

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB  
MUKHERJEE AFTER WITNESSING THE EXCHANGE OF MOUS  
BETWEEN INDUSTRY AND ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS ON THE  
FIRST DAY OF VISITOR'S CONFERENCE**

**Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi : 04 November, 2015**

Good Evening!

1. To begin with, let me extend a warm welcome to you all. Today is an important day for higher education in our country. For the first time in Rashtrapati Bhavan, brilliant minds, captains of industry and academic leaders of 114 central institutions have come together on a common platform to deliberate on issues concerning the higher education sector.
  
2. Let me confess, at the beginning of my Presidential term I was a stranger to the role of Visitor of central institutions of higher learning. Visits to various universities - so far, I have visited over 100 institutions - and discussions with eminent educationists led to the convening of a series of conferences of these institutions at Rashtrapati Bhavan. Starting from February 2013, seven conferences have been held so far. I

have had the opportunity to interact with the heads of central institutions in groups - thrice with central universities, twice with NITs and once each with IISERs and IITs. Recommendations emanating from these discussions have greatly benefitted all stakeholders.

3. The discussion during these conferences focused on:
  - Improvement in the quality of education, research and innovation, and faculty development.
  - Creating international linkages for joint research, and faculty and student exchanges.
  - Improving the rankings of the institutions.
  - Greater use of ICT networks and development of modified MOOCs to deliver quality education at affordable prices.
  - Greater involvement of alumni in the management structure of the institutions.
  - Deeper engagement of industry with the academic institutions.

The results we have achieved in these few years are remarkable. The credit goes to the dedicated teamwork of all the stakeholders.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

4. My constant refrain that we cannot aspire to be a world power without having a single world-class university, has found resonance amongst the institutions, who have now started looking at the international ranking processes in a more proactive and systematic manner. For the first time, two Indian institutions have found place in the top 200 positions in QS rankings. IISc Bangalore at 147<sup>th</sup> and IIT Delhi at 179<sup>th</sup> place deserve full praise and compliments. If we provide enough funds to top 10 to 15 institutions for the next 4-5 years, I am confident that these institutions will storm into the top 100 of global academic rankings within next few years. The National Institutional Rankings Framework put in place by the Ministry of HRD with an India-centric approach will further help our institutions to compete nationally and globally. Apart from giving the nation, the institutions, its students and its alumni a sense of pride, a high rank can help attract quality

faculty and meritorious students, open fresh avenues of growth and placement for students, and provide a benchmark for continuous improvement in standards.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

5. Innovation is the currency of the future. Innovation converts research into wealth. Unless we recognize this reality and start working in a focused manner on creating a strong innovation culture in our country now, we will be left behind in the march to modernity. Way back in February 2013, I had called upon the universities to establish links with grassroots innovators. The response has been very encouraging. Over 60 central institutions have started innovation clubs to provide a platform for interaction between the academic community and grassroots innovators. In April 2014, when I met the heads of IISc and IISERs, I stressed upon the need to create synergy between the activities of these clubs with innovation incubators located in the technical institutes like IITs and NITs to create an innovation network. This effort needs a further push. I understand the National Innovation Foundation has compiled a catalogue of grassroots innovations after segregating them into three sectors. I am sure central

institutions as well as participating industries will find it a useful document. I am confident that this linkage of grassroots innovators with entrepreneurs and financiers will yield a rich crop of “start ups”.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

6. A strong inter-linkage between industry and academia is a critical component for developing the educational and industrial eco-systems. In all the conferences conducted so far, the participants were unanimous that this eco-system needs further strengthening. It is therefore a momentous day, today, as industry captains and leaders of academic institutions have joined hands to sign 44 Memoranda of Understanding. It shows on the one hand the increasing commitment of the industry towards institutes of higher learning, and on the other, exhibits a strong desire of academic institutions to constructively engage with industrial partners. I applaud all industry leaders, particularly CII as the focal point, for collaborating with the President’s Secretariat in this initiative. I will like to place on record my appreciation for the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers and the Ministry of

HRD for their efforts in finalizing these MOUs aimed at deepening the eco-system for industry-academia dialogue.

7. Today, the participants of the Conference have had the benefit of listening to the inspiring words of Prof. C.N.R. Rao, Prof. M.S. Swaminathan and Shri Kailash Satyarthi. These mighty minds have travelled uncharted territories and excelled in trying circumstances. I thank them for sparing their time to come here and share their transformative ideas with the participants.
  
8. Before I conclude, I want to share with you this thought of Mahatma Gandhi. I quote: “*A small body of determined spirits fired by an unquenchable faith in their mission can alter the course of history*” (unquote). The gathering here today represents that small body of determined men and women. The mission is clear. We have to move forward. Now.

Thank you.

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