

Speeding up the wheels of development

The goals for industry's India@75 programme include economic growth, technological vitality and moral leadership

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Indian businesses have come a long way since Independence when the business landscape was still dominated by British and European managing agencies. As a group, we truly came into our own after the economic reforms of the 1990s.

Twenty-five years of reforms and liberalisation have now placed us as the fastest-growing large economy in the world. Yet, it is widely perceived that much remains to be done to improve the lives of citizens. As the country celebrates its 70th Independence Day, industry is prepared to play a significant role in addressing these challenges.

In 2007, the Confederation of Indian Industry identified specific goals for India@75, that is, for the year 2022, under the inspiration and guidance of Prof CK Prahalad. He wanted India to set its standards high in the areas of economic strength, technological vitality and moral leadership.

To make this vision a reality, CII set up the India@75 Foundation and has successfully engaged its large and diverse membership base in nation-building activities across the country. It has popularised the concept of volunteerism among skilled corporate employees seeking to give back to society.

Manpower pool

An important pillar of Prahalad's vision, the importance of which is being increasingly realised, is the need to create a pool of trained manpower.

A critical turning point for the economy can be achieved if more

people are absorbed into the formal economy as good quality jobs are generated in larger numbers. Currently, over 80 per cent of jobs are in the unorganised sector which is dominated by self-employment or employment in very small enterprises. In order to break the vicious cycle of poor quality education leading to low skill jobs, industry took upon itself the task of skilling the workforce.

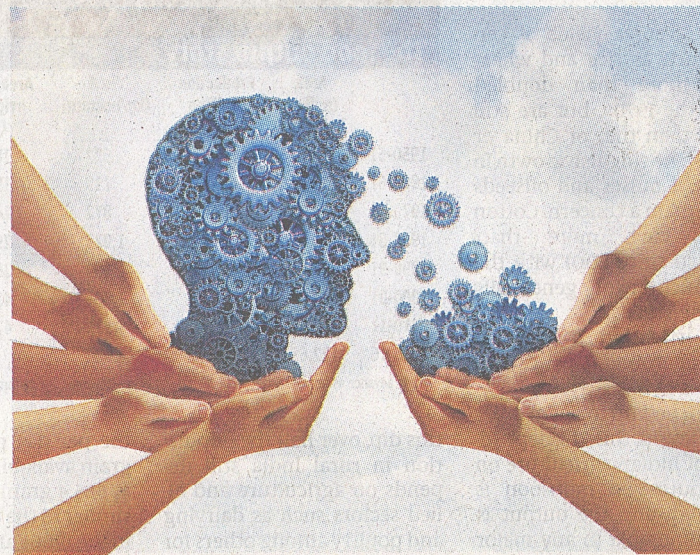
For the organised sector to create jobs in much larger numbers, two things are needed. One is a more supportive regulatory system whose objective goes beyond the protection of existing jobs.

What is needed is a strong social security net for the informal sector along with more flexibility in labour laws.

Second is the availability of people with the right skills. Education must become more affordable and accessible, and the quality of our universities must improve. Skills need to be imparted particularly in the areas of e-learning and digital skills.

Participative citizenship

In an effort to promote participative citizenship, the India@75 initiative has established the CityConnect platform to encourage citizens' partnership with urban local bodies. The model has been established successfully in Chennai, Pune, Goa and Thiruvananthapuram, with plans to cover more cities. Take the case of Pune where industry leaders work with the Pune Municipal Corporation to provide career skills to underprivileged youth.



A sense of urgency To drive Indian industry LIGHTSPRING/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Skill development centres called lighthouses have been successful in attracting low-income workers and the target is to launch a lighthouse in each of the 15 ward offices in the city.

It is important to understand the contours of the emerging industrial order, often referred to as the fourth industrial revolution, in which technology is likely to lead to a number of disruptions. Job security will take a back seat while life-long learning systems will enable skill upgradation throughout one's career. The job-creating capacity of mass manufacturing enterprises may be hampered by the emergence of automation.

At the same time, new developments such as micro-entrepreneurship through aggregation platforms will emerge as opportunities. In the emerging scenario, there is need to leverage technology and in-

novative methods to empower job-seekers through functional literacy comprising modules of digital, financial and basic education.

Today, the use of mobile phones including smartphones has spread rapidly among the Indian populace. Many job opportunities have been generated through greater connectivity between buyers and sellers, and efficiencies in product delivery have improved.

The consumer experience has been enhanced with data availability. The Government, through efforts such as Aadhaar and Jan Dhan Yojana, has made progress towards connecting people to a digital network. This will form the basic building block for a welfare system in an inclusive society.

Building better facilities

Urbanisation is progressing rapidly in India as rural-urban migration

gathers pace. Development of urban infrastructure and housing and effective service delivery would be critical for a less disruptive urbanisation experience.

Efforts need to be made towards better governance, the use of smart systems and prevention of environmental degradation.

The private sector is keen to participate in government initiatives such as Swachh Bharat, Smart Cities and low-cost housing.

Better facilities in the healthcare sector is critical for creating a sense of well-being among the people.

Being from the sector myself, I can say that innovations are changing processes in every branch of medical technology bringing about improvements in diagnostics and treatment of non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

For wider availability of quality healthcare services and effective delivery of public health needs, the involvement of the private sector needs to be considered.

This will also go a long way in creating a more productive and efficient workforce.

It is important to build institutions that will ensure better governance and better execution of our goals.

A sense of urgency is required to achieve our goals in the next five years.

Efforts need to be accelerated by both industry and government. The involvement of citizens would create a "push" for the success of these efforts.

The India@75 initiative through its outreach to corporates, NGOs and the youth seeks to achieve the shared development goals.

The writer is the president of CII

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