

**Speech of Hon'ble Chief Minister , Government of Karnataka
to be given in the 4th Meeting of Governing Council of NITI
Aayog on 17th June 2018 in Rashtrapati Bhavan Cultural
Centre , New Delhi**

Honourable Prime Minister of India;
Honourable Union Ministers;
Honourable Chief Ministers of States and Lt. Governors of Union
Territories;
Vice-Chairman, NITI Aayog;
Officers of the Government of India and States;
Ladies and Gentlemen

I consider it a privilege to be invited to speak at the fourth meeting of the Governing Council of the NITI Aayog. More so, as this is my first address in the Governing Council after taking over as Chief Minister of Karnataka.

The new government has to fulfil several aspirations of the people of Karnataka. We will work tirelessly and need full support of Government of India and the institutions like NITI Aayog. While we may represent various political ideologies, when it comes to development we should hold our hands together. I pledge my full support and cooperation to the Government of India to further this spirit.

The first and the foremost issue that I will like to focus on is the agrarian crisis that the nation is facing today. While about 70% of the population resides in rural areas and dependent on agriculture and allied activities, growth in the agriculture sector is not enough to give them remunerative income. Rural indebtedness is staring at us in the face. We need to come

together to handle this crisis. My government is ready to take substantial steps to redress indebtedness of farmers, and I call upon the Government of India to help us in our efforts.

In Karnataka about 85 lakh farmers have outstanding debts on account of agricultural loans from the banks. Due to recurring droughts, the distress of the farmers is even more acute.

The State Government intends to alleviate the plight of the farmers through a loan waiver scheme in the interest of the farmers. I request Government of India to provide 50% support for our loan waiver initiative.

Karnataka has been a leader in Agricultural marketing reforms. The Karnataka Agricultural Marketing Policy 2013, has brought about transformation in the existing agricultural marketing system by leveraging technology and linking all markets of the State on the e-platform. Traders registered in any one market can participate in bidding of commodities available in any other market . Major objectives of the policy include bringing transparency in market operations, efficiency, automation of market processes, providing assaying facility, increasing the reach of farmers produce across the country through online trading have been realized. These initiatives were studied by the Government of India and incorporated in the e-NAM.

The Unified Market Platform (UPM), which is an electronic trading system, has been progressively introduced across all the markets in the State. Farmers have tremendously benefited from this as price for their produce is being determined through competitive price discovery method.

Karnataka is following a unique method for location of grids in soil sampling which is GIS-GPS enabled. We have developed an

android application “Soil Sample Collector” for mobile devices. Through a web service soil sampling database (which contains details such as date of sampling, survey number, latitude & longitude, name of the crops etc,) is integrated with the Bhoomi Database . Data in the Karnataka State Data Centre is integrated to Soil Health Card portal of NIC, New Delhi.

During 2015-16 to 2016-17, the targeted 78.32 lakh soil cards were all distributed for benefit of farmers. The second cycle is under progress. We commit ourselves to continue this innovative programme for the benefit of large sections of farmers.

I would like to draw attention of this august gathering to the immediate need of gearing ourselves to climate resilient agriculture. Climate change is a reality especially so in the agriculture sector. Karnataka with large tracts of arid areas is being severely affected. With 13 droughts of varying degrees in the past 16 years, the need for climate resilient agriculture is real. I call upon the Government of India and NITI Aayog to harness national and international expertise to develop comprehensive framework, strategies and practices for ushering a climate resilient agriculture revolution in the country. This should include climate resilient crop varieties, water conservation practices and promotion of traditional food habits.

Water is becoming a scarce resource, and is going to be a limiting factor for growth, both in agriculture as well as in other sectors. We have taken up several steps to overcome this like lake rejuvenation called ‘ Kere Sanjeevini ’ as a special initiative. For the first time in the country, two major projects for using treated sewage water from Bengaluru city to fill up dry tanks and recharge of ground water has been taken up. While important, these are not enough. I suggest we dedicate a full

decade for extensive and intensive water conservation efforts. Let us call it the “Water Decade”. It has to become a people’s movement. Substantial part of our resources need to be dedicated for water conservation and management. A mission mode with monitorable indicators has to be the way forward. Our government is fully ready to dedicate its efforts towards this.

