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The prime minister's advisor offers proof that the government of working -- behind the scenes

On the evening of March 18, when asked why the United Progressive Alliance government seems to be at a standstill, **Sam Pitroda**, advisor to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on public information, infrastructure and innovation, fiercely disagreed.

Pitroda, who was anguished to hear the charge, took out his schedule of the day gone by. While sharing the details with [rediff.com's Sheela Bhatt](#), Pitroda tried hard to convince her that there is life beyond politics.

Here is what the prime minister's advisor did when country was busy discussing Wikileaks and cricket matches of the ongoing World cup. A page (March 18) from his daily diary.

9 am: Meeting to discuss work of the National Innovation Council.

India has fascinating tradition of innovations. As a chairperson of the National Innovation Council, I am overlooking national innovation strategy. We are creating 40 platforms all over India to begin with. We will create such 40 clusters that would enhance the skill, capacity, research and development of the workers in these clusters.

We have focused on the diamond workers in Surat, leather workers in Chennai, loom workers in Hyderabad, pharmaceuticals workers in Ahmadabad etc. Different industries have different needs and we will be giving them platform supporting their innovations.

This drive emphasises inclusive growth while keeping in mind the eco-system. Some need seeds, some need research, some need help in registering patterns and some need

innovative tools. We are concentrating on creating platforms that would help them in a holistic manner. My first appointment was to deal with the issues. Samir Mitra, a Silicon Valley engineer has come to India to help in this endeavour.

10 am: Video conference: Keynote address to second edition of Bangalore Cyber Security National Conference.

I was to attend the conference. I had prepared my keynote address but could not fly to Bangalore. I attended it through video conference. This is one important subject that is very complex but we don't have strategy in place. The Indian government is quite aware of it and there is lots of debate going on.

In cyber space, an attack can come from all sides. When we buy equipment from abroad there is the possibility of remote maintenance. That makes your machine vulnerable. Buyers should know that how companies can remote access. In cyber space, besides remote access we have to guard our knowledge network. In India more than 2.5 lakh panachayats, hundreds of courts, thousands of government departments are getting online and have their network. We must assure that we don't get vulnerable in the process.

11 am: Innovation portal workshop

This job is done with help of Confederation of Indian Industry, Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry and other

experts.

The Indian government is taking the initiative in setting up a portal to help innovators get intellectual property rights, supply knowledge about it, help them access venture capital and information about people with moneybags. The portal will be meeting point for all kinds of Indian innovators. It will be launched soon.

12 am: Lecture by Sir Tim Berners-Lee

Nandan Nilekani's office UIDAI had organised the lecture for few people in their office. Planning Commission deputy chairman Montek Singh Ahluwalia also joined in. Sir Berners-Lee is credited with inventing World Wide Web.

Vinton Cerf, who co-invented the internet, is my friend. Through him I know about Berners-Lee. With Berners-Lee we discussed the next generation of semantic mobility and the idea for an open government. India is keenly interested in it. I had lunch with Sir Berners-Lee and hosts. He was a nice guy, quite down to earth.

2 pm: Meeting with D N Gupta, secretary science and technology, Orissa government.

I was born in Orissa, the state is close to my heart and I will always be helpful to them. Like Gupta, I know lots of people from the state. I keep meeting them.

2.30 pm: Meeting with D N Patel from Chicago

Patel is an NRI businessman. The man has amazing courage. He has never studied electronics, information technology or related issues but once he came to me, many decades back. He wanted to buy my business of manufacturing of circuits which I was keen to sell. Look at the audacity of man that without any kind of technological knowledge and without enough money to invest he bought my business worth \$800,000 by paying just half the amount.

He promised me he will run my business successfully and how! He paid me regularly all the installments and he took turnover to \$100 million. He employed 600 men and women in no time in Chicago. In his factory you can see many middle-class Indian women wearing tikka on forehead and working diligently.

Except my marketing manager who was an American he managed the show with his own human resources. Life seems good when you meet such a nice guy who has courage to do right things on their own terms. Patel has terrific wisdom and a never-say-die spirit.

3 pm: Meeting with Chetan Krishnaswami, director, Dell computers

My meeting with him was to chalk out the plan for my programme with his boss Michael Dell, founder of Dell computers, on March 22. I told Chetan not to worry too much because I have managed many such events in my life.

3.30 pm: Meeting with Ms Rashmi and others from Vision institute

The government of India wants to replicate National Institute of Design type of institutes all over India. This is one of the most urgent needs of Indian industries. China is opening almost 100 design schools every year. They have Ph Ds in design courses in various universities.

You need design in every walk of life from designing railway platforms to redesigning the Dharavi slums in Mumbai. We are moving ahead with the plans to open many more NIDs. I am a member of Chicago-based institute of design, known as one of the biggest centres of design in world. I hope this attempt fructifies.

4.30 pm: Meeting with T K A Nair, principal secretary to the prime minister

I took with me a long list of work. Majorly about the broadband connectivity project in India, the issue of chairman, BSNL. I also wanted to follow-up points related to National Knowledge Commission. India will soon have food-banks. The idea is to motivate the community to collect food and feed hungry people in their society and community. One such will start soon in New Delhi. I also had some other 6/7 issues related to infrastructure in India.

5 pm: Aparna Banerjee of Project Sukanya.

Aparna runs an employment oriented programme for poor women in Kolkata. Project Sukanya is a chain of retail stores managed by women, selling wares made by them.

5.15 pm: Meeting with Javed Ashraf, joint secretary (America)

I wanted to discuss with him few things related to Indo-US relations. After President (Barack) Obama's visit we are following up all that we discussed during the visit. We are also moving ahead on issue of open governance with America.

5.45 pm: Meeting with Suhaan

This meeting was to push forward the ideas for the reforms in the law ministry.

6.15pm: Meeting with Law Minister Veerappa Moily

In India, more than 3.2 crore court cases are pending. We want to reduce the waiting period of 15 years to 3 years. Its gigantic work but Moily is quite committed to reforming the system. He is formulating a national litigation policy. I met him to review what all we are doing in improving the ministry.

7.30 pm: Telephonic meeting on food-banking

Talked on phone at length with people who are implementing idea of creating food banks all over India.

"Then went to the home of my friend Dinesh Trivedi, minister of state for health. I won't comment on the politics in the country. That depresses me. I just don't understand it. I am a doer. I work. That's it."

[Sheela Bhatt](#)