to the Eastern region of the country, reducing the significant wastage in storage as well as in the operations of the existing food supply chains, improving credit availability to the farmers and give impetus to the food processing industry by providing state-of-the-art infrastructure.

These strategies have led to positive outcomes in the sector and should help usher in a Second Green Revolution.

The Service sector is the dominant sector of our economy, contributing close to 60 per cent of our GDP.

Hence, any strategy for enhancing economic growth should focus on facilitating the growth of important services such as finance and banking, information technology and telecommunications.

Though India has an important position in the global IT and IT enabled services, its prominence is being challenged by new emerging economies.

We have to, therefore, improve the competitiveness of this sector.

A well-developed financial system is an indicator of a mature economy.

Our policies have enhanced the level of competition amongst different financial players, and in the process, has benefitted the common man.

The financial sector in our country is one of the well-regulated sectors.

Yet, nevertheless to realize the full potential of this sector and achieve an accelerated growth and inclusion, further reforms are required in banking, pension and insurance.

The high economic growth that we have envisaged for our nation will count for nothing unless we are able to translate this into tangible benefits of the poorer sections of our society.

India's economy is the sum total of its States' economies.

States with large economies are crucial for growth of the national economy.

Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat, the top five States in terms of economic size, contribute close to half the country's GDP.

Though only one State in this list is from the Northern region of the country, the share of the Northern States in the country's GDP is around 21.4 per cent.

Growth in the Northern States of the country is, therefore, significant for the nation's growth and therefore, it is a challenge that the Chief Ministers gathered here, should accept.

Of the five economically biggest states, only Maharashtra and Gujarat grew by more than 8 per cent in 2011-12.

But, there is a perceptible deceleration in these states, from the high levels of growth achieved by them in the previous two years.

Amongst the states in Northern India, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab have grown at a rate less than the average growth of the country in 2011-12.

This needs to change.

I am happy to note that amongst the states with larger economies, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Chhattisgarh, have registered growth of above 10 per cent in 2011-12.

This is no mean achievement considering the slowdown in the global and national economy.

I am hopeful that these states will continue to grow at this pace, if not faster, and other states in the country will follow suit.

It is indeed important for this conclave to have brought many state leaders on a common platform to deliberate about the contribution that states can make to further India's journey of progress.

It is indeed a privilege for me to be present here on the occasion of the inaugural programme of the 27th Indian Engineering Congress organized by the Institution of Engineers (India).

The Institution of Engineers (India) was formed in 1920 in response to a felt need for an institution that would serve the cause of advancement of engineering and technology in India.

In 1935 King George V accorded it the Royal Charter and since then engineers attached to this Institution are known as Chartered Engineers.

Prior to the All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE) being given statutory powers in 1987 of regulating engineering and technical education in the country, the Institution of Engineers performed this task under the Royal Charter.

The AMIE examination, equivalent to degree courses in engineering was also initiated by the Institute as early as 1928 for in-service technical professionals wanting to pursue further studies and acquire an engineering degree while continuing with their existing professions.

The scientific and technical community shall eagerly await the results of these deliberations and I am sure these shall go a long way in enabling movement towards Government's vision of fostering inclusive growth.

As we all know, India is poised to be an economic power.

In terms of purchasing power parity, the size of our economy is the third largest in the world.

The substantial growth rate that our country has achieved over the last few years is second only to China in the world.

During the period 2003-04 to 2010-11, we have had an annual growth rate in excess of 8 per cent on six occasions.

A growth rate of 9 per cent per year has been envisaged during the Twelfth Five Year Plan period of 2012 to 2017.

Such scales of economic expansion need several enabling factors prominent among them being education.

We have, over time, created an infrastructure of good educational institutions for imparting quality education at all levels.

In the higher education sector, India is endowed with 659 degree awarding institutions and 33,023 colleges.

The number of Indian Institutes of Technology has increased from 7 in 2006-07 to 15 in 2011-12.

The enrolment to higher education institutions in the country has similarly increased, from 1.39 crores in 2006-07 to 2.18 crores in 2011-12.

The growth rate of enrolment in Engineering, which was close to 25 per cent annually during the Eleventh Plan period, is the highest for any field of study.

Several steps have been taken to bring about an improvement in the quality of technical education, particularly engineering.

Virtual labs developed for science and engineering are being rolled out.

The Government, with the support of the World Bank, has been conducting a three-phase programme for technical education quality improvement.

While the first phase from 2002 to 2009 covered 127 engineering institutions, the second phase from 2010 to 2014 would cover about 190 more engineering institutions.

To achieve truly sustainable growth, however, poverty eradication is of utmost importance.

Poverty and a degraded environment are closely inter-related, especially where people depend for their livelihoods primarily on the natural resource base of their immediate environment.

Removal of poverty is, therefore, a prerequisite for the protection of the environment.

Appropriate climate-responsive technologies are, accordingly, required to provide relief to the economically weaker sections of society.

Several traditional practices that are sustainable and environment friendly continue to be a regular part of the lives of people in developing countries.

These need to be encouraged rather than replaced by more modern but unsustainable practices and technologies.

Technologies exist through which substantial reduction in consumption of resources is possible.

Efforts to identify, evaluate, introduce and use these technologies must be made.

The integration of agriculture with land and water management, and with ecosystem conservation, is essential for both environmental sustainability and agricultural production.

An environmental perspective must guide the evaluation of all development projects recognizing the role of natural resources in local livelihoods.

Mechanisms must simultaneously be put in place to make available to developing countries the latest technologies at reasonable cost.

Technology transfer must be informed by an understanding of its implications in the social, economic and environmental contexts of the recipient societies.

Where possible, existing local technologies must be upgraded and adapted to make them more efficient and useful.

I hope that the Institution of Engineers (India), which is the largest body of engineers and technologists in our country, will initiate steps to achieve these goals in consultation with all stakeholders.

With these few words, I inaugurate the 27th Indian Engineering Congress and wish you the best in your deliberations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to be here on the occasion of the presentation of the National Energy Conservation Awards 2012.

These awards go a long way in spreading the message of energy conservation in society.

I congratulate the award winners from various industries for working together with the Government in its endeavour to promote sustainable development.

I am equally pleased to see the participation by little children in the painting competition organised to spread the message of energy conservation through their simple and colourful paintings.

I extend my heartiest congratulations to these children.

Environmental concerns today occupy the centrestage of global discourse.

Yet, our journey towards pursuing a truly sustainable path towards development has just begun.

Energy consumption in India is expected to double over the next two decades, in line with the growth requirements of the economy.

India occupies the fourth position in the world in energy consumption, after USA, China and Russia.

But the country is not endowed with abundant energy resources required for sustaining such levels of consumption.

Energy Intensity, which is a measure of the energy efficiency of a nation's economy and indicates the cost of converting energy into GDP, is higher for India than developed nations such as the UK, Germany, Japan and the USA.

Thus, achieving a high GDP growth for the country while simultaneously meeting the energy needs of the population will pose a big challenge for us.

The cumulative installed capacity of power as of March-end 2012 is close to 2 lakh MW, comprising renewable energy capacity of 24,503 MW.

The capacity addition during the Eleventh Plan period was close to 55,000 MW, which is more than 2.5 times that of any of the earlier Plan periods.

The domestic production of energy resources is projected to increase at an annual average rate of 6.84% over the Twelfth Plan period.

It is, however, unlikely that we can restrict our high dependence on imports.

The net import of energy is, in fact, projected to increase by 8 per cent per year over the Twelfth Plan period.

While the compulsions of achieving a high growth rate exist, such reliance on imports would have implications on the fiscal balance of our economy.

Sustainable development mandates the use of available natural resources in a more efficient way.

We have to, accordingly, promote universal access to energy, while, at the same time, promoting energy efficiency.

A shift to cleaner energy sources is, thus, imperative.

Climate change is a threat but also a unique opportunity to work together.

As a developing country on the frontlines of climate vulnerability, India has a vital stake in the evolution of a successful, rule-based, equitable and multilateral response to climate change.

