

**ADDRESS BY THE HON'BLE PRESIDENT OF INDIA
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
AT THE CONFERENCE ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL
EDUCATION POLICY IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR**

Rashtrapati Bhavan, September 20, 2020

I am happy to address this conference on the implementation of the National Education Policy in Jammu and Kashmir, which used to be rightly called the Paradise on Earth. Through this conference, we must deliberate the methods and devise the ways to restore this region its glory, using education as a tool.

In my opinion, there could not be a better way to realise your dreams than through education. The National Education Policy, approved by the Union Cabinet in July 2020, is nothing short of a revolution. So far as Jammu and Kashmir is concerned, I have been meeting and interacting with school children from the region at Rashtrapati Bhavan every year. In my own experience, I can say it with conviction that Jammu and Kashmir is a reservoir of extremely intelligent, talented and innovative children. I feel that the implementation of the education policy will produce students with “ignited minds” if I borrow the phrase of my illustrious predecessor Dr APJ Abdul Kalam. Such youth would unleash the hidden potential and take India to greater heights in future.

Dear participants,

The unfolding of India’s growth story rests on the talent and energy of its youth. Our nation has an unprecedented demographic dividend but it can be realized only if the young people constituting a substantial segment of the population become skilled, professionally competent, and above all educated in the real sense.

In this regard the National Education Policy will prove to be a milestone. I firmly believe that education is the biggest catalyst for change and the youth is the most potent agent of social transformation. And whenever these two forces have come together, it has changed the course of history.

Dear participants,

Kalhana, the great Kashmiri scholar and poet, in his masterpiece 'Rajatarangini' had said, "Learning, lofty homes, saffron, ice water and grapes: things that in heaven are difficult to find are common here". It is important to note that the "learning" figured first among the five things that he referred to.

Jammu and Kashmir is a land of rich and diverse cultural traditions. From Hinduism to Buddhism to Sufi Islam, all faiths and beliefs have found home in the cultural ethos of this land. This peaceful and shared coexistence manifests in the lives of its people. We should always remember that education brings people together; it is ignorance that divides.

Jammu and Kashmir since time immemorial has been a centre of literature and learning, science and spirituality. Whether it be Mahayana Buddhism or monistic Shaiva metaphysics, Tantric theory and practice, the theory of art and aesthetics or the philosophy, language, communicative role of Sharda script or enrichment of Sanskrit literary styles, Kashmiris' creative innovations in almost all areas of art and thought have been highly significant. Any history of India's cultural traditions will remain incomplete without taking them into consideration.

It is not at all surprising, therefore, that Kashmir became a favoured place for the pan-Indian intellectual community and also for scholars from other countries, to gather here and interact on issues related to different disciplines and fields of knowledge. The quest for knowledge was uplifted by the serene Himalayan surroundings, turning it into a quest for the meaning of life.

I feel that a land with such a great and shining past should strive hard to add new chapters of excellence and achievements to its history. I wonder why the land of such scholarly accomplishments cannot walk along with the rest of the world on the path of progress and academic excellence.

If we want to ensure that our children and youth excel in life, we have to ensure value-based education for them. To understand your value system, you need to understand your roots, your tradition and rich cultural heritage. This understanding cannot be complete without taking your mother tongue into consideration.

In this context, I feel the National Education Policy has done a great service. The most encouraging feature of the Policy is that it adheres to the cultural ethos of each region. The three-language formula which is envisioned in this policy is of immense significance and can promote multilingualism as well as national unity. However, there will be greater flexibility in the three-language formula, and no language will be imposed on any state or union territory.

Dear participants,

Education is the biggest enabler. It enables us to take charge of our destiny and we want to enable the youth of Jammu and Kashmir to become masters of their fate. The new policy, with its emphasis on vocational education, has given us a blueprint to realize this dream.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given a call to make India 'Aatmnirbhar', or self-reliant, and this is possible only when we make our youth self-reliant. Vocational training will play an important role in this regard.

The policy focuses on ensuring Accessibility, Equality, Affordability, Accountability and Quality in Education and also tends to encourage Skill Development, Experience-Based Learning and Logical Thinking. I think this will ensure new and better pedagogical standards in the country.

We live in an era where research and innovation are the keys to success and development. Jammu and Kashmir is a land of extremely talented people. Its youth have excelled in every field. Today, when we are seeing a new dawn in Jammu and Kashmir, we want the youth of this land to be the harbinger of change by excelling in their respective

fields. The National Education Policy will help them realize their true potential and make their dreams come true.

Dear participants,

My dream is to see Jammu and Kashmir emerge as a centre of knowledge, enterprise, innovation and skill development. In the field of education and scholarly pursuits, the region has set unmatched milestones. Many of the core ideas and concepts that have shaped the Indian mind over the centuries have emanated from this region. I hope that through this conference you will make determined efforts to make this paradise a hub of knowledge, innovation and learning by implementing this policy in letter and spirit. Let us strive together to make Jammu and Kashmir a Firdaus on the earth, a bright jewel on the crown of Mother India.

With these words, I wish you all the best in this endeavour. I thank Lieutenant Governor, Shri Manoj Sinha for inviting me to share my thoughts with you.

I wish the people of Jammu and Kashmir, especially the youth, a very happy, peaceful and prosperous future.

Thank you,
Jai Hind!