

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB  
MUKHERJEE ON THE OCCASION OF INAUGURATION OF THE  
DIAMOND JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS OF THE COIR BOARD**

Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi: 25-11-2013

It is indeed my privilege to be present amongst you on this happy occasion when the Coir Board is celebrating 60 years of its existence. At the very outset, I would like to extend to you all my greetings and felicitations.

2. As one of the oldest commodity boards under the Government of India, the Coir Board has done well on all accounts – whether it is production, employment or export earnings. The coir industry, originating in Kerala came under the Coir Industries Act in 1953 followed by the establishment of this Board in 1954.

3. I am happy to note that since then, this unique industry - of coir manufacturing - has grown into a highly successful sector. It has spread into other coconut growing States and today, thousands of household units are engaged in fibre extraction and spinning of coir yarn throughout the coir producing regions. The industry employs about 7 lakh workers, predominantly women in more than 14 states and Union Territories.

4. It is also amongst the foremost foreign exchange earning industries in our country - whose products have a stable market all over the world. I am told that even at the time when our exports were adversely affected by the global recession, our coir industry remained in a positive growth trajectory.

5. This industry has, in fact, evolved in a remarkable way - in terms of quality improvement, technological and scientific upgradation of the products, better market research and product promotion – to become a net earner of over 1100 crores from the export of its products.

6. I am glad that in the 12<sup>th</sup> Plan, sufficient allocations have been made to this traditional agro-based cottage industry to enable it to expand further. Its further growth is bound to have a positive multiplier effect as most of the units in this industry are in the rural segment of our economy – in the category of micro industries and nearly 40% are small and medium scale production units.

7. An important plus point of the coir industry is that it adds value to a byproduct - the husk of the coconut fruit – which would otherwise have little commercial use. As a versatile substitute for many synthetic materials, coir usefulness in a variety of everyday products - from floor covering to textiles to ornaments and handicrafts that showcase the artistic value of coir has made it very marketable indeed. Coir does not pose health risks and nor does it create pollution. I understand that in Europe and USA, our coir is even used for soil bio-engineering applications. Coir wood, a new innovation, is an important outcome of the research carried out by the Coir Board – and this product is fast establishing itself as a substitute for a traditional wood.

8. In these days of greater awareness of the benefits of sustainable development, we see an increasing usage of coir in doors, false ceilings, wall paneling, acoustics control, and thermal insulation; even for the production of coir pith which has a high water retaining capacity and is has been found to be useful for making organic mulch and growing media.

9. I was glad to learn that along with up-gradation and development of new machinery and diversification of the traditional items produced in this indigenous industry , due attention is being paid to the development of environment-friendly technologies and production processes. As this is an industry where 80% of the workforce is constituted by women, the importance of its modernization and upgradation of its infrastructure cannot be emphasized enough. These steps are indispensable to bring about greater morale in the work force, higher productivity and better quality of products.

10. It is commendable that the Coir Board has developed the Mahila Coir Yojna Scheme to specifically focus on women in rural areas – and train them to take up spinning of coir yarn and other simple processes in coir manufacturing. This opening is an opportunity for them to not only contribute, but also develop their own self–confidence and self-reliance. I was also glad to see that the Coir Board is taking several measures to improve the living conditions of coir workers and helping them to optimize the returns on their efforts and the resources invested by them.

11. Through its various schemes and financial assistance, and support in regular procurement of raw material by producers – as well as infrastructural

support– Government of India has given critical backing to boost the existing coir industry and encourage new entrepreneurs.

12. Certainly, there are always challenges to be faced alongside success: as in other areas of the agricultural sector, difficulties may be faced in availing credit facilities, or with the cost of credit and often delays are encountered in procuring raw material. There is also the problem of inadequate access to updated technology. These are the areas where it is important for the coir industry to receive all the support that it can get.

13. I would very much like to see this industry become self-reliant in terms of raw material procurement; and I would urge employers to ensure that the workers engaged in this industry are provided enhanced support through the insurance and welfare schemes of Government.

14. The Coir Board, in the five-plus decades of its existence, has certainly done a lot to address these issues. I congratulate the Coir Board for its successful efforts and innovations - and its steady focus on market trends. I appreciate its efficiency in converting information and knowledge swiftly into strategy and guidance for the participants in this industry.

15. It is gratifying to learn that the Coir Board has taken up a number of capacity building measures to upgrade the skills of the workers in the manufacturing process.

16. I compliment the Coir Board for their initiatives to make this industry successful. I am sure that through its more than 42 sales outlets throughout the country, its research centres and its continuous innovation of new products to popularize this natural, eco-friendly fibre, the Coir Board will achieve the goal of significantly increasing revenues in this agro-based industry in the years to come.

17. I wish you all success, as well as a very bright and prosperous future.

Jai Hind!