

English rendering of Prime Ministers Narendra Modi's speech at Higher Education Conclave

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Namaskar! I extend greetings to my colleagues in the Cabinet, Shri Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank Ji and Shri Sanjay Dhotre Ji, India's well-known scientist Dr. Kasturirangan, who has played an important role in the National Education Policy, and his team, vice-chancellors, educationists and all those taking part in this conclave.

This event today is very important in the context of the National Education Policy. The education world of the country will get detailed information about the different aspects of the National Education Policy. The implementation of the National Education Policy will become easier once the finer points of the policy are discussed in detail.

Friends! The National Education Policy has been approved after comprehensive deliberations and suggestions from lakhs of people spread over 3-4 years. It is being discussed in detail in the country. People from different regions and different ideologies have been reviewing the National Education Policy and giving their views. This is a healthy debate. The country's education system will benefit a lot through these debates. This is a matter of happiness that nobody from any region or strata said that it was a biased policy. This is an indicator that people are finally getting to see the changes that they wanted in the decades-old education system.

It is natural for some people to question how such a big reform which has been decided upon will be implemented. People are now looking forward to its implementation. In keeping with this challenge, all of us need to see to it how it can be made possible through improvements, wherever necessary. All of you are directly involved with the implementation of the National Education Policy. Therefore, you have a larger role to play. As far as the political will is concerned, I am fully committed, I am completely with you.

Friends, every country reforms its education system according to its national values and national goals. The idea is that the country's education system should ensure the future of not only its present but future generations as well. This is the idea behind India's National Education Policy. The National Education Policy will lay the foundation of the new India, the 21st century India. The National Education Policy focuses on the education and skills needed for the youth of the 21st century India.

This education policy lays special emphasis to make India more powerful, to take it to new heights, to empower the Indian citizens and to make available maximum opportunities to them. Indian student will be able to play a constructive role in the nation building if he studies in a scientific way and according to the changing environment, whether he is in nursery or in college.

Friends, our education system did not undergo reforms for the last several years, resulting in the encouragement to rat race rather than promoting values of curiosity and imagination. There was a competition to become a doctor, or an engineer, or a lawyer. It was necessary to take the education system out from that competitive mindset without the mapping of interest, ability and

demand. How can our youth develop critical and innovative thinking if there is no passion for education, philosophy of education and purpose of education?

Friends, today is the death anniversary of Guru Rabindranath Tagore. He used to say:

“The highest education is that which does not merely give information but makes our life in harmony with all existence.”

Definitely, the far-reaching goal of the National Education Policy is based on it. There was a need for a holistic approach rather than a piece-meal approach to achieve this and the National Education Policy has succeeded in it.

Friends, now that the National Education Policy has taken a concrete shape, I would like to discuss with you the challenges that came before us during the initial days. There were two important questions then -- Does our education policy motivate our youth for a creative, curiosity and commitment-driven life? You have been in this field for so many years. You know the answer better.

Friends, the second question was whether our education system empowers our youth and helps create an empowered society? You all are well aware of these questions and answers. Friends, I am satisfied that these questions were seriously considered while formulating India's National Education Policy.

Friends, a new world order is emerging with a new look in the changing scenario. A new global standard is also getting readied. Therefore, it was necessary that India should effect changes in its education system. In order to change the school curriculum from 10+2 structure to 5+3+3+4 is a step in this direction. We have to make our students global citizens. Simultaneously, we also have to keep in mind that they stay connected to their roots. The format of this national education policy has been decided after encompassing all points from roots to the world, from man to mankind, from past to modernity.

Friends, there is no dispute that children learn faster if they have the same language which they speak at home and the language which is taught in school. This is the main reason why a consensus has been arrived at to provide education to the children till Class 5 in their mother tongue, as far as possible. Not only will it make the children's foundation stronger, their base will also be strengthened while pursuing higher studies.

Friends, so far, the focus of our education policy has been 'what to think', whereas, the new education policy lays stress on 'how to think'. Why I say this because there is no dearth of information and content in the present times. There is a flood of information; all the information is available on mobile phones. What information is necessary and what needs to be learnt should be important. Keeping this in mind, attempt has been made in the National Education Policy to reduce the burden of unnecessary syllabus and books. The need of the hour is to teach students with inquiry-based, discovery-based, discussion-based and analysis-based ways. Children will not only develop interest to learn but their participation in classes will also increase.

Friends, every student should get an opportunity to follow his passion; to pursue any degree or course according to his convenience and need, and the freedom to leave if he wishes to. It often happens that when a student goes for a job after the completion of a course, he finds that what he has studied does not meet the requirement of the job. Many students have to leave the course in between and start working due to different reasons. Taking the needs of all such students in

consideration, the option of multiple entry-exits has been given. Now, a student can join a course, study in a more effective way and can learn according to his job requirement. This has another aspect.

