

**Following is the full text of the speech –**

“Sisters and brothers!

At the outset, let me convey my Deepavali greetings to all of you!

I am pleased to inaugurate the new Amenities Center in the sprawling campus of the University of Hyderabad.

It is indeed a matter of pride that the University of Hyderabad has become the youngest and Institution of Eminence – along with a few IITs and the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) under the public-funded Institutions category.

I am happy to note that the University has consistently figured in the top slots in National and International Rankings. Most recently, the University has figured in the top 10 institutions along with the IITs and IISc in Atal Ranking for Institutional Innovation Achievements (ARIIA).

I am told that the New Amenities Center of 3260 Square Meters has user-friendly facility with offices of the Dean, Students' Welfare, Chief Warden and Chief Proctor, among others. Apart from an amphitheatre and a food court, it also provides space for socialization and interaction of students with peers.

Dear sisters and brothers,

As we all know, imparting holistic education is the key to the development and transformation of the lives of the people. Education empowers people to overcome challenges such as poverty and hunger and facilitates in creating an equitable and inclusive society.

Even 73 years after attaining Independence, we are yet to achieve 100 per cent literacy. There is a need for a concerted effort from all stakeholders to promote literacy and achieve the goal of having a fully literate society. However, what is important is for the education system to focus on holistic personality development. As the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi had famously said: “By education I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in the child and man—body, mind and spirit”.

The education system should develop a human being in all its dimensions in a truly holistic manner—intellectual, physical, moral, spiritual, social and aesthetic. While remaining wedded to our traditions and culture, it should be reoriented to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

I am glad that the New Education Policy (NEP) unveiled by the Government of India not only focuses on providing quality education, but also seeks to develop character, inculcate scientific temper, promote creativity, spirit of service and equip students with the capabilities to meet 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges.

NEP provides scope to our higher education institutions to scale new heights and be counted among the best in the world. However, the first and foremost requirement is for the higher education institutions to become centres of excellence and impart quality education on par with international standards. No doubt, it is a tall order, but it can be achieved with concerted efforts from all the stakeholders, including the private sector.

India can become the hub of knowledge and innovation and Universities like yours have to play a leading role in fostering the climate of creativity, inventiveness and the spirit of enterprise. Universities must not only become the centres of cutting-edge research but must also establish close linkages with the industry. I am happy that the new policy proposes a National Research Foundation to oversee research in the country.

Universities and Higher education institutions have a greater role in shaping the future of the nation.

We need to leverage the huge demographic opportunity we have as the youth constitute about 65% of the entire population. Youth must be trained to create employment as well as entrepreneurial opportunities and at the same make India a global hub of trained human resource.

I am glad that the new policy accords priority to skill-based education by imparting 21<sup>st</sup> century employability skills. The need of the hour is to vastly expand vocational and skill-based courses and promote the entrepreneurial talent among the students.

As part of the Digital India initiative, the NEP foresees a huge surge in online teaching with Higher Education Institutions focusing on introducing new programs in the online mode.

Technology is absolutely indispensable to ensure that education reaches every corner of the country and to every student, and the NEP's emphasis on integrating technology into classrooms is indeed welcome.

Dear sisters and brothers,

Like most areas, the education sector also faced unprecedented disruption in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic. It has brought forth new challenges for both teachers and learners. For wider reach of online education, it is absolutely important to integrate technology to support teaching and learning.

With educational institutions world over resorting to online teaching and learning, there is a need to study and adopt the best practices by institutions like the University of Hyderabad.

It is a matter of concern that only a few Indian Higher Education Institutions figure in the world rankings—IIT Bombay and IIT Delhi and IISc figure in the QS rankings in the top 200. Our multidisciplinary universities should pull up their socks and strive to be amongst the best.

For achieving better rankings, Higher Education Institutions must promote the culture of innovative research and focus on quality publications in the top journals and not just numbers.

Priority must be accorded to setting up research clusters and financing innovative research projects.

Incentives could be offered for this purpose to the best performing researchers.

Dear sisters and brothers,

The need of the hour is to channelize the energies of the youth in constructive, nation-building activities. My advice to youth is to join the forces of growth and shun negativism.

The nation is passing through a critical juncture and there are many challenges before us. Young minds need to come up with innovative solutions to tackle the pressing problems from corona virus to climate change.

This is the time for all sections, particularly the youth to be at the forefront of making India stronger on all fronts. I urge the youth to be the torchbearers in eradicating Illiteracy, combating diseases, meeting challenges in farm sector, ending social evils and discrimination of any sort like atrocities on women and eliminating corruption to build a New and Resurgent India.

Before concluding, I would like to recall the words of Swami Vivekananda, who had said: "My hope of the future lies in the youths of character, intelligent, renouncing all for the services of others, and obedient — good to themselves and the country at large".

I am sure the university will scale greater heights in the coming years and win more laurels. My best wishes to the faculty, non-teaching staff and all the students.

Jai Hind!"

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MS/DP