The Action Plan sets out a comprehensive response to climate change in the overall context of development, identifying measures that promote our development objectives while also yielding co-benefits for addressing climate change effectively.

The eight missions under the Action Plan cover both adaptation and mitigation, in addition to scientific research.

It is evident that demand side management measures have a key role in eliminating power shortages and bridging the gap between demand and supply to a considerable extent.

I am happy to note that energy efficiency and demand side management imperatives have also been factored into our economic development during the last five years.

The National Mission on Enhanced Energy Efficiency, one of the important initiatives of the present Government, which is being implemented by the Ministry of Power, aims to strengthen the market for energy efficiency through creation of a conducive regulatory and policy regime.

This is critical for our energy security.

Today's children are the citizens and nation-builders of tomorrow.

The National Painting Competition organized every year by the Ministry of Power has seen the involvement of school children in spreading the message of energy conservation in the country.

I congratulate these children for carrying forward the message of energy conservation in the country.

With these words, I would once again like to compliment the efforts of the Ministry of Power in recognizing the efforts of the industry towards energy conservation.

I also congratulate the awardees and hope that they would continue their efforts to promote energy conservation.

I congratulate the Bureau of Indian Standards for taking this initiative to create awareness about food safety and the role of standards in India.

Clean, fresh and nutritious food is vital for the physical and mental health of our people.

The safety of the food that we eat requires the maintenance of specific standards of hygiene during its preparation and processing.

It also requires us to prescribe conditions for proper transportation and marketing of these items before they are consumed.

Their storage is, similarly, required to be under safe conditions specified for the different products - which should also be communicated clearly to the consumers.

India has made significant strides over the past decades in food production as well as in exports of food products.

India is among the 15 leading exporters of agricultural products in the world.

It is noteworthy that in 2010-11, exports of agricultural and allied products registered a robust growth rate of 39.3 per cent.

It is indeed a positive development that manufacturers of food, transporters and all stakeholders in the chain of food supply in our country are becoming increasingly cognisant of the virtues of food safety.

More and more of them are voluntarily and consciously adapting traditional approaches to develop innovative systems for food safety management.

Globalization of the world economy has also given a significant boost to food trade - and resulted in a paradigm shift in food consumption patterns, production methods and processing technologies.

This presents a new set of challenges to food safety.

These potential risks require robust preventive and curative capacities to be put in place to safeguard the health of our population.

The economic cost of poor safety standards can be high - in terms of treatment of food-borne diseases and the direct and indirect economic loss due to rejection or low grading of our products in the international market.

The challenge of meeting the ever growing food requirement of our population calls for major investments and innovation in our agriculture, agri-business and food processing sectors.

While up-gradation of suitable technology is essential, safe farming practices, modern breeding techniques should go hand in hand with food related research, duly concentrating on how food safety should be regulated under Indian climatic and other relevant physical and cultural conditions.

The Bureau of Indian Standards has an increasingly important role in this effort.

I note that the Bureau of Indian Standards has formulated Indian Standards and a number of guidelines on best practices and management systems.

In these, they have included Indian standards on Food Retail Management, Good Hygienic Practices, and Good Manufacturing Practices.

It has important economic and nutritional implications for our urban populations as street foods are an accessible and affordable option for a sizeable percentage of our working population.

We should also be conscious that a substantial majority of our food businesses are small and cottage scale units.

They should not be intimidated by the standards that are set for them or find their implementation to be too complex.

There must be a channel for addressing their genuine problems and generating practical solutions to these.

They should be made aware that these standards are measures that have been taken by Government and regulators are in their own interest.

By improving the safety of the food they produce and building food safety systems and capacity, they would increase their own profitability.

The importance of consumer education in the prevention of food-borne illness is another universal imperative.

When consumers are quality and safety conscious, they are able to complement the efforts of food control agencies in encouraging the food industry to provide good quality and safe food.

This outreach by the Bureau of Indian Standards will also be useful in gaining valuable feedback from consumers and key participants in the food supply industry all over our country.

I have no doubt that this seminar will facilitate a purposeful exchange and sharing of information and experiences.

It will contribute to enabling our country to be equipped with workable, practical and realistic systems for improving the safety of the food consumed in our country.

I would like to convey to the participants in the National Seminar my best wishes.

With these words, I, formally inaugurate this Seminar.

Jai Hind!

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am extremely happy to be present on this occasion.

We gather today not just to release a book but also to celebrate the life of a distinguished judge, humanist and legal luminary who has made profound contributions towards the building of a better India.

Lives of some people are an inspiration for millions.

They are lives which touch and lift to a higher sensibility all those who come in contact with them.

He is a humanist whose heart aches for marginalized and forgotten millions, a messenger for justice, and a revolutionary who transformed the words of the Constitution of India into weapons of the weak to fight against injustice.

Justice Bhagwati is a judicial statesman and in a true sense, a judge of and for the people of India.

Justice Bhagwati is living testimony of someone who believed that the true judicial role is to transcend the boundaries of technocratic adjudication.

Justice Bhagwati is a pioneer of Public Interest Litigation (PIL) in India, promoter of the right to legal aid and emissary of Lok Adalats.

He converted the courtroom into a site of people's struggle in humanizing law.

Justice Bhagwati epitomizes how a judge can be instrumental in espousing the cause of justice to the millions of deprived Indians who are standing in the waiting room of history to become the subjects of justice.

His tenure was marked by continuous efforts to improve the justice delivery system and he spoke through numerous judgments and pronouncements, many of whom are landmark in nature.

Justice Bhagwati's judgements contributed to making justice more accessible by the poor.

Some of his judicial pronouncements led to the release of countless numbers of bonded labourers from captivity, restoration of land to the dispossessed, and gave respect and meaning to the life of those who live in the margins of society.

Justice Bhagwati also worked to create a legal aid infrastructure that gave meaning to Article 39A of the Constitution.

He remained Chairman of the Legal Aid Organization while he was Chief Justice of India.

His efforts in the direction of free legal assistance laid the foundation for the subsequent enactment of the Legal Services Authorities Act in 1987, after his retirement.

The juridical innovations that Justice Bhagwati undertook were a departure from orthodox Anglo-Saxon jurisprudence.

However they reflected the true spirit of our Constitution and turned the Indian Judiciary into a powerful instrument of socio-economic justice for the underprivileged.

This judicial creativity also became a pioneering innovation in global jurisprudence with lasting relevance to all developing countries with an independent judiciary.

Family values play a vital role in the growth and development of an individual.

Deep-seated humanitarian values, respect for all religions, conviction that every human being is a manifestation of God and the essential goodness of human beings were instilled in him by his parents early in his life.

His wife, Ms. Prabhavati, who is present amongst, us today has been a source of constant encouragement to him.

His siblings and children have also been a pillar of support providing emotional sustenance and motivation to him.

The role of family and values in moulding his personality is well described in the opening chapter of the book.

Justice Bhagwati on his retirement 26 years ago chose to start a new innings as a champion of human rights in international fora.

His vast experience, expertise and stature was put to use in the Human Rights Committee of the United Nations where he served for over sixteen years and in the International Labour Organization.

Justice Bhagwati's reflections in his book reveal the life of an impressive and sensitive man.

Justice Bhagwati is ten days short of 91 years.

I wish him the very best of health and happiness in the remaining years.

We must be thankful to Justice Bhagwati for having chosen to record his memories in the form of a book.

This book will be a prized possession for every Indian who wants to make a difference to the world and who aspires for a world more just.

Thank you.

Jai Hind!

Shri Tariq Anwar, Minister of State for Agriculture and Food Processing Industries, Shri Adi B. Godrej, President, Confederation of Indian Industry, Shri S. Gopalakrishnan, President Designate, CII and Executive Co-Chairman, Infosys, Shri Rakesh Bharti Mittal, Chairman, CII National Council on Agriculture and Vice Chairman and Managing Director of Bharti Enterprises, Shri Ajay Shriram, Vice-President CII and Shri Chandrajit Banerjee, Director General, CII, and Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am particularly delighted to share my thoughts with this august gathering of intellectuals, scientists, policy makers and industrialists on a subject that is of critical importance to a country like ours that has nearly one half of its work-force working in this sector.

