

**PM's address at the Diamond
Jubilee celebrations of the
National Chemical Laboratory**

**April 1, 2010
Pune**

“I am very happy to be here today to participate in the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations of the National Chemical Laboratory. Let me begin by extending my greetings and best wishes to the scientists, students and staff of the Laboratory and to all others who have been associated with this premier institution of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research.

The National Chemical Laboratory is one of the first research laboratories conceived by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research. It was born of a dream of a nascent nation, awakening to freedom and aspiring to harness the potential of science and technology for the benefit of its people. The institution owes its existence to the vision of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who believed that India would need advanced centres of research where the best Indian minds could pursue their passion for science and contribute to building our nation.

Sixty years is a significant milestone in the lifespan of any institution. The National Chemical Laboratory has had a lineage of distinguished leaders who have guided its destiny with great distinction. With its tradition of excellence in scientific research, it has nurtured some of the best minds in India. Several scientists of this institution have been elected to distinguished academies of sciences,

both in India and overseas. The Laboratory made a seminal contribution to the emergence of Indian pesticides industry which was critical to the success of the Green Revolution. Post-1970, the research conducted at the National Chemical Laboratory gave birth to the Indian generic drug industry, a forerunner to the vibrant Indian pharmaceutical industry of today. More recently, this Laboratory has contributed to the growth of the petrochemicals, polymers and fine chemicals industry. With its world class facilities, it is my hope that the National Chemical Laboratory will sustain this culture of excellence and continue to explore the boundaries of frontier science.

The country looks up to its premier scientific institutions like the National Chemical Laboratory for finding solutions to some of the most vexing problems that confront our society and our development efforts. Our scientific laboratories must align their priorities even more closely to the national needs. They must contribute to the creation of wealth in our society. They must seek and deliver appropriate solutions which would change the lives of the most vulnerable sections of our society. It is our scientific capabilities that will determine our ability to overcome challenges which lie ahead in areas such as climate change, clean energy, environment friendly technologies, water management, affordable healthcare, food security, and biotechnology.

Our Government has declared 2010-2020 as the “Decade of Innovations”. We need to instill the spirit of innovation in our young minds so that they could find solutions in a variety of areas to achieve the goal of inclusive and sustainable growth. Innovators must be challenged to produce

solutions our society needs. The solutions must be found in a timely manner, and must then move out of the laboratory quickly and gain wider acceptance. I am happy to learn that an ambitious proposal to establish a CSIR Innovation Complex in this campus in a public-private partnership mode is under consideration.

I am also delighted to participate in the Foundation Stone laying ceremony of the new campus of the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER), Pune. The charter of IISERs is to create world class institutions for undergraduate as well as postgraduate education in science with an intellectually alive atmosphere for research. In these institutions, education will be totally integrated with the state-of-the art research. The project is also a reflection of the good coordination between Education and Science Ministries.

I understand that the IISER Pune has already progressed well in the above dimensions since its inception in the year 2006, with more than 300 undergraduate and Ph.D. students and a young and enthusiastic faculty.

I share the concerns that our bright young men and young women are not taking up science in sufficient numbers after the 10+2 stage. It is important to bring them into the fold of exciting and stimulating research environment of colleges and universities. Our government has undertaken significant expansion of the education system, including science education, at various levels. However, we need to do more. We need to improve the quality of teaching of science in our schools, focus on faculty development, increase our expenditure on science and technology from the current low level of about 1 % of our GDP, and further

strengthen academia-industry interface. Our competitive advantage in the R & D sector maybe lost unless we ensure that the country produces, on a continuing basis an adequate number of competent and motivated young people who could lead our national laboratories, science agencies and knowledge based industries.

I urge the scientific community to come forward and make the IISER system a unique brand of academic excellence and help in realizing our dream of making India the knowledge hub of the world.

The power and status of a nation in the world of today is determined to a large extent by its achievements and capabilities in science and technology. Our scientific laboratories and institutions must assume a leadership role, and take on the challenge to build a new and resurgent India which will be the envy of the world. I hope both the National Chemical Laboratory and the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research will live up to the expectations the people of our country have from them and other such institutions.

Let me end by wishing both the institutions and all those associated with them every success in the years to come. May God bless your path.”