We welcome Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Swasthya Suraksha Mission (PMRSSM) initiative of the Central Government to provide health protection to poor families and identified occupational categories of urban workers. Government of Karnataka has been implementing such a scheme for various categories of persons for the past 15 years on assurance mode. From March 2018, the State Government has launched a universal health coverage scheme for all 650 lakh residents of Karnataka by way of 1383 specified treatments in public and private hospitals. The state scheme has a much larger scope of covering all 145 lakh families including 30 lakh APL families as compared to about 61 lakh poor families likely to be covered under the central scheme.

We are encouraged by the flexibility provided by the Central Government to implement the central scheme on assurance mode and thereby facilitate integrated implementation of the central scheme and the state scheme. We propose to implement both schemes as one integrated scheme with co-branding by the State Government and the Central Government. I have directed my officers to discuss with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to work out the modalities of such co-branding and common implementation norms.

Special campaigns such as Mission Indradhanush is needed to plug the gaps in the existing immunization programme and we need to focus on improving the effectiveness of the normal

programme itself . The State Government has taken up integrated delivery of mother and child health services including immunization at the field level with seamless functional integration of services by Health Department and Women & Child Development Department and non-intrusive authentication of the service delivery.

We are taking all measures for the comprehensive development of the aspirational districts (Yadgir and Raichur) identified by the Government of India. We have several suggestions for further speeding up the extensive coverage of development, one of which is to provide Rs 100 Crores per Aspirational District per year for the next five years.

I draw attention of this august house towards another major important issue that has not been listed in the agenda but is so important that we must discuss it. This is regarding jobs for the youth. In this regards, while encouraging investments is extremely important, skill creation according to developing needs is also very essential. We need to be very ambitious if we want to create good jobs. We feel that our efforts are perhaps not commensurate with the challenging requirement. In Karnataka we have been trying a convergence of skill development, but we need to redouble the efforts . I call upon Government of India to include jobs creation and skilling in the agenda so that we can deliberate upon it annually and learn from each others about successful strategies and practices.

As disasters are recurring in one or the other parts of the state every year, the state has been spending a huge amount of money towards disaster mitigation and management. The expenditure in the last five years (Rs.7656 crore) has been more than 6 fold of the SDRF allocation (Rs.1253 crore). As a result the financial burden on the state has been increasing manifold.

Despite Karnataka having the second highest percentage of semi-arid area in the country and suffering from very high incidence of drought and also events like flash floods with high frequency due to non-perennial rivers, our allocation for the period 2015-20 under SDRF is only Rs.1375 crore, which is much less compared to allocation to the States. Hence, there is a urgent need of addressing State requirement based on its susceptibility to the natural hazards.

During 2013-14 to 2016-17 due to Drought and Flood, the estimated loss was Rs. 69372 crores. A memorandum was submitted to Gol every year. The total assistance sought from Gol under NDRF for the above period was Rs. 20006 crores. But, Gol has released only Rs.5368 crores. This put additional burden on the State Government to the extent of Rs.14638 crores.

The issue is flagged here as the states unmet needs are huge and has neither been addressed in the Finance Commission award nor under the NDRF. A comprehensive discussion is needed on this issue.

I would like to briefly mention about Urban Development. While existing schemes are being implemented and are yielding results to some extent, I would like to raise some broader questions. Are we following a strategically correct model of urbanisation? Are large metropolitan areas going to remain engines of growth even in future or will they actually start limiting growth faced with umpteen problems arising from urbanization itself? Should we focus on creating more Urban nodes rather than few large metropolitan areas? These are some futuristic questions that I want to raise. Maybe none of us here have answers to these immediately. But as leaders and responsible Governments we need to deliberate and tailor our strategies to what would

sustain growth in the future. I suggest that Urbanisation strategies be put in the Agenda of NITI Aayog deliberations henceforth.

The NITI Aayog has taken over the role of the Planning Commission to participatively prepare plans and policies for development of the nation as a whole. I am sure the NITI Aayog will prove its federal character in due course and not remain a ritual annual exercise body. We welcome the 17 “Sustainable Development Goals” (SDG) adapted by NITI Aayog. But given the developmental disparities in India, the Niti Aayog and the Government of India must re-emphasize Federal, Participative Medium term Planning with concrete goals and inclusive development programs.

I hope and look forward to the forum of NITI Aayog to be used to exchange experiences and best practices and evolve national consensus which would hopefully lead to optimal utilization of resources for the development of States and the Nation in a democratic and participative manner.

Jai Hind, Jai Karnataka