

## **Nitin Gadkari felicitates 20 social innovators at Millennium Alliance Awards ceremony** ***Rs. 20 cr. funding to test & scale innovations in India, South Asia*** ***and Africa to address developmental challenges***

**NEW DELHI, November 25, 2014.** Mr. Nitin Gadkari, Union Minister, Ministry of Road Transport & Highways and Shipping, Govt. of India, today felicitated 20 innovators at the **Millennium Alliance Awards Ceremony**. The innovators were awarded a total funding of approximately Rs. 20 crores (\$3.2 million) under the focus sectors of basic education, affordable healthcare, agriculture/food security, clean energy, and water and sanitation.

**The ceremony was organized by FICCI in association with Technology Development Board (Department of Science and Technology, Government of India), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Department for International Development (DFID) of UK, ICCO Cooperation, ICICI Foundation for Inclusive Growth and Wadhvani Initiative for Sustainable Health (WISH).**

These innovations were selected through a rigorous selection and evaluation process of over 1400 proposals received as a result of pan-India outreach supported through 40 roadshows in tier I, II & III cities. The winning innovators will receive seed funding and other support to test and demonstrate their projects which were selected based on their potential to improve the quality of life for low-income populations in India, South Asia and Africa. The awardees are implementing their initiatives across India and beyond, including in Bihar, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Kerala, and Haryana, and in low-income countries in Africa and South Asia.

The Millennium Alliance is an inclusive and diverse platform to leverage Indian creativity, expertise and resources to identify, support, and scale innovative solutions being developed and tested in India to address development challenges that will benefit low-income populations across India and the world. For more information, please visit [www.millenniumalliance.in](http://www.millenniumalliance.in)

A social innovation expo was also put up as a part of the awards ceremony.

While delivering his keynote address at the ceremony, Mr. Gadkari confessed that he was staunch believer in scientific research. To him, knowledge is power and conversion of knowledge into wealth is a challenge for India. He said that the answer to this challenge is innovation and entrepreneurship. He added that Millennium Alliance provides the right platform for encouraging innovators and scaling up their innovations.

Mr. Gadkari said that India is a land of innovators but most innovations go unnoticed. He urged the Millennium alliance partners and industry to identify innovators from rural India as well and provide them the necessary resources. A case in point, he said was Ahmedabad where there were almost 20,000 innovations waiting for recognition at the national and global level.

Speaking on innovations, Mr. Gadkari spoke about government's initiative of electronic toll collection (ETC) which will be implemented across the 350 toll booths that exist in India at present. ETC is bound to reduce traffic jams on toll plazas, save fuel and reduce pollution.

He urged FICCI to create a bank of innovations and ideas to eradicate poverty and take India to the path of economic

growth. Mr. Gadkari added that it was important to invest in all sectors and innovation that can substantially increase the employment potential of the country.

**Mr. Harkesh Kumar Mittal, Former Secretary, Technology Development Board and Adviser & Member Secretary national Science & Technology Entrepreneurship Development Board,** said that the Millennium Alliance should address the critical social challenges. Technology should be used for finding solutions to these challenges. He added that the various partners of Millennium Alliance have immense capabilities and experience in dealing with international social issues and these capabilities must be harnessed to develop cost effective innovations for people at the bottom of the pyramid.

**Mr. Sidharth Birla, President, FICCI,** said that Millennium Alliance (MA) leverages Indian creativity, expertise, and resources to identify and scale innovative solutions being developed and tested in India to address development challenges that will benefit base of the pyramid populations across India and the world. The MA was conceptualized realizing that there is an urgent need to look beyond the conventional way of doing things and adopt innovative approaches and solutions to meet the demands at the bottom of the pyramid. The focus of such innovations should be on access, affordability, sustainability as well as scalability.

**Mr. John A. Beed, United States Acting Deputy Chief of Mission,** said that this year many new partners associated with the Millennium Alliance program had brought with them a pool of talent, knowledge and resources to strengthen the initiative. The US and India are forging a strategic partnership towards resolving developmental issues and Millennium Alliance is one of the platforms which is facilitating the effort. He added that in Round II of Millennium Alliance some amazing innovations came to the fore and were being promoted to achieve scalability.

**Mr. Marshall Elliott, Minister Development & Head of DFID India,** a new partner of the Millennium Alliance, said that it was a unique platform where diverse partners were engaged in stimulating innovations. India is known for innovation and these innovations were now being shared at the global level.

**Mr. Alay Barah, Director, ICCo India,** said that besides providing funding, his organisation was actively involved in providing other non-funding activities to the causes such as technical support. He urged the innovators to bring in new innovations that could be of help to the backward regions of India such as North East.

**Mr. Chinmay Sengupta, Chief Operating Officer, ICICI Foundation for Inclusive Growth,** said that the impact an innovation is able to make on the society was of critical importance. During the scrutiny of numerous innovations the panel looked at the nature of innovation, concept and how it would leverage people at the grass root level.

**Mr. Soumitro Ghosh, Chief Executive Officer, Wadhvani Initiative for Sustainable Health (WISH),** said that his organization was focused on providing quality primary healthcare services to rural India. Millennium Alliance supports and catalyses innovation and there was an urgent need to scale up quality primary healthcare delivery.

.....