

NIF's recalls its association with the 'Innovation President'

The Rashtrapati Bhawan has been a Center of learning and innovation through a variety of non-conventional initiatives such as the annual Festival of Innovation, Innovation Scholar-In-Residence programme, setting up of a permanent exhibition of innovations apart from the hosting of NIF's Biennial National Grassroots Innovation and Outstanding Traditional Knowledge awards and annual exhibition of Innovations. Many of these were initiated by an exceptional personal interest of the late President Shri Pranab Mukherjee while he was in office.

Innovators with diverse backgrounds, be it at the grassroots or the school students, old and young, experienced equal opportunities of recognition by virtue of their innovations. The so-called 'Minds at the Margin' --- award-winning innovators from remote rural corners of the country and the school and technology students whose creativity was at par with best in the world, received the much-deserved recognition and exposure solely on the basis of merit of their innovative potential.

This triggered a transformation in how society saw innovation and was made possible because of the passion for promoting innovations that the then President Shri Pranab Mukherjee cherished.

Coming from the rural area of the Birbhum district in West Bengal, technologies from rural areas that could solve local problems was very close to his heart, and perhaps this is what drove him to become a great patron of innovation.

The National Innovation Foundation – India (NIF), an autonomous institution of the Department of Science and Technology (DST), the Government of India had the privilege to contribute towards realization of some of his visionary ideas. NIF scientists fondly recall his passion for an innovative India, which was evident in his proactive approach, be in interacting with innovators during the exhibition or with scholars during roundtables.

According to NIF, the programmes organized at Rashtrapati Bhawan encouraged the innovator fraternity throughout the country by sending a message that their contribution is deeply valued by the nation and that they would be nurtured, respected, recognized, and rewarded.

The three editions of the Biennial National Grassroots Innovation and Outstanding Traditional Knowledge awards of NIF were hosted by Rashtrapati Bhawan. The annual Festival of Innovation (FOIN), together with the NIF and DST, encompassed an innovation exhibition and a series of global roundtables to facilitate the learning and sharing of experience related to innovation by scholars, researchers, entrepreneurs, and most importantly, innovators within and outside the country.

In the year 2017, during the Festival of Innovation (FOIN), Dr. Francis Gurry, DG, World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) was invited, and he called on President Pranab Mukherjee. This was an occasion to further the cause of frugal and demand-driven innovations, which are so important for developing and diverse societies. As a part of the Innovation Scholar-In-Residence programme, four batches of innovators were invited to stay as guests of Rashtrapati Bhawan, and valuable linkages to help the innovative technologies were built during Shri Mukherjee's presidency.

A permanent exhibition of Grassroots Innovation at Rashtrapati Bhavan - Navachara – II was set up, and few grassroots innovators who were conferred NIF's Biennial National Grassroots Innovation and Outstanding Traditional Knowledge award received Padma Awards from him in the year 2016 and 2017.

Towards the end of his presidency, a book titled "The Innovation President", a tribute by NIF, was presented to him in the presence of then President-Elect and now Hon'ble President Shri Ram Nath Kovind and the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi.

Shri Pranab Mukherjee's passion towards innovation was not limited to his presidency alone. He conferred the annual Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam IGNITE Awards of NIF for five consecutive years between 2015 and till 2019 to the young and innovative children of our country.

His mantra of 3 I's for India - **Impatient, Innovative** and **Inclusive** along with the three Cs - **Creative, Collaborative** and **Compassionate** society will forever be recalled by innovators through the ages, and The National Innovation Foundation – India (NIF) will remain committed to them in promoting an innovative future.

The legacy of Late Shri Mukherjee in being a champion of innovations continues to grow in the Rashtrapati Bhavan today by Hon'ble President, Shri Ram Nath Kovind.

