

C. Skilling, reskilling and upskilling

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It's an honor to be among this eminent panel on this International Consultation on Transforming Kerala into a Knowledge Economy. We had two very excellent discussions which were looking at two key aspects of a knowledge economy; the infrastructure aspect and later on the innovation ecosystem aspect. Now, I think the third and perhaps one of the most important aspects is what we will be discussing in this session - about people. In the budget, honorable Finance Minister has basically looked at three key aspects of how we actually develop the people to drive the knowledge economy. This includes focus on the creation of the knowledge and on the knowledge workers. And in this context, I think one of the key elements of our strategy, proposed in the budget is to strengthen the higher education institutions by creating research centers of excellence and augmenting the infrastructure in higher education institutions. In the morning, Prof Lundvall presented as how China has actually made a very successful model in the knowledge economy. I think our model is also very similar to that, where we are looking at enhancing public investment in the higher education sector.

We are also looking at setting up a large number of post-doctoral fellowships in the areas which are going to be very relevant in the context of the current Kerala's development puzzle. Now, in all these discussions today, I think one key element which has come out is that for any development to be inclusive, the knowledge economy or knowledge society has to be extremely inclusive. Perhaps that was one of the reasons why there is a focus on setting up of key centers of excellence in areas which are going to take Kerala forward. The centers are expected to be in areas which are going to affect multiple sectors of Kerala. Be it the areas of disaster resilience or the area of marine development or on to support the traditional art forms, how do you actually look at doing high-end research to enable high-end knowledge creation so that these sectors can actually move up in the value chain. This, I think

is the second key proposed in budget. Unfortunately, we may not be discussing these two aspects in this session; perhaps may be the last session will discuss these in more detail.

The third element of knowledge society proposed, I think may perhaps solve a paradox, which Kerala was facing all these years. So, creation of a large number of knowledge workers or knowledge resources is actually going to be the key challenge, when we wanted to create this knowledge economy. We know that the higher amount of state investment in education will create more knowledge workers. We already have very high level in secondary education; even in the higher education GER(Gross Enrolment Ratio) of around 37% is much more than the national average. And the attempts are being made to raise it to 75%, which means three out of four people in Kerala will actually have access to higher education. While this enhances the numbers, we are also concerned that we have a high unemployment rate and the lack of participation of educated youth, especially women, in the economic activities. This basically is the one of the key areas, this session is going to address.

The knowledge economy is basically different from an industrial economy which all of us know pretty well. We know that from large industrial centers which basically concentrate work in a few places, there is a transition happening in the work place with the work is getting distributed all around, through new work from homes and work near homes modes. Distributed employment centers are actually getting created in many places, provided you have people with the right skills in those places to take the type of work which is available across the globe. I believe that this is an area where Kerala should actually focus in serious manner. The budget has put some very ambitious targets to do that.

We have a large number of educated youth, but they may have to skilled. I think Dr. Nandita rightly pointed out in her observation in the last session, they have to be skilled in the right things and there should be a continuous feedback between the industry, the work givers and work demanding units, in a continuous manner. This is another aspect, this session is going to discuss.

Based on this broad theme we have two presentations. One which looks at what would be the type of skilling strategy for the state and going forward, how do we actually ensure that we will make the correct number of knowledge workers and exploit these opportunities which is emerging from different parts of the globe. The second part is how we create decentralized workspaces, so that the people can actually remain in the state, even though they may be delivering their work output elsewhere. They can contribute to the knowledge creation; they

can actually look at the jobs around them. At the same time, they could also look at the participation in the global economy without even moving out of the state. So, these two things are basically getting presented now. And then we will get into the comments from the various members of the expert panel from different parts of the world. So let me first invite Sri Santosh Kurup, the CEO of ICT Academy of Kerala. ICT academy a public private partnership which looks at skilling on various levels of knowledge economy. So over to you Mr. Santhosh.