Now, the students will also have the freedom to leave a particular course in between and take admission in another course if they wish to. For this, they can take a break from the first course for a certain period of time and join the second course. This is the thought behind getting higher education free of streams, providing multiple entry-exits, and Credit Bank. We are moving towards an era where a person will not stay in the same profession throughout his life. Change is inevitable. For this, the person will have to constantly re-skill and up-skill himself. This has also been taken into consideration in the National Education Policy.

Friends, dignity has a huge role in the development of a Nation, and the pride of any strata of the society. In a society, a person can practice any profession as no work should be deemed less than its contemporary professions. We are forced to contemplate how a culturally enriched nation like India has been infested by such an ill mentality. How the idea of high and low and mocking stance towards people who engage in the labour has crept into our minds. The main reason behind this mentality lies in the fact that education remains disconnected from this strata of society. If you ever visit a village and witness the farmers, labours working, then only you can understand their contribution towards society and how they have invested their lives to nourish the needs of the society. Our generation must learn to respect their labour. In order to achieve this prerogative, we have paid attention to the ideas of student education and dignity of labour in the National Education Policy.

Friends, the world expects a lot from the 21st century India. India bears the capability of providing Talent and Technology to the world. The National Education Policy addresses this responsibility that we bear towards the world. The solutions suggested by the National Education Policy aim to develop the mindset towards futuristic technology. Technology has given us a medium to reach the students of far-flung areas- at minimal expenditure, effectively and with a great amount of speed. We must make the most out of the Technology.

Through this education policy, we will get help in developing a better course and content which is based on technology. Whether it emphasizes on basic computing, coding or research oriented activities, this not only would change the education system but would also act as a medium to change the approach of the entire society. The concept of Virtual lab would carry forward the dreams of better education to my young friends, who could never study these subjects before as lab experiments were essential. The National Education Policy would play a big role in bridging the gap between Research and Education in our country.

Friends, the National Education Policy could be implemented in a more effective and rapid manner only when the Institutions and their infrastructure would reflect these reforms. The essential need of the time i.e., the formation of the values of Innovation and adaptation in our society must start from the Institutions of our nation, whose autonomy lies in your hands. When we want to establish education and especially higher education as the creators of an empowered society, then we must also empower the higher educational institutions. And I know that, when the question of empowering the Institutions arises, it follows with the word- autonomy. We know that autonomy bears several views. One believes that everything must be run under the control of the Government with strictness, however, the other believes that institutions by default must get autonomy.

In the first approach, it shows a mistrust towards the non-governmental organisations and on the other hand, the second approach treats autonomy as an entitlement. The path to good quality education lies in the midway of both the opinions. The institutions which strive for quality education must be rewarded with freedom. It helps in encouragement of building of quality and gives everyone an incentive to grow. Before the advent of National Education Policy, we have seen in the recent years, that how our government has started the initiative to give autonomy to institutions. I hope that with the development of National Education Policy, the process of autonomisation of educational institutions would also gather speed.

Friends, former President of the country, the great scientist, Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam used to say- The purpose of education is to make good human beings with skill and expertise ... Enlightened human beings can be created by teachers. Indeed, all of you, teachers and professors are one the greatest means of bringing a change in the education system; of providing good students, good professionals and good citizens to the country. You, the people associated with the education sector, do and can do this work. Therefore, the dignity of teachers has also been emphasized in the national education policy. There is also an effort to make the talent of India remain in India to develop the generations to come. There is a lot of emphasis on teacher training and making teachers constantly update their skills in the National Education Policy. I Believe, When a teacher learns, a nation leads.

Friends, to implement the National Education Policy, we all have to work together with full determination. A new round of dialogue and coordination with Universities, Colleges, School education boards, different states, different stakeholders is about to start from here. Since all of you are at the top of the highest institutions of higher education, you have a greater responsibility. I urge you to keep having discussions and webinars on National Education Policy. Create a strategy for the policy, a roadmap to implement that strategy, add a timeline to the roadmap, and add resources, human resources to implement it; make a plan to bring all of these together in light of the new policy.

The National Education Policy is not a mere circular. National education policy would not be implemented just by notifying and issuing a circular. We have to make up our minds and show immense dedication towards it. In order to build the present and future India, this task is of utmost importance. It seeks your major contribution, from each and every person watching, hearing this conclave. I believe that better suggestions and solutions for the effective implementation of the National Education Policy will come out of this conclave. This conclave has also given me an opportunity to convey my regards and gratitude to Dr Kasturirangan and his team at a public forum.

Once again, I convey my good wishes to all, Thank you very much.
