

**Address by the President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee
on the occasion of launch of IMPRINT India on the second
day of Visitor's Conference**

Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi : 05 November, 2015

Good Morning!

1. I extend a warm welcome to you all who are here to attend the first-ever Visitor's Conference. In the past, I have had the occasion to meet many of you during the different conferences organized at the Rashtrapati Bhavan and convocations at your institutes. This is, however, the first time that as Visitor, I am meeting you all together. As mentioned by my Secretary, the outcomes of the previous conferences have given us the confidence that the institutes of higher learning, if they come together, can make a difference in a short span of time to higher education sector in our country. With this shared belief, we are here today.

2. I thank Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, for his gracious presence. His enchanting speech and inspiring words, I have no doubt, will set the tone for the deliberations during the Conference. I take this opportunity to also place on record my appreciation for Shrimati Smriti Zubin Irani, Minister for Human Resource Development. By steering various initiatives with purpose and energy, she has taken forward the education sector.

3. I compliment the Prime Minister and the HRD Minister for the just-launched programme of IMPRINT, a Pan IIT and IISc initiative. The ten themes of this programme identifying the immediate requirements of the society will lay down the research roadmap for institutes of national importance. I call upon the academic leaders of institutes in social sector and humanities' domain to formulate a similar joint initiative for conducting research on themes of relevance to public policy-making.
4. *Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:* It is true that the past ten years have seen a vast expansion of the higher education infrastructure. However, low Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) at 21 percent in India as against the world average of 27 percent remains a cause for concern. A New Education Policy is being formulated. I am told that a process of consultation has commenced on 13 themes for school education and 20 themes for higher education. The new policy must alter the dynamics of the education sector and help us achieve the GER target of 30 percent by 2020, a goal we cannot afford to miss.
5. At the altar of expansion, quality should not be sacrificed. Greater number of institutions translates into greater number of seats, enhancing access and equity in higher education. However, it has generated a lively debate on reach versus excellence, quality versus affordability, and accountability versus autonomy. A calm assessment will

make it clear to all stakeholders that we need both reach and excellence, quality and affordability, and autonomy with accountability.

6. Increasing access in higher education through digital inclusion is a way forward. We should, without delay, think of taking modified MOOCs to the secondary education level. To skill India, we must design MOOCs that is interactive and offer vocational aspirants an opportunity to learn. This could revolutionize delivery of skills knowledge.
7. *Distinguished participants:* An institute of higher learning finds its real value by excelling in education, research and innovation. This calls for faculty development and augmentation of teaching resources across the board. This calls for inspired teachers, keen-to-learn students, and good physical and research infrastructure. This also calls for a reliable and extensive ICT network. Some encouraging developments in the recent past, that I can recall are:
 - (i) Intensification of exchange of faculty through formal arrangements with foreign institutions: In addition to the MOUs that must have been signed by various institutions of higher learning, over 80 MOUs with 50 overseas institutions have been signed during my visits abroad in the last two years. This demonstrates the interest and potential for collaboration with international institutions.

- (ii) Removal of bottlenecks and simplification of procedures for filling up faculty positions;
 - (iii) Engagement of adjunct faculty and hiring of foreign experts - the Global Initiative for Academic Networks (GIAN) is a welcome step aimed at tapping the global pool of talented scientists and entrepreneurs. By encouraging their engagement with Indian institutes, we can augment our country's academic resources.
8. *Distinguished participants*: It is good to see research moving centre-stage in our institutes of higher learning. This will in near future help us meet the need for good faculty. A recent example is IIT Delhi, which has awarded 221 PhDs this year, the highest in a year so far. It has resolved to increase this number to 400 in the next few years. Such initiatives will not only lead to higher research quotient for the nation but also improve rankings of the institutions.
9. Earlier not a single Indian institution came within the top 200 institutions in international rankings. It seems that my persistent exhortation has paid off. Many of you have responded to my call. I am grateful for that. Our institutions are now taking the ranking process more seriously, in a proactive and systematic manner. In the QS World University Rankings 2015-16, Indian institutions have broken into the top 200 for the first time. I compliment Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, which is ranked

147th and Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, ranked 179th, for this achievement. If we provide enough funds to top 10-20 institutions for next 4-5 years, we will soon see them storm into the top 100.

10. The National Institutional Ranking Framework launched by the Ministry of HRD with an India-centric approach is a step in the right direction. This initiative should enable Indian institutes of higher learning to realize their potential and emerge as world-class institutions.
11. *Ladies and Gentlemen:* Knowledge is indivisible. We must follow a multi-disciplinary approach that allows students to learn and seek knowledge holistically. Our institutions must impart education to the students that help expand their intellect, form their character, instill in them a spirit of service and love for the motherland. It must equip them to face the struggle of real life. It must deepen the students' linkage with society. It is also necessary to develop in our students a scientific temper, which allows the flight of imagination beyond the realm of grades and classrooms. Promotion of research at the under-graduate level would assist such an objective.
12. *Distinguished participants:* The link between progress and innovation is direct. History is witness to many nations low on natural resources emerging as advanced economies only on the strength of rapid technological development.

India today stands within a striking distance of realizing the dreams of the founding fathers of our nation. Indian youth are second to none in entrepreneurship. India serves as the fastest growing start-up base worldwide and stands third with 4,200 start-ups, next only to US and UK. The government has initiated the '*Start-up India, Stand-up India*' campaign to incentivize entrepreneurial ventures. Heads of institutes of higher learning must work towards creating an innovation and research network that will produce entrepreneurs and nurture innovations. The setting up of Innovation Clubs in over 60 Central institutions in the last two years is a good beginning for a platform where novel ideas can be nurtured and innovators mentored to develop new products.

13. In response to the decision taken in the conference of vice chancellors of central universities in 2014, industry interface cells have been set up in many institutions. These cells are now lending vigour to activities like joint research, faculty exchange, and setting up of chairs and endowments. These cells can also interact closely with innovation incubators for monetizing ideas and research. The 45 MOUs signed with the industry yesterday takes to next level the partnership between industry and academia.

14. *Ladies and Gentlemen:* Academic institutions are an important stakeholder for the socio-economic development of the nation. I had earlier asked central universities and

NITs to adopt at least five villages and transform them into model villages. I now extend my call to all the 114 central institutions. After identifying problems in the adopted villages, they must pool all academic and technical resources at their disposal to provide solutions that will enhance the quality of life of our countrymen.

15. As we start the deliberations in this Conference, I assure you of an exciting journey ahead in the world of education. Be ready for roadblocks, criticisms, failures and successes. But continue to work with a fresh and positive mind. Do take heart from what Mahatma Gandhi had said, and I quote: "*First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win*" (unquote). And win you shall.

Thank you.