It is, therefore, imperative that we rivet greater attention to the issues that are bedeviling this sector because of its clear linkage to poverty that we have been struggling to eradicate.

Despite the economic progress the country has made in the last six decades, we cannot ignore the majority of our rural population which depends on agriculture for their livelihood.

Agriculture is the heart and soul of this nation.

It is the most fundamental of activities that the human race depends upon for its existence.

The association of people with agriculture and the importance they give to it from the times of the yore can be gauged by the fact that important festivals in different parts of our country have taken their roots from this occupation.

In the course of our economic transition, the contribution of Agriculture to the nation's income has gradually declined.

The Agricultural Sector contributed 23.4% to the GDP during the Ninth Five Year Plan period.

This declined to 19% during the Tenth Five Year Plan period and to 15.2% during the Eleventh Plan period.

This is a testimony to the fact that growth rates in Agriculture and Allied Sectors have lagged behind the overall growth rate of the economy.

The average growth rate in the Agriculture and Allied Sectors was 2.5%, 2.4% and 3.3% during the Ninth, Tenth and Eleventh Plan periods respectively.

In contrast, the average growth rate of the total economy in the corresponding time span was much higher at 5.7%, 7.6% and 7.9% respectively.

Close to 69% of the total population of India resides in rural areas.

According to the Planning Commission Survey, the poverty ratio amongst the rural populace is about 34% as compared to the all-India poverty ratio of about 30%.

Thus, to alleviate poverty, promote inclusive growth, promote food security, increase employment opportunities and boost rural incomes, it is vital that Agriculture grows at a much faster pace.

The growth rate of Agriculture and Allied Sectors during 2011-12 was 2.8%, which was substantially lower than 7% in the previous year but higher than the 0.4% and 1.7% growth rates in 2008-09 and 2009-10 respectively.

Though the growth rate of 2.1% in this sector in the first half of this financial year is not very encouraging, I am hopeful that the second half will give us some cheer.

The wide variation in agricultural growth is primarily on account of the vagaries of weather.

Reliance on good weather for a successful crop has been the bane of Indian agriculture.

But if we are to realize a much higher growth in this sector, then we must make a concerted and deliberate strategy to liberate this sector from the fetters of the nature to the extent possible like the advanced nations have done.

The aim of the first Green Revolution in India to achieve self-sufficiency in food grains was realized in the sixties through a combination of the use of high-yielding varieties of seeds, increased use of fertilizers and strengthening irrigation.

We have successfully achieved that goal of self-sufficiency.

In 2011-12, the total food grains production in the country was 257 million tonnes, which was above the target of 245 million tonnes set for the year.

However, there are some lessons to be learnt from the first Green Revolution.

The excessive use of chemical fertilizers became unsustainable in the long run as it gradually led to the decline in productivity.

The use of high yielding seeds was confined to only food grains.

Thus, the revolution touched only a limited percentage of India's total arable land.

In fact, there is an increasing realization that high growth in Agriculture and Allied Sectors would be the catalyst for rural development in the country.

But, we would have to give no less importance than any other area to increasing the productivity in agriculture.

The agricultural growth in the Eleventh Plan period was also driven by improved agricultural prices.

But this scenario has undergone a change in the Twelfth Plan period as demand for major crops is projected to decline.

To meet the Twelfth Plan growth target of 4% per annum, emphasis should be placed on improving productivity.

Assigning priority to high yielding crops is a strategy that needs to be promoted with greater vigour.

We must stress on improving seed replacement rate, use hybrid seeds that yield higher productivity, improve water management practices and promote balanced use of fertilizers and pesticides as well to achieve this goal.

In India, farmland holdings are small.

Those with less than 2 hectares comprise 83% of all holdings and 41% of area.

This makes it imperative for us to adopt innovative schemes to increase productivity.

In the context of advanced agricultural food supply systems in the world, it would be worthwhile to consider creating structures for greater farm-firm linkages.

But more importantly, innovation through research and technology development for devising economically viable solutions to enhance productivity of small farms is the need of the hour.

Farmers are at the cutting edge in the agricultural value chain.

It is, therefore, necessary to ensure that they are adequately protected from the uncertainties of weather and market.

To manage risk from the failure of crops due to natural calamities, pests and diseases, a National Agricultural Insurance Scheme was introduced in 1999-2000 to extend financial support to such distressed farmers.

If prevention is a better measure to contain risk, then increased reliance on satellite communication for more accurate weather forecasts and better dissemination of such information would be crucial.

It is also critical to control post-harvest wastages as this would improve access of farmers to markets to enable them obtain better prices for their products.

The effective use of information technology to increase the reach of agriculture extension programmes would not only help to spread knowledge about agriculture, better practices and know how, it would also assist in building a valuable database of such knowledge in the country.

It envisages the extension of the green revolution to the Eastern region of the country, to reduce the huge wastage on account of poor storage facilities, improving credit availability to the farmers and providing a further impetus to the development of the food processing sector.

Progress in these areas is already visible.

There has been significant increase in the production of paddy to the tune of 7 million tonnes in Kharif 2011 in the States of Eastern India.

This achievement has been acknowledged internationally by organizations such as International Rice Research Institute.

To create additional food grain storage capacity in the country, the Government has taken concrete steps.

For instance, 2 million tonnes of storage capacity in the form of modern silos have already been approved for creation.

Further, nearly 15 million tonnes of storage capacity is being created through private entrepreneurs and warehousing corporations.

Thus, some elements of the next generation revolution in the Agriculture sector are already taking place.

But I would like to envision a Second Green Revolution in Agriculture that is more holistic and widespread.

Such an initiative should be accompanied by development of rural infrastructure, human development and increased sensitivity to ecology and environment.

Given the gargantuan task ahead, it is imperative that the Government should seek the right partnerships by building innovative structures that adequately encourage the involvement of the private sector in this area.

Nothing could be more wrong.

Giving agriculture the importance in proportion to its contribution to GDP may be as fallacious as attaching to the heart the importance in proportion to its weight in the human body.

The linkage that the Agriculture sector has to almost all the facets of the society is indisputable.

Its growth can spawn the much-needed social and economic transformation without which economic growth in other areas and that of the nation as a whole would lose its meaning.

I am confident that pragmatic solutions to the problems that the agriculture sector is facing would emerge from this conference.

I wish the conference great success and congratulate the organizers for taking the important initiative to hold this Conference.

I am happy to participate in the Human Rights Day function being organised by the National Human Rights Commission of India today.

It gives me great pleasure to address this audience which has gathered to celebrate an occasion of universal importance and contemporary relevance.

This day marks an important milestone in the quest of mankind towards realization of human rights for all citizens of the world.

The Declaration has provided guidance to many nations in ensuring their laws are in tandem with the fundamentals of human rights.

In a world where human rights continues to remain a challenge in advanced as well as developing countries, the Declaration stands as a beacon for the international community on the standards it should set for the defence and promotion of human rights.

The Universal Declaration is a reference document from which all subsequent human rights legal instruments have evolved to ensure protection of the weak and disadvantaged from injustice and arbitrary treatment.

India's association with the international human rights movement runs deep.

Dr. Hansa Mehta - a freedom fighter, educator and social reformer represented India on the United Nations Human Rights Commission which drafted the Declaration.

She made significant contributions to the drafting of the Declaration, particularly on the subject of gender equality.

Even before independence, India was active at the international level in its advocacy of the promotion and protection of human rights.

The quest for realization of human rights and respect for human dignity was core to our independence Movement.

The Indian independence Movement was also a major influence and catalyst for similar movements in other parts of the world.

As early as 1895, a great leader, Bal Gangadhar Tilak initiated the Swaraj Bill which contained the following rights, namely, the right to freedom of speech and expression, the right to equality, the right to vote and so on.

After the publication of the Montague-Chelmsford Report, the Indian National Congress at its special session at Bombay demanded that the Government of India Act should contain a declaration of Rights of People embodying basic human rights.

