

Director Sunjoy Joshi's speech on 26th Foundation Day, on September 5, 2015

1. ORF's 26th Foundation Day provides us a chance to not merely celebrate 25 years of the steady growth and evolution of an organization but also the opportunity to pause and reflect on 25 years of the transformation that has overtaken both the institution and the nation that it sought to serve. It is the moment to express gratitude to the remarkable men and women who worked tirelessly in the defence of the idea that is ORF -- the idea of nourishing truly democratic debates on key political and social questions, the idea of piecing together, joining fractious hearts and minds, to create a collage out of dissent in order to fashion a consensus through participatory thinking.

2. In this way, ORF's evolution, its impact as an independent policy research institution, has perhaps no parallel amongst organisations in the country. As a think tank that seeks to solve tomorrow's problems today, it has grown from strength to strength gaining global recognition along the way. The last University of Pennsylvania's Go To Global Think Tanks rankings placed ORF at the eighth position among leading institutions in China, Japan, South Korea and India. Gaining recognition as a prominent think tank in the areas of defence and foreign policy, it was the only Indian think tank that ranked across seven different categories - true tribute to its coming of age as a multi-disciplinary think tank. Little surprise then that ORF figured amongst the world's topmost think tanks - as the one to watch out for in the coming years.

3. Yet, no ranking or statistics can reflect the true spirit that ORF embodies. The true testament to ORF's success remain the people that engage with the organisation both as a part of us and as our stakeholders. You all, individuals and their families gathered here, are our strength; for you are the ones who have made the organisation, and who continue to carry us forward. So at the end of 25 years I am humbled as we gather here to commemorate and to celebrate the achievements that have only been possible because of you, and the efforts put in by those who are no more with us.

4. Among those, a special mention must always be reserved for our founder chairman, Mr R.K. Mishra. Yes ORF's success is indeed owed to its people, and nothing makes that case more persuasively than the remarkable life of our Founder Chairman. He was a man born in a different time than ours, but his progressive ideas and deep insights continue to guide us. This Foundation Day like every other is another moment to salute his remarkable vision and foresight.

5. Mr R.K. Mishra may no longer be with us but his memory lives on. And we are lucky that we still have with us those who knew him intimately and who have continued to guide us. Amongst them are the honoured trustees present here. Mrs Renuka Mishra, ever affectionate but firm, who has contributed singularly to keeping us together as the family that ORF is. Shri Lalit Bhasin, who as a guiding light has helped us maintain organizational integrity as an entity registered under the Societies Act. And of course there has always been the indomitable Baljit ji, ceaseless and untiring in his efforts to keep us on the straight and narrow, the conscience keeper who has been with the organization throughout this journey of a quarter century.

6. This is an institution that was conceived of and has remained central to the idea of not just economic reform, but political reform, governance reforms both at the local national and global level. As an organization it has commanded a ring side view of the path traversed by this country over two and a

half decades of reforms as it played a seminal role in building the political and policy consensus that enabled India to set upon this path. Consequently, 25 years of our research, our publications and the many debates initiated by ORF provide a rich tapestry into which has been woven the fascinating narrative of the emergence of India upon the global stage as a rising power.

7. 25 years later ORF remains at the forefront - shaping debates on contemporary global issues, be it climate change, the global commons of the seas, of space of internet governance, or international security. Its publications are testimony to how India's increasing participation in multilateral groupings, be it the G-20, IBSA, IORA or BRICS among others have marked its growing international presence, it's increasing heft and weight in global affairs. The last 25 years of ORF narrate the story of India as it has acquired an unmistakable global footprint propelled by the process of reforms initiated twenty five years ago.

8. But in these 25 years, just as India began making its presence felt upon the global stage, the world too has intruded into our hearths and homes in ways that would have been unimaginable 25 years ago. It is not just India that shapes the world, the world beyond us also has acquired a far greater role in shaping our evolution and growth.

9. And with each passing day as the narrative of the new India unfolds, it is going to be a narrative that will not and cannot move without being influenced by stories around us, not just the tales of the 1001 Arabian Nights to the West of us, but the thousands and thousands of stories unfolding across the world. For yes truly we are finding ourselves in a world where quantum effects are becoming a day to day experience. Where the flapping of a butterfly's wing in the forests of the Amazon can cause seismic changes beneath our feet.

10. The image of a toddler's corpse washed ashore in Europe can threaten the Treaty of Shenzhen. The rise of ISIS is redrawing geographical borders. Great power politics in its 21st century avatar may well be visiting us once again. We face new challenges in agreeing on the new set of rules for controlling and regulating the new frontiers of space, the oceans, the internet and the human mind. The collapse of oil prices and the unexpected softness in commodity prices has pushed some of the world's strongest economies into uncharted waters. As the Chinese dragon seems to be tiring, or some say merely pausing for breath, we can see that its pause seems to be even more unnerving than the high octane fury of its growth. Should there be a vacuum which are the countries, that will fill it, where are the governance structures, the institutions the markets that will step in?

