

EXTRACTS FROM SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE AT THE TWELFTH CONVOCATION IN THE GOLDEN JUBILEE YEAR OF JAWAHARLAL NEHRU KRISHI VISHWA VIDYALAYA (JLNKVV)

Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh: 27-06-2014

I consider it a privilege to deliver the Convocation Address in the Golden Jubilee Year of this prestigious Agricultural University, named after the architect of modern India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. It is my pleasure to visit a higher educational institution for agriculture in the State of Madhya Pradesh, which is a major contributor to the national food basket.

Since its inception in 1964, Jawaharlal Nehru Krishi Vishwa Vidhyalaya has been essaying a crucial role in changing the face of agriculture in this region. It has developed 238 varieties of different crops like chickpea and other pulses. Soybean varieties developed by this University, including the world-famous Jawahar series, have covered over ninety percent area under soybean in the country. It is duly credited for ushering in the Yellow Revolution in Central India. This University, with 90 varieties of 23 crops, is also one of the largest producers of breeder seeds in the country.

Dear graduating students:

I congratulate all of you on your success. You are the recipients of a degree in a field which holds great significance for our nation. Agriculture is a sector crucial on many counts. It determines the performance of our economy, ensures food availability and nutritional security, creates rural employment and boosts grassroots income. A great challenge before our nation is to end the curse of poverty and deprivation. Poverty has no religion, hunger no creed, and despair no geography. Mere poverty alleviation is not enough. It is poverty elimination that can truly herald India's arrival in the comity of advanced nations. Studies have inferred that a one percentage growth in agriculture is two to three times more effective in fighting poverty than a one percentage growth in non-farm sectors.

India has world's 2.4 percent geographical area and four percent water resources, but has seventeen percent of its population and fifteen percent of its livestock. Supporting humanity of India's dimension depends on an efficient agricultural system. India is home to the fourth largest agricultural sector in the world. It is to the credit of our agricultural scientists and farmers that India transformed itself from being a net importer of food grains in the Sixties to being self-sufficient and an exporter. India today stands second in terms of both rice and wheat production in the world. It is also the largest rice exporter and second largest wheat exporter. We have to now maintain our hard-fought leadership position. At the same time,

we have to continue making strong progress in food grains production in a challenging scenario of rising population, limited land and water availability, climate changes and degradation of natural resources. It is incumbent on young graduates like you to ensure that agriculture continues to make worthwhile contribution to the economy.

When I was the Finance Minister, I had delineated in the Union Budget for 2010-11 a strategy to propel agricultural growth. As part of that strategy, the 'Bringing Green Revolution to Eastern India' (BGREI) programme was implemented under the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana. Consequently, farmers in the selected clusters adopted good agricultural practices and benefitted from the yield advantage of hybrid rice technology. As this programme has brought the second green revolution closer to our doorstep, such initiatives must remain an area of focus.

Friends:

Development and management of skilled human resource is vital for realizing the potential of the agricultural sector. For that, sound agricultural education is the key. India has been a front runner in higher learning from ancient times. Agriculture was taught at the world-renowned universities of Takshashila and Nalanda. Yet over the years, we have not been able to maintain our position. Global recognition eludes our agricultural universities today. It is a reflection of our overall higher education system, which cannot boast of a single Indian institution in the top 200 universities in the world. Sustained emphasis on the ratings process has resulted in some success recently – like, increase in the number of Indian institutions in Asian rankings, presence of IITs in the top 50 in some engineering disciplines, and so on. I am confident that our universities can build upon these preliminary successes and appear in much higher brackets in the future.

The interest of bright students in the agricultural profession has to be stimulated. For that, proper counseling at the school level has to take place. This would sow the seeds of fascination amongst children in agricultural education. Agriculture has to evolve into a rewarding occupation for those who want to make it their career. This calls for steps at the institutional level. Stronger ties with the private sector have to be forged and potential entrepreneurs encouraged through networking, internship opportunities, sensitization workshops and facilities for business incubators. An innovative model of agri-entrepreneurship could result in a boom not only for the food sector but for the rural economy as well.

Students in agricultural disciplines have to be infused with skills and competencies to enable them to work in a multi-functional set-up. They have to be taught to integrate knowledge and practices from outside their core subjects. Professional skills apart, they have to be given training in critical skills like communication, decision-making ability, languages and entrepreneurship. I am told that the Business Planning Development Unit of this University has made a significant impact on commercialization of technologies and promotion of entrepreneurship.

Friends:

Agriculture universities have a huge stake in the success of the farm sector as well as welfare of the common man. The yardstick of their performance is the quality of graduates being produced. We require committed, capable and hardworking professionals from our agricultural institutions to spearhead the next farm revolution. Students of this University are no exception and they must fully contribute to this impending transformation in agriculture. I wish them the very best in life and career. I once again congratulate the Jawaharlal Nehru Krishi Vishwa Vidyalaya on its Golden Jubilee Year. I also compliment this University for all the work done so far and wish good luck for the future.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.