The Indian National Congress Session at Madras in 1927 passed a resolution that the future Constitution of India must have a declaration of Fundamental Rights.

The Motilal Nehru Committee in 1928 and Tej Bahadur Sapru Committee in 1944-45 which drafted a Constitution for India laid emphasis on Fundamental Rights.

The father of our nation, Mahatma Gandhi, was widely recognized as among the foremost human rights activists of the world at the time the Universal Declaration was being drafted.

Mahatma Gandhi was therefore consulted on the elements that should go into the Universal Declaration.

The essence of Gandhiji's political philosophy is the empowerment of every individual and protecting the dignity and self-respect of every human being.

This is also the central message of the Universal Declaration.

The Universal Declaration also recognizes that rights come along with duties, an idea strongly propounded by Mahatma Gandhi.

While the Indian perspective found its due place in the Universal Declaration through the contributions of Dr Hansa Mehta, the Constitution of India too drew inspiration from the Declaration.

While framing the Constitution of our country, the founding fathers used the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a first draft for formulating the provisions of Part III of the Constitution on Fundamental Rights.

Since independence, we have been unambiguous in our commitment to the preservation and protection of human rights globally as well as within the country.

India accepts that certain rights have always been understood by man to be basic such as the right to life and liberty.

If human rights are inseparable from man, they should be equal in their application to all human beings at all places and at all times.

These rights are fundamental to the very existence of mankind and not merely for the benefit of one class or one section of the society.

Our Constitution reflects this position.

The right to life and personal liberty is available to all people within its territory and not just its citizens.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Human rights is central to the very notion of peace and development.

Economic, social and cultural rights are equally important.

The Universal Declaration echoes this thought by calling in its Preamble for the advent of a world in which freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people.

In politics, we will have equality and in social and economic structure, continue to deny the principle of one man one value.

How long shall we continue to live this life of contradictions?

How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life?

If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril.

India's commitment to economic, social and cultural rights is reflected in the Directive Principles of State Policy which forms Part IV of our Constitution.

These principles have been described as fundamental in the governance of the country.

They are guidelines to the Central and the State governments, to be kept in mind while framing laws and policies.

In our approach to development, we have built on the Directive Principles and adopted a rights-based approach to areas such as education, employment and food security, which are basic endowments for dignified human existence.

We have backed empowerment of our citizens with legal entitlements by enacting landmark legislation such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act of 2005 and the Right to Education Act of 2009.

Legislation to provide food security is also on the anvil.

Good governance is the key to enforcement of rights by the people.

The notions of transparency and accountability have to be translated into action.

The Right to Information Act of 2005 entitles every citizen to the right to secure information under the control of public authorities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), has since its inception in 1993 rendered yeoman service for the promotion and protection of human rights in the country.

It has been playing a pivotal role in safeguarding the rights of the people.

It has been involved in spreading human rights awareness and sensitization among various sections of society.

The fact that people with impeccable credentials have occupied positions in this Commission has added to the credibility of this institution.

It is due to this credibility enjoyed by the institution that the highest court of the country has been assigning matters of extreme importance to it.

The Protection of Human Rights Act which established the NHRC is widely seen as a model legislation and has been since emulated by many countries of the world.

The successful functioning of our Commission has also inspired similar bodies in many other countries.

The Commission has over the years made significant contribution to the protection and advancement of the right to life, liberty and dignity of the individual, by virtue of its prestige and expertise.

It has also contributed to the growth of a human rights movement in the country.

The inevitable confluence of political and socio-economic rights in the cause of all round development of the country has been well understood by the NHRC.

Human Rights Day is an occasion for us to reflect on the journey that we, as a nation, have travelled so far on the path outlined by the Constitution of India and what we need to do further to make human rights and dignified existence for all our people a reality.

On this occasion of Human Rights day, I call upon our Government, the judiciary, statutory bodies like the National Commission and civil society to do their utmost for the promotion and protection of human rights.

We must increase awareness for human rights by including it as a subject in school curricula.

A human rights culture should infuse our national consciousness.

Finally, we have an outstanding Constitution and a plethora of sound laws and policies to uphold different dimensions of human rights.

However, such an elaborate legal infrastructure to manage human rights will count for nothing if implementation is lacking in form and spirit.

We must therefore focus efforts on translating our laws and Constitutional provisions into a reality for the common man.

Your Excellency, President Viktor Yanukovych,

It is my pleasure to extend a very warm and cordial welcome to Your Excellency and the distinguished members of your delegation on your State Visit to India.

India and Ukraine share a tradition of friendship, co-operation and mutually beneficial people-to-people contacts.

The fruitful partnership between our Governments is now broad, multi-dimensional and comprehensive in its scope.

As we celebrate, this year, the twentieth anniversary of the establishment of our diplomatic relations, there is reason to be satisfied with our joint initiatives and our achievements.

Mr. President, India attaches great importance to its relations with Ukraine.

Your visit is an occasion to take stock and set our agenda for the coming years.

Both our countries are presently consolidating the gains that we have made since achieving independence and we both look forward to sustained economic growth in our respective countries and stability in our respective regions in the years to come.

The joint statement issued by our Governments today and the agreements that have been concluded will further enhance our successful partnership in diverse fields and enable us to explore new vistas of co-operation.

In our exchange of views and official talks we have agreed that there is a large potential for further expanding our multifaceted cooperation.

We do look forward to a productive partnership between our two Governments - that will bring more progress and prosperity to our peoples.

Your Excellency we welcome Ukraine's interest in India.

We share your desire to intensify the collaborations between our business, industry, defence, space, civil nuclear energy, communications, information technology and other sectors.

Fertilisers and pharmaceuticals are important areas of our economic engagement.

The Indian pharmaceutical industry has been playing a positive role in the health sector of Ukraine by providing quality and cost-effective drugs.

Connectivity and interactions between our peoples will facilitate the desired intensification of our co-operation in the identified sectors.

It is a matter of satisfaction that our bilateral trade has more than doubled in the past five years.

We now have a bilateral trade of USD 2.8 billion.

This is a satisfactory augmentation but we must take it to its true potential.

Your Excellency, terrorism has emerged as one of the biggest threats to international peace and security.

To defeat this menace, the global community must take concerted action against terrorists and their sponsors.

We are deeply appreciative of Ukraine's condemnation of the terrorist attacks in India, including at the time of the terrorist attack in Mumbai in 2008.

I am confident that India and Ukraine can contribute to the global efforts in combating terror.

The people of India have deep regard for the people of Ukraine and their remarkable spirit and resilience.

They have overcome many challenging and difficult moments in their history to make Ukraine what it is today - a vibrant economy that is on a very positive path of progress.

They are also full of admiration for the depth of knowledge about Indian art and culture that the people of Ukraine have developed over the years.

These bonds between our people have given strength and warmth to our relationship and must be nurtured and allowed to blossom.

Our Governments can ensure this by facilitating greater cultural and educational contacts between the diverse societies in both our countries.

I have no doubt that this will further enhance the quality of our relationship and strengthen our ties.

The twentieth year of your independence has showcased your nation's impressive accomplishments in many fields including your sporting accomplishments in the London Olympics and the successful hosting of the Euro 2012 football championship.

Please accept my congratulations on these proud achievements of the people of Ukraine.

That will be an occasion for the mighty Dnieper's vibrations to mingle with the holy spirituality of the river Ganga.

I am confident that your visit will give an impetus to the efforts of our respective Ministries to engage, take new initiatives and enhance bilateral co-operation.

- to the good health and happiness of His Excellency Mr. Viktor Yanukovych, President of Ukraine;

- the abiding friendship and co-operation between India and Ukraine.

It is a matter of great pleasure to be here today and share my thoughts with you on this fourth Convocation Ceremony of the Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalaya.

I am overwhelmed by the serene environs of the holy Ganges and the mighty Himalayas in which your institution is located.

I offer my felicitations to the students who have received their degrees, awards and medals today.

I would also like to avail of this occasion to record my appreciation for the great strides that Vishwavidyalaya has achieved in a short span of a decade.