11. There have been those who for a long time have fed on the dream that the 21st century would be India's century. But for me most importantly, the 21st century is supposed to be the one in which we finally end poverty; the century in which we ensure dignity to all inhabitants upon this planet; the century when we finally make peace with our habitat; only then can it truly be the Asian century, the century in which a resurgent India, a young India finally becomes the economic epicentre of the world? Can this be India's moment in the sun? Or will a volatile neighbourhood in tandem with lingering diffidence at home impede the elephants march into the century that is supposed to be India's?

12. Whatever be the answers to these questions, the Chinese say "may you live in interesting times". The world is yet to make up its mind whether the inscrutable Chinese mean that as a blessing or as a curse. But whatever it be, the fact of the matter is that all of you youngsters are going to be living in times far more interesting than any that have so far preceded them.

13. Times so interesting that you will not even have to make the effort to choose what our agenda should be, for our agenda will select itself without too much effort on our part. All that is left for us to

do is to ensure that we as an organization push boundaries, bring new ideas into the policy discourse and provide platforms that nurture and prepare a new generation of thinkers.

14. The presence of ORF upon the international scene today embodies in a way the arrival and emergence of a completely new group of actors upon the scene. These are those who lie outside the traditional apparatus of the state, and yet contribute actively, creatively, to shape the narrative of a new India, a confident India. And in doing so you all have in these 25 years surmounted the constraints of geography and territoriality to make ORF India's first truly global think tank.

15. One that seeks to shape and discuss issues and policies that impact not just India but the world. And It does so every day, 365 days of the year, by forging new partnerships, creating new platforms, and tirelessly embarking on new paths in order that Indian voices be recognized and heard in global forums that decide policies. But most important, as an institution that prides itself upon its founding ethos, we are proud to be an organization that not just respects but celebrates the plurality of those voices. It does not seek to tie them down into an institutional voice, take an institutional position. Our ultimate goal, our only goal must remain to convey the vibrant diversity of Indian debates to the world, even as we bring the full bouquet of contemporary global debates home to India.

16. For we are an association of many people and many generations, united by one single convergence - that is our faith in the capacity of each generation to build a better society than the one it was born into. As ORF completes 25 years, the institution rejuvenates and transforms itself into a much younger organization - one full of promise, optimism and energy - again an embodiment of the new India.

17. And in the same spirit of rejuvenation at the end of 25 let us together affirm the mandate that will guide us in the coming years. A mandate that looks forward even as it remains deeply rooted in the past. A mandate that acknowledges the ever expanding reach of the institution and its ideas, encourages original thinking, promotes innovation and celebrates the differences amongst us all. A mandate that focuses upon ideas that challenge the norm, that strives for institutional leadership by creating forums that can respond to the changing times and have a long term impact.

18. And true to the ethos of ORF, I must confess, even for the design of our new logo, we, led by the irrepressible Britta, went through a truly democratic process of consultative consensus building, in true ORF fashion. I must tell you that everybody's divergent view was considered, recorded and examined. Had all the suggestions, which ranged from having an T-Rex, an elephant, a fish and even Elvis Presley as our final logo been incorporated, we would have ended up with a cross between Jurassic Park and a video of Jailhouse Rock! Well we researchers don't always make the best communicators or visualizers!!!!

19. But in this new age of hyper-media where ORF is being accessed more and more on hand held devices, our work spread more through Facebook and twitter rather than cold print, our new role and new mandate required a fresh look at the messaging and the branding. We began our institutional journey at a time when India was essentially insular, inward looking, largely concerned with engaging with itself, resolving itself. At its inception, ORF's mandate was to answer the precise policy questions that would support a transition towards enabling India to engage globally. But as the years progressed, the people of this country went about creating first a credible India and then the Incredible India.

20. And in these years if the idea of India moved beyond the Himalayas and the waters of the Indian Ocean to the seven seas, all of you have in no small way contributed to that transformation. We today are poised at a place where consider how ORF positions itself globally even as our founding ethos of global partnerships remains the driver. The locus of new partnerships flows from the new emerging

economic and political realities and ORF must transcend its geographical identity to position itself as not just India's think tank but, India's Global think tank. ORF's new brand, its logo and its tag line attempt to visualize a transformation that like the Greek God Janus, looks both forward and backward. But in the end, through many mis-directions finding direction out, we did it, arriving at our new logo and new tag line.

21. It retains the soul and spirit of the old - the tree, which embodies enlightenment, knowledge and wisdom, has been retained; the color blue provides the basis for the logo, given ORF's policy mandate which cuts now spreads across the seven seas. Its louder and bolder style is symptomatic of ORF's demographic transition the energy of which we can all feel in this room today. ORF reaches beyond the institution and its 120 people. It is both an idea and a brand encapsulated in the 3 simple letters - O R F - which is who we are and how we are perceived. Our tagline: ideas, forums, leadership, impact - comprise our core deliverables. Our new logo, motto, mandate and message therefore are an organic outcome of the journey we have traversed....

22. So ladies and gentlemen Welcome again to this special once in 25 years evening, to this gathering and to our family where we are all O-R-F. May I now ask the one person who has been with ORF al of these 25 years, the indomitable Baljit ji to unveil our new logo.