

CSIR Society Meeting
The Speech by Hon'ble President, CSIR Dr. Manmohan Singh
26th July, 2004

Distinguished Members of the CSIR Society, Ladies and Gentlemen.

1. It gives me great pleasure to be with you at this meeting of the Society. As many of you know, I have taken keen interest in the development of science & technology and scientific and industrial research in our country. I would like to reassure you at the very outset that these areas will remain subjects of high priority for me and our government.
2. I will be seeking your advice and support with respect to policies and programmes in the area of science & technology and would appreciate your coming forward with practical ideas that we should give high priority to.
3. I would like to congratulate CSIR for the remarkable transformation into a performance driven and user focused organisation. The entire CSIR family deserves to be complimented for achieving this feat. It is particularly gratifying to see, from Dr. Mashelkar's presentation, the accolades it has received from the business, the scientific community, and also the international management experts on this transformation. I am also happy to hear that the CSIR's next phase of

transformation will be driven by the recommendations made through the Kelkar Committee that was set up for the purpose.

4. CSIR is very fortunate to have Shri Kapil Sibal as the Minister of State for Science and Technology and also as the Vice-President of CSIR. Knowing his dynamism and vision, I am sure the process of the next phase of transformation of CSIR will be completed within the foreseeable future. As the President of CSIR Society, I would like to extend my very best wishes for a glorious journey ahead for the CSIR family.
5. I am happy to see that CSIR is flying higher and further. I was particularly happy to get the news of the successful maiden flight of SARAS on 29th May, this year. This aircraft has been indigenously designed and built by our own scientists and engineers. We are proud of this feat. SARAS to me is not just an aircraft, it is a symbol of India's determination to use its technological prowess to create products that will be not only globally competitive but will also benefit the country at large. I am sure SARAS will herald the dawn of civil aviation industry in India. Going further, I hope SARAS would become a 'brand name' for small aircrafts world over.
6. This CSIR Society meeting is taking place almost three months after our new Government has been in place. The Government has already announced the Common Minimum Programme (CMP) of the United Progressive Alliance on 27th May, 2004.

As you will see, science and technology has been given a place of pride in this programme. I would like to begin by emphasizing the new direction that science and technology has to take in future to make a greater difference to the lives of the Indian people.

7. CMP envisages that the UPA Government will follow the policies and introduce programmes that will strengthen India's vast science and technology infrastructure. We have also stressed that science and technology development and application missions will be launched in key areas covering both 'global leadership' and 'local transformation'. I am happy to see from Dr. Mashelkar's presentation that CSIR's programmes have focused on not only attaining 'global leadership' but also on issues which have deep 'local relevance'.

8. Our S&T system can play a decisive role only when it advances the well being of all sections of society, not just a privileged few. It must play the bigger role of creating wealth for all, not just a selected few. A theme that is close to my heart is on 'making technologies work for the poor and the underprivileged'. In other words, can we develop technologies, which will ameliorate the poverty, create jobs, remove the disease burden of the poor, and improve the overall quality of life?

9. Let us take a special issue of the disease burden of the poor. We have emphasized in CMP that UPA Government will take all steps to ensure availability of life saving drugs at reasonable prices. As was pointed out by Dr. Mashelkar, the costs of development of new drugs have been soaring and, therefore, India must find out alternative paths for drug development. CSIR has had a track record of developing drugs for diseases of the poor including Malaria. It should continue its efforts further not only on innovative process chemistry but development of entirely new drugs. The new IPR regime is going to put pressure on the Indian drug industry to develop new drugs. CSIR should be a willing and active partner with Indian industry in this endeavour and especially focus on the diseases of the poor.

10. CSIR could do a lot in other sectors too. For example, CMP has focused on the housing for the weaker sections in rural areas. Can we look at the use of new technologies for creating affordable housing for the poor? We have just witnessed the heart rendering scenes when around 100 young children perished in Kumbakonam in Tamilnadu. Can we not look at alternative technologies that will create safer fire proof structures, which are cost effective and affordable at the same time? I am familiar with the good work that CSIR had done in Novodaya Vidyalaya in the past. However, I would like to see a CSIR that is sensitive to the happenings

around, such as in Kumbakonam, and respond with speed and determination so that such tragedies do not occur.

11. Water is becoming a precious commodity. I understand that in one of the early meetings of Scientific Advisory Committee to Prime Minister (SAC-PM), Rajiv Gandhi had said 'John Kennedy set up a mission to send a man on the moon. To me the equivalent mission is to take drinking water to 186000 villages in India'. Rajiv Gandhi Mission was set up to achieve this objective. However, we are far away from fulfilling this dream of Rajivji. The scenes of women carrying water over a distance of a few kilometers is still common. Can we not bring in new technologies to fulfil this mission? I am acutely aware of the fact that new technologies can do so much but nothing can be achieved without good delivery mechanisms. Technologists must integrate their efforts fully into such delivery mechanisms by partnering with other Ministries and Departments.

12. Several of CSIR's core competencies can be used effectively to solve India's water related problems. The Government has declared its intention to establish desalination plants all along the Coromandel Coast starting with Chennai. I understand that CSIR has a great deal of expertise in desalination technologies. I would like to see CSIR work in a true 'Team India' fashion to provide all possible technological assistance so that we can meet these targets set up in CMP.

13. While addressing the conference of Chief Ministers on poverty alleviation and rural prosperity through Panchayat Raj that was held on 29th June, 2004, I had suggested that our strategy for the rural development must be fashioned to unleash the productivity potential of our agriculture and its allied activities. I had stressed that technological possibilities to break new grounds in increasing productive capacity of small farms and small businesses need to be fully harnessed. We want to focus on employment intensive schemes in small scale industry. We have decided to free this sector from Inspector Raj giving them full credit of technological and marketing support. I would like to see such technology being provided by CSIR.
14. I had also said that decentralized power in terms of local electricity generation and use can make the Gandhian vision of decentralized production not only an ethical idea but also a viable economic option. CSIR should develop and deliver such technologies so that we can achieve this objective.
15. There is a new big opportunity in terms of the herbal wealth of people in tribal areas, which can greatly benefit from the attention now given by business to Non Timber Wood Products. Dr. Mashelkar's presentation on CSIR's 'bioactives network programme' by exploiting India's herbal wealth has demonstrated that value added therapeutics can be made

through this approach. Here is a possibility of the herbal wealth of the people in tribal areas leading to the creation of economic wealth for the people. CSIR needs to redouble this effort, which can bring in a new societal transformation.

16. It was Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who had realized the crucial role of science and technology in nation building in post-independent India. He had once said 'it is an inherent obligation of a great country like India with its traditions of scholarship and original thinking and its great cultural heritage to participate fully in the march of science, which is probably mankind's greatest enterprise today'. I wish to assure the eminent members of the CSIR Society that this Government will do its best to see that the Indian participation in this great march of science is supported most enthusiastically and vigorously.
17. The Government will not shy away from investing in science and technology research and development provided what we do improves the quality of life of our people and makes our country move self-reliant. Equally our focus must be on making our industry more globally competitive.

I wish the society well in its work.

Thank you.