Its mission of unifying contemporary education with spiritual training to mould well-rounded individuals is laudable, for its relevance in today's world.

Education adds value to a person; and value based education equips us to contribute in a meaningful way to our society.

In this age, striving for spiritual development along side academic excellence is the right approach to regain lost values and traditions.

Shantikunj, the social service organization that founded Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyala, has done a great service by establishing this institution to promote these social objectives.

I am also delighted that your institution mandates every student to undertake a course on Life Management to imbibe social responsibility through internship programmes.

Institutionalizing life-based knowledge and exposure through the medium of academic curricula is a practice that is worthy of emulation.

By endowing the students with the diverse perspectives of life, this Vishwavidyalaya seeks to give them an in-depth world view of modernity.

It is the innovative ideas and the holistic education that Vishwavidyalaya imparts which has made it a centre of excellence that attracts students from India and abroad; including Russia, Iran, Germany, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Japan, Spain, Czech Republic, China and South Korea.

I would also like to pay my respects to Pandit Shri Ram Sharma Acharya, whose philosophical teachings and remarkable vision have been the inspiration behind the establishment of this institution.

Through spiritual regeneration, Pandit Acharya strove to inculcate in the people, high social and moral values leaving an indelible mark in the minds of multitudes.

Our country is fast becoming a great economic power.

In terms of Purchasing Power Parity (PPP), we are the third largest economy in the world.

The growth rate that our country enjoys is second only to China among the major economies in the world.

In six out of the last nine years, we managed a growth rate in excess of 8%.

Though the growth rate had slightly contracted since 2010-11 in the face of global economic meltdown, India has been able to withstand the crisis and has shown a remarkable resilience.

It is the growth of education in India that is one of the key factors responsible for India's resilience.

Therefore, it is indisputable that education through which we build intellectual capital is of singular importance to any individual, society or nation.

It helps skilled workforce to contribute directly to the nation's output.

Research is a finer product of education, leading to innovation, technological advancement and process perfection, which are responsible for shifting the production frontiers, creating greater capacity for future growth.

Thus, the value of education can never be exaggerated.

In the field of higher education, India has 659 degree awarding institutions and 33,023 colleges.

The Indian Institute of Technologies and the Indian Institute of Managements have created benchmark in technical and management education in the country and are held in high esteem internationally.

It is, thus, heartening to note the number of IITs has increased from 7 in 2006-07 to 15 in 2011-12, and the number of IIMs has increased from 6 to 13 over this period.

Evidently, the enrolment to higher education institutions in the country has also increased, from 1.39 crore in 2006-07 to 2.18 crore in 2011-12, which is the terminal year of the Eleventh Five Year Plan.

Notwithstanding our achievements, we have to upgrade the standard of higher education.

The country lacks behind in terms of research and innovation.

The total number of patent applications filed by Indians in 2010 was close to only six thousand, which pales in comparison to over 3 lakh applications filed by Chinese, around 1.7 lakh filed by German, 4.64 lakh filed by Japanese, and 4.2 lakh filed by Americans.

Though the enrolment in such programmes has increased from around 27 lakh in 2006-07 to 42 lakh in 2011-12 but more needs to be done.

Use of information technology and innovative methodology can usher in new vistas and provide increased coverage through opportunities that distance learning affords to those requiring flexible learning options.

I am of the view that at the macro level, education nurtures nation building and at the micro level it fosters character building.

I have a great faith in the philosophy and culture of our civilization.

I also believe that the road to progress should be strengthened by harmonizing such values.

I am, therefore, immensely encouraged by the education model that is practised by Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalaya.

I once again congratulate all the students who have received degrees today.

You are now facing a world of reality.

Do not get disheartened.

Skill, knowledge and confidence instilled in you by the University will stand you in good state.

They are the best equipment and the whole world belongs to you.

Thank you.

Jai Hind!

It gives me great pleasure to present National Cooperative Development Corporation Biennial Cooperative Excellence Awards 2012 to the cooperative societies in the International Year of Cooperatives, 2012.

At the initial stage, I would like to congratulate all the award winners for their achievements which have been recognized both at the State and National level.

These awards, initiated in 2002, promote the spirit of competition amongst the grass-root level cooperatives and recognize their distinct role in socio-economic development.

I note that this year the NCDC has instituted three new National Level Awards for Cooperative Excellence.

I congratulate the societies selected for NCDC Biennial Awards for Cooperative Excellence.

I am sure that these awards would inspire other cooperative societies in the country in instilling a new sense of hope and bringing renewed vitality and vibrancy in these cooperatives enabling them to perform even better in the days ahead.

The history of cooperative movement in India is more than a hundred years old.

Even before formal cooperative structures came into being, the practice of cooperation and cooperative activities were prevalent in India.

In response to this, various Government initiatives were taken - including the Cooperative Credit Societies Act of 1904.

But it was in October 1946, that history was made when two Primary Village Milk Producer Societies were registered.

This was followed by the registration, the same year, of the Khera District Cooperative Milk Producers Union known as Amul.

After India attained Independence in 1947, cooperative development received due recognition and cooperatives were given a central role in the Five Year Plans formulated by the Planning Commission of India particularly for the transformation of the rural economy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Cooperatives in our country are pivotal institutions for bringing socio-economic development for inclusive growth in rural areas.

The co-operative movement helped our founding fathers who gave it a prime place in the process of economic development of the country.

Today, with a net-work of six lakh cooperatives and a membership base of 24 crores, the Indian cooperative movement has proved to be an effective economic instrument for ensuring growth with equity and inclusiveness.

Cooperatives in India have made a visible and significant contribution to the overall economic growth of our economy.

This is especially so in the sectors of agricultural credit, sugar, dairy, textiles, fisheries, distribution of fertilizers and agricultural inputs, storage and marketing.

They have ensured the accrual of a fair share of the benefits of development and growth to our small and marginal farmers.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Recognizing the advantages and its importance world over, United Nations declared 2012 as the International Year of Cooperatives, to increase public awareness about cooperatives and their contributions to socio-economic development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and also to promote the formation and growth of co-operatives.

During these 50 illustrious years, NCDC basically a financing institution for providing financial assistance exclusively to the cooperatives, achieved new milestones and undertook many initiatives with the ultimate goal of developing the rural economy and removing the incidence of backwardness from the rural hinterland of the country.

Recently, the Government has taken a big initiative for the cooperatives by enacting the 97th Constitutional Amendment thereby creating an enabling environment for the development of the Cooperatives.

This would enable democratic, autonomous and professional functioning of the cooperatives.

By this amendment the right to form cooperative society has now become a fundamental right.

The act has paved the way for development of a stronger cooperative movement.

To take this initiative further to the grass root level respective State Governments also need to create enabling environment by amending State laws etc as and when it is necessary.

In conclusion I once again congratulate the award winners.

I compliment Shri Sharad Pawar, Union Minister of Agriculture & Food Processing Industries and his Ministries for their continuous efforts for sustained economic development of our economy through the cooperatives.

It gives me great pleasure to be here amidst you this morning for the 11th National Convention of National Real Estate Development Council.

This meeting is indeed important as it will debate strategies and road maps for sustainable housing for the masses of our country who are facing acute shortage of this basic necessity.

The pressure on housing sector can be expected to chart the northern vector in the coming decades with urbanization in the country growing at a fast pace.

The urbanization in the developing world is virtually unstoppable particularly in India which is one of the fastest growing economies in the world.

This is for the reason that countries urbanize rapidly when economies grow faster.

It is attributable to factors such as industrial and service sectors concentrating in and around urban areas due to better access to material inputs, larger concentration of consumers, better networking opportunities spawned by knowledge sharing, skilled manpower and globalisation.

All these factors would induce larger migration of people to the cities in search of new avenues of employment.

With densification of economic activities in urban areas, these centers would increase in importance as focal points or hubs of economic growth.

Consequently, the share of the contribution of the urban areas to India's GDP is expected to reach 75-80 percent by the middle of the century.

Therefore, managing the challenges associated with this phenomenon is not only important for the economic prosperity of the nation but also from the social perspective.

We have several large cities such as Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai and Kolkata.

