

# Sam Pitroda and his contributions

February 17, 2021

## About Sam Pitroda

- He is an Indian telecom engineer, inventor and entrepreneur.
- He is popularly known as the Father of India's Computer and IT Revolution
- **Birth:** He was born on 4th may 1942
- He was born Titlagarh in the eastern Indian state of Odisha to a Gujarati family
- He completed his schooling from Vallabh Vidyanagar in Gujarat and completed his master's degree in Physics and Electronics from Maharaja Sayajirao University in Vadodara. After completing his master's degree in Physics he went to the United States in 1964 and obtained a master's degree in Electrical Engineering from the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago.
- In 1966 he went to work for GTE in Chicago. He is regarded as one of the earliest pioneers of hand-held computing because of his invention of the Electronic Diary in 1975
- He returned to India in 1981
- Mr. Pitroda is a Founding Chairman of five non-profit organizations including the India Food Bank, the Global Knowledge Initiative and the Institute of Transdisciplinary Health.
- He is also a founding Commissioner of the United Nations Broadband Commission for Digital Development and Chairman of the International Telecommunication Union's m-Powering Development Board that looks to empower developing countries with the use of mobile technology.

## His contributions

- On a 1981 trip back to India, he was frustrated by how hard it was to call his family back in Chicago, and decided he could help modernize India's telecommunications system
- In 1984, Pitroda was invited to return to India by the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.
- **On his return, he started the Center for Development of Telematics (C-DOT),** an autonomous telecom R&D organization
- He had previously become a naturalized US citizen, but renounced his US citizenship to take Indian citizenship again in order to work in the Indian Government
- In 1987, he became an advisor to Indira Gandhi's successor, Rajiv Gandhi and was responsible for shaping India's foreign and domestic telecommunications policies.
- In 1987 during his tenure as advisor to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, Pitroda headed six technology missions related to telecommunications, water, literacy, immunization, dairy, and oilseeds.
- He founded and was the first chairman of India's Telecom Commission.
- Pitroda contributed to India's foreign and domestic telecommunications policies.
- He is considered one among many to be responsible for the telecommunication revolution in India and specifically, the ubiquitous, yellow-signed public call offices (PCO) that quickly brought cheap and easy domestic and international public telephones all over the country.
- In May 1995, he became the first chairman of the WorldTel initiative of the International Telecommunication Union.

### **Role in second phase of India's technology revolution**

- As a way to induce the second phase of India's

technology revolution, in 2005 Mr. Pitroda headed **India's National Knowledge Commission (2005-2009)**, to provide a blueprint of reform for the knowledge-related institutions and infrastructure for the 21st century in the country.

- Recently, Mr. Pitroda served as **Advisor to the Prime Minister of India on Public Information Infrastructure and Innovation**, with the rank of a Cabinet Minister.
- He **served as the Chairman of the Smart Grid Task Force**, as well as the committees to reform public broadcasting, modernize railways, deliver e-governance, and other developmental activities.
- In 2010, he was a was appointed Chairman of the National Innovation Council