

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB
MUKHERJEE AT THE INAUGURATION OF THE
CENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS
PANDHARPUR URBAN CO-OPERATIVE BANK LIMITED**

Pandharpur, Mumbai: 29-12-2012

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed a pleasure to join you today to inaugurate the Centenary celebrations of the Pandharpur Urban Co-operative Bank.

2. I am also pleased to be among the people of this pilgrim town, regarded as the “*Dakshin Kashi*” of India. Great Saints like Dnyaneshwar, Tukaram, Namdev and Chokhamela have spent important periods of their spiritual life here. Pandharpur is known for its holy and pious community, where people have discarded any form of disparity and have lived in mutual respect and unity. I extend to all of you my greetings and good wishes.

3. The origin of the Urban Co-operative movement in India can be traced to the close of 19th century. The first known mutual aid society in India was probably the “Anyonya

Sahakaari Mandali” (अन्योन्य सहकारी मण्डली), organised in the formerly princely State of Baroda in 1889. Urban Co-operative credit societies, in their formative phase, came to be recognised on a community basis to meet the consumption oriented credit needs of their members. Salary earners’ societies inculcating habits of thrift and self-help played an important role in popularizing the movement, especially amongst the middle class as well as organised labourers.

4. The enactment of Co-operative Credit Societies Act in 1904 gave real encouragement to the movement. The first urban co-operative credit society movement was registered in Kanchipuram in the former Madras Province in October 1904. The Co-operative Credit Societies Act 1904 was amended in 1912 with a view to broad basing it to enable organisation of non-credit societies. It soon became such a well established and useful system that during the banking crisis of 1913-14, when no fewer than 57 joint stock banks collapsed, there was a flight of deposits from stock banks to co-operative urban banks. Over the years, urban co-

operative banks have registered a significant growth in number, size and volume of business handled.

5. Co-operative Banks in our country face many challenges and problems; their performance across sectors, activities, and regions is variable; they need to re-orient themselves by improving their efficiency, and have to develop themselves professionally to meet the requirements of the communities that they serve. They are perhaps still best way of reaching out into the vast hinterland of our nation where the poor and the marginalized sections may have few reliable banking options.

6. The Pandharpur Urban Bank which was founded in 1912 with only 45 members and a small deposit of Rs.957/-, today, I understand, has 38152 members, 16 branches and a total business of over thousand crores. I am told that the bank has embarked into new areas and diversified its services considerably. It has also taken up several philanthropic and charitable initiatives over the years.

7. I have no doubt that with its background of steady growth and sound policies, that Pandharpur Urban Co-

operative Bank will continue to progress from strength to strength as it serves and supports the economic activities for this community.

8. I once again offer my felicitations and best wishes to the Management and shareholders of the Pandharpur Urban Co-operative Bank on the occasion of its centenary celebrations. I wish all of you a very pleasant and happy New Year!

JAI HIND.