Neglect of such concentrations can result in urban chaos leading to deceleration in economic growth and law and order problems.

We would, therefore, need to lay emphasis on urban governance, planning and financing.

It would also be necessary to explore the possibility of developing secondary cities and towns by encouraging private investments with the Government playing a support role to provide infrastructural facilities to divert part of the migration from the larger concentrations.

The Government has taken several measures to address challenges in urban sector.

The Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission, launched by Government of India in 2005 to undertake urban infrastructure development and provision of basic services to urban poor is one amongst them.

This has yielded some dividends, but more needs to be done to achieve synergy in partnership schemes with the private sector using PPP models.

Government schemes alone cannot address the problems, the private sector which would also benefit from well managed urban centers have an important role to play in this direction.

The less affluent economic groups face the brunt of the housing shortages.

On the basis of the 2011 census, a Technical group set up by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation has estimated that the total shortage in housing is 18.78 million in 2012 and of this 95 percent is in the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) and Low Income Group (LIG) categories.

This has led to approximately 25 percent of urban population living in slums and squatter settlements.

The Government is seized of this reality and has launched the Rajiv Awas Yojana in 2009 to provide houses to slum dwellers with title certificates.

Mortgage Guarantee Fund and Interest Subsidy Schemes have been launched to safeguard the interest of bankers and help beneficiaries.

This is a major and significant step that has been taken by the Government to resolve the housing problem of the urban poor.

But as I have just emphasized, the private sector would have to take more initiatives to find sustainable solutions.

The Government is taking steps to encourage private developers by making affordable housing construction attractive through direct and indirect incentives.

Weighted deduction of 150 percent on capital expenditure u/s 35AD, External Commercial Borrowing and Service Tax exemption on affordable housing projects are some of the incentives that I had the opportunity to announce in my last budget as the Finance Minister.

As you all know, there are major problems that bedevil the efforts of the low income groups become homeowners.

Significant among them is the difficulty in extending credit to this segment of the population through the banking channels.

While HIG and MIG segments have been able to reap the benefits of the low rate mortgage loans and deductions available under the Income Tax Act, and home loan disbursement has gone up many fold, the EWS and LIG households have been left behind.

Banks are generally reluctant to lend to them because of the perceived risk of the loans becoming non-performing assets.

I am confident that banks would rise to the occasion to face this challenge and evolve innovative methods to allow greater credit flow to this segment.

I hope that Mortgage Guarantee Fund and Interest Subsidy Scheme, launched recently, will make the credit flow to these segments easy.

Another challenge this sector is facing is the shortage of land.

Land is limited and accounts for upto 90% of the cost of house in metros.

Both the Government and the private sector should look at ways to augment land supply for housing.

One way may be to look at acquisition of land in adjoining areas of urban agglomerations and connect them to the city centers through rapid mass transportation systems.

Simultaneously, it should also be ensured that available land mass is utilized optimally by revisiting planning norms.

In addition, it should also be ensured that all the housing projects have schemes for low-income groups.

This should be made a part of town-planning strategy.

The importance of this requirement cannot be exaggerated as the economically weaker sections provide the kinds of services without which urban agglomerations cannot have a healthy existence.

Through this, inclusive growth can be encouraged not only as an existential requirement of agglomerations, but also as a social need.

I am aware that there are many challenges associated with land acquisition, township planning, project approval, construction and transfer of assets to beneficiaries.

There is a need to look at the systems in place and provide solutions to make the dream of providing houses to the economically weaker sections of the society a reality.

Special emphasis should be laid on the adoption of innovative technologies, designs and materials to speed up delivery at reduced cost.

Skill development is another important area that has particular relevance to the housing industry, where new technologies have to be adopted and higher volumes achieved.

Government and industry must join hands in finding solution to this challenge.

National Skill Development Corporation is engaged in this task and its effort must be further supplemented by the real estate industry to achieve optimal results.

Finally, I reiterate that housing and real estate sector holds the key to economic prosperity of the country because of its backward and forward linkages with other sectors of economy besides serving an important social goal.

This sector is rightly termed as engine of economic growth.

I hope that this gathering of experts and important stake holders will deliberate and find workable solution to meet the housing need of Aam Adami.

There is the need for all stakeholders to join hand and work for achieving the objective of housing for all.

I wish the Convention all success.

Jai Hind

I am happy to welcome to the Rashtrapati Bhavan, the distinguished judges and jurists who are taking part in the 13th International Conference of Chief Justices of the World organized in Lucknow by the City Montessori School.

I am delighted to meet and interact with this gathering of jurists from different legal traditions across the world.

It is a matter of great happiness that the City Montessori School established 53 years back, has taken the leadership in organizing such Conferences for the last 13 years.

Article 51 provides that the State will endeavour to promote international peace and security, maintain just and honourable relations between nations and foster respect for international law and encourage settlement of international disputes by arbitration.

Just a few years before the formulation of Article 51, India had participated in the negotiations and adoption of the Charter of the United Nations.

Imprints of the language of the UN Charter can therefore be seen in the formulation of Article 51.

Maintaining just and honourable relations between nations and fostering respect for international law is a critical pre-requisite for the promotion of international peace and security.

Article 51 is a unique provision in the Indian Constitution which mandates the Government to strive for good and friendly relations with foreign countries.

This Constitutional directive has always been a central element of India's foreign policy.

Article 51 provides international law and treaties and agreements entered into by India with a special status within our country.

This is reflective of the high respect the Constitution and Indian legal system accords to International Law and the global vision of our Constitution makers.

This article has been relied upon to introduce and implement various international instruments, particularly the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the two Covenants on the Political and Civil Rights and the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in the interpretation of fundamental rights.

The importance of international law in the contemporary world cannot be overemphasized.

There are other challenges for example international terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, transnational crimes, illicit drug trafficking, human trafficking and money laundering.

Global warming and climate change, corruption, poverty and health care are also some other key issues that need to be addressed.

It is important that States reaffirm their adherence to the rule of law, with a commitment to abide in good faith to an international order based on respect for international law, including obligations under the Charter of United Nations, principles of justice and peaceful co-existence.

No country in the world can afford to ignore the basic tenets of international law, as a just world order is only possible by adherence to international rule of law.

Today, international law touches every aspect of human life.

Due to rapid technological advancements, the world has become smaller.

This necessitates the need for finding common approaches to counter problems of environmental degradation, cross-boarder terrorism, international trade, human rights and utilization of resources beyond national jurisdictions culminating into international rules.

Being the largest functional democracy in the world, India believes in promotion of democratic values and processes.

We have consistently played an important role in seeking international consensus to tackle major global issues and foster international cooperation and collaboration.

India remains committed to work with partners to make the world safe for our children and banish poverty so that each one has the option and facilities to realize his or her potential.

India also believes that advancement of the rule of law at the national level is an essential tool for the protection of democracy, economic growth, sustainable development, ensuring gender justice, eradication of poverty and hunger and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

I am aware that one of the subjects you have been discussing is the establishment of a World Government.

However, what we have at present is the United Nations Organization.

All countries and citizens of the world must do their utmost to support and strengthen the UN.

As a founder member of the United Nations, India supports the purposes and principles of the UN, as embodied in its Charter.

India has made significant contributions to implementing the goals of the Charter, and the evolution of the UN's specialized programmes and agencies.

India has worked for enhancing international cooperation in the areas of counter-terrorism, prevention of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to non-state actors, and the strengthening of UN peacekeeping and peace building efforts.

In view of the serious threat posed to international maritime trade and security by piracy off the coast of some countries, India has promoted concerted international cooperation against the pirates.

Over the decades, India has urged the UN to play a more active role and be more effective in pursuing a more equitable international order and an economic environment that is conducive to rapid economic growth and development in developing countries.

In the context of the new globalized system, India has also actively urged the UN to work to ensure that developing countries can harness the benefits of these processes in an equitable manner.

India strongly advocates the process of reform and restructuring of the UN to equip it to more effectively respond to the evolving needs of its membership.

