

## Full text of speech

“Sisters and brothers,

Namaskar!

As President of this prestigious Institute, it gives me great pleasure to deliver the first Dr. Rajendra Prasad Annual International Memorial Lecture on the occasion of the 68th Founders’ Day of IIPA. With the challenge of the Covid-19 pandemic on the wane in India, and with the easing of restrictions, I am delighted to be here with all of you. I must thank IIPA for this opportunity.

An iconic leader who earned lavish praise from Mahatma Gandhi on several occasions, Independent India’s first President, Bharat Ratna Dr. Rajendra Prasad devoted his life to see a prosperous, unified and strong India. Babu Rajendra Prasad’s remarkable journey from a student activist to Independent India’s first President, is a great saga of his indomitable capacity, resolution and commitment towards the country and society. It is also a reflection of the democratic values vested in Indian politics, wherein a student activist driven by his fierce commitment to serve the nation, rose in time, to become the first President of India.

Babu Rajendra Prasad was a visionary leader who understood the important role civil servants play in shaping a strong and inclusive India. Our civil servants across the country have been striving over the past seven decades to shape Dr. Rajendra Prasad’s vision into a living reality. IIPA has contributed in significant measure to this national effort.

The Institute’s journey from the time that it was founded in 1954, has been an eventful one, marked by a thrust to be responsive to the changing needs of governance. IIPA has, over the years, fostered a culture of academic excellence combined with policy orientation. Embedded in the wide array of programs and activities IIPA undertakes, I am sure, is the essence of the unifier of India, Sardar Patel’s advice to administrators that they should be guided by the spirit of service. The Institute today, is primed to act as a catalyst in ushering in governance reforms in the country. It can do so effectively through its activities and collaborations, supported by eminent faculty and a large pool of distinguished alumni. On the occasion of the 68th Founders’ Day of IIPA, I would like to place on record my appreciation of its tireless efforts to widen the frontiers of knowledge in public policy and governance.

Sisters and brothers,

Public administration must seek to be more citizen-centric, predicated on the principles of justice, morality and fairplay. Driven by Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s vision of “Sab Ka Saath, Sab Ka Vikaas, Sab Ka Vishwaas, Sab ka Prayaas,” India today stands poised on the cusp of a transformative era in which every citizen seeks to be an empowered catalyst of socio-economic change. In line with Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi’s concept of ‘minimum government and maximum governance’, the Government of India has been framing policies and programmes aimed at improving the quality of life of our citizens. The revival of the Indian economy after the devastating impact of the global pandemic,

holds forth the promise of the inclusive development of an 'Atma Nirbhar' Bharat. The IMF has projected a growth rate of 8.5% in 2022 for India and this is a welcome sign.

Today, the Government of India's social security net is wider than ever before, covering the neediest sections of society. There are several tangible indicators of the Government's model of 'Su-Raj' or good governance. Among them are Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), the most far-reaching financial inclusion initiative in the world, Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana, to help the poor tide over the crisis brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic, Ayushman Bharat, the Government's flagship healthcare outreach programme, Digital India program, Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) and many others.

Sisters and brothers,

IIPA's role in training civil servants to be active members of a sound, responsive and competent administration, sensitive to the needs of the poor, is laudable. While the nature of a public servant's leadership is rooted in service, last mile delivery of public services is critical and this is where administrators play a key role. Your job of training them through a number of programmes and activities, is equally important. Civil servants and administrators must ensure that gaps in the delivery system are efficiently and effectively plugged. We must bear in mind that the onus is on civil servants to ensure that governance reaches the doorstep of the poorest and most vulnerable segments of our population. The benchmark of the effective implementation of any development programme lies in the extent to which it can positively impact and transform the lives of the needy sections of society. Civil servants must remember the fact that there is no better touchstone of a welfare scheme and development initiative than the prosperity of its beneficiaries through efficient implementation.

Among other things, administrators need to be more accessible to the needy and underprivileged, to accomplish this mission. Civil servants must co-opt citizens from all sections of society down to the last individual, as active partners in scripting India's growth story. In doing so, they would be fulfilling Babu Rajendra Prasad's dream of a prosperous and inclusive Bharat.

A citizen-centric paradigm of governance hinges on efficient public service delivery systems. Such a system must be able to adapt itself to the growing needs and aspirations of citizens. Inclusiveness, accountability, agility, transparency, objectivity and honesty constitute the key facets of the complex task of public governance. Some of the defining features of good governance, therefore, are comprehensiveness, fair play, integrity, efficiency and equity. I hardly need add that civil servants must be open to upgrading their skills, adopting and scaling up best practices within India and outside the country. Only then can they come up with innovative, out-of-the-box strategies and solutions to complex challenges in governance and administration, for effective implementation of programmes and policies on the ground.

IIPA's role in honing the technical managerial skills of administrators to enhance their leadership and administrative competencies, is commendable indeed. In taking up a wide spectrum of training, research and consultancy activities for administrators, and through its many collaborations, the Institute is contributing to the positive responsiveness of public governance systems to the hopes and aspirations

of our society. In seeking to create an environment for the training, development and management of human resources for efficient, effective and ethical governance, you are fulfilling the vision of Dr. Rajendra Prasad, as also that of the founding fathers of this Institute.

Dr. Rajendra Prasad was a firm believer in the Gandhian principle of truth and non-violence, who endeared himself to Bapu. Gandhiji recognised his dedication when he visited Champaran in Bihar and later wrote in his autobiography:

[quote]“Rajendra Babu is one of the best volunteers working with me. His affection has made me so dependent on him that without him I cannot move even a step forward.” [unquote]

Babu Rajendra Prasad dreamt of a harmonious and egalitarian India, free from the shackles of caste and creed, an India in which the rulers and administrators would strive to ensure socio-economic justice to all.

I dedicate this lecture to the sacred memory of Dr. Rajendra Prasad and bow my head in reverence to this great son of our motherland whose life is defined by the virtues of altruism, truth, service and simplicity.

I wish IIPA and its team a great success in all its future endeavours.

Jai hind!”