

## **CLOSING REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE ON THE THIRD DAY OF VISITOR'S CONFERENCE**

Rashtrapatibhavan, New Delhi : 06.11.2015

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1. At the outset, I would like to compliment all the heads of central higher educational institutions (CHEIs) for thoroughly analyzing the action taken reports and participating in the discussions on the agenda items through group work and panel discussion. I am happy to see the concrete outcomes which of course will be studied in detail by my Secretariat and by MHRD for further action.

2. This is for the first time I decided to have this conference of 114 CHEIs from fields as diverse as agriculture, pharmaceuticals, information technology, fashion and social sciences which have come together at a single platform with central universities, IITs, NITs, IISc and IISERs. This interaction has provided us the golden opportunity to build a strong inter-linkage between all these institutions for energizing the higher education sector in India.

Distinguished participants:

3. In the past seven conferences held in the Rashtrapati Bhavan, we worked on building bonds of co-operation amongst central universities, IIT, NITs, IISc and IISERs. We have invested our time and energy in establishing linkages with foreign institutions, industry and alumni. The progress that we have made is remarkable but a lot more is to be done. I invite all those institutions who have come here for the first time to join the family and build a strong network for mutual benefit and for the benefit of the nation.

4. It is now time to build linkages amongst all of you which will have multiplier effect. I am happy to see ideas already beginning to float. The Banaras Hindu University and the National Institute of Fashion Technology, capitalizing on their respective strengths, can launch joint degree-level courses in fashion technology at Varanasi. Likewise, languages universities can collaborate with technical institutes to offer language courses using ICT. Agricultural institutes can partner with IITs, NITs and IIITs to develop technologies for improved agricultural practices. To provide impetus to Institution-to-Institution (I-to-I) linkages, an e-platform could be started where you can share ideas and take them forward. The e-platform hosted by the Rashtrapati Bhavan, where all 114 institutions are connected, can be extended to capture the new needs of this collaboration. I have asked my Secretariat to take this initiative forward in collaboration with the CHEIs.

5. Here, I will like to sound a note of caution. We have signed a large number of MOUs with foreign institutions and with the industry. These will remain mere pieces of paper if we do not vigorously follow-up on their implementation. Henceforth, I will like the progress made on these MOUs to be included in the Action Taken Report. MHRD may also kindly set up a mechanism for monitoring the progress.

Distinguished participants:

6. Many of you have pointed out the shortage of resources and delay in sanctions/ approvals as impediments to new initiatives. Taking forward what Prof. C.N.R. Rao had said on 4<sup>th</sup> November, I would like to make a suggestion – let us segregate the initiatives which do not require any funds and are within the control of the institutions themselves from the ones which need additional funding. Some of these are regular up-dation and revision of the curriculum, improving the quality of teaching by adopting new methods, imparting education that will build the character and value system of the students, better maintenance and utilization of the existing infrastructure, etc. If we work on these with renewed vigour, I assure you the results will be highly rewarding. We have tried this in Rashtrapati Bhavan. And it has worked. We have increased the activities manifold, improved the look and feel of the campus, and completed the digitization of the services, and all this in the budget that we were getting earlier. We are fast moving towards being a smart township. We call it the 3 H Township – Humane, Hitech and Heritage. The requirement of additional funds for all these changes has been minimal.

For the new initiatives which need additional funds, I am sure reasonable demands will be met by the MHRD. I, on my part, will extend all help to MHRD for accessing such funds. CHEIs could be incentivized to raise resources by providing matching grants from government. We can also think of launching a Global Research Interactive Network (GRIN) as follow-up to GIAN for funding research collaborations.

Distinguished Participants:

7. In this conference, we have spent considerable time on reviewing the progress on the action taken on earlier decisions. Filling up vacant teaching positions has been a priority all through. While I note with satisfaction that the heads of most institutions have now been appointed, I hope that a better picture of faculty position in your institutions will emerge when we meet next. We are making progress on rankings. If we were to expedite action on getting NAAC[1] accreditation, working on the National Institutional Ranking Framework, and criteria for international rankings, the quality of research and education in the central universities, IITs and NITs will automatically improve. I note with satisfaction the progress made on Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) and increased utilization of NKN[2] and NMEICT[3]. It is my fond hope that by next year, we will have at least 5 CHEIs in world's top 200. India must emerge as a higher education destination.

8. I see an enthusiasm in the institutions for MOOCs and creation of e-content. The recommendation of a working group on setting up of education technology centres in NITs on the model of IIT Kharagpur for generating e-content can be pursued. The last mile IT connectivity problem of some institutions should be solved quickly for effective delivery of MOOCs.

