

Mobilise political support to foster creative society



ANIL GUPTA

The author is a professor at IIM-A

During the recent exhibition of innovations, mainly from grassroots at Rashtrapati Bhavan hosted by President of India Pratibha Patil, we learned several lessons about the way society looks at the innovations by common people. For whatever reason, we did get several state ministers in union cabinet to look at the creativity, but no union cabinet minister had time to interact with creative people from different parts of the country.

Those who came however, made a very interesting statement. Almost all of them spent at least an hour and a half each to understand each innovation, its implications and how they could leverage it from their ministerial perspective.

We also had many secretaries, members of council to promote innovation and chairman of public sector corporations, councils and others visit the same exhibition. Except National Small Industries Corporation, and secretary, MSME, agriculture, renewable energy etc., most bureaucrats and technocrats were in great rush. They hardly spent half an hour each and while they were inspired by the innovations, they did not make enough effort to identify what they could do to leverage each idea or innovation.

Does it say something about the professional ethics? Can we say that while

politicians are becoming more professional, bureaucrats are becoming more political and that too not always in the positive sense.

This is an issue which we will revisit again and again. Why innovations are not important for all those who are interested in issues dealing with the well being of women, resolu-

Politicians are becoming more professional and bureaucrats more political

tion of problems dealing with environment, employment, poverty alleviation etc? May be innovations have not created a constituency large enough for them to see these as politically or administratively strategic.

Let me recount the impression of children. I talked to many groups of children who came from far as well as nearby small towns. Children from small towns took much more interest, spent more time in different stalls and learned perhaps more than the children from Delhi itself. This is evident in many of the sunshine sectors of our economy. Young people from small towns are making a bigger difference than the one from large towns and big cities.

Some knew about innovations but most did not remember the names of innovators. Why are we not teaching our kids to recognise, respect and relate with, new heroes of our society? Time has come when each state assembly and national parliament should have at least one session to discuss ways of leveraging innovations in various sectors by public, private and civil society sectors.

MINDS ON THE MARGIN