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My dear Goku:

Sub: preparatory work for the 8th Plan.

During the last 40 years much investment has been made in S&T. If one carefully looks at broad scientific research areas in which many institutions and scientists have been working across the country one gets the impression that at the current stage with increasing demands on resources one should first carefully take stock of the infrastructures already built up, find the gaps and close them before selecting newer areas and institutions for expansion.

As an example I enclose a recent report brought out by ISRO AND INSA on the Solar Terrestrial Physics Research in the country. A quick glance will show that there are thirty (30) stations dotted across the country - some of them set up many years ago and somewhat neglected but nevertheless important constituents of the national network that has emerged. Many of the research stations are at universities, others are run by major research laboratories of different departments of Government. What is the level and quality of the activity at each station? No single agency knows - however it is important for the national science scene to have an assessment. At my request ISRO Headquarters have made a first cut analysis classifying three levels of research I, II and III each successively higher, III being close to active viable and forward looking research. Most of the research groups (mainly at universities) are still at level I - only one academic institution reaches level III. Only three major institutions reach level III but their work - especially in the future needs data and inputs from all the stations. We do not know the lacunae in detail - is it personnel or some equipment missing or just sloppy leadership? If brought up to speed and inter-linked - like the IMAP exercise - without bureaucratization these centers would constitute a national scientific asset and, I am sure you would agree, we cannot afford to waste this through neglect.

In the case of IMAP the crucial thing was to find a discerning and dedicated scientist - that was Roy Daniel - and trust him to bring people together, identify gaps through interactive discussion and support his recommendations. We need to do this in other areas - including Solar Terrestrial Physics, Atmospheric Sciences, Seismology, Astronomy and several more. We must not allow decay of existing scientific units to subcritical activities after having made investments for many years. If you think it worthwhile

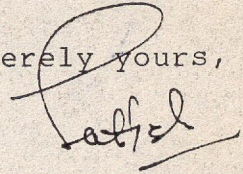
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(I think it is) you could identify a few major areas and set the ball rolling. The SAC to PM could help - you can decide. The essence is to find an active scientist for each area, with a wholesome outlook who would be prepared to put out some effort - not easy, but still possible and worthwhile.

Warm regards,

Sincerely yours,



S DHAWAN

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