9. To give shape to the various recommendations in the earlier conferences, government has launched a number of schemes. These include "Unnat Bharat", "GIAN", "UCHHATTAR AVISHKAR YOJANA", "ISHAN VIKAS" and "IMPRINT". Our CHEIs must get actively involved in these schemes and ensure that the intended results are achieved in a time-bound manner. I presume that appropriate financial allocations for these schemes would have been

made. I would request MHRD and other agencies concerned to set up a review and monitoring mechanism for speedy implementation.

Distinguished participants:

10. I am glad that the symbiotic relationship between teaching and research is now being fully recognized. To produce good quality research and meet the acute shortage of faculty, we have to give a further push to the award of PhDs in our CHEIs.

11. While I do see intensification of the involvement of alumni in the governance structure of the CHEIs, there is still a need to widen the area of interaction through sponsored research, endowment, setting up of chairs, donations, and in catalysing faculty recruitment.

12. The progress made in setting up centres of excellence is slow. However, a welcome development in this area is that the central ministries are now coming forward to fund centres of excellence to address the needs of sector-specific technologies. The state governments are also showing interest in setting up such centres. MHRD must act quickly to set up a pro-active single window to help CHEIs to conclude agreements in line with existing administrative and legal systems.

Distinguished participants:

13. Innovator, entrepreneur and financier are the three crucial players of an innovation ecosystem. I am grateful to all the CHEIs for their overwhelming response to my call for setting up innovation clubs and incubators, industry interface cells, inspired teachers network and community development cells. Some of you have now mentioned about entrepreneurship cells and development offices to attract funding. I will like you to add setting up of these cells to the list. In the context of "*Start-up India, Stand-up India*", entrepreneurship acquires a new dimension.

14. Our institutes of higher learning must have a governance mechanism that supports growth, collaboration and innovation. The institutions must become transparent, accountable and responsive to the needs of their stakeholders. An e-platform '*Brihaspati*' developed by IIT Kanpur for better academic management can be studied by other institutions for adoption.

15. We have received some very good suggestions on the engagement of CHEIs with the community and society for sustainable and inclusive development. Some of the suggestions made include:

i. Assigning students to teach in nearby government schools for at least 12 hours annually or one hour per month. Given the student base at the tertiary level, this could potentially create 35 crore teaching hours. Besides helping to mitigate the existing shortage of teachers at primary and secondary levels, it will create in the minds of students a desire to enter the teaching profession.

ii. Students may be deployed to undertake community-based projects to uplift the condition of people residing in nearby areas.

iii. Students may study and identify problems faced by villages in the vicinity. Inter-disciplinary teams can then work on innovative solutions which blend modern technology to local practice.

Distinguished participants:

16. Rashtrapati Bhavan and Ministry of AYUSH has recently collaborated to open an AYUSH Wellness Centre to offer the integrated system of Indian medicine in the President's Estate. This facility has received an overwhelming response. You too can think of a similar initiative in your campuses. It will deliver the benefits of alternate systems of medicine to higher education networks, and lead to its further refinement, innovation and research. I am sure Ministry of AYUSH will extend a helping hand.

17. The first Festival of Innovations was hosted in Rashtrapati Bhavan in March this year. Many of your faculty members and students participated in the exhibition and as members of Innovation Clubs. For the second Festival of Innovations to be held in March 2016, I expect greater response and eager participation.

18. In 2015, the Rashtrapati Bhavan had organized a series of in-residence programmes where 31 inspired teachers from central universities, 36 NIT scholars and 10 innovation scholars, besides 4 writers and artists spent one to three weeks as my guests in the Rashtrapati Bhavan. In 2016, we intend to hold these in-residence programmes for inspired teachers and students from remaining central institutions, and award winning school teachers from States, besides innovation scholars, artists and writers. The Secretariat will notify the schedules shortly.

19. The first Visitor's Awards for Best University, Innovation and Research in central universities were presented during the conference of vice chancellors this year. The applications for the Second Visitor's Awards have been invited. The last date for submitting nominations is 15<sup>th</sup> November, 2015, and these Awards will be presented in February, 2016. I look forward to an enthusiastic response.

20. Since this is the first Visitor's Conference, some new institutions have joined the group as invitees. In the next conference, they will be part of the whole. They will be expected to report the progress on the recommendations made in the earlier conferences as applicable to them, as well as the ones that are being made in this Conference.

Distinguished participants:

21. I have listened to your recommendations carefully. I thank you again for your keen participation and fruitful contribution to this Conference. As the Visitor of your institutions, I take immense pride in your achievements. I am confident that you will now open your wings to scale new heights. The administrative ministries concerned are fully behind you. For any assistance, my Secretariat is also available. With the hope to see you with greater achievements and speedier progress next year, I conclude.

Thank you.

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[\[1\]](#) *National Assessment and Accreditation Council*

[\[2\]](#) *National Knowledge Network*

[\[3\]](#) *National Mission on Education through ICT*