Objective realities underscore the need for thorough-going and genuine UN reform: it is an organization that is over six decades old; its membership has expanded by nearly four times since the Charter was signed; and the world of today is very different from the world of 1945.

This demands a greater dependence on the UN as the only democratic, universal forum for the community of nations.

It necessitates comprehensive reform of the UN, aimed at its revitalization.

India believes that the UN should be able to respond to the needs and priorities of member States, particularly developing countries, which constitute the vast majority of its membership.

India believes that no reform of the UN will be complete without the reform and expansion of the UN Security Council.

It is essential that the Security Council is expanded in both the permanent and non-permanent categories.

The inclusion of developing countries from Asia, Africa and Latin America, who are capable of global responsibility, will contribute to optimal decision making necessary to address the insecurity of developing countries.

By any objective criteria, such as population, territorial size, GDP, economic potential, civilizational legacy, cultural diversity, political system and past and ongoing contributions to the activities of the UN-especially to UN peacekeeping operations-India is eminently suited for permanent membership of the UN Security Council.

India has affirmed its willingness and capacity to shoulder the responsibilities of permanent membership of the UN Security Council.

I thank all the distinguished delegates for having taken the time and effort to visit India.

I compliment the City Montessori School, for the good work done in spreading the message of world peace and encourage the school to continue its efforts in this regard, especially with a focus on children and the youth.

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.

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.

Late Lakshmipat Singhania, 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.

Freedom then meant political and economic freedom.

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 Singhania, JRD Tata, G.D.Birla similarly contributed in ensuring economic development.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

It is indeed a privilege for me to be present here to extend to the faculty and students of the Punjab Agriculture University, my felicitations and best wishes on the 50th Anniversary of this great institution.

This is my first visit to Punjab in my present capacity.

This Institution is synonymous with the Green Revolution which transformed Indian agriculture, making our country self reliant in feeding its population.

Today, we produce enough to spare for export and assistance to other developing countries.

It is the Punjab Agricultural University that pioneered agricultural research and technology dissemination in our country - at a time in the '60s when this was a crucial need.

Its scientists engaged with a sense of urgency in research, innovation and foreign collaborations.

They have since developed hundreds of new strains, high yielding and robust varieties of crops and studied the management of environmental, weather and soil conditions.

I congratulate the Punjab Agriculture University for its splendid contribution in the service of our nation.

The agriculture sector in India continues to be the lifeline of our people and a key factor in our economy's overall productivity.

It has rightly been accorded due priority in every budget and Plan for achieving India's developmental goals.

Government of India has, over the decades, introduced a variety of schemes and measures to give support to the entire agriculture sector from small farmers to large investors.

Institutions and banks have been created to focus on supporting agriculture development, fixing remunerative prices and improve agricultural marketing.

Promoting inclusive growth, sustaining food security and boosting rural incomes in the country is intrinsically linked to growth in the Agriculture sector.

As the Finance Minister, I had outlined a four-pronged strategy as part of the Union Budget for 2010-11 to drive growth in the Agriculture sector.

The first component of the strategy was to extend the green revolution to the Eastern region of the country comprising Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Eastern Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Orissa.

The second component of the strategy was to reduce the significant wastage in storage as well as in the operations of the existing food supply chains in the country.

The third component was to improve credit availability to the farmers, while the fourth component was to aim at providing a further impetus to the development of the food processing sector by providing state-of-the-art infrastructure and substantial fiscal incentives.

The initiative of bringing green revolution to Eastern India has resulted in a significant increase in production of paddy, as States in Eastern India reported additional paddy production of 7 million tonnes in Kharif 2011.

The total paddy production in the country increased from 95.98 million metric tonnes in 2010-11 to 104.32 million metric tonnes in 2011-12.

To reduce wastage in storage, concrete steps have been taken by the Government to create additional food grain storage capacity in the country.

Two million tonnes of storage capacity in the form of modern silos have already been approved for creation.

Further, nearly 15 million tonnes of storage capacity is being created through private entrepreneurs and warehousing corporations.

The Mega Food Park scheme, which was introduced in the Eleventh Plan, aims at developing farm proximate state of the art infrastructure with strong backward and forward linkage in a demand driven manner.

30 Mega Food Parks are being planned for creation in this financial year.

At the present juncture, we have come a long way.

The growth rate of GDP in Agriculture and allied activities in 2011-12 is 2.8 per cent which is, of course, lower than the growth rate of 7 per cent in 2010-11 but higher than the growth rates of 0.4 per cent in 2008-09 and 1.7 per cent in 2009-10.

There is however, a reality that cannot be ignored - and I take this opportunity to call upon all present here today to reflect on why, despite all these successes and efforts and despite India's overall improved economic performance, the economic viability of this sector is still a challenge.

There are, even today, so many regions in our country where subsistence farmers and small farmers remain susceptible to failure, risk and desperation.

It is ironical that although India is the second largest producer of fruits and vegetables in the world, value addition to this produce is just 7 per cent and processing only around 3 per cent of production.

We import a large amount of the pulses we consume.

In the agriculturally advanced regions, there are problems of over-exploiting ground water resources and vulnerability to pests and crop diseases; over-mining of nutrient reserves has led to multi-nutrient deficiencies.

Excessive use of fertilizers is taking its toll on the productivity of soil.

This is a compelling reason for the Indian farmer to be provided the wherewithal that he urgently needs - the financial, technological, infrastructural, transportation and other requirements for a sustainable approach for the increased productivity that we seek.

In this context, I take this opportunity to share a few thoughts on the challenges that we must address.

We need to do a re-think on agriculture in India.

And we need to do this urgently to ensure food security in India.

We must have in place a coherent and comprehensive policy that has synergy among its various elements.

Government initiatives are of little use without efficient systems for their implementation.

Equally important is the necessity for collaboration between the state and central governments on the monitoring and appraisal of various schemes.

A co-ordinated and integrated approach should start at the grassroots, taking into account all the factors.

Many policies are susceptible to failure because of inaccurate feedback.

Collation of information and policy integration is essential.

As I am among academia and experts, I would like to suggest that we identify the priorities and act swiftly.

I would put training and entrepreneurship development high in my list of items requiring urgent attention.

To this I would add the task of developing and reaching appropriate technology to farmers, agriculture marketing reforms, studying the present yield gaps and methods to harvest wastelands, address wastage and overuse of fertilizers and develop simple IT tools for farmers - that are user friendly and can provide relevant and timely information relating to weather forecasts.

Enhanced productivity would reduce per unit cost, enhancing the global competitiveness of our produce.

Farm mechanization, linking farms with markets and adding value at each stage will help in employment generation, entrepreneurship development, increased profits to farmers and safe and healthy food to consumers.

Investments in food processing sector have multiplying benefits for all, and hence a major boost needs to be given to the processing sector.

Fiscal incentives and land leasing policies of State Governments should be such that agro-processing, especially in the rural areas, becomes a lucrative option both for the farmers and the private sector.

A useful part of the re-assessment would be a mapping and indexing of crops and livestock to anticipate market demands, plan resource allocation and ensure its optimal utilisation to ensure maximum output.

This would give an edge in the global market.

Similarly, the agro-industry, in partnership with research institutions can plan relevant and standardised crop production and efficient agricultural supply chains, which are vertically integrated.

Improved connectivity between agricultural universities and the farmers could be very beneficial for both.

The percentage of GDP from Agriculture and allied activities spent on research and development must be increased from the current level of 0.6 per cent to 1.0 per cent in the Twelfth Five Year Plan.

I believe that a multi-pronged strategy involving technology development, new marketing methods, precision in farm operations and innovative policy instruments is required to ensure agricultural sustainability and food and livelihood security and I would stress the importance of due attention to modernising food storage and its distribution.

This Conference on Sustainable Agriculture for Food and Livelihood Security is, therefore, an important opportunity for stakeholders to review the current overall approach and, develop an updated, comprehensive strategy to accelerate agricultural growth and further strengthen national food and livelihood security in India

Dr Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India

President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, Former President of Brazil

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

The presentation of the Indira Gandhi Peace Prize for Peace Disarmament and Development for the year 2010 is a key event in the calendar of global peace, development and disarmament.

