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Welcome Speech-2009

We are living through a period of unprecedented change. This change is economic, social, environmental and political. During the last two years many iconic names in world business have vanished. Many more have gone into losses. This gives an inkling of the scope and severity of this change. The developed world faces the prospect of slow growth and unemployment. Our economy is integrating rapidly with the global economy exposing us to its opportunities and risks.

Hence, we in India have been also affected but not so severely.

Climate seems to be changing & becoming more uncertain. We have experienced this in the last two years with the monsoon.

We are now travelling in a rocking ship in a turbulent sea. This calls for very sagacious navigation. It seems to me that more and more initiatives would have to come from non-governmental sectors even as the role of the government would remain crucial.

We must also consider the sobering thought that a large number of countries in our neighbourhood have become unstable states. It is almost impossible to have an island of prosperity in a sea of misery. This was rudely brought to our attention by the attack in Mumbai less than a year ago. Therefore, the stronger and more capable sections of our society, which includes all of us present here today, have to engage much more with our society, to the best of our abilities. By being conscious of the national interest in our sphere of work.

I would also like to take the opportunity to highlight an initiative of Jamnalal Bajaj Foundation during the year. A Bajaj Science Education Centre at Wardha, funded by the JB Foundation, would be inaugurated next month by Dr Mashelkar, the eminent scientist on our advisory board. It started functioning in October 2007 and has over 200 children using its temporary facilities. It essentially tries to develop an interest in science amongst high school children. One of its students has already done it proud by winning a gold medal at a national level science project competition. Proof that software is not more important than hardware. It would be moving into a larger facility designed by the globally renowned architect Mr. Christopher Benninger.

