

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB
MUKHERJEE AT THE PRESENTATION OF NATIONAL SAFETY
AWARDS (MINES) - 2008, 2009 & 2010**

Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi: 21-11-2012

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.

2. I am happy to learn that the National Safety Awards are becoming increasingly popular in mines all over the country. This exemplifies the resolve on the part of all mines in the country to promote a safer and better working environment through voluntary initiatives. The twin concepts of “Self-regulation” and “Workers’ Participation in Safety Management” have resulted in a steady decline in fatality rates over the several decades which is quite encouraging. 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.

3. 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 mineral sector contributed 5.0% of our national GDP during 2010-11. The industrial climate of the country and the overall economic scenario is undergoing substantive change which, I hope, will also result in the mining industry benchmarking itself to global efficiency parameters through improvements in efficiency, productivity, safety and health standards.

4. 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.

5. 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. This would be unsustainable for the economy, with implications on its fiscal balance as well as its targets for growth and development.

6. India is fortunate to have been blessed with vast coal resources. The country has 118 billion tonne of proven coal reserves as of 1st April 2012, which places it amongst the top five

countries in the world with large coal reserves. At the present level of production, these reserves could last for around 200 years. As of now, coal meets around 52% of the total energy requirement in the country. The total energy requirement in the country in 2016-17 that is the terminal year of the Twelfth Five Year Plan is estimated at around 738 million tonne of oil equivalent. To meet our developmental needs and vast requirement of energy, the country in the next 10-15 years will have to rely more and more on coal. In fact, coal should occupy a predominant position in our sources of energy supply. However, to make increased dependence on coal a sustainable phenomenon, we will have to move towards cleaner technologies so that environment is not unduly stretched. Another area that needs intervention is introduction of technology and processes that ensure a hazard free environment to workmen in this sector.

7. The added emphasis on information technology will also profoundly impact the manner in which the mining industry shall function in the future by simplifying work processes, on the one hand and bringing about cost reduction and productivity improvements, on the other. Moving into the 21st century, one can envision a restructured mining industry with multiple players. We

also need to recognize that in today's competitive environment, only cohesive, focused and, work-oriented organizations will survive. I am sure that the mining industry will measure up to the challenges of our times.

8. I am confident that the National Safety Awards (Mines) will prove to be an excellent catalyst in upholding health, safety and welfare standards in our mines. I once again congratulate all the award winners for their splendid efforts in encouraging mine safety.

JAI HIND.