Today, we recognize and honour a contemporary world leader for his substantial contribution towards the achievement of these universal aspirations.

This prestigious award celebrates the legacy of the Late Shrimati Indira Gandhi as an untiring crusader for global peace, universal disarmament and a new international economic order.

She won the mandate of the Indian people at a time in our recent history when our country was faced with serious domestic and external challenges.

In her characteristic style, she approached these with due urgency, armed with the principles that Mahatma Gandhi taught and lived by - and the policies of her visionary father, Jawaharlal Nehru.

For me personally, this day is a reminder of my own association with one of the most dynamic Prime Ministers of modern India, a tall leader acclaimed internationally, whose dedication and commitment to the people that she represented was unparalleled.

Shrimati Gandhi was very clear that India had to be self reliant and that her first concern always was national interest.

In the socio-economic development of India, Shrimati Indira Gandhi reached out to the poorest and the most deprived.

It drove home the point that growth in India had to go hand in hand with equitable distribution of its benefits.

It made prudent management of resources and revenues a priority - as also the creation of institutions and programmes for social change such as empowerment of Panchayati Raj institution, strengthening of public distribution system, initiating of mid-day meal schemes for school children, empowerment of scheduled castes and tribes among others.

It was Shrimati Indira Gandhi who steered India's State and business sectors into a co-operative alliance for economic growth.

She put out a new industrial policy to encourage expansion and also provided finance and tax relief to encourage investment.

Special legislations were passed to discourage strikes and labour unrest.

Two decades of steady economic reforms have contributed to an improvement in average income and consumption levels in both rural and urban areas.

I recall that once she had written to Chief Ministers of all the States suggesting a drive to plant a tree for every child.

She stressed the value of traditional energy-saving technologies - and welcomed the development of new technologies and their adaptation to India's needs.

She was a firm believer that only with coexistence could there be any existence at all.

I would like to recall her words that are so relevant today.

Yet different types of interventions, open or covert, do take place in Asia, in Africa, in Latin America.

They are all intolerable and unacceptable.

Interference leads to intervention and one intervention often attracts another.

Each situation of conflict has its own origins.

Whatever they be, solutions must be political and peaceful.

All States must abide by the principle that force or the threat of force will not be used against the territorial integrity or political independence of another state.

Her theme remained constant - the interrelation of security, development and the environment.

She believed that nationalism should not detach peoples from common humanity.

Shrimati Indira Gandhi firmly believed that smaller nations had a key role in determining the future of the world.

In pursuing India's aims, she never acted against the aspirations of other developing nations or compromised their priorities.

She held that the myriad problems related to the environment, optimal utilization of global resources and the reorganization of political and economic systems needed the co-operative endeavours of the whole world community.

Shrimati Indira Gandhi shall be remembered for her untiring efforts at maintaining cohesion, unity and enhanced economic co-operation among developing nations, their autonomous development, collective self reliance and equitable and democratic dialogue between the North and South.

In her interventions at international fora, she was admired as a moderator and conciliator.

In awarding the prize for 2010 to President Lula, we are honouring today an outstanding champion of the developing world.

President Lula has been a transformative figure in Brazil.

With his own unique life story of rising from humble origins to the highest level in the country and to international recognition as a world Statesman, he has inspired millions of his countrymen.

Their faith in participatory democracy and in effective governmental intervention for development were strengthened by his actions.

As a man of vision, he dreamed of comprehensive development for Brazil and made eradication of hunger and alleviation of poverty his imperatives.

With energy and perseverance, he challenged the structural causes of food shortages and achieved food security for his people.

Today Brazil is one of the front ranking economies and more than 20 million Brazilians have been lifted out of acute poverty due to these innovative and well administered programs.

President Lula is also credited as having changed significantly Brazil's international profile.

His energetic and dynamic international engagement has been anchored on empathy and solidarity with the developing world.

Starting with all of South America and with efforts at greater unity in the countries of that continent, President Lula forged stronger links with Africa recognising the historical and economic bonds of Brazil with many African countries.

He has been a force in the evolution of new fora that bring together major emerging economies including India and Brazil.

President Lula has thus greatly contributed to the cause of the developing countries and to the self-realisation of the commonalities and convergent interests of the major emerging economies.

Brazil will come under even greater world attention in the coming years as the host of the FIFA world cup in 2014 and the Olympics in 2016.

Your Excellency, President Lula, allow me to state that it is a moment of great satisfaction for me to present the Indira Gandhi Peace Prize for 2010 to you.

I understand that the international jury had been unanimous in their choice.

You are a true visionary of the 20th century.

You are regarded as the most popular politician in the history of Brazil and one of the most popular world figures.

The formation of IBSA and south-south co-operation are manifestations of your contribution to the strengthening of co-operation between developing countries of Africa, Asia and South America.

It was your foresight that infused a momentum to the integration of Latin America and the Caribbean.

The formation of the Community of the Latin American and Caribbean States fulfills the desire of the people and the will of the nations in your region to carve out their own destiny.

The people of India hold you in high esteem.

You have been a sincere friend of India.

It was during your Presidency that relations between India and Brazil steadily progressed and the seeds were sown of a close partnership in the IBSA, BRIC, G-20 and BASIC.

Our bilateral cooperation has strengthened significantly in recent years - and we are today in a strategic partnership of a privileged nature, engaged in realizing its full potential for our mutual benefit.

Our two way trade flow today is over 9 billion USD.

In recent years, our economies have been growing and today we are major economies in terms of GDP, but we both face regional and income disparities.

It is therefore inevitable that often our perspective on global issues are similar be it with regard to democratisation of the world order, issues relating to international trade at the WTO or climate change.

We share a strong commitment to nuclear disarmament and the global elimination of all weapons of mass destruction.

We are united in our belief in dialogue and consultation as the best path to the resolution of disputes.

Your Excellency, President Lula, at this critical juncture in world affairs, as we confront economic uncertainty, food scarcity, increasing competition for the world's resources, political instability and terrorism, it is men of vision, integrity and clarity of purpose who can instill faith among their fellow men, find solutions and show the way.

Your policies have always been inclusive and your perseverance inspiring.

Our Government and people applaud your selfless labour for your people and for mankind.

May you long continue to play an active role in global affairs.

It is indeed a pleasure for me to be here today to felicitate the award winners of National Safety Awards (Mines) for the years 2008, 2009 & 2010.

I take this opportunity to congratulate all the award winners for recording exemplary performance in the area of mines safety.

These awards, instituted by the Ministry of Labour & Employment, Govt of India are a token of appreciation for good work done over the years in the field of mine safety.

This exemplifies the resolve on the part of all mines in the country to promote a safer and better working environment through voluntary initiatives.

However, there can be no room for complacency in this regard particularly since safety issues, and their associated complexities, are increasing with expansion of mining activity, intensive mechanization and extension of mining activity to adverse geo-mining locales.

The mining industry occupies an important position in the national economy by not only employing over one million persons but also producing basic raw materials for many industries, including the core sector.

The last millennium had witnessed some of the greatest changes in recorded history.

The millennium began in the middle ages, then progressed through the industrial revolution, the age of science, and now, the new millennium is rapidly trying to catch up with the information age.

This is a time of introspection.

Issues such as increased mechanization, emphasis on protection of environment, stringent social demand on safety at workplaces, large scale introduction of information technology in mining industry, more difficult geo-mining locales and cost considerations pose serious challenges to the mining industry in India.

In this changed scenario, all stakeholders will constantly need to be a step ahead of the learning curve and continuously re-invent business and technological processes.

A developing economy needs increased availability of power to sustain a higher growth rate.

A GDP growth rate of 9 per cent per year has been envisaged over the Twelfth Plan period of 2012-17.

This would necessitate a growth in the total energy supply by around 6.5 per cent per year.

The total requirement of Oil in the country in 2010-11 was 164.32 million tonne, with as much as 76% being met through imports.

The oil requirement could increase to 205 million tonne per year by the end of the Twelfth Five Year Plan, with around 80% of it to be met by imports.